



WOMEN
in Action

No. 1, 1998

**violence
against
women**

Pepe Jeans

LONDON

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Freedom and Responsibility

Journalists play a central role in the development of meanings and symbols. They choose the story line, they choose the image to support a particular mind frame that they, too, chose. Writers act as gatekeepers who decide which idea and which language become visible on broadsheets and tabloids, on television, on radio, and on web sites. Media norm and practices and the broader political culture influence the way mass media construct our identities.

The press claim to be the instruments that make democracy possible. But mainstream media, in general and in truth, are instruments of either private business or government, acting in pursuit of either profit or propaganda. Despite all the claims to democracy, media often simply reflect the meanings and symbols of the most powerful actors in society, with little, if at all any, contribution from the rest of that society.

And when it comes to reflecting women's identities, mass media is guided by the meanings and symbols created by men. Today, in Asia, most of the existing media codes uphold objectivity, taste, decency, and morality. Despite all the international documents on violence against women, and on media's role in setting the stage for physical and sexual violence to take place, there is still no specific provision in most of media's codes to guide it in its reportage and coverage of women, specifically violence against women. The only exceptions are China where stringent anti-pornography laws are enforced, and Malaysia where a provision instructs advertisers to highlight a woman's role in society. But even this provision can be interpreted in a patriarchal way where ad agencies reinforce the stereotypical and traditional roles society has assigned to women.

This is not to say that media coverage has not improved. It has; but only a little, especially in the Asia-Pacific. A small survey that we did on women's images in advertisements yielded a number of positive portrayals. But these breakthroughs are either not deliberate or are the results of the efforts of a few enlightened individuals, many of them media activists. And we wonder, is there any way we can institutionalize women's positive images and identities in media?

Because of this, we at Isis International are drawn to a mission: To develop a specific provision

on the coverage and representation of violence against women and to have this provision included in the existing media codes of conduct. We know that various groups concerned with women and media have written guidelines on the portrayal of women. But we feel that these are at the periphery of media policy. What's more, if media's own self regulations about objectivity, taste, and decency are hardly effective because of poor implementation, how then can we expect them to uphold the guidelines of groups whom media probably consider as outsiders.

We do not, however, want to be misinterpreted as proposing press control. We abide by the principle that attempts to improve women's images and identities in media should be "consistent with freedom of expression." Yet, what does consistency with freedom of expression really mean? How can we ensure the balance between the press's freedom and the press's responsibility to present women fairly and objectively?

There are models that strive to achieve this balance. All involve government intervention. More importantly, all involve a public that actively participates in the judging of news, in the shaping of journalistic values. In South Korea, for example, where women's portrayal is comparatively better than other Asian countries, the public is active in monitoring media's conduct. Their comments and complaints go to government, which, in turn, puts media to task. But while this works in South Korea, how will the media in other countries react to such a relationship between the press, the state, and the public?

For in these models, media is accountable to the public through government; although we have to note that with globalization blurring national boundaries, accountability becomes vague and even more difficult to enforce. In these models, mass media is not the turf of a special few. In these models, the "mass" in mass media gains a different meaning. The public becomes not just the target of communication but a participant in its process.



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On the cover: Violence against women is not just about physical and sexual violence. Violence against women is also woven into the images and words and meanings that media disseminates. The ad on the cover is by Pepe Jeans.

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Media Recognition for a Freedom Fighter

Marie-Noelle Ferrieux Patterson, Vanuatu's internationally-respected ombudsman, is under increasing attack from politicians whose misdeeds and corruption she regularly exposes. Some are agitating to remove her from her position. But Ferrieux Patterson's work has received welcome recognition from an unexpected source, the region's main news media organization.

Meeting in Port Vila, the Vanuatu capital, for its annual convention, the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) broke from precedent. It awarded Ferrieux Patterson for her fearless efforts to use her knowledge of the law and accounting to bring into the public domain questionable practices by people in public office. She was hailed for her determination to make sure her findings continued to be available to the local news media and the people of Vanuatu.

Ferrieux Patterson herself had praise for the Vanuatu news media. The independent newspaper *Vanuatu Trading Post* had shown courage and determination to publish the truth through the publication of her reports, she said. She also thanked Radio Vanuatu for detailed interviews. The growing role of the Pres Klab blong Vanuatu had contributed to letting the public know how important a free press is to the nation, she added.

The convention, hosted by Pres Klab blong Vanuatu, saw the association unanimously adopt plans to take it into the new century. They included:

- Setting up radio, television, newspapers and magazines, and national associations groups;
- Electing its first president from Fiji, William Parkinson, the managing director of Communications Fiji, operators of four national FM stations in Fiji and two in Papua New Guinea;
- Launching a major programme to train more Pacific Islanders as journalism trainers and educators;
- Launching pioneering training on the use of the Internet for both print and broadcast media on the region;
- Next year's PINA convention will for the first time be held in the French Pacific, with French Polynesia winning the bid to host it in Papeete. It reflected the growing role both the New Caledonian and French Polynesian news media are playing in PINA.

Women Take Back the Media

A new movement called "Take Back the Media" urges women to consciously support independent and alternative media and to fight corporate image factories which spread disempowering images of women. The campaign describes today's media as "a dangerous landscape of images that work to communicate powerlessness in women by continuing to represent women as victims." Women are trying to flourish in an environment where they are bombarded with negative images. These images don't depict women accurately—whether they are women in your community or across the world. The goal of the "Women Take Back the Media" campaign is to provide an alternative to confusing, misleading, and harmful images of women and to connect media makers producing alternatives. The campaign suggests that supporters use creative ways of showing their support for positive images of women in media. In particular, it asks supporters to:

- Wear a photo button depicting a positive image of a woman to provide an example of a better way to represent women.
- Purchase media with positive images of women—be it video, magazines, newspapers, music, computer, etc.
- Send a photo of a woman to show your vision of the future for women, for use in their video tapestry of women entitled "Beyond Beijing: The International Women's Movement."

(Source: *off our backs*, June 1997)

Women Strategize on Violence Against Women in the Media

a Multi-Media Forum on Media and Violence Against Women will be held to strategize on how activists interested in improving media's coverage and representation of violence against women can actually do this. The forum, co-organized by Isis International-Manila and the United Nations International Fund for Women (UNIFEM), will be held in New York in time for the Commission on the Status of Women meeting in March 1998.

Media's representation of violence against women has increased tremendously despite the focus of the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. To address this situation, actions are being taken to increase women's participation and access to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication, and to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in media.

The multi-media forum will be an occasion to present an assessment of media policy on the portrayal and coverage of women. It will also be an opportunity for groups to share experiences and strategize on how to establish effective media monitoring enforcement and mechanisms. The forum aims to draw up the broad outlines of an Asian regional strategy that women can use to bolster their working relationship with media. The organizers hope to use the results of the forum to persuade media and advertising to develop or strengthen their codes of conduct relating to the portrayal and coverage of violence against women.

Apart from the forum, there will be an exhibit of ads that positively portray women. The exhibit will also feature "before and after" ads, ads that improved after individuals or groups intervened.

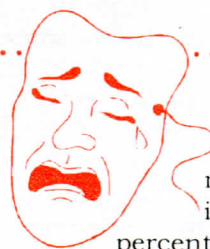
Those who wish to participate in this event should contact Isis International-Manila at phone numbers (632) 435-3405 and 4360312; Fax: (632) 435-3408 and e-mail <isis@mnl.sequel.net>.



Positive ad on exhibit

Asian Cinema and Globalization

The higher visibility of Asian cinema in international festivals, overseas theaters, and among academicians and professionals worldwide, masks reality, for in a number of countries once-thriving film industries face dire prospects as they contend with globalization and the forces of transnational corporations and new information technology. Consistent throughout Asia is the trend of foreign (mainly United States) films increasing their take of box office receipts and, in some cases,



diminishing local production almost to oblivion. In 1995, receipts for foreign films shown in Hong Kong were up 32 percent while those for Chinese-language pictures dropped by 16 percent. In Taiwan, domestic production has dropped from an average of 215 feature films in a year in the 1970s to fewer than 50 annually in the 1990s. The number for domestic films in China decreased from 150 in 1995 to an estimated fewer than 100 the following year, again attributable to the entry of Hollywood movies very popular with young people.

Source: *Media Asia*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1997

Iranians

TEHRAN (Reuters)—Athletes from 24 Islamic countries competed last December for a week of games only for women in Iran which were dominated by the host country.

Iran took first place with 58 golds, followed by Kazakhstan, Syria, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Bosnia and Jordan. More than 1,000 women athletes competed in 12 sports in locations around the country during the games which were only watched by women spectators. Men were allowed to watch only the opening ceremony, where women were covered from head

to foot in headscarf, overcoat, and track suit.

Iran, which also hosted the first games in 1993, has been a main force behind the competitions promoted as a viable Islamic alternative to Western women's sports events. Iranian women, who have to follow a strict Islamic dress code are not allowed to attend most sports events. Iranian officials say the language and behavior of some fans make the events unsuitable as family outings.

Source: *Today*, 29 December 1997

Rule

Islamic

Games

for

Women

Spouse Rape Soon a Crime

MEXICO CITY (AP) - Women legislators and activists were exuberant over Congress' approval of a hotly debated bill that would make rape by a spouse a crime. The Law against Domestic Violence outlines prison sentences of between 8 and 14 years for those convicted.

"This bill is a victory that women have been looking for many years," independent congresswoman Carolina O'Farril said.

The measure, which passed

the Lower House 254-90, split the three major parties. Some members of the right-center National Action Party objected to treating husbands the same as strangers in rapes.

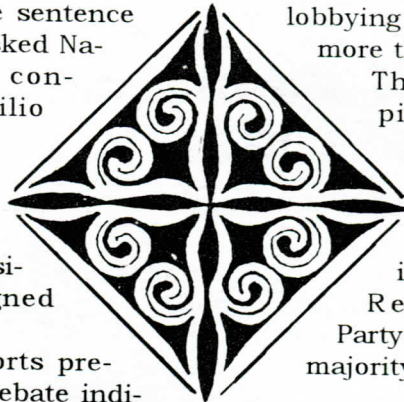
"Should a husband be given the same sentence as a rapist?" asked National Action congressman Emilio Gonzalez.

If approved by the Senate, the bill would go to Mexico's president to be signed into law.

Expert reports prepared for the debate indicate that domestic violence—including beatings, rape, and psychological abuse—is on the rise but is seldom reported and even more rarely punished.

For years, women's groups, the Roman Catholic Church, and other organizations have demanded stronger punishment to crack down on domestic violence. House and Senate committees have been lobbying for the bill for more than a year.

The campaign picked up momentum following 6 July elections in which the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party lost its absolute majority in Congress.



Source: <http://members.aol.com/ncmdr/index.html>

Many Women-run Businesses Really Run by Men

by Carrie Mason-Draffen, *Newsday*

NEW YORK—More than half of white female federal government contractors in the manufacturing and wholesale industries are “fronts” for white men, a Detroit professor told a minority trade group in Manhattan recently.

Timothy Bates, a professor of labor and urban affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit, reached that conclusion after studying US Census Bureau data that profiled small businesses from 1992-96. He maintained that in more than 55 percent of the companies, a man was actually the owner of such businesses. “I was shocked at how extensive the problem is,” Bates said. He warned a gathering of the National Minority Supplier Development Council that recent Clinton administration moves to open a key federal minority contracting program to white women could lead to more fraud and shift benefits away from those it was originally intended to help.

Fronts have long been a problem in federal programs aimed at helping women and minorities. Over the years, the US Small Business Administration (SBA) has tightened up the process that ensures the companies are properly classified.

Steve Sims, a vice president of the supplier group, said that because of the fronts and “because you are talking about a finite slice of pie, you have women and minorities fighting each other for an even smaller slice.”

For his study, Bates crosschecked Social Security data identifying companies as women-owned with answers provided on a profile questionnaire the Census Bureau sent to businesses last year. At one point on the questionnaire, respondents are asked the gender of the owner. Bates identified government contractors as those that derived at least 10 percent of sales from the government.

While the Census Bureau uses a similar methodology in counting women-owned companies, a statistician there emphasized that the agency has never measured the problem. “We have these issues and they are real,” said Ruth Runyan. “But they’ve never been quantified anywhere.”

In the fiscal year ended 30 September 1996, women-owned businesses obtained \$3.4 billion, or 1.7 percent, of prime federal government contracts, according to the SBA. “Prime” means they were the lead company on the contract. A company is considered female-owned if a woman owns at least 51 percent.

In fiscal year 1996, minority-owned companies received \$11 billion, or 5.5 percent, of federal contracts. Many minorities bid for contracts through the SBA’s program, which the Clinton administration has proposed opening up to white women.

Source: *Today*, 24 October 1997

Reforms Needed to Motivate Women to Work

TOKYO (Reuters)—Japanese women have long been shut out of the mainstream work force but change is essential for one of the world’s fastest aging societies to cope in the future, the government said in a report recently.

In its annual white paper on national life, the government said Japan lagged far behind other countries in giving women opportunities outside the home.

The report said there were powerful disincentives for women to pursue career-track positions in corporate Japan and women usually got the short end of the stick in terms of pay and opportunities for advancement.

Forty percent of Japanese working women are office assistants and many are part-timers. Only eight percent have managerial-level jobs, compared with 42 percent in the United States and 33 percent in Britain, it said.

Surveys showed that the majority of men and women thought women encountered discrimination at work, and the average wage of women workers was only 63 percent that of men compared with 76 percent in the United States.

Those women who pursue higher-paying careers do so outside Japan’s big corporations, in specialist professions such as accounting.

At the root of the problem are Japanese employment practices that require years of service and long hours before significant wage gains are made, the report said. “Women who have children and quit work aren’t motivated to go back to a full-time job because they know they haven’t put in the time to get a good wage anyway,” said Kiyoshi Ota, director of the Economic Planning Agency’s Social Research Division.

Source: *Today*, 5 November 1997

Body and Witchcraft: Victim Cremated

By Shobha Gautam

In Kathmandu, Nepal, the young woman Saraswati Adhikari died after being beaten, burned, and denied food and water for three days. This was what her husband claimed to be "the proper treatment for a witch."

Saraswati's husband and the "witch doctor" who tortured her are under investigation in police custody.

The victim's dead body was taken for cremation the day of her death by a rally of journalists, human rights activists, and women's activists, several of whom had tried to rescue her.

Saraswati was brutally treated by her husband after she was reportedly possessed by spirits. She was tied to a plank and kept in an outhouse above the toilet for three days.

When she started complaining of excruciating pain, her husband brought the "witch doctor" to their home.

This woman declared that Saraswati was a witch and needed treatment that could only be done at her house.

When activists came to rescue her, she smelled horribly and was almost unconscious. She was in no condition to speak and only opened her eyes after her children called to her. After some time, Saraswati asked for water and, after drinking the water, she repeated, "I have not done anything," again and again. Shortly thereafter, she lost

consciousness again and never recovered.

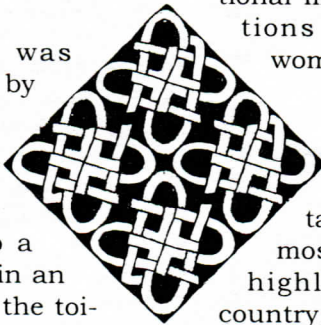
The activists raided the witch doctor's home with the help of the local police, but Saraswati's neighbors remained silent spectators. Not one raised a finger to help her. Even the police did not take the report seriously and arrived a half-hour too late. Since the victim was a woman, they did not take immediate action.

In Nepal, 80 percent of all women suffer from anemia. Saraswati was also severely anemic, and her weakness only contributed to her suffering.

Accusations of witchcraft are common in Nepal, where many ills are treated by traditional medicine and superstitions persistently use women as scapegoats.

Perhaps most shocking of all, this crime took place in Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, which is the most abundant and most highly developed in the country. Now the city with the best medical care in Nepal witnesses a woman killed for supposedly being a witch.

Source: *Women's Health Journal*, 3/97



Northern Marianas No Paradise for Foreign Workers

By William Branigin
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON—Older Americans remember the Northern Mariana Islands as the scene of horrific fighting between US Marines and Japanese troops during World War II.

Today they are a battleground of a different sort, a remote US commonwealth in the western Pacific where local politicians, federal officials, and members of Congress have been slugging it out over immigration laws, the minimum wage, garment sweatshops, and the alleged exploitation of foreign workers.

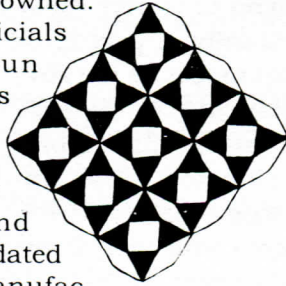
Those differences came to a head last October with a lobbying visit here by the island's governor, Froilan Tenorio, and the introduction in the Senate of legislation aimed at reining in what the Clinton administration regards as the territory's abuses of its privileges under a 1976 "covenant" with the United States.

The governor, a Democrat, strongly opposes the bill and has completely fallen out with the Clinton administration. In a campaign to defeat the proposed legislation—and to help advance his bid for reelection next month against a Republican who happens to be his uncle—Tenorio has been courting the GOP in Congress. Over the past year, he has invited several members of Congress and dozens of staff members to visit his tropical isles on expense-paid junkets.

The proposed legislation, introduced by Sens. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, and Daniel K. Akaka, D-Hawaii, would extend federal immigration and minimum-wage laws to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and restrict the use of "Made in the USA" labels by its \$625 million-a-year garment industry. The powerful industry has benefited from local control of immigration and the minimum wage by bringing in thousands of cheap and docile temporary

foreign workers, mostly Chinese, to toil in factories that turn out clothing for the US market.

Because the commonwealth is a US territory, the garments made there carry the "Made in USA" labels and enter the United States without duties or quotas, even though the workers and materials are all imported and the factories are largely foreign-owned. The result, US officials say, is an end-run around the quotas and tariffs that apply to garment import, as well as the minimum wage and workers' rights mandated in US domestic manufacturing.



Moreover, garment factories in the Northern Marianas often pay their workers less than the islands' current \$3.05-an-hour-minimum wage, force them to work long hours with no overtime, and require them to live in crowded "barracks" with restrictions on their freedom, according to workers and human rights organizations. Before they leave China, workers must sign contracts with the Chinese government that violate their rights on US soil, the Interior Department says.

One such contract says the worker "is forbidden from engaging in any political or religious activity" on the islands, must not request a raise or go on strike, and "cannot fall in love or get married." Violators face penalties back in China.

Source: *Today*, 24 October 1997

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Isis International-Manila has sister offices in Santiago, Chile and in Kampala, Uganda where the Isis' Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) is located.

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Open Letter to President Clinton on US-Philippines Relations

Boone Shirmer of the Friends of the Filipino People circulates and asks you to send this letter to President Clinton to signify your protest to a new Status of Forces Agreement being negotiated between the US and the Philippines.

President William Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
USA

On 30 September 1997, in Washington, DC, high civilian and military officials of the Philippine and United States governments held a meeting to negotiate a new Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). These negotiations were made necessary because of Washington's demand, as put forward by Admiral Joseph W. Prueher, commander-in-chief of the US Pacific Command, that the Philippine government grant "partial diplomatic immunity" to US military personnel on duty in the Philippines.

The US government demanded and got diplomatic immunity when it imposed US bases on the Philippines at the beginning of the Cold War. This diplomatic immunity was clearly a definitive aspect of the infringement of Philippine sovereignty that the US bases brought with them. US soldiers were not bound by Phil-

ippine legal procedures and, when they committed crimes, they were often spirited out of the country by US military officialdom.

With the democratic upheaval that overthrew the Marcos dictatorship, the US bases were removed and Philippine national sovereignty strengthened. The attempt of the Pentagon to restore diplomatic immunity is part of its larger effort to restore the strategic military use of the Philippines that the bases provided Washington. The proposal for a new SOFA is therefore closely connected to the Pentagon's effort to foist an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) on the people of the Philippines. This agreement would allow the US military to use most of the important ports of the Philippines for ship visits and military exercises. When first proposing ACSA in June 1993, Admiral Charles R. Larson, then chief of the Pacific Command, declared agreement would in effect return the Philippines to its previous functions as stepping-off point for the US military interventions in Asia and the Mideast. The US military high command gave the Philippines this alien role after the imperial conquest nearly a century ago, and so it continued for many years until the Philippine Senate voted to remove the US bases in September 1991.

Mr. President, you have proclaimed the promotion of democracy to be the keystone of your administration's foreign policy. We, therefore, call upon

you, as commander-in-chief, to order the US military to cease its attempt to take from the Philippine people—by means of SOFA and ACSA—democratic gains they have won through the peaceful exercise of their political rights. To do otherwise is complicity in an exercise of hypocrisy that tarnishes our nation in the eyes of the world.

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Sandra Torrijos

Violence against women

is the most pervasive form of human rights abuse in the world today. It includes assault, battery, rape, sexual slavery, mutilation, and murder. It is not a new phenomenon. It is not tied to poverty or economic upheaval. It is not related to the social displacement of peoples. Instead, it cuts across social and economic situations and is deeply embedded in cultures around the world—so much so that millions of women consider it a way of life.

Over the past decade, national and international groups have turned a spotlight on the hidden brutality of violence against women. They have called on the international community to value a woman's right to be free from violence as a human right. This focus on violence against women has spurred the development of strategies and programs to address the problem. Still, efforts to eradicate violence remain in their infancy and most societies continue to consider violence against women a private, so-called "family" matter.

ABUSED AT HOME

The highest percentage of violence against women occurs at home. A recent World Bank analysis indicates that one-quarter to one-half of all the world's women have been battered by an intimate partner. Regional studies confirm the level of violence. Statistics from Latin America show that between 26 and 60 percent of adult women have been beaten at least once in their lives. In Asia, 60 percent of all women have been assaulted. In sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 42 percent of women report being battered regularly by an intimate partner.

VICTIMS OF RAPE

Data on rape provides another chilling picture: One out of five women worldwide is a victim of rape. Most of them

an **issue** of
human rights

know their attackers. Young girls are the most frequent targets. Forty to 60 percent of all known sexual assaults are committed against girls aged 15 years and younger.

And although rape as a weapon of war has been internationally condemned since the Nuremberg trials following World War II, armies continue to use it in conflicts around the world. In 1992, as many as 20,000 women were raped in

the first months of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Rwanda, between 2,000 and 5,000 rape-related pregnancies were reported in 1994. Over the past 10 years, mass rape has been documented in Peru, Myanmar, Liberia, Cambodia, Somalia, and Uganda.

OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Female infanticide and sex-selective abortions are also forms of violence against

women. Demographers estimate that 60 million women are "missing" from the populations of South and West Asia, China, and North Africa, as a result. In India, particularly the northern regions, and in China and the Republic of Korea, genetic testing for sex has grown into a booming business. A recent study of amniocentesis procedures in a Bombay hospital found that 95.5 percent of aborted fetuses are female. UNICEF reports anecdotal evidence of the practice of female infanticide in some Asian communities.

Another fatal practice, "dowry killing," occurs in India. There, women are killed because they cannot meet the dowry demands of husbands' families. More than a dozen women are reported killed each day in dowry-related incidents—higher than 5,000 per year.

Female genital mutilation, practiced in at least 28 countries, mainly in Africa, is another form of violence against women. Considered a rite of passage for young girls, an estimated 130 million women and girls alive today have undergone a procedure in which all or part of the outer genitalia is removed. Two million girls each year undergo the operation, which is not only painful but also often results in a lifetime of health-related problems.

RESPONDING TO THE VIOLENCE: THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The international community has a role to play in re-

ducing the violence against women. The 1979 approval by the United Nations of the Convention on the Elimination of Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) marked a significant beginning in addressing the problem. Today, 160 countries have ratified the con-

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Jennifer Lynn Shafer

vention. Although it is a milestone in international efforts to reduce violence against women, nearly one-third of the signatory countries have declared that they will not be subject to several CEDAW provisions. These include equal rights to nationality and citizenship, equal ownership of family property, and an equal role in marriage and family life.

NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONS AND CRIMINAL CODES

At the national level, many countries have constitutions and laws intended to protect women against violence. Constitutions include bans on violence against human beings and the right to the integrity of

the body and the right to life. Most prohibit discrimination against citizens.

Brazil's new constitution requires the state to combat violence against women. Colombia declares violence in the family destructive and provides for penalties by law. Equality under the law is written into most constitutions. Some refer specifically to women, like the constitutions of China, Greece, and Poland. These types of provisions are important because, in the absence of other laws or regulations, they can be used to protect women from violence.

National laws that protect against violence are usually part of the penal code. However, only 44 countries worldwide have laws that specifically protect women against domestic violence. Of these, some have expanded the law to cover cultural practices. For example, 12 countries have now criminalized the practice of female genital mutilation.

Most countries have laws against sexual assault and rape. The problem lies, however, in the level of protection guaranteed by the law. Efforts to reform rape law have been ongoing for decades and have centered on determining what constitutes rape. Only 17 countries now consider marital rape to be a criminal offense. Twelve Latin American countries still allow a rapist to escape prosecution if he marries his victim.

Source: *genderaction*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Summer 1997.

The Rural Context

The economic development of rural women is one of the keys to their social emancipation while education is a mechanism to help form new values and perceptions, writes Kees Van Der Waal.

The high rates of crime, rape and abuse seem to be overwhelming us. While the media keep us informed about these worrying aspects of society, there is often too much focus on physical violence and too little focus on relationships, perceptions, context, and the cases of these phenomena.

Despite the increasing violence against women, there are positive developments. The 1993 Prevention of Family Violence Act is an improvement for those who can make use of the instrument it provides. Opposition against women abuse has also become more visible. However, the interventions that exist—shelters and programmes—are mainly in the urban centres. Rural areas remain largely untouched and unexplored, and this motivated the anthropological research reported here.

The research was conducted in 1991 and 1992 in an area of the former homeland of Gazankulu, in the Northern Province [of South Africa]. The unit of study was a group of 65 residential stands. The men mainly migrant workers to the factories and mines of the main economic centre of the country, while the women worked mainly on the farms of the Letaba Valley. The economic conditions of the settlement were characterised by a high level of unemployment and the poverty it caused. The research used a variety of methods which sought to find events, relationships, and perceptions: daily reports were written by people living in the settlement, participation observation was done during research visits, and cases of violence were analysed.

It is important to note that much of the daily interaction among inhabitants of the rural settlement consisted of cooperation and fun. Yet, physical violence seemed to be quite obvious

and important in many relationships, especially where age and gender played a role. In one year, 757 cases of violence were recorded, which translated to more than one incident per person per year. The cases covered only those picked up by research assistants (living in the settlement) and did not take into account cases that never became public knowledge or those that took place outside the settlement. It was clear from an analysis that boys and men used much more physical violence than did women.

An inclusive definition of violence was used: physical violence, verbal attacks, and refusal to provide resources or refusing cooperation. Often, a verbal attack or a refusal to provide resources led to a physical confrontation. Invariably, physical violence was associated with verbal and psychological abuse. It was further evident that levels of domination implied levels of dependency based on age and gender and were seen as natural and given.

Powerful outsiders often acted violently against the people living in the rural settlement. This included representatives of the tribal authority, the homeland government, and white farmers in the vicinity. Children were, for instance, beaten at school for lacking uniforms or they were scolded and sent home for not paying school fees. The water pump attendant, a paid official, often ignored the women who were waiting for water which he alone could pump for them. Clinic sisters often shunted patients around and diminished them verbally. Farm

workers, especially women, received low wages, despite physically demanding work done during long hours and in poor climatic conditions.

Men had given themselves the exclusive right to multiple sexual relationships. If their girlfriends or wives questioned them or, worse, opposed them, they were subjugated by beatings. Apart from this, many men neglected their families by not remitting money regularly

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to their wives. If money was remitted, it was only a small part of the salary that was earned and the rest was used by the man and his new urban household. Men also often stayed away from home whenever they liked, without having to tell their wives as was always expected of them when they left their homes. Women were also symbolically put down by men, being referred to as "prostitutes." They were beaten when they dared to have extra-marital relationships to gain access to another man's salary.

Women had less scope for physical violence and usually hit back at their men when

neglected or abused by refusing to do as they were told. They show their disrespect in other more psychological ways. Women among themselves often had violent altercations about men and resources about which they competed. A place in the queue for water or firewood left in the bush to dry often caused such conflicts.

Parents often used force against their children when they were not behaving as expected. Boys often used violent means to subjugate other more junior boys. Girls were harassed on the streets and footpaths, seemingly in a playful manner, but often with violent results. Sex was often forced on girls and boys considered themselves to be owners of their "cherries."

Girls occupied the lowest rung on the social ladder, being at the bottom of the hierarchy of violence and therefore the most vulnerable social category. Among themselves, girls used age as a ranking criterion and enforced seniority with violent means when necessary.

Several health implications are evident from the relationships discussed above. Injuries inflicted during fights and disciplinary action are self-evident health risks flowing from the highly stratified relationships in the rural context. Just as important to consider as the physical wounds are the psychological scars on the perpetrators and victims of violence. The strict social hierarchy furthermore implied that the socially junior did not have easy access to decision-making or to the resources they needed. Reproduction is one area with health implications where girls and women had

little say. They were, furthermore, subjected to life-threatening risks involving sexually transmitted diseases, of which HIV was the most serious.

Mostly, the reaction of women and girls to the violence they had to endure was one of submission. In the event of the woman taking action against a person who used physical violence against her or who abused her verbally in a serious way, she usually relied on her kin and on informal arbitration rather than on the intervention of the police. Only in extreme cases did women resist male violence against them in a physically violent way. Such a course of action needed a strong woman who had the necessary character or resources to rely upon. Leaving the household was the ultimate threat feared by men because of their own vulnerability, but this again was only possible where a woman had access to supportive kin.

Is it right to present the violence in families in rural areas as the problem? In South African society, it seems that violence is widespread throughout the society. Crude acts of physical violence seem to be more common in conditions of instability and poverty, but are these in themselves not also violent and to some extent caused by those outside these conditions? Violence does not only affect the working class or the poor. Our society is still highly hierarchical and patriarchal. Seen in a wider context, the institutions of modern society—schools, hospitals, churches, families, and factories—are often violent in concept.

Just as much as the inter-

relationships among various forms of violence differ, the contexts in which they occur also differ. This has important consequences for intervention strategies which need to be diversified and locally rooted. Examples are the different options which women of different backgrounds have when their married life becomes unbearable. In the city, a shelter may be the appropriate strategy for effective support, but in the rural areas, where kinship

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plays a very important role, it is not certain that a shelter would be preferred to the home of origin as a refuge.

What is fundamental and similar to all social contexts is the presence of patriarchy. In terms of the values of justice and democracy, which are central to our constitutional system and the bill of rights, patriarchy is unjust and needs to be undermined. The factors which reinforce patriarchy (and the violence which it generates) are historically so much part of our society that they are difficult to remove or to change. Tradition, which can help a person retain self-worth and to find security in social forms and customs, is one.

Poverty is another factor and, where relative deprivation is high, as in South Africa, people have to make the best

possible use of social difference in order to compete successfully for limited resources. The grip of tradition and poverty on social life has, again, been reinforced by colonialism and apartheid which led to the dispossession of Africans. Another factor is female disempowerment, again linked to the externally introduced forces such as racism, migrant labour, and social marginality. The devastation of family life as a result of migrant labour and influx control, is another factor which led to the growth of social survival strategies with negative effects, especially the high rate of fostering, estimated to be about 20 to 30 percent of the country's children.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon, an integrated, holistic approach is needed. A truly democratic society needs to be created in which exploitation and domination are replaced by just and equal relationships. The legal and justice system needs to be reinforced and, in this connection, the role of a trustworthy police is crucial as it forms the first line of contact with victims and perpetrators. Secondary support for victims, for instance, in the form of shelters and counseling programmes are equally important.

As violence against women is socio-economically embedded, the economic development of rural women is one of the keys to their social emancipation.

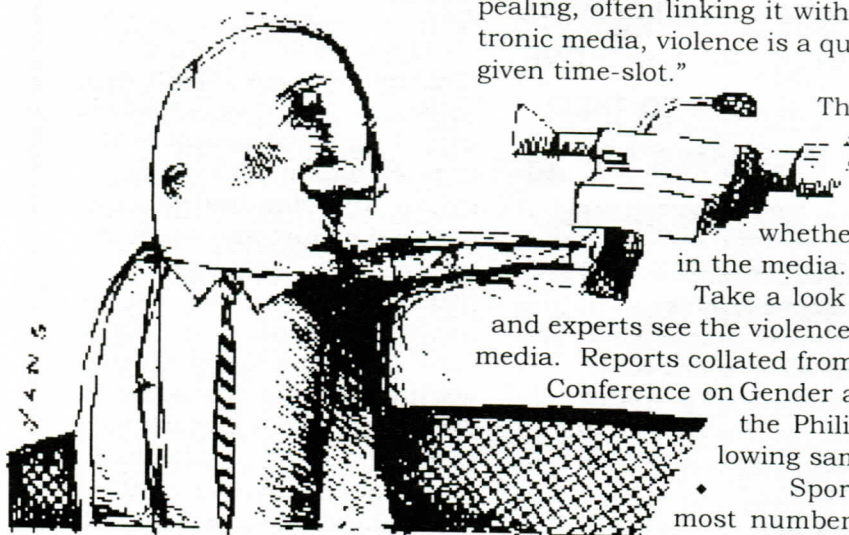
Source: *Women's Health Project* No. 22, May 1997. Original title is "Violence Against Women in a Rural Context." Kees Van Der Waal is with the Development Studies, Rand Afrikaans University.

"Media violence is different from real violence because no real visible long-term effect is perceived by the viewer."

Shari Graydon and
Elizabeth Verrall

It is a never-ending story, like a refrain that is played again and again. Through the decades, in so many survey reports, conference proceedings, books and newspaper articles, both in developed and developing countries, feminists have documented and decried commercial media's treatment of women and stories that have perpetrated violence against them. It seems that their battles have not yet been won.

Two Canadian women said that "very calculated decisions are made at every stage of construction of media violence." Shari Graydon and Elizabeth Verrall, president of Media Watch in Canada and Canadian English teacher, respectively, in a curriculum kit released by the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, wrote that "violence is made to seem appealing, often linking it with power and pleasure. In the electronic media, violence is a quick way to resolve conflict within a given time-slot."



They said that violence through the media can be verbal, physical, psychological, and/or sexual. And violence against women, whether subtle or overt, is often portrayed in the media.

Take a look at how Asian media practitioners and experts see the violence against women perpetrated in the media. Reports collated from papers presented at the Regional Conference on Gender and Communication Policy held in the Philippines in July 1997 give the following sampling.

- Sports newspapers in Japan sell the most number of copies because of pictures of

media

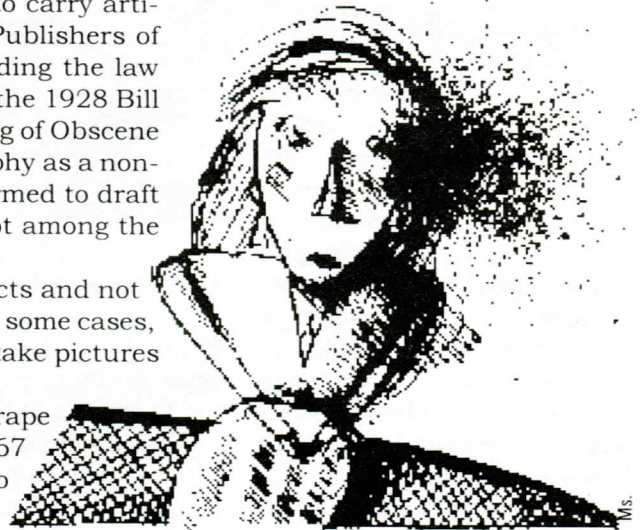
By Leti Boniol

nude women and sex stories. Rape is covered in sports papers only when murder is involved and the victim is usually named. The stories do not use the word "rape" but the Japanese term for "mischief." Publications that target boys and adolescents carry messages of aggression and violence. These same messages are also on television and in print cartoons, computer games, school supplies, pillows, chopsticks, and stationery. The television programs and publications are also very popular outside Japan. Television programs sold as family-oriented shows feature women in bikinis trying to climb up a slope. The camera focuses on their hips, legs and buttocks.

- The increase in rape cases, including rape of children, and harassment in the streets of India are linked to the way women are projected in media. Films, the major source of entertainment in India (the world's largest source of films), and television programs always revolve around sex plots and divorce and bigamy themes to excite and entertain audiences including young viewers who are highly impressionable.
- Pornography is illegal in Thailand but porn magazines are always available to those who seek them. In fact, they shamelessly proliferate. Even newspapers and magazines that tackle political and social issues have started to carry articles on nude models to increase readership. Publishers of pornographic materials have succeeded in evading the law because of the flawed definition of obscenity in the 1928 Bill on the Suppression of the Promotion and Trading of Obscene Materials. The Thai press still regards pornography as a non-issue. While a press council is already being formed to draft a code of conduct for newspapers, sexism is not among the issues being covered.

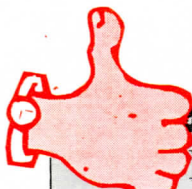
Moreover, the law only protects child suspects and not victims of rape, child abuse and child murder. In some cases, newspaper and television reporters compete to take pictures of the girl victims.

- In Indonesia, the number of reported cases of rape between 1980 and 1993 has increased by 15.67 percent each year, making it the number two crime in this country. In reality, rape is the



Ms.

Violence



4. Pag-ibig sa pamilya. Pag-ibig sa bayan

Mga Dakilang Kababaihan Ng Ating Kasaysayan.



Josefa Abierias



Tandang Sora



Josefa Llores Picado



Teodora Alonzo



Gabriela Silang



Raymunda G. Abila

Melchor Aquino o "Tandang Sora" ang dakilang ina ng Rebolusyon ng 1896. Teodora Alonzo ang ulat na magpapatal na ina ni Dr. Jose Rizal. Gabriela Silang - magiting na bayani ng Binondo. Prinsesa Urduja - magiting ng kalapangan labas sa mga diyosidad. Josefa Picado - ang magtatag ng Caravan of the Philippines. Josefa Abierias, ang itinatag ng mga lalaking patal sa kababaihan. Raymunda Guioke Abila - isang bayani ng World War II. Sila ay dalawang sa mga dakilang babae ng Pilipino na nag-alay ng puso, dugo, at buhay para sa kaniyang bayan. Sila ang kinakatawan sa tinatay na ariwa ng Pag-ibig sa Pamilya.

Isang pagpapagay mula sa



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number one crime because there is a far bigger number of unreported cases. One of the major reasons why a lot of rape cases remain undocumented is the stigma associated with rape especially when it is covered in the media.

- Photographs and cartoons of women are almost exclusively negative and normally offensive in Cambodia. Photographs of naked women and girls are regular features of some newspapers and magazines. Naked photos of Western women appear to be included for their freak value and often feature women with abnormal bodies. Cartoons featuring women tend to concentrate on their sexuality as the content of jokes. The second most popular daily newspaper publishes pornographic stories on page two everyday. The text explicitly de-

scribes sexual acts and female genitalia in offensive terms and is always accompanied by explicit drawings of women and men engaged in sex, including rape scenes. It is common for the men to be dressed in military uniform and armed and the women naked.

- In Mongolia, domestic violence, sexual abuse and harassment are not often portrayed substantively. Yellow newspapers constantly write about rape and domestic violence to ensure sales. Many pornographic newspapers that copy Western formats have emerged. Prime time television shows depict a lot of uncensored violence and pornography.

Similar litanies can be gleaned from reports from the Philippines and other Asia-Pacific countries.

CHANGES IN THE COVERAGE

But while the litanies may be long, there have also been positive developments.

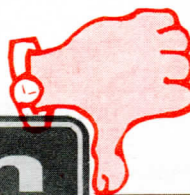
- Over the last two years, awareness of women as victims has increased in Cambodia, the Women's Media Center of Cambodia (WMC) reports. The number of positive stories have increased while negative stories have decreased. The center attributed this to lobbying, journalists' workshops, and the positive image of women on television and radio.
- Since 1992, media practitioners say that time given to women's programs in Malaysia has increased. Current affairs television programs have dealt with

issues such as Muslim women's rights and women trafficking. But stereotyping has remained.

In print, although women are no longer confined to cooking and beauty and fashion and now tackle women's rights, health, and politics, they still do not make the news. Efforts by women media practitioners have changed particularly the English language dailies. Women activists network with media practitioners to raise awareness on key issues of concern to Malaysian women. Starting in 1985, a coalition of women's groups campaigned for nine years addressing several issues: domestic violence, sexual violence, pornography, and sexual harassment. Media support, particularly its focus on rape and domestic violence, maintained public awareness.

- In South Korea, women are now increasingly projected as active, self-confident, and professional due to the efforts of feminists and changing life-style. But the distorted and despised image of women has not improved over the years despite all the promises, says a paper presented by Kyung-Ja Lee, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism and Communication, Kyung Hee University in South Korea. The portrayal of women as sex objects is also an emerging issue.
- Sudip Mazumdar, *Newsweek* correspondent, reports in a 24 November 1997 article that "the Indian film industry, the

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world's largest producer of cheap popular dramas, is having second thoughts about gore." Western film imports, he says, are now driving many of the improvements in Indian theater. Feel-good movies are in, violence out.

Sylvia Spring, a feminist connected with Media Watch-Canada, said during the Asian Regional Conference on Gender and Communication Policy that gender and media-related issues have not changed. What is changing is how the issues are being played out. There is more subtlety. While there may be no more naked women in the media, the stereotypical portrayal of women remains "insulting."

In the Philippines, a feminist journalist says that Phil-

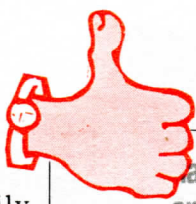
ippine media's coverage of women has improved in the 1990s with more journalists conscious of their handling of sexual harassment and rape cases. However, at least eight tabloids churn out hundreds of thousands of copies daily with semi-naked women splashed on their front and inside pages and lewd stories. And more are joining the pack.

"The media does not just reflect reality, it operates at a far more fundamental level to legitimize existing social relations, indeed, to create a reality," said Allison Gillwald, lecturer at a South African university, in a 1994 article, "Women, Democracy and Media in South Africa." (*Media Development*, 2/94).

GAPS BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE

There may be media policies but these are unclear, inconsistent, or lacking in gender-specific provisions. They are also largely ignored.

- ♦ In Cambodia, a national press law was passed in 1996. Two journalists' associations have their own codes of ethics and committees that monitor their implementation. But no policy specifically refers to the coverage of women. Obscenity, vitriol, and the portrayal of women as sex objects violate Articles 7 and 14 of the press law. Article 7 prohibits the publication of obscene texts or pictures or graphically violent material and Article 14 says that the press "should not publish anything which



affects the good customs of society, primarily words directly describing explicit sexual acts, drawings or photographs depicting human genitalia or naked pictures, unless published for educational purposes." Those who violate the policies are not punished.

- ◆ In Australia, there

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- ◆ In Japan, there are no laws on pornography and rape coverage or guidelines on gender issues in news organizations. Organizations practice self-regulation.
- ◆ In Malaysia, there is no law which spells out clearly how rape and violence against women can or cannot be portrayed. The law bans pornography and the Advertising

GENDER AND MEDIA-RELATED ISSUES HAVE NOT CHANGED. WHAT IS CHANGING IS HOW THE ISSUES ARE BEING PLAYED OUT. THERE IS MORE SUBTLETY. WHILE THERE MAY BE NO MORE NAKED WOMEN IN THE MEDIA, THE STEREOTYPICAL PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN REMAINS "INSULTING."

is no clear-cut government guideline for the portrayal of women in the media, partly because subjective areas like "taste" and "decency" have proven difficult in the past. The government took steps between 1986 and 1993 to address sex role stereotypes and promote positive images through consultation, research, and the establishment of the National Working Party to handle the portrayal of women in the media and in advertising. Guidelines on sexist language, reportage of violence against women, recognition of changing gender roles, material that incites violence against women, and a commitment towards discussing domestic violence were adopted and developed by media and advertising organizations. Accreditation requirements

and film classification systems supplemented the guidelines. But government efforts ceased in 1993. The introduction of competition legislation in 1995 caused the collapse of the system regulating advertising standards.

- ◆ In Indonesia, the mass media operates under self-regulation in matters of decency. But the same may not be said of the national attitude to issues of violence against women. Marital rape is not a crime. While it can be reported as "assault," social norms do not often support this. US State Department investigations reveal that marital rape and domestic violence are poorly documented in the legal system as well as in the media. There is no sexual harassment law and the issue is under-reported in the media.

Code prohibits "indecent exposure." But these can be ignored or circumvented. Media organizations practice self-regulation sporadically and often only when there is public complaint. "Concepts and specific words are not clearly defined," according to Zohara Gary Bathusha, controller of Radio Television Malaysia. Interpretation is thus usually up to the discretion of enforcement officers.

- ◆ In Thailand, there is no law on the coverage of crime against women, none on the news coverage of rape and violence against women, and there are no provisions or guidelines for non-sexist language in the media. There is a law on pornography and rape coverage is supervised by the police department, which also works as a film cen-

THE MEDIA DOES NOT JUST REFLECT REALITY, IT OPERATES AT A FAR MORE FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL TO LEGITIMIZE EXISTING SOCIAL RELATIONS, INDEED, TO CREATE A REALITY.

sorship board. But soft porn is still pervasive, especially in *karaoke* footages.

Women continue to be discriminated against in the media, participants declared at the end of the Gender and Communication Policy Conference. Several factors were mentioned, including the "structural constraints of media organizations, women's subordinated status, gender inequitable policies, and questions of democratization of the media."

Aside from the "inadequate and biased portrayal of women in media content, the media in our countries are a major contributor to the perpetuation of patriarchal and sexist gender identities and relations between women and men," the declaration added.

Among the participants' recommendations and strategies are:

- The development of a new code of ethics or guidelines or the revision of existing ones to include gender-sensitive, non-stereotype portrayal of women in various media genres and channels and the development of measures to ensure that the codes are followed strictly.
- The formulation by non-government groups of practical guidelines on the portrayal of sexuality and pornography through active discussion with diverse social groups; the guidelines should address the issue of reporting violence against

women. The identity of victims and survivors should be protected and their rights respected.

- The media should promote the positive portrayal of women's sexuality.

"The women-media relationship can only be analyzed, and successful strategies for changing it can only be developed, if we take into account the entire cultural, political, and ideological spectrum and study the economic context in which this particular relation (media-women) is created and takes shape," Gillwald said.

Another said that changes could not be effective permanently without broader social change. Education is the main way to improve women's status and increase the number of women journalists. There is need to first change society's opinion that girls should not go to school.

Meena Shivdas of the Asia-Pacific Development Center says that "while it is important to strategize and pressure for changes to the women and media situation with our reading and understanding of portrayal and representation, it is equally important to understand the implications of global processes of deregulation and developments in new technology. This is in order for us to locate the strategies within the framework of globalization and new technology which have given new dimensions to freedom of expression."

With all the media experts and practitioners doing their

share, will change be far behind? ☺

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Consuming Pornography

A Question of Individual Rights

By Sakuntala Narasimhan

Pornography is now available from the armchair as it enters, unbidden, into homes—in-forming, influencing, and often corrupting young minds. Proliferation of visualising techniques combined with easy-to-access modes today pose a new area of concern. This article looks at instances of artistic expression which border on pornography and visuals created only to titillate.

One man's meat, the saying goes, is another's poison. If I want to consume potassium cyanide, either because I consider it food or because I claim the right to consume what I choose, I cannot purchase it. Because the state recognises an obligation to safeguard the public against something that is considered harmful, dangerous. No one decries this as an infringement of the individual's rights. Why then should a controversy be raised when the same yardstick is applied to things that poison the mind?

Does pornography poison the mind? Consider the recent Press Trust of India (PTI) report on a survey that found a 67 percent rise in eve-teasing cases in the last two years (figures in these kinds of cases are always underquoted because not all cases are reported, whether it is eve-teasing, rape, or sexual harassment). The report specifically mentions the boom in infotainment as one of the causes. That mongrel word is itself a mirror of the times—entertainment masquerading as information—and titillation in turn accepted as synonym for entertainment.

In the name of information and awareness creation, a programme on AIR FM discussed sex, but was declared to be objectionable by the then

JP minister who described it as promoting adultery. The crux of the matter is not whether such education is needed, but whether the commodification of modern technology in the media itself poisons the mind, in the sense that it destroys and/or corrupts (*Collins Dictionary*).

MASKED OBSCENITY

- ◆ Pasted on a wall along a thoroughfare in central Coimbatore is a poster for the Tamil film, *Apoorva Sahodarargal*. What differentiates it from other cinema posters is the phrase in bold lettering underneath the title—"with censored portions." That, undoubtedly, is meant to lure a larger crowd than would normally turn up. The motive: titillation, for profits.
- ◆ Another film poster. This one, in south Bombay, is for *College Girl*. An innocuous title? Not quite. Under the title it says, "Based on a true story." A sure-fire crowd puller because the "true story" involving a college girl is a rape incident that hit the headlines prominently that year, with a boy from a VIP family accused as the culprit.
- ◆ A magazine called *Health and Nutrition* has, on its cover, a teenager posing provocatively, with her knees drawn up in such a way that her thighs are laid bare all the way up to the crotch, and it looks as if she was wearing nothing except a sweater and hat. Even the sweater is pushed off one shoulder, to reveal a white strap underneath. If this is not an offensive, debasing, and commodifica-

tion of the female form in order to sell a story on slimming, what is?

- ◆ Another magazine called *Police News* comes out in Kannada, Tamil, Marathi, and probably several other editions, and sells fast. It is a "detective paper," the news agent claims, because the stories are all taken from police crime records.

THE ISSUE TODAY IS NOT SO MUCH WHERE THE LINE BETWEEN ARTISTIC FREEDOM AND PORNOGRAPHY LIES AS THE MANNER IN WHICH MODERN TECHNOLOGY IS HIJACKING THIS GRAY AREA TO INVADE INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS.

But the photographs, captions, and style of reportage are all clearly and unabashedly meant to titillate. (A report on a pregnant woman who had her baby delivered with a blade in an emergency shows a young girl lying upside down on a flight of stairs, with her petticoat drawn up to reveal the contours of her leg through her sari. The cover girl has, however, nothing to do with the woman who actually gave birth—again, titillation, to boost sales.)

- ◆ The latest in this line of masked obscenity is the ad for a 24-hour "Friendship Line" telephone service that urges you to "dial and make friends." The ad features sultry young girls, sometimes shown fondling the telephone cord while (pre-

sumably) murmuring sweet nothings. Britain's Dial-a-titillation facility enables one to listen to "erotic spiels" but at a cost. In the name of "liberalisation" and "going modern," we are not merely aping these trends of the West but, more saliently, enabling the electronic media to spread this culture faster than the spread of tangible evidence of well-being.

DRAWING THE LINE

If the line dividing offensive, debasing pornography on the one hand and "artistic freedom" on the other is blurred, the issue today is not so much where the line lies as the manner in which modern technology is hijacking this gray area to invade individual rights.

Material not suitable for immature, impressionable minds has always been available to those who sought it and went out to get it. Today, it comes unbidden into the living rooms of millions of homes through television and video players. Primary school children, sitting before the idiot box, are exposed to vulgar film dances with suggestive gyrations and to all kinds of advertisements (including use of contraceptives) in a manner that would not have been possible two generations ago. Even a child who cannot read gets bombarded with messages that undoubtedly influence his or her perceptions. *Chitrahaar*, the film-based programme, has a very high viewership nationwide; in one of its recent telecasts, the hero was shown disrobing the heroine by pulling off her sari till she stood in her blouse and petticoat. Heroines rolling down a meadow with

heaving bosoms and throbbing movements, with the camera zooming down their cleavage (or between the legs of the hero while the heroine runs her face up his leg) are not uncommon.

These are all nothing but instances of pornography as per the dictionary definition. And children, whose only vulnerability and crime is that they happen to live in homes that own TV sets, learn a distorted set of debasing values that legitimise offensive behaviour patterns and add up to the dehumanising, desensitised life-styles of today, frazzled by rootlessness, cynicism, and erosion of ethical values.

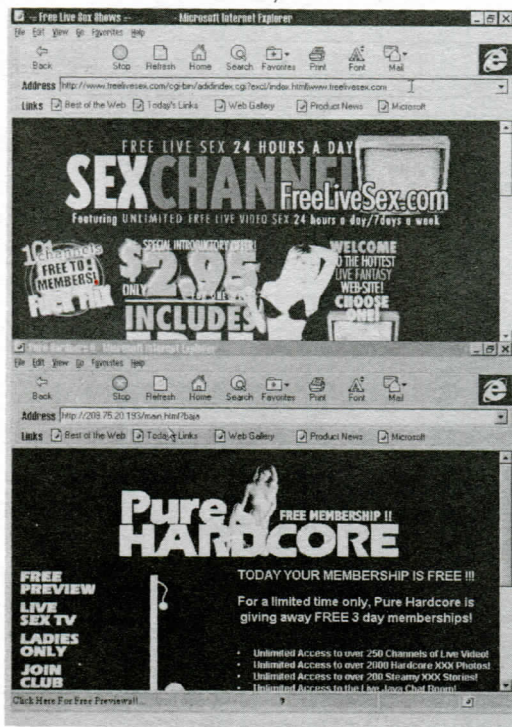
Given the overriding commercialisation of everything—from finding a spouse to political agendas—what we end up with is not the furtherance of individual rights but an evasion and perversion of it.

EASY-TO-ACCESS

How far is the consumption of pornography (even the word consumption is symptomatic of the commercial overtones of our present day ethics and ethos) a question of individual rights? To answer that, we only need to posit a counter question—does a nine-year-old child need the freedom to watch on TV and learn the pelvic thrust that go by the name of dance in Indian movies? Or the freedom to borrow from the neighbourhood lending library a blue movie videotape? Are we infringing upon this child's "rights" as an individual to get acquainted with and promote perverted urges?

Does liberalisation mean

the freedom to import *Playboy* magazine freely? Does "modernisation" mean developing our own versions of such magazines (recall the recent case of *Fantasy* magazine, being the subject of a controversy after it was found offensive by the authorities)?



Sex on cyberspace

If cyanide, which destroys the body, were to be freely available on supermarket shelves to cater to those demanding the freedom to purchase it, there would be a hue and cry. If magazines that destroy or pervert the mind are banned because they are unhealthy, the "rights of the individual to consume what he or she wants" is quickly cited. Debasing of the mind, being insidious and less palpably measurable than debasing of the body, is not seen as such. That is the crux.

Pornography objectifies women and reinforces sexism. Sexposing gimmicks (visuals,

ads, films) do the same, with the additional dimension of coming right into our homes. We even have access to Internet now, making porn consumption easier than ever before, from the comfort of one's armchair.

Nude paintings in the Sistine chapel of the Vatican or the nude monolith of Gomateswara in Sravanabelagola do not offend or corrupt because the *intention* is not to titillate. A nude centrespread in a girlie magazine is something else again, because the intention is clearly to titillate, to arouse, and attract.

If the mind—the intention—makes the difference, then we need to address the issue of how the mind is molded and sensitised. Which is where censorship requires its legitimacy. Certainly there is a gray area where something that is considered "artistic" by some could offend others who see it as "obscene." So who decides?

We, the people—to use that democratic phrase. If women's groups find an ad or film demeaning and obscene, their voices of protest need to be heeded. As the people's representative, the Censor Board, or a similar body, needs to keep its receptors honed. The right to spread filth, tangible or otherwise, has no legitimacy under any pattern of society, democratic or otherwise.

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Source: VOICES, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1996

Roundtable Views

In February 1994, *Ms. magazine* ran an article "Where do we Stand on Pornography?" Ms. gathered a group of prominent US feminists to discuss the issue of pornography and censorship. Three years later, many of the arguments still hold true. In the Asia-Pacific region, the issues of pornography and censorship are taking center stage. We decided to re-run excerpts of this article as the issues are the same and, as in this article, the positions among feminists in the Asian region are also diverse.

Andrea Dworkin: ...The statutory definition [of pornography] has to be very concrete. But when we talk about what is pornographic in our culture, for most people that has many subjective dimensions to it.

Norma Ramos:I look at pornography as a system and practice of prostitution, as evidence of women's second class status. It is a very central feature of patriarchal society, an essential tool in terms of how men keep power over women.

Folks who defend pornography as free expression are actually defending some of the narrowest thinking I can imagine. When people consider the misery that it takes to make this stuff, the lives that have to be exploited and shattered to produce these images, ...it isn't just about what you see, it's what it took for a human being to be in that position—it takes a whole lot of abuse. It takes women who have been sexually abused in childhood, who have been robbed of their self-esteem, and who are vulnerable to this exploitative sexuality.

Marilyn French: There was a time when it was very clear to me that pornography involved both the use of the body, usually a female body, and power, so that what you had in essence was sadism. Now I am not sure what human sexuality is. I am not sure to what degree normal human sexuality contains elements of power and sadism.

There are pictures in men's magazines in which women are making love to women; they're not hurting each other. This is a situation of equality.

Dworkin: But they're *not* making love to each other. There's a social relationship between the photographer and the consumer. So-called lesbian layouts in heterosexual male pornography provide two women for the male consumer. What you see are the orifices of their bodies turned for his sexual pleasure.

Ramos: Men are getting sexual pleasure from our subordination. What if racism had been turned into sexual pleasure the way the oppression of women has been? When you struggle against the oppression, the opposition stands up and says, "No, you are fighting against my pleasure." A very big piece of that is learned behavior. And, in our society, it's socialized by the pornography. Even if you're not directly consuming the pornography, you're getting those images through advertising and movies.

Gloria Jacobs: But what about the possibility that some women are saying: "We enjoy certain kinds of sex that have power differentials, but it's not sadistic, and we don't want to be attacked for it. We don't want to have our sexuality negated because we probably can't change how we feel about sex in our lifetime."

Dworkin: In the United States, censorship seems to have an ever-expanding meaning depending on who's using it. In legal terms, censorship has always meant prior restraint: you pass a law that stops something from being made or being done.The Constitution protects the magazines. It is not the speech of women that is being protected. It's a way of making women into chattel. Who do they belong to? The pimps and the consumers of the magazines and the movies.

Gillespie: We almost automatically speak of pornographers and consumers of pornography as "he," but there are materials made by and for women.

Ramos: Sexuality is socialized. The pleasure principles did not come by accident. ...

But what I'm saying is that women are socialized into actually getting sexual pleasure through their powerlessness. And it is very hard to opt out of this socialization. So I understand your question speaks to this reality. It's a struggle that a lot of us wage personally. ...

French: I seriously doubt that anybody can change his or her sexuality.

Dworkin: But sexuality does change. As your life changes, your fantasies change.

On the issue of censorship and laws that address pornography, the women had this to say:

Ramos: ...I've heard this before: "I don't trust the government so we'd better not do anything on pornography." Well, we don't trust the government, but we have other civil rights laws.

French: The government is not going to use a sexual harassment law to keep me from publishing a novel, but it could use an anti-pornography law.

Dworkin: The obscenity laws can already be used against you. I think they should be repealed.

Ramos: I think censorship helps pornography flourish; the laws should be repealed. Let's have some power in the hands of women and then we'll have some real political discussion about censorship and sexual exploitation.

The feminists in the roundtable discussion article were:

Andrea Dworkin, author of 10 books including *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* and *Letters From a War Zone*.

Marilyn French, author of *The Women's Room*, *The War Against Women* and *From Eve Till Dawn*.

Norma Ramos, a lawyer and anti-pornography and environmental justice movements activist.

Ntozake Shange, author of *Brilliant* and the play "for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf."

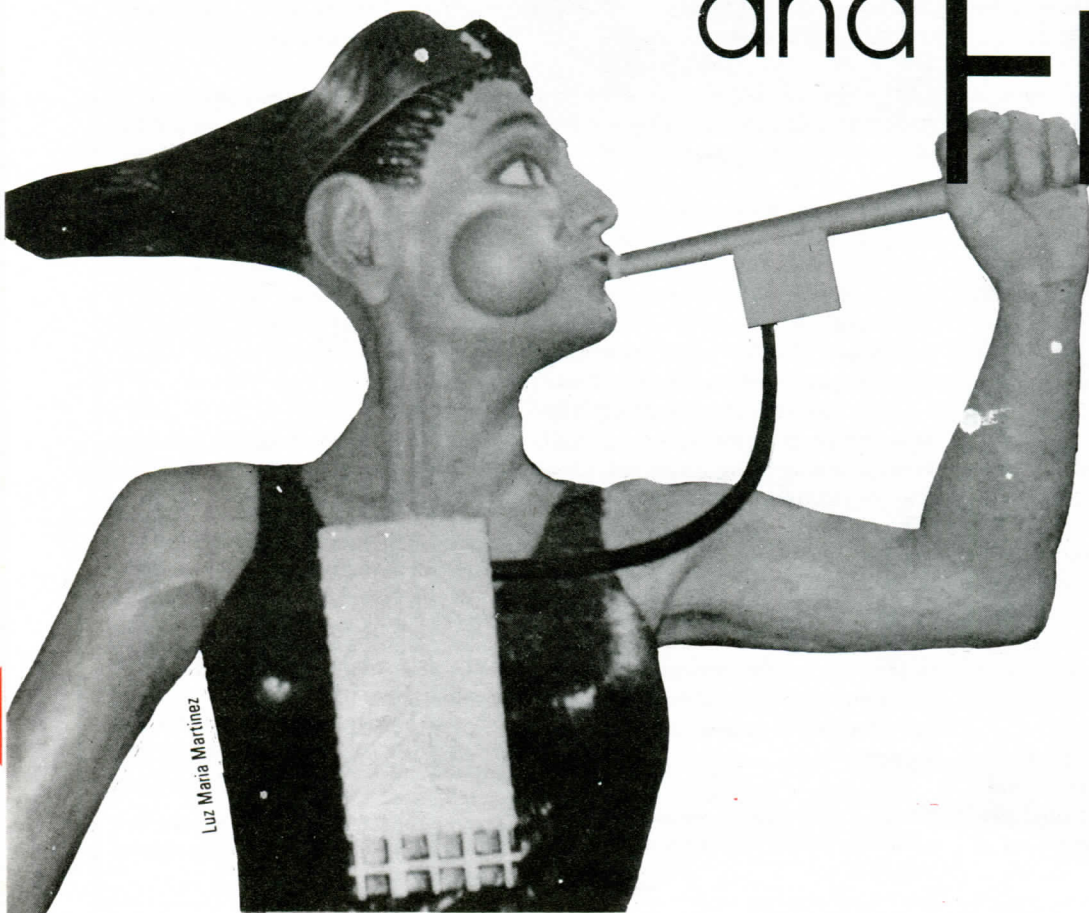
Marcia Ann Gillespie, editor of *Ms.* There was no information on Gloria Jacobs.

Feminists for Free Expression (FFE), a US national, not-for-profit anti-censorship organization, is deeply concerned about sexual harassment in schools and workplaces and believes that gender-based harassment—like all serious social problems—requires thoughtful, fundamental solutions. It is alarmed by the facile proposals popular today among some policy-makers and activists who claim that banning a list of “bad” words and images will improve the condition of women. It will not. Such quick-fix solutions ignore the substantive causes of sexual har-

assment and establish restrictions on words and images that will harm women’s interests. Without tolerance for a broad range of words and images, women could never have founded a feminist movement—considered dangerous and sinful—25 years ago. Without tolerance, the goals of women will be harmed today.

Sanitizing work place speech in defense of women workers enshrines archaic stereotypes of women as delicate, asexual creatures who require special protection from mere words and images.

Feminism and Free



Luz Maria Martinez

Why should women put up with offensive speech? Why not define sexual harassment as broadly as possible?

Should the law prohibit all words and pictures that someone in a workplace or school finds offensive, much speech—certainly, much interesting speech—would soon be illegal. Women’s speech might well be thought offensive because it runs counter to a worker’s religious beliefs. Feminist material on reproductive choice would be particularly vulnerable. Should the state force a woman to remove a pro-choice poster or magazine article from her office because another worker finds it objectionable? History teaches us that, once in place, censorship schemes are used to stifle feminist advocacy of social change. Birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger was jailed under censorship laws. Today in

selves make and enjoy sexual banter. Very broad restrictions on sexual material treat women as infants and shore up destructive Victorian stereotypes that they are (or should be) so pure that any expression about sexuality offends and demoralizes them. This is not a feminist position.

Finally, focus on sexual material diverts attention from the underlying causes of harassment. Gender-based harassment (whether it uses sexual language or not) is typically a power play by men who feel threatened by women’s progress toward equality or even their mere presence. It is the deeply-rooted social causes of such hostility that policy-makers need to address.

FEMINISM AND FREE SPEECH: PORNOGRAPHY

Feminism and Free Speech:

Speech

Canada, feminist books (ironically, including two by Andrea Dworkin who has long advocated restrictions on erotic speech) are being seized by Customs and prosecuted in the courts for violation of a new “obscenity” law.

Isn’t sexual material inherently harmful to women?

Those who focus on sexual speech and presume it’s inherently offensive to women miss the point. Gender-based harassment should be illegal whether or not it relies on sexual language or imagery. A woman is likely more intimidated by comments that she is “slow” or “dumb” than by sexual jokes. Moreover, women them-

Pornography is part of the Feminism and Free Speech series produced by Feminists for Free Expression. The following are excerpts from the material on the Internet provided by FFE based on scientific and cross-cultural research and legal and historical data on sexually explicit material:

MYTH: Sexually Explicit Material Causes Violence Against Women

◆ No reputable research in the US, Europe, or Asia finds a causal link between pornography and violence. Dr. Judith Becker said, “I’ve been working with sex offenders for 10 years, and have reviewed the scientific literature and I don’t think a causal link exists.”

◆ No research, including the US Surgeon General’s report, finds a link between “kinky” or “degrading” images and violence. Exposure to such material does not cause people to change their sexual preferences or commit acts against their will. The derailed impulses of child abusers and rapists are caused by childhood traumas. “They are not,” wrote leading researcher John Money, “borrowed from movies, books, or other people.”

◆ Studies on violent pornography are inconsistent. Some find it increases aggression in the lab, some find it does not. Research also shows that aggression will be increased by anything that agitates a subject (raises heart rate, adrenaline flow, etc.), not only violent movies but also riding exercise bicycles. Agitation will boost whatever follows it, aggression or generosity.

Dr. Suzanne Ageton, measuring violence out of the lab, found that membership in a delinquent peer group accounted for three-fourths of sexual aggression.

◆ Studies in the US, Europe, and Asia find no link between the availability of sexual material and sex crimes. The only factor linked to rape rate is the number of young men living in a given area. When pornography became widely available in Europe, sexually violent crimes decreased or remained the same. Japan, with far more violent pornography than the US, has 2.4 rapes per 100,000 people while US has 34.5.

MYTH: Men Watch Pornography and Copy it or Force Women to do What They See

◆ Violence and intimidation have existed for thousands of years before commercial pornography and countries with no pornography, like Saudi Arabia and Iran, have been violating women’s rights for ages. Men have forced women to

do things—sexual and non-sexual—for centuries. The problem is not sex, it's force.

- ◆ People do not mimic what they read or view in knee-jerk fashion. If they did, feminist books for the last 25 years would have transformed this into a perfect feminist world. If they did, advertisers could run an ad and consumers would obey. Instead, companies spend millions of dollars on advertising and consumers still buy mainly based on price. People juggle words and images—good and bad—with all the others that they have seen or heard with all their real life experiences. It is experience that is the strongest teacher.
- ◆ Men do not learn coercion from pictures of sex. They learn it from the violence and contempt for women in their families and communities where each generation passes down what sorts of force are acceptable, even “manly.”
- ◆ Copycat theories are “porn made me do it” excuses for rapists and batterers. They relieve criminals of responsibility for their acts.

MYTH: Pornography Degrades Women

- ◆ Sexism, not sex, degrades women. Though sexism pervades our culture in many forms, we will not eliminate it by banning sex. Sexism and violence stem from long-standing economic, political, and emotional factors. These are the ones that need addressing.
- ◆ Women interpret pornography in different ways. Some find it sexist; some find it a form of fantasy, like dreams and movies we run in our head when we masturbate or have sex. Opponents of sexual speech do not realize that it is in everyone's interest to allow a variety of pleasurable materials that enhance well-being and sexual fulfillment.
- ◆ The only work removed under Canada's new obscenity standard (which claims to outlaw the deg-

radation of women) is an erotic magazine made by and for women.

MYTH: Pornography is Only for Men

- ◆ Half the adult videos in the US are bought or rented by women alone or women in couples.
- ◆ Sexual health professionals recommend pornography as entertainment and information for women and men. It may enhance failing marriages and help couples talk about and experiment with sex.

HISTORY TEACHES US THAT, ONCE IN PLACE, CENSORSHIP SCHEMES ARE USED TO STIFLE FEMINIST ADVOCACY OF SOCIAL CHANGE.

- ◆ AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases have made it a public health necessity to encourage sexual fantasy material that offers women and men safe alternatives to unhealthy sexual contact.

MYTH: The Women in Pornography are Exploited or Victimized

- ◆ Women are exploited and harassed in all fields, some are in pornography. Exploitation will stop when it is vigorously prosecuted wherever it occurs.
- ◆ When the National Organization for Women (NOW) considered launching a campaign against pornography, women in pornography protested saying that a ban against it would create a black market of exploitation. Some said their work gave them independence and a sense of accomplishment; banning it would worsen their lives. NOW abandoned its proposed campaign.

MYTH: As an Aid to Masturbation, Pornography is Action that is not Protected by the First Amendment.

- ◆ Pornography may lead to masturbation much as a novel or film may lead to tears or laughter. All are protected by the First Amendment, including those that some find offensive. “The government may not prohibit,” wrote the Supreme Court, “the expression of an idea because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.”
- ◆ Feminists for Free Expression does not believe that policing masturbation is the proper business of government or well-meaning committees.

MYTH: Banning Sexual Material will Protect or Help Women

- ◆ Historically, censorship has hurt women. Information about sex and reproduction has been banned under the guise of “protecting” women—from the jailing of birth control advocate Margaret Sanger to the “gag rule” against abortion counseling in federally funded clinics to the attacks against National Endowment for the Arts grant recipient Holly Hughes. It has never reduced sexism or violence.
- ◆ If one group may be censored because some find it offensive, all groups may be censored, including women. The best protection for women's ideas and voices is the constitutional protections of free speech.
- ◆ Sexual images that do not meet women's needs should not be restricted. Better images should be made. The answer to bad pornography is good pornography, not no pornography.

(This publication was developed by Patti O. Britton, Ph.D., Jennifer Maguire, and Beth Nathanson, M.A. for FFE. Copyright 1993, FFE.)
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Although styles and thematics are finally diversifying within the industry, money is lacking. And training is the first aspect of film making to disappear. In post-Doi Moi Vietnam, old structures and material become rapidly obsolete. All these arising problems have made the film production fall down to an all time low: only 10 films produced a year.

National identification is, of course, a main topic in a socialist country like Vietnam and finds its filmic translation through highly complex narratives about war heroism. It is the shared cultural identity of the Vietnamese people which is stressed. War is always present but rarely visible. These films emphasise the heroism of the individual and the solidarity of the masses, not the atrocities of war. The ideological message conveyed by the state through war films is solidarity and tolerance.

The controversial filmmaker Tran Van Thuy asserts that "the state only wants to take up political problems." For him, "everyday life concerns are different."

SOUNDS OF SILENCE

In Vietnam, documentary and feature films have important interlinkages because film thematics are always realistic or historical. "There are, in fact, no 'fiction' films made in Vietnam," says filmmaker Xuan Son.

Most Vietnamese films relate everyday life concerns. Everyday life coincides with moments of si-

lence, of inactivity, of human glances. Silences, or long musical breaks without words, is a characteristic feature of Vietnamese cinema. Sequences of silence are the trademark of an artistic, quality film. This is in sharp contrast with more recent commercial, mostly South-produced, cheap video films which contain an abundance of dialogue. It is almost a rule in Vietnamese cinema: the less dialogue, the better the film.

Famous film artists such as Dang Nhat Minh and Xuan Son use the typical lyrical approach of blending silences with a slow rhythm of filming. Not as a means of rejecting the strong oral culture of Vietnam but as a creative way of compensating for the poor sound quality both at production and projection level.

In Vietnam, no film has ever been made with synchronous direct sound recording and the sound quality of Vietnamese film screening venues is generally poor.

VIETNAMESE "NOUVELLE VAGUE"

Official Vietnamese cinema nowadays only has an elitist, artistic public. The rapid disappearance of film audiences both in the urban and rural context is due to five factors: poor sound quality, increased competition from the commercial sector, external influence, video piracy, and the lack of protection of authors' rights.

"Vietnamese cinema now has to rely on young film makers to create a new filmic language if it wants to survive on its own spe-

cific terms," says filmmaker Le Hong Choung.

The young generation does not acknowledge the socialist propaganda dictating cultural education through film. A new aesthetic and narrative framework will accordingly have to refute the themes of war heroism as well as the stylistic lyricism which is associated with official filmmaking.

The time has passed when a large audience frequented cinemas to see films made by Vietnamese filmmakers trained in famous film schools in Moscow, Poland, or Cuba, socialist brother countries.

Some Vietnamese filmmakers have experimented with new critical points of view. They, too, however, have to cope with the realities of a nonexistent audience on the one hand and the difficult cultural and ideological compromises they are still forced to make on the other.

This "nouvelle vague" of Vietnamese films, born in the nineties, has already proven its excellence by winning some awards in international film festivals around the world (not only in socialist countries).

These films are first and foremost the mirrors of a rich and fascinating culture. Filmmakers such as Tran Van Thuy, Viet Linh, Le Hoang, and Le Hong Choung express their personal perceptions of the contemporary realities in Vietnam, in which the aspirations of the "people" are still indistinguishable from those of the state.

Media in Vietnam

State of the Art—or Art of the State?

By Olivier In and Laurent Kugler



LAHORE (IPS)—Male and female television news readers can no longer be seen on the screen together if new media directives are implemented in Pakistan.

Television shows, news broadcasts, and even commercials showing soaps and detergents will have to be taken off the air.

“Just as television had started to open up, become more upbeat and contemporary, we’re hit with this,” commented a stunned viewer in Lahore, Pakistan’s second largest city.

ming,” he asserted. “The new directives are ridiculous. They want us to make interesting and creative programmes on civic sense, road safety, and how to say our prayers.”

Although no written directives were initially given to the state-run PTV, memos were sent to the semi-private NTM (National Television Marketing) channel, which in turn sent out a circular to advertising agencies.

“We were shocked at the directives,” Bashir A. Khan of

NEW TV restrictions shut women out

By Beena Sarwar

The new directives have come right from the top. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in a recent visit to Lahore Television Station, told the television producers to “clean up” their act.

The confused producers, worried about their jobs in the government-run Pakistan Television Corporation (PTVC), scrambled to oblige even before any written orders were given. “The Prime Minister has given verbal orders, so that is enough,” confided Ali Akbar Abbas, a scriptwriter at the station, apparently fully in agreement with Sharif’s point of view.

“His remarks were clear enough. We don’t want to compete with foreign channels, and Pakistan Television should promote educational programmes suitable for Pakistani culture,” he said.

But a producer who requested anonymity felt the prime minister had been misled. “There’s nothing vulgar about our program-

Manhattan Advertising in Karachi. “Our clients, especially the multinationals, are really upset. The emphasis of these new guidelines seems to be against women. It’s pathetic. Here we are on the threshold of the 21st century, and the PM (Prime Minister) wants us to cut down on the projection of women.”

According to the circular, female models are prohibited from blowing bubble gum or licking ice cream cones. They cannot be shown lathering their cheeks in soap commercials, or washing their hair in shampoo ads. Male and female models are not to be shown in close proximity to each other.

“It’s like a return to the Zia era,” said popular television actor Asif Raza Mir who also runs an advertising agency. He was referring to the days of martial law under Zia, who tried to justify his stay in power through a process of so-called Islamisation.

In 1988, all advertisements showing women were pulled off the screen and sent to the country's capital, Islamabad, for "re-censoring" after the then self-appointed President Zia made a speech about Islamic values.

The present clamp down is believed to have been triggered by the music programmes run by PTV and NTM which featured Pakistani rock and pop groups.

During his visit to Lahore TV, Sharif launched a tirade against "long-haired young men" and the "jean-jacket culture" and declared that "Pakistani culture" should be promoted instead.

Hugely popular with young Pakistanis, the modern music groups were immediately banned from appearing on television.

"What's more vulgar, 5,000 young people, boys and girls, peacefully singing along to a song that creates national harmony and unity, or millions of people denied education, health and basic human rights?" asked an angry Salman Ahmed of the popular rock band Junoon.

"What's more obscene, our music, or the loot and plunder of Pakistan by politicians? And will someone please define what our culture is, before the term is used as a trump card," he said.

"Culture and religious faith mean different things to different people, and governments should not even attempt to define them," said freelance journalist Jalees Hazir, who writes on media and culture. "In a country as culturally diverse as Pakistan, no single definition of Pakistani culture will do."

All the rock groups of Pakistan have "national" songs on their repertoires—an attempt to make themselves more acceptable to the establishment. Some of these songs are extremely catchy and popular and have helped instill a

new sense of national pride in Pakistani youngsters.

"Pop music has done for the youth of this country what politicians couldn't," asserts Shehzad Ahmed of Vital Sings, Pakistan's pioneering pop group whose national song, 'Dil Dil Pakistan,' has almost become an anthem for the young since it was first sung almost a decade ago.

FEMALE MODELS ARE PROHIBITED FROM BLOWING BUBBLE GUM OR LICKING ICE CREAM CONES. THEY CANNOT BE SHOWN LATHERING THEIR CHEEKS IN SOAP COMMERCIALS, OR WASHING THEIR HAIR IN SHAMPOO ADS. MALE AND FEMALE MODELS ARE NOT TO BE SHOWN IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO EACH OTHER.

Sharif's edict, which came at a time when there was no political pressure for it, reflects the government's need to strengthen its political base at a time when it is facing a constitutional crisis. Sharif is at loggerheads with the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Some observers in Islamabad are convinced that the move is a precursor to yet another out-of-turn election for which the government wants to increase its vote bank.

Since it is seen as having lost the support of the business community which brought it to power, the government wants to woo back the religious right-wing element which it could earlier afford to ignore.

"This is an effort to strengthen the conservative vote bank on

which the government was losing its grip," said a senior television official in Islamabad.

Historically, whenever a government in Pakistan feels politically weak, it plays the "Islam" and "Pakistan nationalism" cards. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did this in the 1970s, prohibiting the sale of alcohol to Muslim citizens, making Friday the weekly holiday instead of Sunday, and declaring the Ahmedi community as non-Muslim.

But as has been often pointed out, it did not save him. His successor, Gen. Zia, played the Islam card throughout his 12 years in power because he had no political base. However, his stint as head of state and government was due not to popular support but to his military standing.

After his death in a plane crash in 1988, when general elections were announced, Bhutto's Oxford and Harvard-educated daughter Benazir pulled a scarf over her head, began fingering prayer beads, and stopped shaking hands with men in public in an attempt to placate the religious right when she began her electoral campaign.

This did not in any way enhance her popularity or increase her acceptability in a constituency she can never hope to command.

"Those who supported her did so when she didn't have the outward trappings of piety, and those who were against her were never fooled by the prayer beads," commented an activist for women's rights. She adds that the new media restrictions are certain to backfire as Sharif loses further support among the business community he hails from.

Source: *Inter Press Service Asia Pacific*, 29 October 1997

INTRODUCTION

The debate on corporate responsibility for human rights captured broad public interest worldwide in 1997. Local activists at the point of production, supported by advocacy groups in the United States, Canada, the European Union (EU), and Asia spurred a steady stream of reports, counter-reports, articles, and press releases.

The debate, while still centered in the apparel, footwear, food, and drug industries, expanded beyond these sectors to touch the multinational oil

May, following reports of worker abuse and child labor in the textile industry in South Asia, members of the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the European Commission to adopt EU legislation to ensure that clothes, shoes, and carpets imported from developing countries would be labeled to indicate that worker rights had been respected. A high-profile, tripartite attempt occurred in the United States with the work of the White House-convened Apparel Industry Partnership.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 1998 WORLD REPORT:

Corporations and Human Rights

companies. Feeling the sting of allegations of complicity in rights violations and their effect on corporate image, a few of the oil giants made general commitments to human rights without the programmatic steps to implement them.

THE APPAREL INDUSTRY

Across the globe, corporations and their critics debated monitoring. In May, the director-general of the International Labour Organisation floated a proposal for a "global social label" to tag goods produced according to core labor standards. He suggested that specific country labeling would be a more effective check on labor rights violations than voluntary codes of conduct. In

The partnership, a group of US-based apparel and footwear manufacturers, labor unions, and non-government organisations, was launched by President Clinton in 1996 to formulate a global code of conduct to eradicate sweatshop practices in the companies' operations, both in the US and abroad. After eight months, on 18 April, the partnership issued an interim report. Its "Workplace Code of Conduct" consolidated and advanced the best of the existing US voluntary company codes of conduct on freedom of association and expression.

The appeal of voluntary codes of conduct and the debate over their implementation spread in 1997. The export

manufacturers association in Guatemala, VESTEX, announced the promulgation of its own voluntary code of conduct and the Guatemalan subsidiary of the US accounting firm, Ernst & Young, conducted several audits of its implementation. In contrast to this auditing, during 1997, a coalition of Guatemalan religious, human rights and labor groups had formed a committee to monitor corporate codes of conduct. Parallel efforts were also underway in El Salvador, where working conditions and hiring practices of multinational corporations and their subcontractors had received bad publicity.

Responding to the calls for transparency in monitoring, the world's largest accounting firms, such as Ernst & Young and Coopers & Lybrand, presented themselves as independent monitors able to perform social audits. While Ernst & Young did a commendable job in documenting egregious health and safety violations at a Nike contractor in Vietnam, the competence of accounting firms to conduct sensitive human rights investigations, combining testimonial evidence with statistical analysis, was doubtful.

While several US footwear and apparel companies were actively exploring the possibility of independent monitoring as of November, the only functioning—and quite effective—locally-based independent monitoring program in existence was the program implemented at the Mandarin factory, a supplier to Gap Incorporated, in El Salvador.



News from IRENE

NIKE

The sharpest and most persistent controversy over corporate responsibility of human rights and independent monitoring of company codes of conduct swirled around the practices of Nike contractors in Vietnam, China, and Indonesia. In the face of repeated allegations by international and regional investigators of abusive labor practices at subcontractor facilities in those three countries, Nike hired former US Ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, and his consultancy firm, GoodWorks, to conduct an audit of Nike facilities in all three countries. The methodology employed by Ambassador Young was disturbingly flawed: he spent very limited time at each facility; interviewed workers at random on company premises; and conducted the interviews with the assistance of company-supplied translators. Ambassador Young's report, released in June, found that Nike facilities were generally respectful of human rights and that there was "no evidence or pattern of widespread or sys-

tematic abuse or mistreatment of workers" in the factories he had visited.

Ambassador Young recommended that the company should more actively publicise its code of conduct in supplier factories, implement an independent monitoring system, and organise a committee of "distinguished individuals" to perform spot-checks at their factories abroad.

In contrast to Ambassador Young's findings, the Hong Kong-based Asia Monitor Resource Center and the Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee released a report drawn from their investigations of Nike (and Reebok) contractors in south China. Highlighting the different findings that emerge from widely varying orientations and methodologies, this investigation documented very different conditions than those reported by Ambassador Young.

That report concluded that conditions in the Chinese facilities were in gross violation of the Nike (and Reebok) codes of conduct, the Apparel Industry Partnership's "Workplace

Code of Conduct," and Chinese labor law.

Nike management severed relations with four Indonesian contractors on the grounds that they did not meet the company's code of conduct requirements.

In October, a coalition of US-based women's groups, including the National Organization for Women, the Ms. Foundation for Women, and the Feminist Majority, launched a campaign against Nike in order to highlight the problems female workers faced at Nike's Asian contractor facilities.

PHILLIPS-VAN HEUSEN

Another example of the critical importance of independent monitoring, this one involving Human Rights Watch, was demonstrated in the controversy at the Phillips-Van Heusen (PVH) factories in Guatemala. Starting in September 1996, PVH was confronted by allegations from union organisers and international labour rights activists that its workers' rights to free association, specifically their right to engage in collective bargaining, at PVH's Camisas Modernas factories, was being suppressed.

THE OIL INDUSTRY

Increasingly, multinational oil companies, expanding exploration and drilling operations to states ruled by governments that are serious human rights violators, were criticised for the human rights consequences of partnering with those governments. Operations in such human rights trouble spots as Colombia, Nigeria, and Burma repeatedly received press attention.

COLOMBIA

In 1997, faced with an increase in guerrilla attacks and paramilitary activity, multinational oil companies operating in the Casanare and Arauca regions of Colombia found themselves deep in controversy

PRESSURE MOUNTED BY GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS, THE PRESS, AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE WAS PLAYING AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN HOLDING CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE FOR COMPLICITY IN GOVERNMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

over the human rights implications of their security arrangements with the Colombian Defense Ministry.

Controversy over the companies' relations with Colombian military and police was particularly active in Britain.

NIGERIA

In the case of Shell, human rights concerns were not limited to company operations in Colombia. In March, following two years of criticism for its partnership with the Nigerian government and the role the company had played in events leading to killings in Ogoniland, Shell announced that it would explicitly acknowledge respect for human rights and the environment in its revamped internal code of conduct. The announcement was hailed as a breakthrough in that Shell had acknowledged that its operations had a significant impact on human

rights.

On 14 May, at the annual general meeting of the Shell Transport and Trading Company in London, management soundly defeated a resolution brought by a socially responsible investment organisation, Pensions and Investment Research Consultancy (PIRC), to conduct an independent audit of its human rights and environmental policies.

BURMA/THAILAND

The Burma operations of California-based UNOCAL and French-based TOTAL Explorative en Productie Maatschappij B.V. (TOTAL) continued to draw fierce criticism and became the focus of an important lawsuit in a US federal court. The suit was brought on behalf of a number of unidentified citizens of Burma and a California resident.

On 25 March, Judge Richard Paez declined to dismiss the lawsuit against UNOCAL and TOTAL and ruled that they could be sued in a US federal court, under the Alien Tort Claims Act, for abuses committed by the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS' INITIATIVES

Advocacy and grassroots campaigning spread to more countries in 1997, and it was clear that pressure mounted by grassroots organizations, the press, and the public at large was playing an important role in holding corporations accountable for complicity in governmental human rights and labor rights violations.

Source: *Human Rights Watch*

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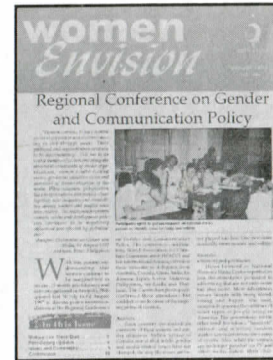
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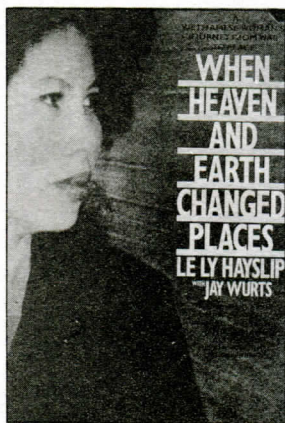
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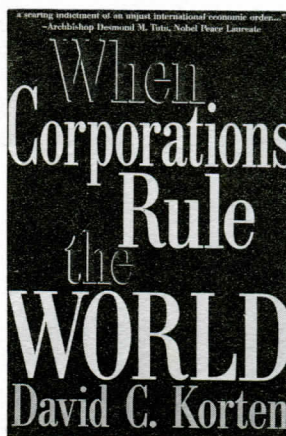
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WHEN HEAVEN AND EARTH CHANGED PLACES: A VIETNAMESE WOMAN'S JOURNEY FROM WAR TO PEACE by Le Ly Hayslip with John Wurts

The movie *Heaven and Earth*, directed by Oliver Stone, was based on this book and recounts the author's experience as she grows up amid war in Vietnam. Her village is caught in the cross-fire between government and Viet Cong troops and Le Ly, like other children in the village, gets involved in the war. She suffers near-starvation, imprisonment, torture, rape, and deaths of beloved family members and barely survives. Le Ly marries a shell-shocked American GI, moves to America and suffers abuse from her husband. She leaves her husband together with her children and manages to return to her country and the family she left

behind. Through it all, Le Ly manages to rise above adversity, revealing the true horror of war, strengthening her faith in herself and humanity, while holding on to her spirituality. (USA: Penguin Books, 1990. 368p. ISBN 0-452-26417-0)



WHEN CORPORATIONS RULE THE WORLD by David C. Korten

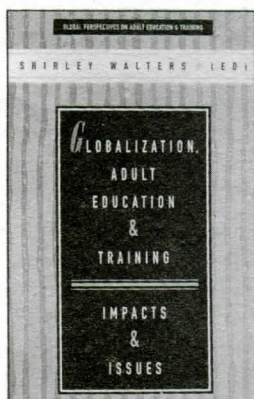
When Corporations Rule the World takes a harshly critical look at the institution of the corporation and the system within which business functions. It spells out the reality and consequences of a corporate-dominated globalization process and how it is undermining democracy all over the world. At the same time, the book outlines a citizen's agenda to enhance the efforts to reclaim the power that have been yielded to

institutions of money and recreate societies that nurture cultural and biological diversity. Korten asserts that it is necessary to get corporations out of politics and for people to create localized economies that empower communities within a system of global cooperation. Korten's book has received high praise from a mixture of leaders in various fields including economists, business executives, government officials, bishops, and leaders of civil society. All are in agreement in recommending readers to take heed of Korten's compelling vision that offer an empowering agenda for change. (USA: Kumarian Press, Inc. and Berrett-Koehler publishers, Inc., 1995, 1996. 374p. ISBN 1-887208-01-1)

GLOBALIZATION, ADULT EDUCATION, AND TRAINING: IMPACTS AND ISSUES edited by Shirley Walters

This is part of a series designed to provide a global basis to the theory and practice of adult education and learning. The book is concerned with the role of adult education and training within the context of globalization. It looks at how adult education and training are shaped by the restructuring of the economic, political, cultural and social life around the globe, and how practitioners are responding to these new and of-

ten contradictory pressures. The articles have been collected mostly from conference papers and some have been commissioned. Divided into four parts, the first part discusses the changing nature of the state, market, and civil society and their impact on adult education and training practices. The second part de-

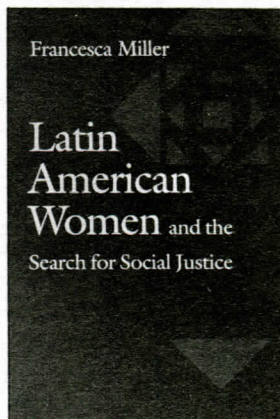


scribes the different responses to the diverse contexts of adult education and training. Part three presents descriptions and analyses of local, engaged practices of adult educators and trainers as they work with the majority of people who are poor, working class, women and children, living in urban and rural areas. The fourth part challenges the dominant human-capital school and redefines and reconceptualizes the meaning of adult education and training. The experience of South Africa is highlighted in this series, partly because the conference was held here and because the historical experience of South Africa reveals many lessons and issues confronting adult education and training. (UK: Zed Books, 1997. 278p. ISBN 1-85649-511-6)

LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE SEARCH FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE by Francesca Miller

The focus of this book is on the role of Latin American women in the impetus toward

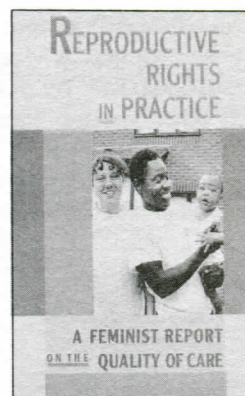
change that envisions a fuller empowerment of all people within a society. Historically, this includes the reform-minded female intellectuals of the nineteenth century as well as women leaders of the



grassroots movements of the 1980s. Particular attention is given to the tension between the search for change within the domestic political arena and the transnationalist view that seeks ethical, moral, and substantive support beyond the boundaries of the imagined national community.

Central considerations include the history of the women's movement as influenced by and exerting influence on contemporary social movements, with secondary referential analysis of women's groups that have aligned themselves with the status quo and counter-revolutionary forces. Theoretical insights emerge from the comparison of women's movements as they developed in specific historical contexts; considerations of class and ethnicity as well as of gender inform the analysis. (USA: University Press of New England, 1991. 324p. ISBN 0-87451-557-2)

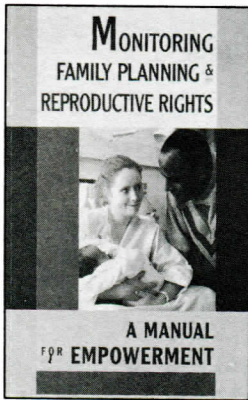
REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: A FEMINIST REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF CARE edited by Anita Hardon and Elizabeth Hayes



This book aims to reveal where reproductive rights are being respected in family planning services and, just as importantly, where, how, and why they are being denied. It contains unique information on the provision of family planning in eight countries from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America which have each ratified the CEDAW declaration and at least on paper have committed to reproductive rights. The book looks at each country's family planning program and the extent to which that program makes women instruments of demographic population policy. The authors highlight current trends in these countries and praise different family settings that exhibit good quality of care and adherence to reproductive rights. The examples used in the book also cover a wide range of economic, health, and cultural settings, which illustrate the current practice of both reproductive care and reproductive rights. In its conclusion, the book reviews the relationship between the way reproductive rights are set out in policy and followed in practice. The authors provide recommendations for change to empower women and men in a wide variety of cultures. (UK: Zed books, 1997. 235p. ISBN 1-85649-451-9/Hb 1-85649-452-7/Pb)

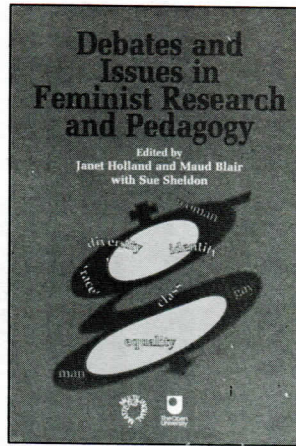
MONITORING FAMILY PLANNING AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS: A MANUAL FOR EMPOWERMENT by Anita Hardon, Ann Mutua, Sandra Kabir, and Elly Engelkes

This book is the companion volume to *Reproductive Rights in*



Practice: A Feminist Report on the Quality of Care. This handbook provides a framework for researching family planning provision in different cultural settings. The book shows NGOs and other health research bodies how to design such projects and provides indicators for quality assessment. It is the first methodology handbook of its kind and employs a step-by-step approach, covering all of the elements needed to design, carry out, and analyze such a study.

Chapters explore the full range of skills required to conduct research, from choosing the size of the sample to processing final data. Throughout, the book is structured to enable groups to adapt the material here to work with their own particular research questions or to reflect local circumstances. It is an invaluable resource for anyone involved in health research, specifically those with a view to assessing the impact of governmental policy on women's lives. (UK: Zed Books, 1997. 143p. ISBN 1-85649-455-1)



DEBATES AND ISSUES IN FEMINIST RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY edited by Janet Holland and Maud Blair with Sue Sheldon

This book is a collection of articles on the pedagogy of gender, race, class, and sexuality. The first part provides the theoretical framework, taking off from Freire's pedagogy of liberation and re-envisioned to include the subject's position, experience and diversity; hence, a feminist pedagogy. The second part presents studies on classroom and curriculum experiences in relation to gender, race, class, and sexuality and how these impact on both the teacher and the student. The last part of the book explores the ongoing and lively debate on feminist methodology and epistemology, indicating the variety of approaches and positions taken up in this area. (UK: *The Open University*, 1995. 317p. ISBN 1-85359-252-8)

FEMINISM BESIDE ITSELF edited by Diane Elam and Robyn Wiegman

The editors of this anthology called it *Feminism Beside Itself* to highlight how feminism had become increasingly "anxious about itself." It is an exploration of the history of feminism's identity along with the identity of its history. The collection is a consideration not only of ways in which

feminism had become self-reflective but also why it might want or need to be self-reflective in the first place.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section, "Beside Itself," articulates feminism's historical concerns by asking questions about feminism as history. The second section, "Against Itself," explores more fully how feminism is in conflict with itself. The essays in this section look at the terms by which feminism has constituted itself in order to define how these terms have often undermined feminism's most cherished political goals and beliefs. In the last section, "Besides...," the editors attempt to demonstrate that feminism actually never stands alone by a collection of essays that draws feminism's connection to particular issues of nationalism, personal narrative, and contemporary popular culture. By framing the question of feminism through a variety of disparate issues, the essays collected here do not move the volume toward any simple sense of closure. Rather, they demonstrate the impossibility of a comprehensive or completely representative feminism. By questioning the unity and identity of feminism, the editors do not relinquish feminism's political force but contingently agree that its unknowability is its very strength. (USA: Routledge, 1995. 334p. ISBN 0-415-91040-4 cloth, ISBN 0-415-91041-2pbk)

CONCEIVING SEXUALITY: APPROACHES TO SEX RESEARCH IN A POST-MODERN WORLD edited by Richard G. Parker and John H. Gagnon

The essays in this book pose a challenge to the readers to reflect on what they know about culture, society, and behavior change, both past and present. Changing cultures, social norms,

and sexual activities as they relate to the demography and epidemiological status of populations, for example, have been of central concern to policy-makers and social analysts in the past few decades. However, perceptions and understanding of this matter have recently changed.

Divided into five parts, part one discusses the history of sexuality and desire. Part two outlines issues on gender, sexuality, and identity such as cultures and sexual behavior of bisexuals and gays and in relation to HIV/AIDS. Part three is about gender power that includes issues on violence, sexuality, women's lives, homosexual stigma, and poverty. Part four presents theories of sexual conduct, behavioral study of the sexual and social lifestyle of gay and bisexual men in England and Wales, and patterns of sexual behavior of high risk populations and the implications for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS transmission in Nigeria. Part five highlights the construction of risk in AIDS control programs and the implications for AIDS prevention. The book is an invaluable source of "sex research" which seeks to understand and respond to the complexity and diversity of contemporary life. (USA: Routledge, 1995. 307 p. ISBN 0-415-90927-9 hb/0-415-90928-7pbk)



Sandra Torrijos

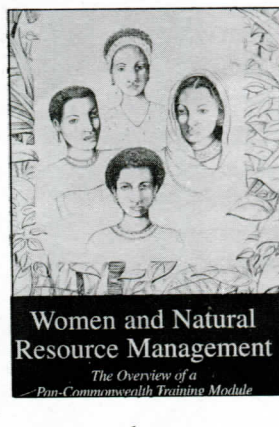
GUIDES ON WOMEN AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Very useful additions to the Isis collection are two volumes on women and natural resource management published by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Pan-Commonwealth Training Module on women and natural resource management comprises four manuals for the Africa, Asia, South Pacific, and Caribbean regions of the Commonwealth. It also includes an overview module on issues and strategies for promoting women's role in environmental and natural resource management and a video *Women of the Rainforest* focusing on Macusi Amerindian women of the Iwokrama rainforest of Guyana.

Featured here are the overview module and the manual for the Asia region.

WOMEN AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: THE OVERVIEW OF A PAN-COMMONWEALTH TRAINING MODULE

The Overview of a Pan-Commonwealth Training Module is intended to deepen the understanding of women's roles in environmental and natural resource management. It examines the conceptual and practical linkages between gender and the environment, presents an overview of women and natural resource management issues in the Commonwealth, and presents relevant recommendations on women and environment issues emanating from Commonwealth and international sources. (UK: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996. 68p. ISBN 0850-92-489-8)



tal management and sustainable development in Asia. It acknowledges the valuable indigenous knowledge which women in Asia possess and emphasizes that women themselves must be involved in the identification of their needs. It is divided into five sections containing in-



formation about local rural conditions in various Asian countries, case studies in natural resource management, examples of conservation techniques, simple learning exercises on environmental changes, and resource use and management. (UK: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996. 144p. ISBN 0-85092-481-2)

WOMEN AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A MANUAL FOR THE ASIA REGION

The Asia manual provides trainers and extension workers with relevant skills and techniques for involving women effectively in conservation activities. It presents success stories of women promoting environmen-

Reviews

WHEN FANTASY LEADS TO MURDER

A review of *Gender 'Race' and International Relations: Violence Against Filipino Women in Australia*

by Chris Cunneen and Julie Stubbs

Review by Concepcion Garcia-Ramilo

In 1987, a 17-year-old Filipina was shot five times at close range by her 41-year-old Australian husband. The man was charged with murder but indicted only of manslaughter on the basis of diminished responsibility. The Australian court ruled that at the time of the murder, the husband was "suffering from an abnormality of the mind that substantially impaired his mental responsibility for causing his wife's death." On 3 February 1988, he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, the maximum sentence for such a charge, with a non-parole period of six years. If he had not yet been released, he would be set free on 3 February this year.

That a convicted murderer of a Filipino woman could be let off with a light sentence and possibly claim yet another victim is the very reason why the publication of the book *Gender 'Race' and International Relations: Violence against Filipino Women in Australia* is of utmost relevance. Its significance increases by several folds at this time when murders and disappearances of Filipino women migrants in Australia as

well as in many parts of the world have reached alarming numbers. Chris Cunneen and Julie Stubbs, authors of the book, examined 27 cases of deaths and disappearances of Filipino women and children in Australia from 1980 to 1995. Their conclusions validate the public outcry of the Filipino community against the uncommonly high level of violence against Filipinas in Australia.

The book represents the final report of a research commissioned by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), an Australian government body, that showed Filipino women were six times more likely to be victims of spousal homicide than Australian women in general. This research was in response to representations made by the Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia (CPCA) in 1994. CPCA is an organization of Filipino migrants that started documenting the incidence of murders of Filipino women in 1989 after another Filipina, Gene Bongcodin, was strangled to death by her ex-husband. The man pleaded guilty to manslaughter and

was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment with a minimum of five-and-a-half years.

I distinctly remember the shock of the Filipino community in Australia when news of the sentence broke out. I was then living in Sydney and was an active member of CPCA, which vigorously campaigned for a murder conviction. The incident pushed us to look more closely into the conditions of Filipinas who were married to Australian men. The information we unearthed about the violence in these marriages was devastating. First, we found that domestic violence was a common occurrence in many of these relationships. Second, we discovered a disturbing pattern of more and more deaths and disappearances. Third, we realized that the violence extended to Filipino women in general and manifested in a number of ways that included such as sex tourism, prostitution and trafficking. Fourth, we began to see that all these had created a racialized and sexualized construction of Filipino women, an image shaped and even popularized by international media.

Stubbs and Cunneen bring all these realities together and draw from many other studies undertaken over the years to produce an insightful analysis of violence against Filipino migrant women in Australia. Melba de Guzman-Marginson, staunch advocate for Filipino women in Australia and national coordinator of CPCA, believes that the book's contribution is its analytical framework that so clearly illustrates how racism, sexism and First and Third World relations have significantly interplayed and impacted on the violence experienced by Filipino women living in Australia. It was Marginson who presented the tales of murders to the Australian government and who challenged the HREOC to look into spousal homicides among Filipino women.

In the beginning of the book, the authors define the "intersectional approach" they adopted in analyzing the findings of the research. Central to this approach is the examination of the "manner in which Filipino women are constituted with respect to race/ethnicity, class and gender and with respect to other axes of social location such as age."

Cunneen and Stubbs effectively apply this approach in their examination of the case studies and in their interpretation of the findings.

The research revealed that Filipino women are over-represented in cases of homicides. More accurately, the findings showed that *Filipino-born women aged between 20 and 39 were found to have a homicide victimisation rate, which is 5.6 times that of Australian women in the same age group.* On the other hand, the homicide rate of Filipino men in

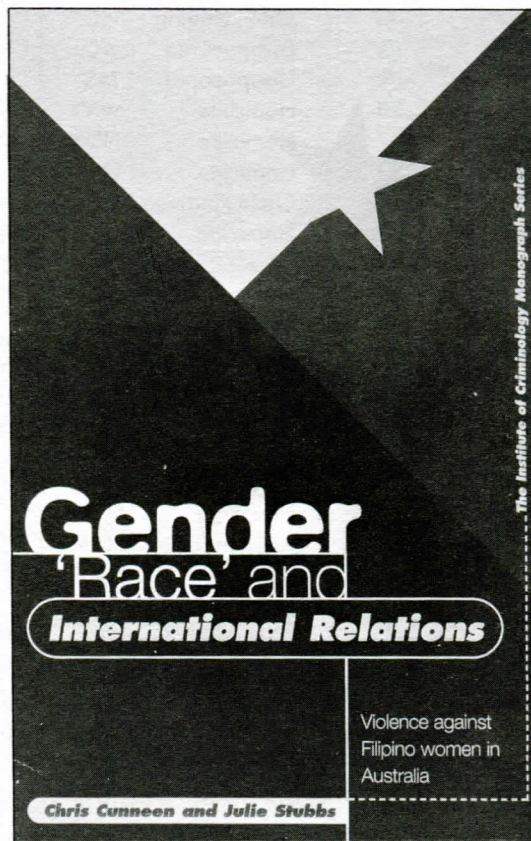
Australia is substantially lower than that of Australian men. Stubbs and Cunneen concluded that the empirical evidence available shows that "homicide is a specific issue for Filipino women in Australia" and clearly indicates that concern over the level of violence against Filipino women is well founded.

the perpetrators were non-Filipinos coming from culturally diverse backgrounds and many of them met their Filipino partners in the Philippines. On the average, the men were 13 years older than the women. In most cases, domestic violence occurred before the homicides.

While many of these "findings" have previously been cited in many other studies and reports about violence against Filipino women in Australia, Cunneen and Stubbs bring the analysis one notch higher. They go beyond presenting the facts by tracing the trends and discovering the racial and gender patterns in the cases they studied. Particularly enlightening is the discussion on the role of masculinity and violence in constructing a male fantasy of Filipino women. The authors cite previous studies on masculinity and murder that identify homicide as a masculine offence with masculine power and control being central features in spousal homicides. The following explanation demonstrates the depth of understanding Cunneen and Stubbs have of

the issues:

"The racialised and sexualised construction of Filipino women is fundamental to understanding their position in male fantasy. The male fantasy about Asian women incorporates exotic sex, the promise of a relationship with complete security and compliance and a fantasy about love which transcends age difference. The final aspect of this fantasy is that the relationship can be bought cheaply through an agency or arranged simply through the use of informal networks. In



Through a closer examination of the 27 deaths and disappearances of women and children used as case studies, the authors unveiled the nature of violence at the personal level. According to them, the critical features of the homicides were their gendered and domestic nature. The homicides were highly patterned by particular social relationships and were not random killings. In almost all the cases, the killers were male partners or ex-partners and the killings were domestic in nature. In all of them,

Deaths and Disappearances of Filipino Women and Children, Australia: 1980-1995

NO	YEAR	NAME	AGE	CAUSE	STATE
1	1980	TA	21	Homicide	QLD
2	1987	RS	17	Homicide	NSW
3	1987	NW	33	Homicide	QLD
4	1987	CG	1	Homicide	NSW
5	1987	AP	33	Homicide	NSW
6	1987	HJP	3	Homicide	NSW
7	1987	NE	33	Open Finding	VIC
8	1987	BS	u/k	Disappeared	VIC
9	1987	SN	u/k	Disappeared	TAS
10	1988	BE	28	Homicide	WA
11	1989	JH	37	Homicide	NSW
12	1989	GB	34	Homicide	VIC
13	1989	NV	34	Open Finding	VIC
14	1989	MD	39	Homicide	VIC
15	1991	ER	44	Homicide	NSW
16	1991	TG	34	Suicide	NSW
17	1991	NG	36	Suicide	NSW
18	1991	RK	34	Homicide	NSW
19	1991	PN	38	u/k	NSW
20	1992	MO	31	Homicide	VIC
21	1993	MW	36	Homicide	QLD
22	1993	EH	5	Homicide	NSW
23	1993	YR	12	Homicide	NSW
24	1993	RD	29	Accidental	NSW
25	1993	RDJ	4	Accidental	NSW
26	1994	EY	42	Homicide	QLD
27	1995	PS	40	Homicide	NT

Note: QLD - Queensland, NSW - New South Wales, VIC - Victoria, WA - Western Australia, NT - Northern Territory

other words, it is a completely commodified fantasy that requires nothing more than money or a credit card number. This fantasy is particularly powerful and damaging since it can be mobilised to justify and authorise First World men's access to and power over women on the basis of mythical "natural" characteristics."

"What happens when men attempt to live out these fantasised relationships and the women involved refuse to comply, refuse to be treated as commodities?" In answering this question, the authors point out this male fantasy becomes lethal for Filipino women when it is integrated back into the relationships that resulted in their deaths

and disappearances. The killings are a heightened or extreme instance of domination, which has been mediated by representations of 'Asian' women in general, and Filipino women in particular, as both passive and sexual beings, as the embodiments of male desire.

Cunneen and Stubbs reveal that two interwoven processes become apparent in some of the case studies. First, violence emerges as a resolution to conflict for the male when he attempts to assert absolute dominance and authority and the women resist.

Second, the Filipino women become re-invented as manipulative and self-seeking people who simply marry western men to leave the

Philippines. In other words, women's actions are re-interpreted through the lens of a stereotype of Filipino women as sexually promiscuous gold diggers seeking foreign nationalities so they can bail themselves out of the pit of poverty. They are seen at best as complicity in the violence against them, or at worst, deserving of their violent fates. The men, on the other hand, are constructed as victims who merely gave their spouses and partners the punishment they deserved.

The strength of this book lies, as I see it, in three things. First, its insightful analysis of the many issues around violence against Filipino women in Australia. Second, its careful consideration of earlier research and work on the issue. Third, its rigorous scholarship that manages to avoid the pitfall of reducing the gruesome murders into emotionless statistical data or treating the subject matter in heavy academic terms.

In the end, however, this book serves a useful purpose not just in terms of allowing us to understand the phenomenon of murders of Filipino women in Australia in the hands of their male partners, but also to convince policymakers and law enforcement authorities that action is needed now. The findings and analysis presented in the book have affirmed what many have been saying for years. What is required from the Australian government at this point is the political will to conduct an official inquiry and take decisive steps to arrest the intensifying violence directed at Filipino women. ♪

Concepcion Garcia-Ramilo is the Resource Center and Information Program Manager of Isis International-Manila.

Reviews

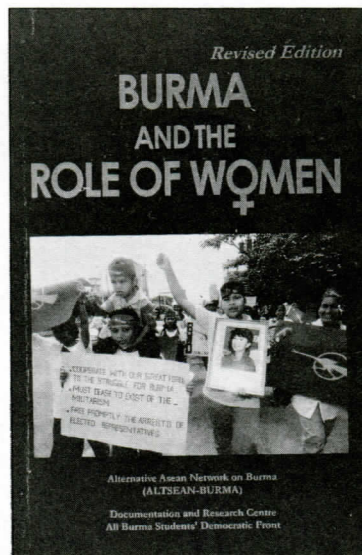
BURMA AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Review by Joanne Higa-Cole

The revised edition of the original *Burma and the Role of Women*, published in March 1997 by the Alternative Asean Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma) and the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) imparts an understanding of the plight of women in Burma today.

Section One, of the book is a brief overview of the situation of Burmese women detailing numerous important events in Burmese history. The author discusses historical events during the periods of anti-colonialism and after independence, then proceeds to the very difficult current political, economic, social and educational conditions created by Burma's ruling military junta, the State, Law and Order Restoration Committee or SLORC. Examples of SLORC's forced conscription of labor without pay, forced prostitution, rape, murder and the suicide of Burmese women is pervasive throughout this section.

Section Two is the opening keynote address of Aung San Suu Kyi to the NGO Forum on Women held in Huaroiu in August 1995. Section Three is an elaboration of the plight of Burmese women and provides an account of the role women played during the 1988 uprising and in the aftermath of the military coup. It also contains a discussion of women as military porters and as refugees and chronicles various abuses they suffer under the SLORC regime. Section Four is entitled "The Women of Burma: Holding Up Two Thirds of the Sky," a short chapter that



offers an examination of some attitudes towards women that are undergoing change in Burmese society.

Burma and the Role of Women is a "noble" attempt toward telling the story of Burma today. The writing is full of feeling, seriousness and sincerity. Taken as a whole, the crimes enumerated here are not only crimes against Burmese women but against all its citizens—men, the young, the old, the sick and every other victim of the current military presence in this suffering nation.

I would like however to point out a number of significant omissions and suggest a few changes that I think will add more power to the telling of this story that has to be told. For a start, an

early explanation of the ABSDF would have given the reader a contextual background to the writing. A more effective placement of the write-up on ABSDF would have been in the beginning of the text and not at the end of it.

Some general information about Burma which have been left out provides readers who are not familiar with Burmese history with an incomplete picture. For example, major ethnic groupings and their separate languages are referred to in the text but are not properly noted. More importantly, China's current political and economic influence is not mentioned at all, in spite of its huge impact on Burma's society and its women today. Adding a small section devoted to the "brain drain" of professional women who have left Burma for safety would better round out the treatment of Burmese women.

I would certainly recommend that the story of women in Burma be told—over and over again. If action is one of the missions of this book, it will be helpful if clear courses of action can be suggested to the reader. Let's hope that when this book is revised for its next edition, it achieves its twin goals of informing and inciting action of supportive readers. ♀

Joanne Higa-Cole is an Asian American who has been living in the Philippines for two years. While her formal studies is in business marketing, Joanne has a long term interest in feminism.

A DAY IN ZAPATISTA LAND

by Mark Lucey



The author is an American who has been traveling, studying, and supporting human rights work in Mexico and Central America for the last six months. In January this year, he joined a Civilian Encampment for Peace, popularly called peace camps, *in Morelia, an area controlled by the Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion Nacional or Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). The following is his account of how the Zapatista women and children in this village faced an army blockade, a military action that is becoming terrifyingly common in many Zapatista villages in Chiapas.*

The Civilian Encampments for Peace began in Chiapas in March of 1995 after the February offensive against the Zapatista communities by the Mexican military. The peace camps are meant to establish a continuous international presence of "neutral" observers to deter the army from acting against the communities and to monitor and record the military's presence in the communities. Among the groups that coordinate sending people to spend time in the peace camps are Global Exchange (a human rights organisation based in San Francisco that builds people-to-people ties between First and Third World nations), Enlace Civil (an organisation in San Cristobal that promotes sustainable development in indigenous communities), and the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Center for Human Rights (also based in San Cristobal).

I turned to Chris as we walked along the dirt road leading out of the village of Morelia in Chiapas. The Mexican sun was blazing down on our necks and I was squinting despite the best efforts of my baseball cap. I

was still holding the plastic cup of morning java that I had forgotten to put down in the sudden rush out of the cement building where we Peace Campers stay. A man from the village had shown up at the door, out of breath, and said, "El

Ejercito viene!" (The army is coming!) I had shaken Chris from his slumber in his hammock and the ten of us campamentistas had grabbed our cameras and raced out the door to join the community in blocking the army from entering the town.

The evening before, we had attended a memorial for three members of the community who had died during the offensive of January 1994 when members of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) had announced their presence to the world by militarily taking over the local governments of several of the larger cities in Chiapas. The fighting gave over to peace talks between the EZLN and the Mexican government, but not before numerous soldiers had died, including three from Morelia. Toward the end of the memorial service, several men had rushed into the building and announced that they had received word that the army was coming. I followed the running crowd of people out the door and down the road to the entrance to the village when I suddenly realised that the men had all disappeared.

Only women and children had gone out to blockade the army!

I saw that a few of the women had gone into the woods by the side of the road with machetes and were cutting branches off of trees with which they were arm-

ing the other women. The children were collecting little piles of rocks. One of the leaders of the group, a woman named America, asked if a few of us *campamentistas* would go up the road a bit to be a lookout. Chris and I volunteered.

As we walked up the road in the increasing darkness, I thought to myself, "Do I really want to be the first to encounter the military when they get here?" But I pushed that thought behind me. A young boy and his even younger brother came running up to us.

"Tienes miedo?" (Are you afraid?), the boy asked excitedly.

"NO!" Chris said as emphatically as he could muster and asked the boy in return, "Are you afraid?"

"NO!" the boy answered, equally emphatic.

"NO!", his little brother echoed, looking as brave as a four-year-old can.

We waited there as the sky grew black and the view of the 60 women waiting in the road 100 meters behind us with sticks in their hands faded into the darkness. Eventually a man came by and told us that the army had turned around and that we could go back to the village.

That was the night before. This morning the same call had come. We marched down the road and reviewed what we, as Peace Campers, were supposed to do. We were not to become involved in the confrontation in any way. We were witnesses and photo takers, and we were an international presence that would hopefully deter the military from any sort of violence. Our job was to just be there.

But as we waited in the heat with the women and children, it seemed that it was another false alarm. Soon the people from the village left to go back to their daily chores and I stayed at the lookout spot with several of the other Peace Campers and a few children. I lay down in the rubble at the side of the road, pulled my cap over my eyes, and dozed off to sleep.

"THE ARMY'S HERE!" I sat up and looked around. Was it true? Indeed, up the road another 100 meters was a line of military trucks filled with soldiers. I jumped to my feet and saw two of the children running toward the village, yelling at the top of their lungs. I turned back toward the military convoy and saw that they had stopped. A man was climbing out of the front vehicle and was checking us out through a pair of binoculars.

Seemingly out of thin air, the women appeared. I can think of no better way to describe this than to say Angry Moms. Anyone who has ever seen her mother react to one of her children being treated unfairly has a sense of what I'm talking about. Multiply that by 100. A mother's rage is incomparable.

They came up the road wielding sticks and clubs and shouting with a ferocity that I was completely unprepared for. A crowd of children was at their feet, carrying sticks and rocks.

"KILLERS! ASSASSINS!"

"DEVILS!"

"WE DON'T NEED YOUR ARMY HERE!"

"GO BACK TO YOUR BARRACKS! MORELIA IS NOT YOUR BARRACKS!"

As they arrived at the crest of the hill where we were waiting, they came to a halt and fortified their ranks, waiting for others to catch up. I looked back toward the army and saw, to my surprise that they were turning their trucks around and starting to drive off! When the women saw this they surged forward and the fire seemed to flare up even stronger within them. They charged ahead.

At that point, all there was for me to do was to stay with them. That was my job. That is what I was there for and I had no choice but to go along for the ride. My senses told me that it was probably not the safest idea to go running after the military with sticks and rocks, but I had gotten myself into this situation and now I had a responsibility to be there.

My pale face would likely deter the soldiers from opening fire or beating anybody up.

I started to run with the surging crowd, as did the other ten Peace Campers and as we came upon the trucks the shouting grew louder and rocks began to fly. The soldiers in the *Cola del Convoy* (Tail of the Convoy) had to shield themselves as rocks bounced off their helmets.

"This is it," I thought to myself. "One of those soldiers is going to get really pissed off and just start mowing people down with his AK-47." As I ran, I kept my eyes firmly on the soldiers looking for one funny motion and scanned the sides of the road, thinking about where I would dive if anybody decided to get a little crazy with their firearm.

I had assumed that the women and children were simply going to run up to the trucks to let them know that they weren't afraid and then let the trucks go. But they had no such thing in mind. They kept right on

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running after the convoy. In the cloud of dust kicked up by the trucks, I looked around me and realized that I was the only Peace Camper in sight. Chain-smoking seems to be the cool thing to do these days for solidarity activists and the effects of that were quite clear. The rest of them were several hundred meters behind us by now, red-faced and sucking wind.

"Stay with us, *campamentista!*", one of the women yelled to me. "We need you to stay with us!" I picked up my pace a bit, just to let them know that I had no intention of falling behind. I looked at these women, 4'5" tall with babies on their backs, little plastic shoes on their feet, and sticks in their hands and said to myself, "If I can't stay up with them, I'm a sad excuse."

After about two kilometers, the army had disappeared ahead of us. The women and children began to slow down. But as we rounded a corner we saw that the convoy had come to a stop again. The women yelled for everyone to catch up and then surged upon the army like a flood. The children launched rocks, many bigger than a baseball, with amazing accuracy, and the women beat against the trucks with their sticks. "You should be ashamed of yourself!", I heard one woman yelling at a timid looking soldier in the last truck. "Your army killed my brother! How can you be an assassin and kill your own people?"

The other Peace Campers caught up, along with the rest of the village and soon there were about a hundred people yelling and screaming. There were 105 soldiers in 10 trucks. Several high-official-looking men climbed out of the trucks and came toward us. I stood off to the side while Chris frantically snapped photos. A man stepped toward us. He looked like someone straight out of a Tommy Lee Jones movie with mirrored sunglasses, a big mustache, a baseball hat, and a coat that said "NARCOTICO." "Where are you from?", he called over to Chris.

"The United States," Chris called back.

"Let me see your papers," the Narcotico ordered.

"Are you Migra?" (*The Immigration Police, whose main duty is to kick pesky international solidarity activists out of the country so that the military can go about its business of terrorizing the indigenous population.*)

"Yes."

"Let me see," Chris challenged him. The man pulled out a badge from his pocket and flashed it quickly, but not quickly enough.

"You're not Migra," said Chris. The man smiled, put his badge away, and went back to the others.

Another military man pulled out a camera and

aimed it at me. I put my head down, hoping that the brim of my cap would cover my face. When I looked up again, several of the men were motioning for me to come over to them. One of them flashed a badge, trying to intimidate me. I gave them my best Thousand-Yard-Stare and didn't budge.

The tension was building up. I watched the soldiers for any itchy fingers while the women and children continued to beat against the trucks with sticks. Soon the high-official-looking guys got back in their trucks and the convoy began to pull away again.

"Maybe this time they'll let them go," I thought to myself hopefully. But no such luck. The villagers ran after the trucks, continuing to hurl insults and rocks. Another kilometer away, the military trucks stopped again and the familiar scene ensued. By now, men from Morelia had decided it was safe to join us. Several of them engaged the high-official-looking guys, who had climbed out of their trucks again, in discussion.

I looked over and saw Chris beside one of the trucks taking a close-up photo of one of the soldiers. Then they exchanged some words. Later I asked Chris, "What did you say to him?"

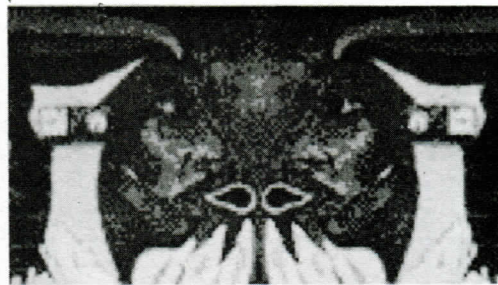
"I pointed at his gun and said, 'That's your gringo aid,' and then I pointed to my camera and said, 'and this is their gringo aid.'"

I sat down with the other Peace Campers in a group by the side of the road and waited to see what would happen. The Narcotico guy came over to us and said, "This is your fault! You foreigners organised this. You are putting these crazy ideas in the Indians' heads."

"He gives us too much credit," I said to the other *campamentistas*. The presence of foreigners in the EZLN villages has created a major impediment to the military's desires to control the indigenous population. Unlike in the past when the military could effectively break up a rebel movement by going into a few villages, massacring a bunch of people, and demoralizing everybody like in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, the presence of Peace Campers has made that option more costly.

Dead foreigners are very bad press. Recently, the Mexican press has been filled with anti-foreigner propaganda, spreading the idea that these crazy visitors are causing all the problems down in Chiapas. The sentiment is catching on. I can feel it when I walk down the street.

Finally, the army climbed back in their trucks and drove off in a cloud of dust. This time the people from



Morelia did not follow. They clapped and yelled a few final insults and then we all turned to walk back to town. A woman came up beside me and said, "So now you've gotten a taste for what life is like for us in the EZLN. We live in constant tension and fear of the military when all we ask for is the right to be treated with dignity."

"Thank you for being here with us today," said a man.

But I could sense that the feelings of victory at having chased off the military were colored by a sense of foreboding. "The military will be back," I sadly said to myself. "They are only testing the ground and trying to wear out the communities with false alarms and probing missions. One of these days things are going to snap. As much as events like this boost the morale of the community, how long can they be sustained?"

What I saw that day showed me clearly that the EZLN struggle is a struggle of life or death for the indigenous Maya who have lived in these mountains for thousands of years and have lived under the boot of colonialism and imperialism for the past 500.

Those women don't fear death; they fear that their children and their children's children will have to live in the same poverty and cruel, undignified social conditions that they have lived under.

YA BASTA! ENOUGH!

PostScript

The attempt by the army to enter Morelia on 8 January 1998 is part of an intensifying campaign of military harassment of Zapatista communities. Since the 22 December massacre by paramilitaries in the Chiapas village of Acteal, the Mexican Army presence in the area has escalated dramatically on the pretext of providing services for refugees and looking for arms caches. There has not been a military mobilisation of this magnitude since February 1995 when international attention and public pressure prevented the federal government from carrying out a push to destroy the Zapatistas.

In response to civil outcry over the Acteal massacre, the Mexican federal government shuffled its cabinet, but the army buildup in Chiapas continues. The governor of the state of Chiapas resigned on 7 January after the Mexican press published evidence that, in the weeks before the killings, he paid \$500,000 to a pro-government, pro-landowner group known as "Peace and Justice," which is notorious in the region for organising paramilitary squads.

On 4 January, the respected weekly magazine Proceso

published a document prepared in 1994 by Mexico's Defense Department, which describes a counterinsurgency plan for Chiapas in language reminiscent of the war in Vietnam:

Key objective: "To destroy the relationship of support which exists between the population and the transgressors of the law...military intelligence services should secretly organise certain sectors of the civilian population...ranchers...small businessmen...individuals...train and support self-defense forces or other paramilitary organizations...in cases where self-defense forces do not exist, it is necessary to create them."

On 7 January the army entered the community of La Union and attempted to take two human rights observers with the Civil Encampment for Peace into custody. They were only prevented from doing so when the members of the community came out with sticks, stones, and machetes and expressed their determination to fight to keep the observers in their community.

On 12 January, the international day of protest against the massacre in Acteal, Chiapas, the Seguridad Publica (state police) shot into a crowd of protesters in the town of Ocosingo. The protesters had been throwing rocks at the police officers and calling them murderers. (The state police were within hearing distance of the Acteal massacre on 22 December and did nothing to stop it.) The shots killed Guadalupe Mendez Lopez and wounded her 11-month old child as well as an 18-year-old man. During her funeral procession in the community of La Garrucha, the mourners symbolically occupied the federal army base outside of their community. Approximately 30 Seguridad Publica officers are "under investigation" for the shooting.

In a message that went out on the Internet on 8 January, the EZLN asked foreign governments to pressure the Zedillo administration to order the immediate demilitarisation of Chiapas through a withdrawal of Army troops from indigenous communities and the dismantling of the paramilitary groups. (Source: Mark Lucey and WomensNet-Chiapas Homepage <http://www.igc.org/igc/womensnet/hg/morelia.html>)

The presence of a PIF officer wearing a NARCOTICO jacket is also significant. The government is attempting to construct grounds for defining its actions against the Zapatistas as anti-narcotics actions. For example, they claim to have found a small quantity of marijuana along with a supposed Zapatista arms cache in Altamirano. As anyone who has visited the Zapatista communities knows, they are probably the most drug-free areas in the Western Hemisphere.

THOSE WOMEN DON'T FEAR
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Her Baby With Colic

by Mary Lou Sanelli

Sitting cross-legged on a receiving blanket
spread over grass on the first sunny day in a month
in this coastal town where winters are long
and summers unreliable at best,
she seemed a stranger—hardly the woman I knew.
face pale as beach sand. Smile
sarcastic as if she withheld some secret
that could destroy me.

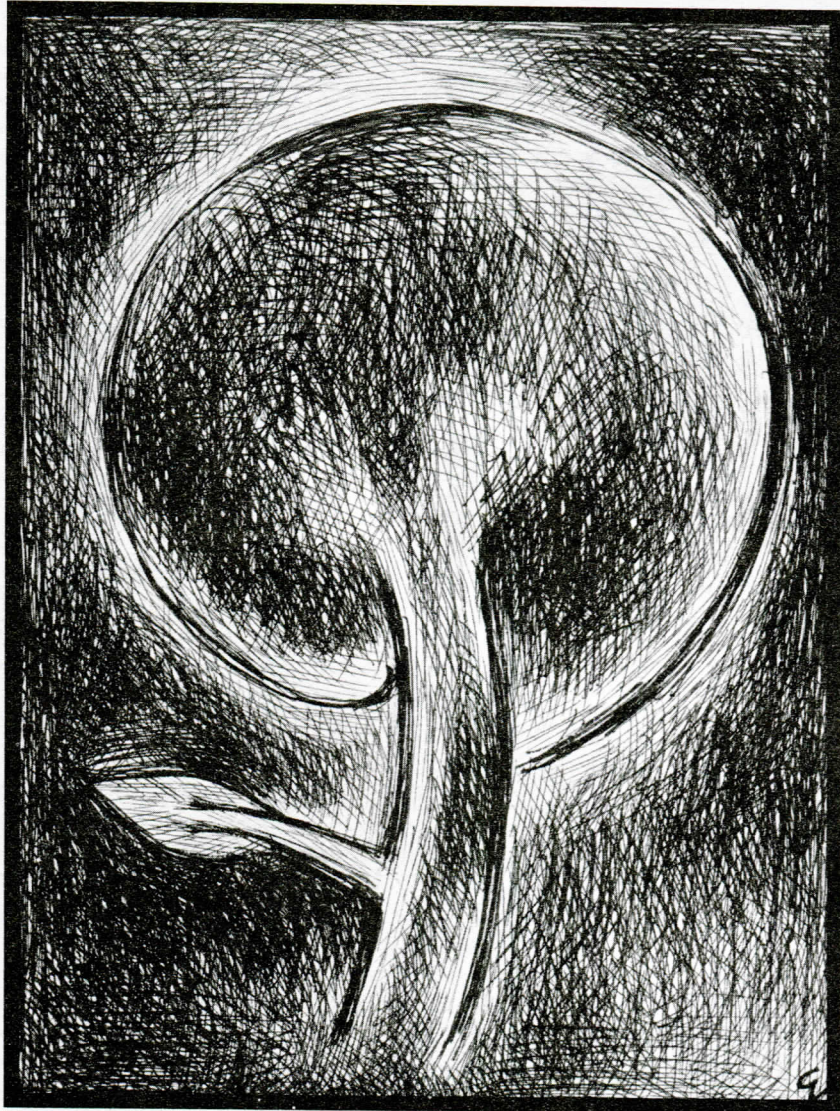
Eager, I wanted details of delivery. The whole of it.
How her body felt its way through the pain.
But she wouldn't talk about that. Instead
she told me what it was like to cook
using one hand and to sleep
and breastfeed at the same time.
And how tired she was. How tired.

I wanted to say the right thing.
Something *new-agey*
like someone might add at a spiritual gathering or write
in a self-help book, but nothing came to me.
I looked around. Diapers hanging on a rack
cast shadows. In silence
I took to counting how many times one widened
to blend with the next.

When the baby woke
with so much sound I remember thinking
from such a tiny opening, I reached out to hold her
and we sat like that for a moment
as if I knew how to quiet her
without ever having done so before.
But blood-red-faced, she grew louder
bathing us in screams and landing me
smack in the middle of her distress. Taking me
with her way down
to the place of colic—the place
I now see reflected in the slap
of her mother's stare.

Mary Lou Sanelli's poems have appeared in many literary publications. Her newest collection, Close At Hand, is forthcoming from High Plains Press.

Source: Women Wise, Summer 1997



The artist: **CRISTINA Q. RAMILO** is a Filipino artist living in New York. She has mounted several one-woman exhibitions in both New York and Manila. Schooled at the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts and New York University, Cristina maintains close ties with her home country through her art. Constant in her artwork are themes of culture and experiences of women. Cristina's artwork will be featured in the forthcoming Isis publication, *Living Collections*, a collection of articles about women's resource and documentation centers in Asia.



TRIBUTE TO SHAMIMA SHAIKH

14 September 1960 to
8 January 1998;
9 Ramadan 1418.

Muslims believe that the person
who dies in the month of
Ramadan goes straight to
heaven.

By Farid Esack, Acting CEO,
Commission on Gender Equality
of South Africa

If this be madness.

Shamima Shaikh (37), South Africa's leading Muslim gender equality activist passed away in the early hours of last Thursday at her home in Mayfair, Johannesburg when her physical body succumbed to cancer. Shamima left behind her husband, Na'eem Jeenah, and two sons, Minhaj (9) and Shir'ah (7).

Shamima was a member of the National Executive of the Muslim Youth Movement and former editor of the progressive Muslim monthly, *Al-Qalam*. More recently, at a time when other co-religionists were denying women the right to be on air, she served as chairperson of Muslim Community Broadcasting Trust, which runs *The Voice*, a Johannesburg Muslim community radio station. It was, however, as a gender activist within the Muslim community that she made her mark. She spearheaded the formation and headed the Gender Desk of the Muslim Youth Movement. In this capacity, she rapidly became a thorn in the flesh of conservative Muslim clerics on the now-defunct Muslim Personal Law Board who were keen to develop and implement a set of Shari'ah laws which would entrench gender inequality.

In an event that drew widespread controversy in the Muslim community, she led a rebellion of Muslim women worshippers at the 23rd Street in Fietas in 1994. Throughout the month of Ramadan she and a number of other women prayed upstairs in the mosque. On the 27th night, the most spiritually significant one for Muslims, when she arrived, the upstairs was occupied by men and a tent was set up outside for the use of women. Braving numerous angry offended men with tiny egos, she led a group of comrades to re-occupy their space. By then she had acquired the well-deserved description as "that mad Shaikh woman." Yet to friends and foes, Shamima was the epitome of gentleness and politeness.

In the same way that for anyone committed to gender justice a woman's place cannot be confined to bedrooms and kitchens, she ultimately became frustrated with being an "upstairs" woman. In a little known move, and unprecedented in the world of Islam, she and a number of comrades – male and female – started an "alternative" congregation where gender equality and all its implications for Islamic thought and practice were the norm.

Shamima first learnt that she had cancer about three years ago. Nothing changed for her. Her life was full of laughter, courage, and the will to change the world and she merrily continued. "If the last hour strikes and finds you carrying a sapling to the grove for

planting" said the Prophet Muhammed, "go ahead and plant it." Her hour had struck but her planting continued unabated. Knowing that her life was rapidly ebbing away, she delivered a lecture in Durban three weeks ago on the "Qur'an and Woman." She inspired us and taught us that there is nothing inevitable in life. She insisted that while death may be inevitable we are free to shape our responses to it. She chose not to undergo various forms of chemotherapy and, other than resorting to some traditional and homeopathic options, she was determined not to return to her Lord kicking and screaming. A poem, penned by a cousin and posted at the entrance to her bedroom said it all.

What Cancer Cannot Do

Cancer is so limited
It cannot cripple love,
It cannot shatter hope,
It cannot corrode faith,
It cannot destroy peace,
It cannot kill friendship,
It cannot suppress memories,
It cannot silence courage,
It cannot invade the soul,
It cannot steal eternal life,
It cannot conquer the spirit.



The day of her death and burial was a day of relentless pushing of the religio-cultural limits. Shamima's death was testimony to the Qur'anic verse which says "Do not say about those who are slain in the path of God that they are dead; nay they are alive." She requested that a close female friend lead her funeral prayers. (As part of her obsession with retrieving subversive theological and juristic memories which accorded women a more just place in the Islamic scheme of things, she had come across a report that the funeral prayers for Imam Idris bin Shafi', a revered Islamic jurist, was led by a woman). Thus it came to pass that, for the first time in the last few centuries, a Muslim's funeral service, albeit at her home, was led by a woman.

At another service in the nearby mosque later, her husband led the prayer despite the presence of a number of theologians and clerics. In what is possibly unprecedented in the contemporary Islamic world, a large number of women attended the funeral prayers at the mosque. (And no, they did not go upstairs, nor to an outside tent.) When her physical remains arrived at her final earthly resting place, in the town where she was born, Pietersburg, the women were again there to offer the funeral prayers. While a narrow pathway separated the women mourners (mostly clad in black) from the men (mostly clad in white), who surrounded the grave, it was nevertheless a historic occasion.

What a life! What a way of passing on! What a death!

"If this be madness, God," her husband Na'eem, prayed, at her funeral service, "Give us all the courage to be mad."

Amen.

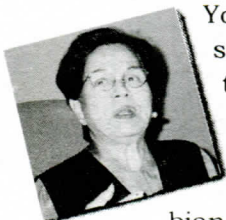
Social ills cannot be Blamed on Media

In the Philippines, the issue of censorship is a continuing battle between the progressive and the conservative forces. The traditional church and the government on the side of the conservatives, argue that the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), a government regulatory body, protects the morals of the public. The progressive's challenge MTRCB's authority. In recent years, film producer Armida Siguion-Reyna, along with film director son and scriptwriter daughter-in-law, has produced some "controversial" films. Controversial because she has tackled socially relevant subject matters and portrayed them with realistic sensitivity. Her movies have looked at, among others, incest, prostitution and homosexuality. Armida's socio-political films have gone beyond the typical male-dominated perspectives. However, her films usually have a tough time getting MTRCB approval; some are banned, others significantly cut before they are allowed to be shown.

Ligaya, a film about a prostitute, reached the halls of Malacañang and needed the president's endorsement before it could be shown to the public. It was earlier banned by MTRCB. It went on to become the highest-grossing film for 1997, fanning further the debate on censorship.

Armida, a direct and outspoken woman has been at the forefront of the battle against censorship. That is why Annie Calma Santoalla and Luz M. Martinez, of Isis International-Manila, met with her to discuss her views on censorship and other aspects of the film industry.

I: What is the difference between erotica and pornography?



You know just like obscenity, you cannot define it. You cannot define what is obscene. What is obscene for one is not obscene for another. You have to define it from the present-day community standards. Standards, moral values, even though I don't want to call them moral values, reflect present community-based standards. What was forbidden before is acceptable today. Like before you could not talk about living arrangements between a male and a female, much less a gay or lesbian. But now it's accepted.

A sex scene in a movie is not advocacy of sex and violence. You have to look at the whole thing in context. What is the movie saying? What is the article saying?

When I am abroad, for instance, you can access sex channels. That, I would call pornography. There is nothing (even though well-made) in the movie that says anything meaningful or worthwhile. It is just a series of masturbation, sex acts, and complete nudity. It does not propel me into active action for the welfare of any community or any social structure. I think that is how I would distinguish it (pornography): when you watch a film and it propels you to do something about your community so that abuses won't happen no matter how much sex and violence is in that movie, to me that is not pornography.

I: The feminist community does not look at the debate so much as to whether its moral or not but more on the exploitation of women's bodies. Does the exploitation of women's bodies perpetuate the use of sex and violence in films to keep women in the subordinate position? There is one stream of feminists which says censorship should not exist and another stream which says using women's bodies in movies, whether pornographic or not, is sexualising women and is providing bad role models for younger women.

They are no better than the Censor's Board [MTRCB]. For example, if you are doing a story where the story of the film is about a violent society, there has to be violence otherwise you don't get your point across.

If you are just going to say 'prevent child abuse' I will say, okay, I'll prevent child abuse but it does not shock me into the reality that there is child abuse. When you make a movie, I am not remotely suggesting that you put a child there on the table and chop him to pieces. But you have to have scenes that will have a shock-

NOT EVERYTHING THAT HAS A NUDE BODY CAN BE CONSIDERED OBSCENE. IT REALLY MATTERS HOW THE SCENE IS PUT TOGETHER, HOW THE MOVIE IS SHOT. HOW THE SCENES ARE PARTICULARLY EXECUTED THAT WILL MAKE IT OBSCENE OR NOT OBSCENE. IT REALLY DEPENDS. I CANNOT SAY THAT IF THERE IS NUDITY IN FRONT OF ME IT'S EXPLOITATION.

scene or not obscene. It really depends. I cannot say that if there is nudity in front of me it's exploitation.

I: If there is no censorship, then what is the ideal way?



I don't believe in censorship. I believe there should be a regulatory body with review and classificatory powers. You have to review and classify the film and be very strict about the classification. It should be an industry regulatory body. It should be up to the industry to police its own ranks, otherwise, the film industry will never mature. It will also teach producers how to target their audience and money.

Censorship has not worked. We have had censorship for I think 60 years. Why are they still saying we have lousy movies, why are they still saying that movies are bold, sexy, and violent? They are the approving powers, why are they saying that after 60 years of censorship our movies are bad and project only what is immoral. Who approved them? Not me.

I: I just read a report from Fiji that even though they follow a classificatory system, they still have a problem with the pirating of the films. Films that are X-rated, pornographic, can be easily seen by anyone. The classification system is fine, but when you have pirating of vid-

ing effect that will shock people out of complacency and treat the matter more seriously. You have to show me what it is so I will be shocked and see the horrors of child abuse. If you are making a movie about prostitution, you have to show it. You have to show how these women are exploited and agree to be exploited.

Not everything that has a nude body can be considered obscene. It really matters how the scene is put together, how the movie is shot. How the scenes are particularly executed that will make it ob-

eos how do you control it?

You cannot control it. That is why I think today censorship is becoming more and more useless. With cyberspace you can download any film to any home.

I don't know why parents are blaming the ills of society on the movies? Movies don't invent these. It comes from reality. What they reflect. Social ills cannot be blamed on media. I don't think you can accuse media of eroding the moral values, the moral values that you as a parent should teach your children. Going back to the voluntary rating system of the United States. You know that the voluntary rating system sees its job as an advance notice to parents for the movie-going of their children. In other words, if parents don't care about the movie their kids are going to see nothing else is going to matter. You are the only one who could give those values to your kids.

I: Is there in any way we can sensitize how women are treated in films?



That is very, very difficult to answer. It really depends on the producers, directors and the filmmaker. It depends upon the story, the execution of the film, I can put a nude body there and it will not look obscene. But another, well, it boils down to taste. But you cannot legislate this. You cannot even say that people with good taste can only enjoy freedom from censorship. Everybody should enjoy freedom of expression. This film we are doing now is about three lesbians. It's a relationship film. I am sure that there will be another battle with the censors.

I: Do you think that women as film directors are more sensitive to showing a more subtle imagery than men who tend to show images of women in a raw sexual way?

Generally, yes, women can be more delicate in the treatment.

I: What are your thoughts or ideas on the

impact of globalization on the media?

That is progress. You cannot stop it. It is sometimes disadvantageous. For instance, now the Philippine movies are doing badly at the box office. But we are consoling ourselves because the slump is not only in the Philippines but also world wide. There are now other options of entertainment. Before you had only television and movies; you didn't have video games, cable channels, and malls. Before you went to the movies to cool yourself but now you don't have to go to the theater in the mall. The entire mall is a big air-conditioned building.

I also accept the fact that the industry brought this slump unto itself. We stopped respecting the audience. We treated the audience badly. I think that the audience is speaking to the movie industry loud and clear: "we are

tired of your movies, you don't respect us, you are condescending." Sad to say that we should have been at the forefront of raising the standards of the viewing public but did not achieve that. Those who have achieved that are the foreign competitors. Like the videotapes, free TV, paid TV, cable channels, more or less the level of appreciation of the viewing public has been raised. They will expect no less from the Filipino films, not only in the context of stories, but in technical quality. With technical quality your audience can forgive you because you cannot compete with *Independence Day* or *Air Force One* (two popular Hollywood movies recently shown in the Philippines). We don't have enough money. But we have enough money to make small films that reflect the life around us.

I: But you don't think that if you close off the local market, that without foreign influences there will be more opportunity for creativity from the local industry?

Are you asking me if I agree to the idea of limitations of importation? I don't think so. The idea is to compete. I don't think you should limit importation. We also learn a lot and become educated by foreign films.

President Ramos is always saying 'global,

global.' I agree with him. This is the only way we can survive. We have to expand the Philippine market because the producer can no longer recoup the investment from the local market. The cost is going up especially with the devaluation of the peso. It's terrible. But you cannot go global if the creative minds are in prison. We have been oppressed by censorship for 60 years (of those, 14 were under martial law). Who are the writers today? Martial law babies whose minds have been conditioned to control. I have been a judge in several play writing contests. You know who are the martial law babies by their scripts; they have lazy minds. They don't want to explore. Not only laziness, it's more like 'what is the use? It won't pass anyway.' A defeatist attitude. The characters talk the same way, the actors look the same and as if they have been conditioned to write a script that will pass the censors. It has a crippling effect.

I: Some social commentators are saying that we are not increasing the quality of the films but creating more of the same old thing.



Maybe to a certain degree it's not improving the quality of *the* films but it is increasing the level of quality expectations from the audience. That is important. It is not only the filmmakers you have to develop, it's the film audience that you have to build up. You have got to raise the quality of the audience. You cannot do that by giving them garbage. I must admit that there are also some garbage foreign films but generally the technical polish alone is already knowing that they worked hard on this film. Some filmmakers here do poor production but claim this film is for the 'masses' so they (the people) won't notice it, they won't see it. That's a wrong attitude.

I: In 1997 in the film industry we saw a lot of bold (flesh films) movies, and I just noticed that before it was only a monopoly of the established studios but all of sudden there

are several small film outfits, producing one bold film after another.

Correction! I will not call them *bold* films, I will call them "quickies." These are a few producers who for a few centavos will create garbage in the hope of making money. But the sad irony is that the Board of Censors (MTRCB) allows these films. The "quickie" films are the ones that should disappear. But movies, even if they are bold—bold meaning not only skin exposure but also bold statements—these films ought to be encouraged.

IT IS NOT ONLY THE FILMMAKERS YOU HAVE TO DEVELOP, IT'S THE FILM AUDIENCE THAT YOU HAVE TO BUILD UP. YOU HAVE GOT TO RAISE THE QUALITY OF THE AUDIENCE. YOU CANNOT DO THAT BY GIVING THEM GARBAGE.

I: A lot of these bold films are featuring really young women. They seem to get younger and younger.

Yes! It's terrible. That is exploitation. You get these girls to do what you want them to do, take off their clothes for 20,000 pesos. Not only that but the contract says that, when the contract expires, the sole option to renew the contract is the producer's. It's terrible! Young males are exploited, except that in our culture, society frowns down more upon women, and it's easier for the men. It's easier for them to survive.

I: What are your hopes for the Filipino film industry?

I really hope that the practitioners of the industry be more disciplined and that the leaders of the industry exercise more professionalism. For the movie workers, I hope that there will be a change of leadership in the industry. Because our industry leaders are weak, they don't have the will to walk along briskly with the developing and changing world. For the government, I wish they would let us off the hook with the censorship and let us regulate our industry. Those are my hopes. ♪

BRIDGING

NORTH and SOUTH...

Notes Towards True Dialogue and Transformation

By Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi

I am writing these notes from the perspective of a woman from the South who has lived in North America for the past eight years. Over the years, I have become increasingly troubled by the widening gulf between feminist theory and practice. As a black, “Third World” woman and scholar, I have become suspicious and weary of “well-meaning feminists” from the North who pay lip service to feminist politics in theory but are quick to shy away from putting their theories into practice—especially in their relations with women from the South or the so-called “Third World.”

Feminism is still very much misunderstood because those who “exported” it did a poor job of foregrounding the issues and connections among women. In my country, being a feminist means you are an educated, sometimes frustrated, sometimes angry, sometimes unmarried, loudmouth woman who shuns domestic duties and having many children! For too long, being a feminist in Africa has meant copying unattractive Western attitudes that have no place in African cultures. The gradual understanding of the word feminist to mean a woman dedicated to fighting gender discrimination is a slow process indeed.

MY MOTHER AND FEMINISM IN AFRICA

I was raised by a mother who never had the western education that I have but she went about the business of living and survival every single day of her life. She never hesitated to use the tools at her disposal to demand and obtain what was rightfully hers. Her children, her husband, her family (extended, as well), were her world. She, like millions of African women, will never know the word “feminist” or what it means. Yet, she was and still is, in my eyes, one of the most important feminist figures that I shall ever know as I also go about the business of living and survival.

Needless to say, when one talks about feminism in Africa, the millions of women like my mother are always an “absence.” Feminist theory and practice, in the conventional sense, belong to and find roots and definitions within an African middle class of women, like myself, who have been privy to western education. We carry on that colonial mantle that demands of us to label ourselves in various and varying contexts. My mother will, therefore, in essence, not lay a claim to the word “feminist” and, unfortunately, academic feminist discourses have left women like her by

the wayside, in spite of the fact that their lives and experiences are those that have grounded my feminism and those of us who speak to/within western feminism and international feminist circles. Academic feminist discourses have, on the whole, failed to identify grassroots feminists as custodians of ways of knowing, of knowledge that academics do not possess.

THE NEED FOR TRUE DIALOGUE AND RESPECT BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH

I think of myself as feminist in many ways, irrespective of how I define my feminism; but in many other ways, I find my relationship with feminist theory and the practice of feminist politics to be sometimes very frail. Feminism and women-organizing are important to me, given that fighting discrimination—gender, ethnic, racial, linguistic, political (bolstered by my minor-

ity anglophone status in Cameroon), etc.—has been intrinsic to my life and experiences. My relationships with some women of the North, some of whom have helped question and rethink feminism from my own positional perspectives, have sometimes caused me to doubt my own feminism, to question the sincerity of feminism in general, to wonder what the hoopla around “international feminism” is all about.

In spite of the fact that I rarely saw our experiences as African and/or “Third World” in much of feminist theory and academic feminist discourse, women-organizing across cultures

continues to hold my attention. The attraction to feminist theory for me always lay in the ability of “theory” to give spaces and acknowledgment to “other/Other” voices. Living in an-Other culture, I sought to find a space for myself with women in North America but soon realized that international feminism was too often cloaked in empty rhetoric. I have networked, I have attended conferences, and I have asked myself when we have gone through all the theoretical “abstract” jargon: “where are women like my mother (who are in the majority around the world) in these high-powered reflec-



Where are grassroots women in feminist discourses?

Stephanie Hollyman/Forum '95

tions?”

The correlation that I draw between my mother, an “illiterate” African, grassroots feminist, and myself, educated in her ways and the ways of the west, is intrinsic to my relations with women of the North. What women like my mother have done, are doing, and will continue to do—in short, what they have been doing for millennia—do not seem to be finding their rightful place in academic language/spaces except when a select few, with international renown, are co-opted to speak the Third World/native women’s experience. Similarly, the connections and disconnections between my status as informant, in relation to feminist practice and post-(neo)colonialism, must be highlighted if our goal is respect, sensitivity to each other, and true dialogue and transformation between North and South.

I once had an encounter with a feminist journalist. She had interviewed me for her radio show, for a couple of hours, about my thoughts on "African feminism" and how I saw my thinking fitting into the larger picture of "global" connections between women. She later offered me a copy of the interview and the piece that was aired. I was surprised when I finished listening to the show. I had spoken on a variety of issues of prime concern to most African women, issues that are often neglected by western feminism. I had also answered her questions on homosexuality in Africa and lamented the fact that it is a topic rarely addressed as part of sexuality debates in African literary studies. That was the one issue that she chose to put on the air.

I did not hear the program when it aired, but I did get a call from a very angry African woman, to say the least, who assaulted me with a barrage of words. She did not mince her words when she clearly pointed out that I was a shame to Africa, that I was not doing African women like herself a service when the only thing that I could talk about on radio was to blame Africans for not discussing homosexuality. She classified me among those African women scholars who have sold their souls to white women, pandering to western sensational political issues, for whatever crumbs they throw us, in order to carry the banner of their agendas and not ours. She could not understand why I, put in an enviable position like the radio, where few of us are rarely given the forum to speak for ourselves, would ignore what she considered other pressing and more important issues that are relevant to the daily struggles of millions of African women. She felt betrayed by me (even though she agreed that I no longer had control over what happened to my taped interview after it had been conducted); I felt betrayed by the journalist, because I also questioned what her agenda had been all along. I had earnestly believed that she was genuinely interested in my take (as a woman from the South) on feminism and its inter-relatedness or disconnections with the lives of African and western women. Her piece reaffirmed the disconnections more than the possibilities of a

MY RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOME WOMEN OF THE NORTH, SOME OF WHOM HAVE HELPED QUESTION AND RETHINK FEMINISM FROM MY OWN POSITIONAL PERSPECTIVES, HAVE SOMETIMES CAUSED ME TO DOUBT MY OWN FEMINISM, TO QUESTION THE SINCERITY OF FEMINISM IN GENERAL, TO WONDER WHAT THE HOOPLA AROUND "INTERNATIONAL FEMINISM" IS ALL ABOUT.

true dialogue between different interests and interlocking issues.

I continue to be concerned about some feminists in the North who espouse academic feminist discourse, play the "global" card, and parade the banner of "international sisterhood" yet fail to recognize their own prejudice when, in various forms, it rears its ugly head. I am disappointed with academia. Our experiences and discursive practices as African women, as "Third World" women, are not making tangible inroads. They are either considered "outside" of academic discourses, or, when deemed acceptable, endowed with "universal" qualities and appropriated or validated to serve specific agenda. It is our job to stop perpetuating and reinforcing hierarchies that can only serve as hindrances to the construction and promotion of dialogue among women around the world. If women's voices do not meet as equals, then the battle for "global sisterhood" is lost before it even begins. True dialogue between women of the North and the South must include making concrete efforts at narrowing the gulf between feminist theory and practice. Academic feminists

must learn to switch the lenses of their gaze. They must learn to be Other(ed). They must also learn to be "consumers" of (other) feminist theories and practices, and what they have termed "grassroots feminisms" must be integral to this process. Otherwise, "bridging North and South" will remain a hollow phrase.

Juliana Makuchi Njah-Abbenyi is from Cameroon. She obtained her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from McGill University and is an Assistant Professor of English and Post Colonial Literature at the University of Southern Mississippi. She is the author of Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference (Indiana University Press, 1997) and has contributed material to many books and scholarly journals. Her fiction (published under the pen-name, Makuchi) has appeared in Callaloo, the Crab Orchard Review, and The Toronto Review of Contemporary Writing Abroad. Her first novel is forthcoming from Ohio University Press.

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NORTH- SOUTH Dialogue NEEDED IN Asian Financial Crisis

By Gamani Corea

THE CENTRAL FACT IS THAT ASIA BECAME VERY DEPENDENT ON FOREIGN INVESTORS, WHOSE CONCERN WAS NOT WHETHER A COUNTRY HAD ITS FUNDAMENTALS IN ORDER, BUT WHAT OTHER SPECULATORS WERE THINKING. THIS CREATED A VERY VOLATILE SITUATION AND ULTIMATELY A CHAIN REACTION OF CRISES.

COLOMBO, Jan. (IPS) - The explanation frequently cited in the international media for the Asian financial crisis—poor economic “fundamentals”—simply is not convincing.

It is implausible that the Asian “tigers” could have sustained rates of expansion so high and for so long, nearly transforming their economies, while all the time the so-called “fundamentals” were not right. Certainly there were weaknesses and excesses, but these were not so common as to cause a re-enactment of this crisis in country after country.

If anything was wrong, it was the fact that the nations exposed themselves excessively to footloose speculative movements of capital, and to short-term capital flows, with no regulations or control mechanisms set up in advance. This was partly because of the prevailing philosophy of openness to all kinds of financial flows.

For many years this produced positive results and people applauded. But the immediate causes of the current crisis has not been an over-investment in real estate, or the corruption and crony capitalism, that we read about—which are to be found in all the economies in the world, not only in East Asia.

The central fact is that Asia became very dependent on foreign investors, whose concern was not whether a country had its fundamentals in order, but what other speculators were thinking. This created a very volatile situation and ultimately a chain reaction of crises.

One of the major lessons to be drawn from the present situation is that there is appalling absence of any kind of mechanism to moderate and regulate these developments once they appear to get out of hand.

There is no “ex-ante” preventive system internationally to monitor the situation,

anticipate possible weaknesses and take action. Instead there is an ad hoc and "ex-post" response.

Unfortunately any kind of preventive regulation by governments, or even by international organisations, is considered contrary to the prevailing liberalisation philosophy. The result is a very large exposed and vulnerable economic area.

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE TOLD THAT NOW THERE IS AN EXPRESS TRAIN CALLED "GLOBALISATION AND LIBERALISATION." IF THEY GET ABOARD, THEY WILL BE CARRIED ON A GREAT DISTANCE BUT, IF THEY FAIL TO DO SO, THEY WILL BE LEFT BEHIND AND MARGINALISED.

If there is to be an international legacy from this crisis, it should be the establishment of mechanisms to monitor and react in time. This should top the list of the agenda for the evolution of the international financial system.

There are other issues. One of the casualties of the great euphoria about globalisation and liberalisation has been the debate on international development cooperation: there have been no serious negotiations on a North-South basis for the last 15 years!

All the changes for which the South has been pushing—tariff preferences for developing countries, concessional aid targets, commodity stabilisation arrangements, codes for the transfer of technology and restrictive business practices—have been put aside. As a result, the whole burden of action, and virtually the whole focus of attention, is now being placed on the internal domestic policies of developing countries.

Developing countries are told that now there is an express train called "globalisation and liberalisation." If they get aboard, they will be carried on a great distance but, if they fail to do so, they will be left behind and marginalised.

The secret of boarding is in their own policies: if they liberalise, deregulate, privatise, balance their budgets, and so on they would be beneficiaries of the process.

The North-South dialogue thus has been replaced by a sort of "do-it-yourself kit" for developing countries—who are told that they don't need big discussions and conferences on international cooperation, aid flows, the terms of trade and so on.

Nevertheless, it remains as true as ever that developing countries need a global economic environment that is supportive of the development process and stability in the world economy. This will not come about through the country-by-country implementation of internal structural adjustment policies alone.

There are major issues that can only be addressed through multilateral actions, and a revival of discussions and negotiations on these is clearly needed. One of these is the international financial system and the way it should evolve. This must be the subject of inter-governmental actions rather than of national policies alone.

There also are other issues: trade, capital needs, debt relief, regionalism and global environmental concerns that involve an inter-dependent world and, effect both developing and developed countries.

The present situation presents developing countries with a challenge: they must reshape their platform to reflect the changing world scene. They need also to harness their numerical strength and cohesiveness in multilateral fora.

Otherwise they will lack an agenda of their own, and their responses to world trends and events, at best, will be reactive.

Gamani Corea, a Sri Lankan economist, was Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) from 1974-84. Currently, he is chairman of the ad-hoc panel of economists appointed by the Non-Aligned Movement to study the position of developing countries in the world economy.

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Global Glossary

Your Guide to **Deciphering** the Language of Economic **Globalization**

Trying to digest all the mind-numbing acronyms, labels, and terms dealing with global trade and investment issues? Is your head spinning? Your worries are over! We've compiled a short glossary of key terms to help you navigate the world of economic globalization

APEC: THE ASIA PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION FORUM

Operating through secret ministerial meetings, APEC is a relatively loose association of 18 "member economies"—Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South Korea, and the United States. APEC exists to service the needs of corporate investors, promoting their expansion through unregulated markets, unrestrained foreign investment, and unrestricted trade.

EU: EUROPEAN UNION

An umbrella organisation of European countries which was founded in 1993. Members

cooperate on a number of areas, ranging from a single free trade market to foreign policy. The EU agreement includes provisions for an Economic and Monetary Union with a single European currency. This monetary union has proven to be highly controversial, as member states are required to meet a number of conditions for entry, including lowering government deficits. This has forced several countries to cut public spending on social programs and services.

FTAA: FREE TRADE AGREEMENT FOR THE AMERICAS

An expanded free trade agreement promoted by the US that seeks to bring all the nations of the Western Hemisphere, excluding Cuba, into NAFTA.

GATT: GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Never a formal institution or organisation, GATT was founded in 1948 to develop common rules and agreements for the international trade of goods. GATT has since been replaced by the WTO.

IMF: INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

Formed in 1944 along with its sister organisation, the World Bank, IMF is the world's principal financial agency concerned with the management of the international monetary system. The Fund provides loans to member countries experiencing problems with their balance of payments and regularly imposes strict conditions—"structural adjustment programs"—on lending. These programs force governments to cut social spending, privatize public services, and rollback business regulations.

MAI: MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

An investment treaty currently being negotiated within the OECD. The MAI is designed to guarantee corporations' unrestricted access to all markets and prevent governments from effectively regulating corporate behavior.

MIA: MULTILATERAL INVESTMENT AGREEMENT

Like the MAI, the MIA is an international investment treaty designed to rollback restrictions on foreign investment and corporate regulations. It is being negotiated within the WTO.

MERCOSUR: THE SOUTHERN CONE COMMON MARKET

A customs union between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. An agreement on common tariffs, rather than a fully-fledged free trade agreement, the deal has nevertheless resulted in rising unemployment, a shrinking industrial base, and lower wages for working people in member countries.

NAFTA: NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

A free trade agreement between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Far more than an agreement eliminating tariffs, NAFTA drastically limits the ability of governments to regulate corporate behavior and has been blamed for rising job losses and increased environmental problems.

OECD: ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A Paris-based research organisation, providing the world's 29 richest countries, including Canada, with information and advice about eco-

nomics policy. The OECD favours liberalized trade and is spearheading the current negotiations on the MAI.

TRIMS: TRADE-RELATED INVESTMENT MEASURES

Provisions of the WTO agreement which limit the controls member countries can place on foreign investment. TRIMS could eventually be replaced with a more extensive MIA.

TRIPS: TRADE-RELATED INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Measures outlined in the WTO agreement which grant corporations patent protection for genetically-engineered food, seeds, microorganisms, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals.

WORLD BANK

Whereas the IMF acts as a monitor of the world's currencies, the World Bank is an international lending institution which funds projects designed to integrate developing countries into the wider world economy. Like the IMF, however, the World Bank requires countries receiving loans to implement "structural adjustment programs"—austerity measures designed to make developing nations more "competitive" in the global economy by cutting public programs and loosening environmental standards.

WTO: WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

A global free-trade association created in 1995 to enforce the rules of GATT. The WTO is based in Geneva and has 128 member countries, including Canada. GATT (the agreement) has been amended and incorporated into the new WTO Agreements. Whereas GATT dealt only with trade in goods, the WTO Agreements now cover services and intellectual property (TRIPS) as well.

Source: *Canadian Perspectives*, Fall 1997

Across Asia, Stirrings of Democracy

By Keith B. Richburg, *The Washington Post*

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia—In Taiwan last November, the ruling Nationalist Party suffered its biggest defeat ever in local elections, presaging a possible loss of power in the 1998 national elections for a new parliament. Meanwhile in South Korea, a veteran pro-democracy campaigner and a long-time political outsider has emerged victorious.

In the Philippines, a revived “people’s power” movement and vociferous media criticism forced President Fidel Ramos to abandon thoughts of running for another term, while in Thailand, popular protests and media pressure forced an unpopular prime minister, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, to relinquish his office last November and retire to the political sidelines.

Even in tightly controlled Indonesia—where general elections are still derisively called “elections of generals”—there are discernible stirrings of discontent and change. President Suharto is set to be anointed in 1998 to a seventh consecu-

A MORE COMPLEX REALITY IS EMERGING, WITH MORE AND MORE ASIANS NOW CHOOSING THEIR OWN LEADERS, THROWING OUT OLD ONES, FORMING LABOR UNIONS AND ADVOCACY GROUPS OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL, AND PUBLICLY CLAMORING FOR MORE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS.

tive five-year term, but already there is open talk about the “post-Suharto era.”

The question now, say Indonesia analysts and journalists, and foreign diplomats there, is not whether the vast archipelago will democratize, but at what pace and in what manner.

For most of the past three decades, East Asia has been known largely as a region of miraculous economic growth but stilted political development, with most countries led by military regimes, autocratic

strongmen, or all-powerful ruling parties that kept power through money, patronage, and a measured amount of repression. Yet recent events are converging to challenge some of the old certainties, and ending some long-held political orthodoxies.

Just as the region-wide economic slowdown has called into question the Asian “miracle,” so too have recent democratic stirrings tested the much-repeated axiom that Asians, by and large, care little about democracy and favor authoritarian government.

A few regional leaders—Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in Malaysia, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore, Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa in Hong Kong, and China’s communist leaders—still advocate the idea of “Asian values,” a system that prizes stability and consensus while eschewing Western-style democracy with its emphasis on political conflict.

But a more complex reality is emerging, with more and

more Asians now choosing their own leaders, throwing out old ones, forming labor unions and advocacy groups outside of government control, and publicly clamoring for more democratic rights.

Just as the democracy swept through Latin America and the former communist-run states of Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War, East Asia, too, is in the midst of what many here are calling a slow but steady move toward more pluralism and openness.

"The trend is toward greater democratization," said Dewi Fortuna Anwar, a political scientist with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences in Jakarta. "There is increasing societal pressure in every country. This relates to the fact that people are getting more education. It's the rise of the middle class. And it's also a result in the increased globalization of communication and travel. The wave of democratization since the end of the Cold War seems to be catching everybody."

"Democracy is on the march in East Asia," said Douglas Paal, president of the Asia Pacific Policy Center in Washington. "But the problem is, it's hard to notice because all we tend to listen to are the booming voices of the Mahathirs"—a reference to Malaysia's outspoken leader. Paal called democratization "an inevitability in the region" that will only be reinforced as more countries are forced to liberalize and open their economies as a condition for international aid.

One sign of the trend can be seen in the heavy electoral calendar of the next 12

months. South Koreans went to the polls last December for their third free presidential elections since 1987. After voting in local elections in November, Taiwanese—who emerged from martial law only in 1986—will vote in 1998 for a new national parliament.



Mural of Suharto and various images of Indonesia

Fuke Yosuke/AMPO

Filipinos will elect a new president in May, further consolidating the democracy restored by the 1986 "people power" revolt that tossed out dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos. Thailand is likely to hold its first elections under a new reformist constitution aimed at cleaning up "money politics" and reducing the role of patronage in the country's ailing system.

Hong Kong will elect its first legislature under Chinese rule which, despite complaints about the fairness of the rules and the size of the voting franchise, will make the territory the most democratic part of China.

With so many Asian countries now voting for leaders—and in places as diverse as Taiwan, with its Confucian tradition, and the Philippines, a former colony of the United States and Spain—it seems difficult to argue anymore that Asians in general don't care about democracy.

"It's nonsense," Taiwanese

President Lee Teng-hui said in an interview, commenting on the "Asian values" concept and speaking as the first leader ever elected democratically by Chinese. "Asian people are human beings... Democracy is something everybody would like to have. Everybody would like more freedom."

Some Asian countries have a long tradition of democracy and pluralistic elections—Japan, which became a Western-style liberal democracy after World War II, the Philippines, where democracy was aborted by the Marcos dictatorship, and India, the world's most populous democratic nation.

But Asia's autocrats have been able to brush aside those three countries as unsuitable role models for the rest of the region because of their unique circumstances—Japan's wartime defeat and occupation, for instance, and the Philippines' history as a US colony. And India, with its endemic poverty and violence, often still is seen as a negative example showing that democracy does not guarantee economic development and stability.

Nevertheless, academics, journalists, diplomats, and others point to a number of trends that they say shows democracy is becoming more entrenched. They are:

- ◆ The declining role of the armed forces in East Asia.
- ◆ The growth of non-government organisations.
- ◆ The rise of information technology and the aggressiveness of the media.
- ◆ The emergence of a new leadership generation.

Source: *Today*, 20 December 1997

“**S**ould your wife sharply, bully and terrify her” is a direct quotation from a 15th century church publication called *Rules of Marriage*, a document which does not just condone wife battery but actually recommends it as a meritorious action that will bring spiritual benefit to both husband and wife, to the batterer and battered alike. Just one example of the many religious texts that speak about wife battery as a legitimate and acceptable act.

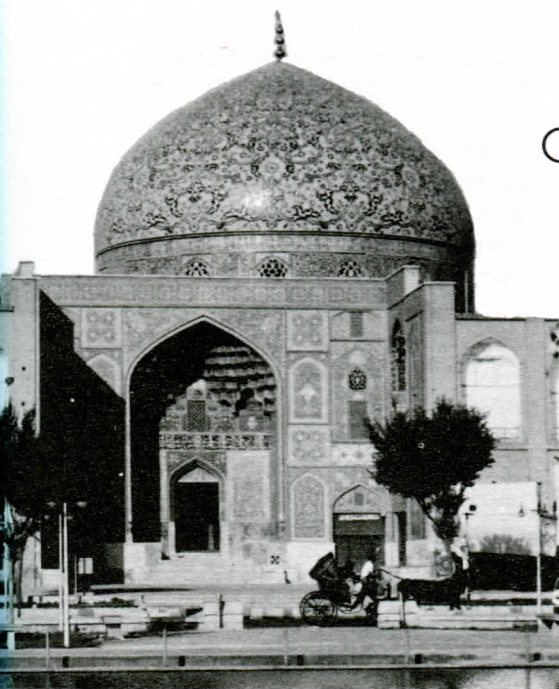
In Islam, the discussion around wife battery is linked with a particular verse, the *Surah an-Nisa* (the Surah of the Women) from the Koran. In the 34th verse (*ayah*) of Surah 4, it says (from the translation by Yusuf Ali):

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband’s) absence what Allah would have them guard.

*As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) **beat them** (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): for Allah is most high, great (above you all).”*

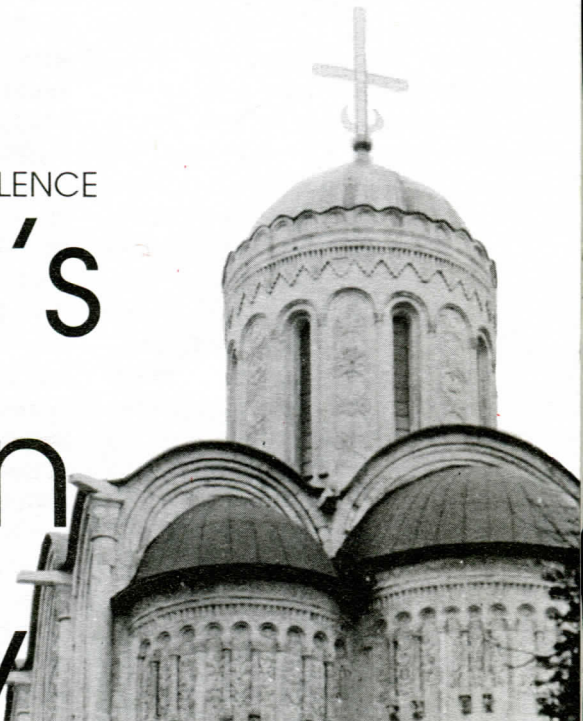
Muslims believe that the Koran is the literal word of God, a copy of the *Oemn al-Kitab*, the book that is with God in heaven. The text in its Arabic form is considered holy. Nevertheless, Muslims do hold that revelations, especially those that state guidelines for conduct, were revealed to Muhammad after particular situations occurred or when cases or problems had been brought before him. In order, therefore, to interpret the passage correctly, it is important to know which event had caused the revelation to come down. Muslim scholars called this the ‘*asbab an-nuzuli*,’ knowledge of the inducement of the revelations.

Surah 4:34 was revealed as the Prophet responded to an incident of wife battery brought to



ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

God's Own Say





The early church fathers lavishly elaborated on Eve's deception. "Do you know that each of you is an Eve; the sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age; the guilt must necessarily live too; you are the devil's gateway."

him. Mernissis's source is the *Tafsir* (a commentary on the Koran) of the famous and esteemed Islamic scholar at-Tabari who died in 922 CE.

During a violent dispute, an Ansari man slapped his wife. The injured woman hurried to the Prophet and demanded that he, as *hakam* (that is, arbiter in the legal sense), apply the law of retaliation and that he take action on the spot. Muhammad was preparing to make his decision to fulfill her request when the verse was revealed. God had decided otherwise. Muhammad realised that as an individual he could be in conflict with God. So the Prophet summoned the husband, recited the verse, and told him: "I wanted one thing, and God wanted another."

The context is clear: An incident of wife battery had taken place in Medina. The woman involved went to the Prophet to demand justice and despite the Prophet's own inclination to give her rights and straighten the husband out, a verse was revealed that in certain situations beating was allowed. And the conclusion of Muhammad is: Sometimes I want one thing and God wants another.

In the *Surah 4*, the word *daraba* is used. What does it mean? Yusuf Ali translates it to mean *to beat* but qualifies it by adding the word *lightly* in brackets even though the Arabic text does not have such qualification. Pickthall translates it as *to scourge* and Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan, while agreeing with that meaning, say the actual severity of the blow varies according to the context in which *daraba* is meted.

It is important to note that the Prophet as a person seemed to have rejected wife battery. But although the *Sunnah* (the sayings and customs) of the Prophet is highly regarded in the Islamic tra-

dition and functions as a major source of Islamic law, yet the Koran itself, the Holy Book that was sent directly from God, is regarded as the primary source of *Shari-ah*. In the case, therefore, where there is a contradiction between the sayings and customs of the Prophet as recorded in the *hadiths* and the Koran, the text of the Koran prevails in all cases.

The text of *Surah 4:34* has two crucial terms that we need to look at. First is the Arabic word for that which triggers beating, '*nushuz.*' Yusuf Ali translates it as *disloyalty and ill conduct* in v.34, whereas later in the same *Surah* in v.128, he translates it as *cruelty*.

Let us focus on secondary causes within Christianity that have led to the legitimacy and condonation of wife battery and other forms of violence against women.

Patriarchy is a social system which supports and authenticates the predominance of men, brings about a concentration of power and privilege in the hands of men, and, consequently, leads to the control and subordination of women generating social inequality between the sexes. The Bible was written within a strong patriarchal culture in which women were considered to be the possessions of men rather than their partners. The Ten Commandments prove the point. In the Tenth Commandment ("Do not covet...") in the book of Exodus, Ch. 20, v.17, "your neighbour's wife" is mentioned alongside his houses, oxen, donkeys, and all other items that *belong* to him and which another man must not take.

Influence was exercised by the patriarchal Roman culture on the emerging Christian church. In Roman culture, the *pater familias* had total power over all members of his household, including power over life and death. These Roman



It is said that a battered woman once demanded justice. But despite Muhammad's own inclination to straighten the husband out, he concluded that sometimes he wants one thing and God wants another.

patriarchal traditions influence the New Testament to some extent but more especially the canonical laws of the church. But while the Roman laws were reformed as time went by, the Church's canonical laws remained unchanged. It was the state and not the Church which in the 19th century took the lead in first minimising and later abolishing the right of husbands to chastise their wives.

In order to legitimatise the male authority over females, the same classical arguments were used as Riffat Hassan argues. Some verses from St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy, Ch.2, which speak about the attitude required of women in worship, sum it up:

"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner." 1 Timothy, 2:11-14

Paul further asked wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. *"For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church... Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."* Ephesians 6:22-26.

The early church fathers lavishly elaborated on Eve's deception. Tertulian, a church father from the second century, wrote: *"Do you know that each of you is an Eve; the sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age; the guilt must necessarily live too; you are the devil's gateway; you are the unsealer of that tree; you are the first deserter of the Divine Law; you are she who persuaded him when the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image in man. On account of your desert, that is, death, even the*

Son of God had to die."

The logical step from this and similar types of verbal violence to actual physical violence is easy to see, especially in those cases where husbands considered their wives *'daughters of evil'* rather than daughters of Eve, *'scorpions ever ready to sting'* and *'instruments which the Devil uses to gain possession of the male souls,'* to quote from just a few more descriptions of woman that have flowed from the pens of church fathers.

Don't the Scriptures imply that physical violence against women is acceptable since the mother of all women, Eve, is punished with the pains of labour for her transgression? It says in the Book of Genesis 3:16: *"Because you have done this, I will greatly increase your pains in child-bearing; with pain will you give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you?"* And the reformer Martin Luther, said: *"If a woman grows weary and at last dies from child-bearing, it matters not. Let her only die from bearing. She is there to do it."*

In more recent times, theologians, both male and female, sought new ways of interpreting the texts. They have stressed the creation tradition of the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis. Genesis 1:27 says that: *"God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them,"* thus underlining that there was one act of creation which brought humanity, male and female, into being. Both were created in the image of God.

Source: *African Human Rights Newsletter* Vol. 7, No. 2, April-June 1997



WOMEN and new TECHNOLOGY

By Catherine Russo

Telemanita

is a center dedicated to training women in the use of electronic technologies.

Since 1992, more than 40 women have been trained in video production. The courses offered are: basic video production, editing, sound, and lighting.

Our courses include media literacy education with a gender perspective. Our goal is to encourage women to develop new ways of seeing the images they consume and then to think about new ways of producing images that empower women.

We analyse the communications industries and examine their biases. In 1995, we designed a ten-day workshop for 18 women. The first days were spent in deconstructing media images and analysing their patriarchal content. For the remainder of the workshop, women wrote scripts, including documentary, drama, and ex-

perimental pieces and produced a video.

Groups that have produced videos at Telemanita include: Madre Tierra—Guatemalan women refugees from Las Chavas; a young girls' gang from Mexico City, Sipam; a women's health centre in Morelos that runs a recycling centre; students from the University of San Luis Potosi and Las Reinas; and a group of older women who run workshops on women and aging.

We also produce videos for other groups. We produced a video for the sixth and seventh Latin American Feminist Conferences and another for the fourth Lesbian Feminist conference in Mexico.

CATALOGUE ON WOMEN'S WORK

Over the past two years, we have trained ourselves to use the Internet. This year, we began training other women, too. We produce an electronic bulletin called 'Video Red Mujeres,' which is sent over the Internet to 35 groups involved in women

and communications projects. This bulletin is produced in Spanish and English and open to others wishing to receive information about new video productions, new technology, and other news affecting women producers.

The goal is to share information, which is hard to come by, especially in Latin America. One of our goals is to develop this bulletin into a conference. We are dedicating our services to organise, translate, and distribute the bulletin. It includes the responses we have received from members, as well as information we have come across that seems useful.

We feel that a conference of this sort may just flounder without a group assuming responsibility for some time. Many fine videos are produced and sparsely distributed. In addition to disseminating this information via the bulletin, we are presently producing our first catalogue of video productions by women in Latin America. We highly recommend the productions included in this catalogue to groups who need educational videos. The themes include domestic violence, pre-natal care, women and AIDS, environmental issues, women and religion, sexual preference, sexuality, and others. We have produced three women's video festivals in Mexico City and sent video festival packages to groups in other parts of Mexico and Latin America.

BETTER TRAINING WITHOUT MEN

It is our experience that women learn better in groups without men. They are not as afraid to appear stupid and ask more questions. They more eagerly pick up the equipment

without deferring to the men in the group. Women have been taught to be intimidated by technology. We have created our own production manual where we break down the terminologies and concepts of production.

In the very first class, we pass around the camera and let women shoot whatever they like. As the classes progress, they can view their progress from that very first shoot. The classes include anywhere from five to ten women and run over three weekends for a total of six days.

A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE INTERNET TRAINING IS TO HAVE A VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND PATIENT TEACHER. IT IS ONE THING TO KNOW THE INFORMATION AND ANOTHER TO BE ABLE TO PASS IT ON.

It is our experience that women in Mexico and Central America most often need additional one-on-one training sessions after the workshops. We encourage these women to continue working with us and to produce their own piece as soon as possible. Otherwise, time passes and the task seems overwhelming.

We are here to help develop a script, make a production plan, look for funding, and help with the actual shooting and editing. Most women who come to our courses need all these types of assistance. They also need access to equipment.

Our Internet training began last year. For a while, it was difficult to work with "La Neta" and we still have problems because of the poor tele-

phone service available. We have to pay for long distance calls to Mexico because that is the closest node and this has made it difficult to really investigate with Netscape.

Many women's groups in Latin America do not use Internet services or, if they do, only one woman in the group knows how to use it. Phone lines are still very expensive and so it is hard to dedicate the office line to women learning and using the Internet.

A very important part of the Internet training is to have a very knowledgeable and patient teacher. We ourselves have had the experience of learning from people who were also learning from people who were also learning and it was frustrating to feel we were wasting time through lack of basic knowledge. Someone who knows how to *teach* is also important. It is one thing to know the information and another to be able to pass it on. Internet training for women must be consistent. The women must be able to practice regularly so as not to forget the skill.

Finally, we have designed and are presently giving a media literacy course for fifth and sixth graders. The concept of media literacy does not exist here and we have not been able to define it in a few words in Spanish. We are looking for media literacy material that is easy to use or to translate. We would also like to hear of experiences in training young students as well as adults. We would also love to share our experiences.

Source: *Zebra News*, Issue 32, 1997

MANILA (Women's Feature Service)—“No voice, no choice, no power,” was how Anna Leah Sarabia, executive director of Women's Media Circle, summarised the situation of most Filipino women today during a recent symposium on Women and Technology.

In her talk on “the new technologies from a feminist viewpoint,” jointly sponsored by

market what to or not to sell,” she explained.

Women who work outside the home believe equality begins with economic independence. “However, there is still that ‘broadcast’ clock which shows how women in the Philippines, even with money, are stereotyped,” Sarabia conceded, herself a mother and a producer of radio and TV programs.

Information Technology:

The New Gender Equalizer

By Gina Mission

Easymailer (EMC), a national E-mail service, Isis International-Manila, and WomanHealth, Sarabia started with the roles that women play vis-a-vis technology—as audience, as consumers, and as inter-actors.

We are audience, according to her, when we listen to priests deliver the homilies in the pulpits; when we listen to politicians announce their platform of government; when we sit in boardrooms dominated by men. It is a situation where the main players are men.

“As audience, we are expected to listen to those in power,” she says with bitter sarcasm. “After all, silence is supposed to be a virtue for women,” she added.

But we are now in the 90's where women, apart from opting to be full-time housewives, now pursue professional careers—for economic independence or when to or not to sell,” she explained.

With some money, Sarabia conceded, women as consumers can be equal with men in some aspects. “As buyers, for example, they can dictate the

The advertising rates for primetime shows (between 6 to 10 p.m.—the time when husbands and kids are supposed to be home) cost twice the rates of the morning noontime shows (consisting mainly of fashion, cooking, showbiz news, etc. and considered watched only by housewives). In fact, some Philippine TV stations don't start until 12 noon.

“The irony is that while advertisers pay much to be seen by prime time audience, it is the women who do the ‘grocery,’” she added matter-of-factly, prompting a suppressed laughter in the audience.

The advent of telecommunication technology brings yet another role for the women to play—that of inter-actors.

Unlike the first two roles where they are quite passive, women as inter-actors now approach things rather aggressively, whether through the 15 x 9 inch beeper or the 2 x 5 inch cellular.

It is common nowadays to hear stories of people sending uncensored messages (expressed at most in 400 characters) to each other or for some to talk unrestrictedly on the phone.



The same is true with telephone hotlines where callers can share their wildest or cruellest experiences simply because nobody sees them.

And where anonymity is the name of the game, the emergence of E-mail and the Internet is considered to be God's gift to the women's movement. Computer intersection through network gives the women a 'feel' of the ultimate communicator.

Easymailer, where 150 subscribers are connected through the E-mail, serves as an avenue for women who want to address issues of all concerns on a national level. The issues 'talk' politics, ecology, culture, gender, etc. with the hope of influencing policy on these issues.

Pi Villanueva, section editor of *Women in Action*, a publication by Isis International-Manila, confesses to have been attracted to the computer because "you don't have to dress up to face an audience to convey your message."

"It offers them privacy which makes it possible for women to create a new self, a virtual self they themselves designed (in as many words as they want), which is devoid of prejudgment because of physical absence of the other party," asserted Sarabia.

"This development brings in what they call 'cyberfemininity' which creates virtual freedom for women. Unlike being audience or consumers where they are voiceless and therefore powerless, they can now explore or break boundaries to constantly create or define who they are, to show that there are voices other than those in power," she maintained.

In the same manner that we abhor any violation of the freedom of expression, Sarabia believes that "invasion of this privacy would trigger them to create communities of their own. Diversity would then exist, which in turn makes democracy possible."

Ande Andolin of the Women's Education, Development Productivity and Research Organization (WEDPRO) conceded that it is to the great advantage of those who have access (like when you type a password and on the screen will appear, for example, a woman's face in the mail-order bride directory of the Internet). However, it is surely a major form of exploitation on the part of those who are in the directory, knowingly or unknowingly. "I may wake up one day to see my face in one of those in the directory," she exclaimed.

Villanueva, on the other hand, claims that

goodness or badness of this information technology (IT) is relative. "After all, it's the user that gives it value," she countered.

Access to this interaction means you have a personal computer and a modem connected to the Internet or the local E-mail through a telephone line, Dr. Sylvia "Guy" Claudio, chairperson of Linangan ng Kababaihan (literally means developing the women or LIKHAAN), an NGO that trains and educates grassroots women, said that this development creates two classes: "the haves and the have-nots or the knows and the know-nots."

THE KEY IS TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO FALL INTO THE TRAP OF ENJOYING THE WONDERS OF THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY AND FORGETTING THE VALUE OF ONE'S NEED FOR IT.

Robert Verzola, operator of EMC, activist, and a convener of Philippine Greens, said that the Philippines, "basically an agricultural country trying hard to be industrialized, has a dilemma like other developing countries to try or not to try."

"Being in the transition period, we tend to change the order, by replacing manual works with computerized ones, in the honest belief that it is the only way to get there, wherever and whatever that is."

A person, for instance, may be contented with using the non-complicated DOS at first. But with the various Windows-based softwares now proliferating in the market, everyone wants to have his/her PC upgraded to accommodate the latest version. One may be spending the last centavo in the ardent desire to join the bandwagon.

"The key is to be careful not to fall into this trap," advised Verzola. That is, enjoying the wonders which this new technology offers without forgetting the value of one's needs for it.

However one views this development, one thing is sure though: information technology gives a level playing field for men and women. Women can now be heard or represented equally. IT is it!

PART ONE: Brief Overview of the Country*:

For more than three decades, Cambodia, because of its unique situation, has had no official census since 1962. The first phase of a government census (1997-99) was interrupted by another violent change of power in July 1997. To what extent the turmoil and uncertainty damaged the reliability of information gathering will be difficult to ascertain but they undoubtedly affected the initial phase of the census.



CAMBODIA

WATERED BY WOMEN'S SWEAT AND TEARS

By Nancy Pearson Arcellana

Nevertheless, Cambodia currently estimates the population at 10.7 million with approximately 53 percent being female. The female population is higher at 58 percent for the over-40 age group. The population is believed to be increasing at a rate of 2.8 percent per year. Cambodia continues to be primarily an agrarian society with an overwhelming 86 percent of the people residing in rural areas.

The burdens of trauma, war, and on-going civil disturbances rest heavily on the shoulders of Cambodian women with nearly every fourth household headed by a female. Interestingly, a World Bank survey which assessed poverty — **based on food consumption** — found that female-headed households fare much better than their male-headed counterparts. According to the survey, the female-headed households “account for 23 percent of population but they account for only about 15 percent of poor.” The World Bank report naively concludes: “Overall, it does not appear to be the case that female-headed households are generally more vulnerable to poverty than those headed by males; in fact the opposite seems to be the case. In this respect gender and poverty patterns by household headship are similar to those observed in other East Asian countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia.” The report should have acknowledged that despite women’s severe disadvantages and poverty — often to their own physical detriment — they prioritize the food security of their children and families over expenditures common to men (i.e., alcohol, gambling, entertainment, etc.).



photos by Nancy Pearson Arcellana/isis photobank

Literacy Rates: Aged 15 and above

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>Total</u>	68.7	81.8	58.0
Urban	80.2	90.6	71.5
Rural	66.8	80.3	55.7

These burdens are aggravated by a very low literacy rate among Cambodian women. (See box on Literacy Rates.) Among those who are literate, aged seven and above, 96 percent have NOT completed even secondary level education. To make matters worse, almost 62 percent of females have not even completed the primary level. The legacy of the Khmer Rouge regime has resulted in only 1.5 percent of the population achieving levels beyond secondary education. The girl-child is significantly disadvantaged and represents more than half of the child labor force, estimated to be about 10 percent of all children aged 7-14.

To bring the reality of the situation closer to home, basic services such as potable water, toilet facilities, and electricity are unavailable to more than 90 percent of the population. This inevitably results in additional time-consuming labor for women and young girls. The pervasive lack of access to basic education, primary health care, immunization and social welfare services has resulted in a high child (under five) mortality rate of 181 per 100,000 live births—estimated at over 80,000 deaths per year. Malnutrition is cited as a major underlying cause of such deaths. In addition, Cambodia has the highest maternal death rate in Asia—600-900 per 100,000 live births. The high rate of anemia among pregnant women (50 percent) certainly contributes to the incidence of birth complications resulting in death.

The *First Socio-economic Development Plan 1996-2000* of the Ministry of Planning of the Royal Government of Cambodia (February 1996) states: **"For some, the rapid liberalization of the economy has resulted in exploitation. The psycho-social conditions of a nation recovering from**

massive destruction adds to the vulnerability of people, many of whom are isolated from the traditional networks of social protection. The breakdown of many nuclear and extended family units has had a significant impact on the protection of individuals, most notably for children." This is clearly an understatement considering the alarming rise of street children, forced prostitution, trafficking in women and children, and domestic violence. These will be further discussed in the second section of this article.

Economic liberalization in Cambodia began in 1985. Prior to that the economy was organized primarily along centrally-planned lines. Private property rights were restored and government control of prices was abolished in 1989. After the signing of the Paris Peace Accord in 1991, economic liberalization went in full swing.

Perhaps due to the massive influx of investments and consumer needs of the international donor and service agencies, the fastest growing sectors in the country were industry—especially construction—and services, with the hotel and restaurant component expanding by the widest margin (21 percent a year).

Unfortunately but not surprisingly, agriculture—by far the largest sector—was considered the main drag on economic growth. It grew at a mere 2.6 percent during the period (1990-95), slightly below the rate of population growth. Rice production in particular did not increase at all over the same period. The government acknowledges that food shortages were common in many areas and aggravated by the difficulties surplus producers faced in transporting their produce. The government admits that, "This points to food insecurity in the rural areas as a major problem and demonstrates that economic welfare is not directly proportional to the level of GDP per capita." In fact, "considerable inequality exists, both across

and within regions."

Cambodia seems to be following the footsteps of many other Asian governments. Rather than focus on sustainable agriculture, food self-sufficiency, and security, the government is advocating and focusing on the expansion of more commercial or cash crop diversification, especially rubber plantations. In addition, the scale of deforestation in Cambodia is massive and alarming. A principal government objective is the "controlled, managed exploitation of the forests" and more accurate GDP calculations in the future taking into account "resource depletion...[and] the destruction of non-renewable resources."

PART TWO: The following section highlights government statements+ and reality as perceived by a number of Cambodians working in various areas of development and social services regarding issues of domestic violence; forced prostitution; the girl-child; and mental health.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

"The manifestations of violence within many households and within society are evidence of the isolation and insecurity felt by manyDomestic violence and rape are also critical problems. Preliminary findings of a recent survey indicate that domestic violence is much more pervasive than originally thought; and that the levels of violence are extremely high and occur across socio-economic classes and geographical regions."

In the words of a young male Cambodian development worker regarding the incidence of domestic violence: "Violence has been used to change each regime and government in Cambodia. This has been seen as the way to resolve problems. It is not, surprising that it has been carried down to the family level." Surprising or not, understandable or not given Cambodia's history, the situation is appalling.

The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) was set up less than a year ago to change that pattern and work toward the elimination of all forms of violence against women (domestic violence, forced marriage, prostitution, rape, etc.—See side story). In such a short time, it has already served almost 150 women and won a landmark civil law case.

The CWCC assisted in a civil suit against an abusive husband—who happens to be an employee of the UNDP in Cambodia—for both wife battery and child abuse. The court awarded the wife a divorce, custody of the children, the family home, and entitlement to child support and alimony. Unfortunately, the husband did not agree to appear or abide by the court's decision. He refuses to vacate the family home, continues to hold one child, and has hired armed men to secure the compound. This forced the judge to issue arrest warrants for all parties standing in the way of the implementation of the judgement.

The UNDP was requested to garnish the employee's wages and remit it directly to the wife. The UNDP, however, claims it cannot do this without the consent of the employee or permission from the head office in New York. This is indeed unfortunate given the fact that the husband has been convicted of severe abuse of his wife and children. Certainly, it is not in the interest of the woman for the UNDP to fire the employee but the UNDP could set a strong example and certainly bring pressure to bear upon the employee to comply with the court's judgement. This could be a strong example of the UN's commitment and would be a tremendous support and service to the advancement of women's human rights.

FORCED PROSTITUTION

"An alarming aspect of the lives of too many young girls and women is their 'commoditisation.' Anxious to do what they can to provide finan-

cial support for their families, some of them are tricked into lives of debt and virtual slavery. Many have few alternatives but prostitution, with the high risks of contracting HIV/AIDS which such a life entails.

In November 1997 alone, CWCC helped rescue 200 women from a brothel where they had been forced into prostitution. Brothels have become rampant and the supply of young women from the poor rural provinces is unending. As a way to raise community awareness and stop

CAMBODIA SEEMS TO BE FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF MANY OTHER ASIAN GOVERNMENTS. RATHER THAN FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND SECURITY, THE GOVERNMENT IS ADVOCATING AND FOCUSING ON THE EXPANSION OF MORE COMMERCIAL OR CASH CROP DIVERSIFICATION, ESPECIALLY RUBBER PLANTATIONS.

the recruitment cycle, the CWCC asks women if they are willing to return to their communities to share their stories. Many of the women have risked social isolation and prejudice in doing so. They often find that they are not the only victims from their community. In one village, as many as 27 young women "disappeared" and families have not heard from their daughters or seen the "job recruiters" again.

The prostitution of women and teenagers has been growing at alarming rates. In 1990, there were an estimated 1,500 prostitutes; by late 1994, the figure rose to an estimated 17,000-20,000. The Cambodian Women's Development Association conducted a survey in an attempt to gauge the extent of the problem. They found that sophisticated networks for abduction, sale, and trafficking of women have been established both domestically and across international borders. The

survey also showed that 50 percent of commercial sex workers had been deceived or sold, 86 percent of them by their parents, relatives, neighbors or friends whom the girls/women had initially trusted. Most often, the reasons were to pay debts or help the family survive. Among the young prostitutes under 18 years, half were sold with the understanding that they would be placed into domestic service.

In addition to the blatant abuse of women and girls as a result of forced prostitution, the high incidence of HIV/AIDS positive cases is horrible. The CWCC provides education to women regarding HIV/AIDS and offers women the choice to be tested. They provide counseling services before, during, and after the testing process. HALF of each batch of women tested so far have come up HIV positive. This includes a group of women rescued from a "high-class" brothel.

Commonly held views among Cambodians are that only Vietnamese women are prostitutes, not Khmer women, and they voluntarily chose the profession. From a group of 103 women rescued from a brothel, **only one said she had voluntarily entered prostitution** because her family desperately needed the money. About 35 percent of these women were under 18 years. There were 10 Vietnamese women in this group, all of whom had been tricked by recruiters and brought across the border illegally. Clearly the public perception is having a hard time catching up with reality.

The GIRL-CHILD

"The main problem faced by rural female-headed households is lack of labour...These women face problems of child care, having nobody to look after their young children while they work. The elder daughters in such families usually have to take much of the responsibility for caring for their younger siblings, so that they often drop out of school."

Survival often requires being inconspicuous. The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) has had to balance this need for privacy with an equal need for public visibility. Yet their PUBLIC office is a lesson in quiet but intense existence.

I'm sitting in a small room of their center with Executive Director Chanthol Oung while she tells me about the inner workings of their fledgling organization. The going hasn't always been smooth and they've sometimes had to learn lessons the hard way. At the same time they have had exceptional success by anyone's standards. The CWCC has already served almost 150 women since opening their doors in March 1997.

Chanthol has a license of law and public administration — AND she finds good lawyers. Recently, one of the CWCC clients won a landmark domestic violence case in civil court with the help of the Cambodian Defender Project. (See main story.) I was so absorbed in the stories of the women and how the center is able to provide services that I completely forgot to ask her what brought her into this line of work. Whatever her motivation, she exudes passionate interest and perhaps that passion sparks hope in the women who enter the CWCC's doors.

I say doors — plural — because the CWCC has two places: the public office and the women's shelter. The shelter, as women know, must be absolutely confidential in order to protect women from abusive husbands, pimps, brothel owners, and even law enforcement personnel and high level government officials who are involved in the prostitution and

trafficking of women and children. In order to maintain this confidentiality, the public office serves as the intake center and has a capacity to house 10 women. During the first week, CWCC does intake assessment, counseling, and screening of the women before moving them to the shelter.

The shelter has been "home" to an average of 50 women a month since it opened even though the ideal capacity is about thirty. The women always make room for more. The women can stay in the shelter for up to six months. The CWCC provides food, medical assistance, clothing, literacy training, counseling — both psychological as well as legal — and make referrals for various kinds of vocational training with other NGOs. In the first nine



Nancy Pearson Arcellanalis photobank

Chanthol Oung, Executive Director of the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center

months alone, 10 women have availed of vocational training and five were already placed in factory jobs which CWCC located. Some women do want to reintegrate into their communities and CWCC helps them return. Thirty-one women so far have taken that difficult step.

Community education is a critical concern and aspect of CWCC's efforts. Four months ago, the CWCC launched a TV video and radio spots on sex trafficking which are still being aired. One of the immediate results was the

Hope Amidst Despair:

the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center

By Nancy Pearson Arcellana

awakening of the vice-mayor of Phnom Penh. Last 5 November, he brought district police chiefs from all city districts for an orientation where the CWCC showed their video, presented the issues, and asked for support in stopping the trafficking of women. The results in the last weeks have been dramatic with a significant rise in rescues of women from brothels and arrests of people involved in trafficking. How are they able to trust the police? Chanthol calmly replied, "We only trust those who have been referred by our husbands, friends and former classmates." So far, that policy seems to have been a good one.

In addition to the terrible emotional and physical scars inflicted upon women and girls — many forced into prostitution are between the ages of 12 and 17 — the incidence of those testing positive for HIV/AIDS is astounding. It confirms the UNDP assessment that Cambodia has the highest HIV transmission rate in the world. It is highly unlikely that the new and expensive treatments now available in the West for prolonging life will be available to these poor women and girls. This fact, among others, makes places like the CWCC even more remarkable in their ability to spread hope in the midst of despair. ☺

The legacy of the Khmer Rouge regime continues to wreak havoc on the social fabric. The unusually high number of orphaned and abandoned children in Cambodia is but another of these tragic testaments. It is difficult to assess their numbers although a "study in 1991 in the 11 most populous provinces, [found that] one out of every 13 children was reported to have lost one or both parents. Forty-five percent of these had lost both." These are the children most at risk of many forms of abuse—child labor, physical and sexual abuse, and exploitation. Girl-children suffer with long hours of work and lose opportunity to attend school. They are also at high risk of being sold to supplement family income.

MENTAL HEALTH: An entire nation affected by a legacy of armed conflict.

"Cambodians are not only living with the dangers of continued localized armed conflict but also with the consequences of two decades of civil war. The direct consequences of this include the dangers of land mines, of being displaced, of losing family members, and of living with violence as a way of life."

The decades of war have scarred the land and countless numbers of people—both visibly and invisibly. It is estimated that one in 236 persons is an amputee and that there are an average of 300-500 victims of land mines per month. The vast majority of victims are men (18 to 35 years old). Five to eight percent of those maimed are women, seven percent children. These are the visible scars. The mental health of an entire nation is difficult to gauge but the high rate of domestic and civil violence is clearly an indication of the invisible scars left on the psyches of millions.

Isis had the opportunity to interview seven of the first 10 Cambodian psychiatrists who will graduate in February 1998 after three and a half years of training through the International Organization on Migration

(IOM) and the tutelage of Dr. Ang Sarun. Dr. Lavrantz Kyrдалen, head of the Department of Psychiatry of Gjøvik Fylkessykehus of Norway, was just completing one year with the candidates and stressed the huge demand in Cambodia for mental health services.

THE CAMBODIA WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION SURVEY SHOWED THAT 50 PERCENT OF COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS HAD BEEN DECEIVED OR SOLD, 86 PERCENT OF THEM BY THEIR PARENTS, RELATIVES, NEIGHBORS OR FRIENDS WHOM THE GIRLS/WOMEN HAD INITIALLY TRUSTED. COMMONLY-HELD VIEWS AMONG CAMBODIANS ARE THAT ONLY VIETNAMESE WOMEN ARE PROSTITUTES, NOT KHMER WOMEN, AND THEY VOLUNTARILY CHOSE THE PROFESSION.

Dr. Ka Sunbaunat, one of the Cambodian psychiatrists and chairman of the Mental Health Sub-Committee, Ministry of Health, will be taking over the leadership of the group after February. He said that though they are young, they are very committed to strengthening their competency to transfer knowledge to the next generations. Their challenge is tremendous.

In spite of the fact that the social stigma against people with mental health problems is very high in Cambodia, they are not abandoned by their family members. Ironically, this could be one of the "benefits" of not having any in-patient mental health facilities in the entire country. Families literally have nowhere to put their ailing family members. The outpatient clinic can provide a room and sedate a severely psychotic patient until he or she is able to go home.

As in most other parts of the world, two-thirds of the patients are

women and one-third are men. However, there is a dearth of research related to the mentally ill, let alone the impact on women, as mentally ill or care-givers. With such significant numbers of women patients, it is encouraging that one of the psychiatrists, Dr. Ang Sody (the only woman in the batch of ten), is doing her research on the high incidence of post-partum depression disorders in Cambodian women and possible treatments.

The most common reported problems are depression, anxiety disorders, and severe psychosis. Men are more likely to exhibit acute psychosis. The main problems for women are generally due to their husbands, namely, domestic violence and economic difficulties. The doctors believe that they will undoubtedly begin to see more mental health problems in women associated with the rise in forced prostitution and the resulting incidence of HIV/AIDS.

It is deeply encouraging to witness the dedication and commitment shown daily by these people who are stemming the tide of violence to build a healthier society. ☺

* Information was culled from the following published sources in addition to personal interviews cited above:

+ Ministry of Planning, The Royal Government of Cambodia. *First Socioeconomic Development Plan 1996-2000.* [1996]

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Listening to our Pain

Preventing workplace injuries and illnesses through ergonomics

For many people, work means pain: eyestrains, back pains, traumas, strains, and repetitive motion injuries. Ergonomics focuses on the prevention of such injuries through the proper design of equipment, workstations, products, and work methods according to people's capabilities and limitations. This article explains what ergonomics is, how it works, and what the ILO is doing about it.

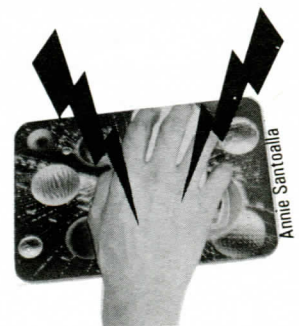
In the United States, back disorders caused more than 27 percent of all non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work in 1993. Government studies have estimated total costs of low back pain to society to be between US\$50 billion and US\$100 billion yearly. Moreover, up to 30 percent of US workers routinely perform activities that may increase their risk of developing low back disorders, and it is estimated that half of the workers in the US hold jobs which could cause Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTDs).

At the Colmotores automobile factory in Colombia (1,600 employees produce 100,000 cars yearly), where most sick leaves

and occupational injuries are due to musculoskeletal disorders, company medical experts realised that the work environment had to be improved and that ergonomic principles had to be applied. The experts understood that better working conditions would be the most effective way of reducing the risk of musculoskeletal injuries.

Ergonomic-related injuries and illnesses affect workers worldwide, from eyestrains and headaches to musculoskeletal ailments such as chronic back, neck and shoulder pain. Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs), Repetitive Motion Injuries (RMIs), and CTDs are terms used interchangeably.

While there are no global figures, data concerning such injuries are largely gleaned from national sources, mostly from industrialized countries. Millions of workers around the globe prob-



ably suffer from one or more of the above ailments yearly. Result: downtime, reduced productivity, and high costs for both employees and employers.

To date, reliable figures are generally not available to describe the extent of ergonomic-related injuries and illnesses in non-industrialized countries. It is encouraging, however, that in a number of developing and newly-industrialized countries such as Hungary, Tunisia, Singapore, and Myanmar, musculoskeletal diseases, RSIs and vibration-related diseases are recognized as occupational diseases. This means that a physician or employer who detects a work-related case is required by law to report it to the competent authority. The reporting system breaks down, however, even in many industrialized countries, when there is a lack of motivation on the part of employers, employees, and physicians. Without accurate reporting, reliable figures cannot be obtained to describe a country's situation.

Ergonomics, the integration of anatomy, physiology and psychology, which is used to match jobs, systems, products, and environments to the physical and mental abilities and the limitations of workers, has a proven track record in reducing work-related ailments.

The experience of the Norwegian State Institute is a case in point. Ergonomic improvements made on workstation layouts and seating halved absenteeism due to back pain in one year. In the Colmotores automobile factory, its medical director used a Finnish model of work organization and design involving choice of tools and equipment and adjustable chairs. The result was a produc-

tivity increase of 15 percent during the first five months following the application of such measures. Experience has shown repeatedly that the application of ergonomic principles in the workplace can result in marked, even dramatic, improvements.



Women work long hours without anything to rest their backs on.

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Repetitive Strain Injuries are a category of injuries which occur from repeatedly performing a task putting stress or strain on a certain part of the body causing damage to nerves, muscles, tendons, and other soft body tissues. They comprise more than 100 different types of job-related injuries and illnesses, some so crippling that they may require surgery or cause permanent disability. Repetitive Strain Injuries can cause severe pain and often make daily tasks such as getting dressed, shopping, turning taps, cooking, child care, etc. difficult, or even impossible, to perform.

Increased tension at home and at work is frequently associated with RSIs due to several factors. For one, since RSIs are not usually visible to the naked eye, colleagues and family members may not believe what they cannot see. For another, the resulting disabilities usually affect the type of tasks which can be performed at

home and at work which may temporarily increase the burden of work for others. For still another, those not suffering from the condition often don't understand the nature of the injury or illness. Finally, depending on the extent of the condition, treatment and healing time can range from a number

of weeks to more than a year. Some cases never heal and may leave the injured person permanently disabled.

Not localized to any type of job, RSIs tend to affect workers in a wide variety of occupations ranging from assembly line and food processing jobs to secretarial work, data processing, and work at visual display units or VDUs (also called visual display terminals, or VDTs), to name a

few.

Repetitive Strain Injuries, though they can take years to develop, usually strike when the workers are still in their prime around the age of 40. Fortunately, treatment is available and, in many cases, yield good results, especially if the symptoms are diagnosed early. Once "cured," however, if a worker returns to the same working conditions which caused or aggravated the condition in the first place, recurrence is likely, which in turn usually necessitates more days off work.

More on RSIs:

- ◆ In an 11 December 1996 article in the *Washington Post*, US Labor Secretary Robert Reich acknowledged that RSIs were the fastest growing job-related impairments in the United States. In March 1997, the United States Department of Labor reported that 6.6 million work-related injuries and illnesses were reported in the USA in 1995. Sixty-two per-

cent (or three out of five) of the workplace illnesses were disorders associated with repeated trauma, such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

- ◆ Outlined in the 1994 issue of *Euro Review on Research in Health and Safety At Work*, research has shown that, in Sweden, one out of every four workplace accidents and more than 50 percent of the reported cases of occupational disease involve the musculoskeletal system. Two-thirds, or around 20,000 of the cases, involve symptoms of the neck, arm/shoulder, or hand. On average, musculoskeletal injuries led to more than 100 sick-leave days per case. Sweden's women in manufacturing industries have the highest risk of developing RSIs. The risk of musculoskeletal diseases among women who perform assembly work in the Swedish electronics industry has been reported to be 20 times higher than in the country's working population as a whole. Germany has also reported higher prevalence of RSIs among women. Another startling statistic from Sweden reveals that, across the board, injuries of the lower back are estimated to make almost 40 percent of all musculoskeletal injuries on the job, in any country, with some cases resulting in permanent disability.
- ◆ A 1992 report on workplace injuries published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that the majority of the workplace disorders that year were associated with repeated trauma, affecting some 282,000 workers or 62 percent of total private industry illness cases in the United States.

- ◆ A 1994 report of the Health and Safety Commission of the United Kingdom showed that, during the financial year 1993-1994, there were at least 107,000 people in the UK alone suffering from musculoskeletal symptoms brought on as a direct result of poor

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workplace design. Half of these symptoms caused an absence of three or more days off work. The cost of these to British industry, including lost output, medical treatment, and individual suffering, exceeded UKL90 million (US\$144 million). The total cost of musculoskeletal symptoms to British industry is conservatively estimated at UKL25 billion (US\$40 billion) a year. These disorders, however, should not be considered as a hazard only of modern-day life. According to the 1994 issue of *Euro Review on Research in Health and Safety at Work*, RSIs were reported in the former East Germany as early as 1952, with between one and two thousand cases documented a year after.

CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME DOCUMENTED MOST FREQUENTLY

The most frequently documented RSI is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS), today a compensable occupational disease in many countries. Carpal Tunnel Syn-

drome occurs when the median nerve (a major nerve in the wrist) cannot function adequately because of pressure caused by repeated finger motions and/or a bent wrist. Symptoms can include numbness, pain and/or tingling in the thumb and fingers, a burning feeling in the hands or forearms, a dry, non-sweaty palm, reduced strength of the hand noticeable by the inability to open jars or to lift or hold objects, and discomfort in the arms, shoulder, or neck.

Some of the symptoms may occur during the night rather than during the day. Extreme cases can result in permanent disability due to a complete inability to use the wrists in performing or holding an object in the hand. The disease is often suffered by workers who spend long hours using computers, particularly where the computer workstation is not adequately adjusted to the side of the user, workers who process meat or poultry, supermarket check-out workers who use electronic scanners, other workers who perform repetitive tasks. Working with vibrating hand tools also increases the risk of CTS. Wrist-intensive activities at home, such as gardening or painting, can greatly exacerbate CTS or other RSIs.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, every worker suffering from CTS loses more than 30 days of work. This is longer than absences from amputation and fractures. The United States Occupational Health Safety Administration (OSHA) estimates the annual cost of these injuries to be about US\$100 million.

"ERGONOMIC PHILOSOPHY" PAYS OFF

Eyestrains, headaches, and musculoskeletal disorders can be prevented and optimal performance can be obtained if equipment, workstation, products, and work methods are designed ac-

ording to human capabilities and limitations, by applying the principles of ergonomics. The costs of *ignoring* these principles include:

- ♦ injuries and occupational diseases (including RSIs, CTDs, and RMIs)
- ♦ increased absenteeism
- ♦ higher medical and insurance costs
- ♦ increased probability of accidents and errors
- ♦ higher turnover of workers
- ♦ less production
- ♦ lawsuits
- ♦ low-quality work
- ♦ less spare capacity to deal with emergencies

The adoption of an ergonomic philosophy in the workplace has a proven track record. For example, an ergonomic evaluation and redesign were carried out in a park and school involving the janitorial staff in Mostreras, Sweden. The project, which was implemented from 1991 to the end of 1992, proved the benefits of ergonomics. Sick leaves went down from 44.1 days to 10.1 days per employee per year. In 1992, savings to the employer and the social insurance system amounted to SEK 417,000 (US\$57,000). Productivity rose by 150 personnel days and satisfaction among workers increased.

In the case of the Norwegian State Institute which studied the incidence of back discomfort among office workers, the ergonomic improvements made to workstation layouts and seating for the workers reduced back-related absenteeism by half and turnover from 40 percent to five percent and 40 percent of the workers on disability leave returned to work. The importance of these results cannot be overstated as muscular soreness is the second greatest cause of absenteeism next to common cold.

ERGONOMIC CHECKPOINTS: ILO RESPONSE

It is essential to identify ergonomic risk factors (defined as any imbalance between the worker and the work environment which results to extra demands on the worker) to prevent ergonomic-related illnesses. The first step is to perform a superficial audit of the workplace using an ergonomics checklist. It may contain the following questions:

IT IS ESSENTIAL TO IDENTIFY ERGONOMIC RISK FACTORS TO PREVENT ERGONOMIC-RELATED ILLNESSES.

1. Are carts, hand-trucks, and other wheeled devices or rollers used when moving materials?
2. Are workers trained before allowing them to use power tools?
3. Are workers consulted when there are changes in production and when improvements are needed for safer, easier, and more efficient work?

Once an ergonomics checklist is employed and risk factors identified, a set of corrective actions should be outlined. Such actions might include ergonomic design changes in the tools, products, process, and work environment. Corrective actions can also address training needs, including identification of prevention responsibilities and development of necessary skills and knowledge to implement corrections.

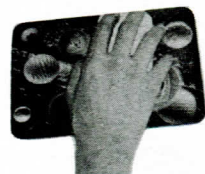
Many ergonomics checklists are available but, for most of them to be effective, they have to be used by someone with a firm knowledge of ergonomics. This is where the recent (1996) publication by the International Labor Office (ILO) makes a difference.

Due to its simple and easy to understand format, the manual, *Ergonomic checkpoints*, developed jointly with the International Ergonomics Association, can be used by managers, supervisors, workers, trainers, and ergonomics specialists who wish to learn low-cost practical solutions to ergonomic problems which can be applied locally.

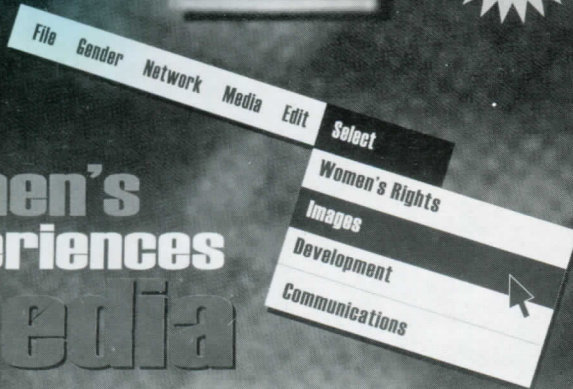
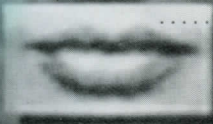
The manual's 128 checkpoints provide sound guidance for filtering and disseminating ergonomically sound workplace improvements. An ergonomics checklist is included. The solutions provided are fully illustrated and demonstrate good work practice. The manual will be an invaluable asset in any workplace and will surely contribute to improving both working conditions and productivity.

The high cost linked to workplace illnesses and injuries is causing policy-makers, employers, and workers to broaden their perspectives. There is incontestable evidence that fitting jobs to workers and designing and redesigning jobs taking into consideration human factors, including both capabilities and limitations, yield positive results. Eliminating the suffering of workers and their families and minimising the financial burden borne by employers and insurance companies are attainable goals. Waiting for symptoms to appear instead of preventing them will only continue to injure and cripple millions of workers in the world.

Source: *World of Work*, No. 21, September/October 1997



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