LILIAN FOSTER (l) and REBECA KNOWLES (standing r) threaten LANA FINIKIN with guns — a powerful scene from SISTREN's latest production MUFFET INNA ALL A WI.

Countdown to Sistren Festival

A DECADE OF WOMEN IN CULTURE

The SISTREN THEATRE COLLECTIVE will launch a major festival of its work in April to celebrate its 8th Anniversary and the end of the UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF WOMEN.

The U.N. DECADE OF WOMEN ends officially in August, with a conference in NAIROBI, KENYA. A major regional review of the DECADE has already taken place at a conference of LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS in HAVANA CUBA last year November. The conference was sponsored by the U.N. COMMITTEE OF NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS and hosted by the CUBAN FEDERATION of WOMEN (FMC).

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Representatives of the SISTREN THEATRE COLLECTIVE POPULAR EDUCATION PROGRAMME (POPED) took part in an 'adult basic education' international consultation in New York from March 3 to 8. It was the first time SISTREN performed in the United States.

The consultation, "Stories of Hope: The Church's Experience in Adult Basic Education" had about ninety participants. It was sponsored by INTERMEDIA, an agency of the NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST in the U.S.A. About half the participants are directly involved in 'non-formal' education. Others, including denominational and ecumenical executives and editors have a particular interest in the topic.

Some twenty-six participants, including the SISTREN team, came from outside North America, from countries as far afield as Tonga and the Phillipines, India and Egypt, Burma, Nambia and Ethiopia.

JASMINE SMITH, PAULINE CRAWFORD, VIVETTE LEWIS and CYRENE STEPHENSON together with resource person HILARY NICHOLSON led a workshop on the STORY OF SISTREN - from 'Crash Programme' workers through the formation and development of the group.

Their special workshop was held with participants during the first evening of the consultation. The audience was quickly involved in a game of musical chairs and later in a debate over whether a women who wanted to improve her impoverished life should do so by seeking an education, becoming a higgler or going to work on a sugar estate.

"What we try to do is to get everyone involved from the beginning," said JASMINE about the SISTREN POPED process. "In the particular workshop (we prepared for the INTERMEDIA consultation), in the first scene where SISTREN members are working on the 'Crash Programme', we gave all the participants a broom or shovel and we mixed instructions with action. So, for example, each of us SISTREN took the role of a 'Crash Programme' supervisor, so when we gave instructions it was at two

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What's been happening with the SISTREN documentary film SWEET SUGAR RAGE?

Here at home, and elsewhere in the Caribbean from December through March we've been having previews of SWEET SUGAR RAGE. These previews have been aimed at representatives from womens groups, trade unions, community groups, educators, the media and development agencies, local and overseas.

We're using the feedback to guide us in the preparation of a video subtitled version (in standard english) and an accompanying information package for overseas audiences.

We thought you might be interested in some of the comments we've received.

"I am already familiar with the (SISTREN POPED) process and the language. I think those who are being introduced to the process by the film might find it difficult to follow the language especially foreigners. The theme song is especially good. With better production and presentation it has the potential for release on the music market . . ."

ELAINE WINT-LESLIE/MEDIA SPECIALIST

"The Photography is excellent. The concept is interesting. The social problem highlighted deserves discussion. The film is weakest in fully explaining the SISTREN research and workshop process, through some of this does come across. But overall an interesting and fairly successful film. . . ."

WENTY BOWEN/INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH UWI (ISER)

"This is an informative film which could be expanded . . ."

CRESCENCIA LEON MEDHURST/GLEANER

"A very creditable effort. It is obvious that a lot of work went into it. The only (negative) comment is re the clarity of speech and probably the need for more close-up shots while people speak . . ."

SELENA TAPPER (CUSO)

"Novel idea . . . Very strong, sensitive portrayal of the creative process from research to actual dramatisa-

BRENDA CAMPBELL/RJR ("INSIDE THE ARTS")

"As one not familiar with the SISTREN approach, it gives me a good understanding . . ."

PROF GEORGE BECKFORD/UWI

"Main power of the film, highlighting the conditions under which women work and the inequalities of the

CLAIRE MADDIKX/CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

'I do not think that SISTREN has worked through the goals and aims of the process. Needs more critical work with each other to clarify these objectives . . . . . . . . . . DR. FREDDY HICKLING/PSYCHIATRIST
APPOINT A WOMAN FOR WOMEN’S AFFAIRS

Sponsor-groups of the International Women’s Day Forum on Women and Politics have called on Prime Minister Seaga to ensure the appointment of a woman to head the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and that a female heads the government delegation to the upcoming United Nations End of Women’s Decade conference in Nairobi, Kenya.

Currently the Women’s Bureau is part of the Ministry of Youth headed by Minister Edmund Bartlett who is also slated to head the government’s delegation to Nairobi.

In a letter to Mr. Seaga, representatives of SISTREN, CWP, YWCA (Ja.), the Women’s Studies Group UWI and Ms. Elaine Rainford, noted that the call had received strong support at the IWD Forum.

The letter noted that the call had already been made in numerous women’s fora at the community and national levels and is strongly supported by both men and women throughout our island.

It further stated, “In a country where there are so many women with excellent records of contributions to the struggle for women’s rights, contributions which are recognised both nationally and internationally, and after ten years of consciousness-raising around our special needs as women during the Decade we see no basis for a man to lead the delegation to the Nairobi Conference, or to be Minister of Women’s Affairs.”
IWD RESOLUTION

A forum, on “WOMEN IN POLITICS” was held at the Scouts Headquarters on Camp Road, jointly sponsored by the COMMITTEE OF WOMEN FOR PROGRESS (CWP); YWCA (Ja.); the UWI WOMENS STUDIES WORKING GROUP and SISTREN.

The forum which drew an audience of over two hundred, was addressed by LINNETTE VASSELL (CWP), JOAN WEBLEY (JLP), and SONIA MAE WITTER (PNP). Discussion was led by ELSIE SAYLES, Chief Executive Officer of the COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES and the REVEREND MARJORIE LEWIS-COOPER of the CHURCH AND SOCIETY UNIT of the CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES. The function was chaired by ELAINE RAINFORD of the YWCA (Ja.)

The audience included representatives of SISTREN, the JAMAICA FEDERATION OF WOMEN, YOUNG WOMEN’S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF JAMAICA, COMMITTEE OF WOMEN FOR PROGRESS, COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICES, the WOMEN’S BUREAU, the LAND SURVEYOR’S WIVES and the WOMEN’S STUDIES WORKING GROUP, UWI.

The following Resolution was unanimously passed at the Forum:

WHEREAS at this International Women’s Day meeting of 1985, the over 200 women and men present, are deeply alarmed at the deteriorating social and economic conditions facing women as reflected in:

a) the high rate of unemployment among women

b) the spiralling costs of the basic necessities of life, beginning with food and extending to shelter, utilities, clothing, etc.

c) the malnutrition of our children, as exemplified by the disclosure by VOUCH that some 50,000 are presently malnourished

AND

WHEREAS we feel that is an unacceptable situation at the end of the long ten years of the United Nations Decade of Women 1976 — 1985

AND

WHEREAS we here present feel that in order for the special interests of women to be considered by governments, women need to play a more united consistent and leading role in political parties and the political life of the country in the interest of the vast majority of women.

BE IT RESOLVED

That the organisations here present form a broad committee to seek to get meeting with the three parties to put forward the situation facing women and to put forward concrete proposals to alleviate the situation: in doing so to pay particular attention to:

1. Altering economic policies that send prices skyrocketing with no control — further eroding the material position of women.

2. Measures to control the degrading projection of women in the media especially in advertisements

3. Government support for the rights of women to unionize especially in areas of the economy concerned with export manufacturing and agribusiness.

4. Public education programmes to inform women of their rights and factors affecting their position in society and the world.

5. Specific measures to combat domestic violence and sexual abuse of women including support for crisis centres and special police and court facilities.

6. The revision of discriminatory legislation against women up to and including the constitution; and reassessment of the income tax and tax benefits from the point of view of women.

7. That a Ministry of Women Affairs be created and that the post be given to a woman committed to the upliftment of women and rights of the majority of Jamaican women.

BE IT RESOLVED

That these organisations here present call on the government to ensure through consultation and discussion with women’s organisations and individual women that the position and delegation to the non-governmental meetings in Nairobi to assess the achievements of the Decade, truly reflect the real position of Jamaican women at the end of the Decade.

AND

That to ensure this the government should provide assistance for non-governmental democratically elected representatives to attend the Nairobi conference.

AND

That women and their organisations here represented a first step towards providing greater unity and autonomy among women, have this resolution discussed in their organisations as a first step towards joint action for their implementation.
The SISTERS CELEBRATION Concert at Zinc Fence was the main cultural event commemorating IWD.

From L - R some of the artistes that rocked the audience, Poets In Unity member, ANITA STEWART, Jamaica’s all-female reggae band, PEP; EDI FITZROY; Singer and drama teacher, CLAUDETTE RICHARDSON; Writer, Poet, drummer and graphic designer MBALA.

Popular radio personality FAE ELLINGTON rocking to the beat Scenes of jollification as SISTREN members lead the enthusiastic appreciation for the music.

(L-R) BEVERLY with MRS. EDN LUCILLE MAIR, Secretary General on Pal
“THREE WOMEN ARTISTS”, an exhibition of the works of painters JUDITH SALMON and SAMERE TANSLEY, and sculptress RACHEL FEARING, was another event commemorating International Women’s Day and the UN Decade of Women.

Carmen Tipling of CCL (L) opens the exhibition. Artists (L-R) Samere, Rachel and Judith look on.

Y HANSON and DELORES ROBINSON chat with JA MANLEY. (Far right) Special Guest, Jamaica’s distinguished UN Assistant Secretary, Palestinian Affairs.

SISTREN members (L-R) LANA FINIKIN, PAULINE CRAWFORD and BEVERLY HANSON, lead the audience in a selection of SISTREN SONGS.

(Below) The Platform reflects the broad character of the Forum. From left to right ELSIE SAYLES (CVSS), SONIA MAE WITTER (PNP), LINNETTE VASSELL (CWP), ELAINE RAINFORD (YWCA), ANN NETHERSOLE (YWCA WORLD PRESIDENT), JOAN WEBLEY (JLP) and REV. MARJORIE LEWIS-COOPER (CCC).
NO! TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Joan French — education specialist, well-known defender of Women's rights, and SISTREN Workshop Director — is also the editor of publication NO! TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE, published by the SISTREN THEATRE COLLECTIVE in collaboration with the FRIENDS OF SISTREN.

Following is an interview with Joan in which she talks about how the booklet originated and developed and what impact it’s having since it was launched in December of last year.

Q. WHAT PROMPTED RESEARCH INTO THE THEME OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE?
A. In 1982 SISTREN did a series of workshops with two groups in the Corporate Area, one comprising middle-class women and the other working class women. We brought the two groups together in 1983 and after reviewing the issues that came out of the 1982 workshops, this mixed group chose the theme of sexual violence as the one they were most interested in working around — not because it was the most vital issue, like unemployment or the cost of living, but because they wanted to do something that would make an impact, even though they were a small group.

Q. HOW DID THE WORKSHOPS CONNECT WITH RESEARCH FOR THE BOOKLET?
A. We produced the material for the booklet by actually doing workshops with the women, who became part of the group called the FRIENDS OF SISTREN (F.O.S.). We invited a broad cross-section of women to a meeting to discuss the idea of the booklet.

Twelve of them turned up and of the twelve, ten had actually been raped! That was really quite an experience because we had not called a meeting of women who had been raped! The participants were so awed by this, they started talking about their experiences and the problems they had faced dealing with rape, as well as experiences they knew of in their communities. We then did workshops with SISTREN to explore their experiences. Out of this SISTREN developed a drama piece which was taken into community workshops and used for further exploration of the theme. A main source was a workshop we did with teenage girls which showed most clearly the connection between economic deprivation and sexual abuse.

Q. WHAT CRITERIA DID YOU SET FOR PRODUCTION OF THE BOOKLET?
A. We tried not to make it an “intellectual” document because we wanted it to be very readable so that the average person who was either suffering from sexual violence or saw someone else suffering from this thing could be armed with information that would help them. That's why the booklet is organised as it is. The importance of the theme is simply put in a few statistics which speak for themselves and then go straight into the material. The material itself is very immediate with the use of comic-strips, other visuals, and a simple text.

Q. YOU HAD A BROAD SET OF PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE THAT HELPED....?
A. The people we drew in were people with an interest in women’s matters or with a related expertise. They included JACQUELINE SAMUELS-BROWN, and EILENE BOXER who have been working on women's issues in their fields — law.

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Sexual Violence Cont’d from P.8

DR. AGGREY IRONS is known as a very humane person and gave guidance on the psychiatric angle. We asked RICHARD SMALL to help us because of his clinical legal ability. Whereas we wanted the material to be appealing, we also wanted it to be factual and we felt, correctly, that he’d prevent us from making any big errors. We got our statistics through HORACE LEVY of SOCIAL ACTION CENTRE (SAC) and Trinidadian WENDY BAIL-LEY who’s done extensive research into the topic of rape.

Another Trinidadian, RHODA REDDOCK, who is at the Institute of Social Studies in Holland and who has helped open up opportunities for Caribbean women to pursue work on women’s affairs through that programme, gave a lot of support as did SONIA CUALES of the ECONOMIC COMMISSION OF LATIN AMERICA (ECLA) Women’s Programme in the Caribbean. Journalist PHOEBE CHANG was very helpful, sharing as she did with us her experience in trying to set up a Women’s Crisis Centre.

Q. WHAT’S YOUR MAIN AIM NOW IN TERMS OF EXPOSURE OF THE BOOKLET?

A. The main thing now is distribution. It’s with a number of organisations and in some communities as well as in commercial outlets, but although a few schools have it we want a more formal link with the schools for example — through guidance councillors. The strength of the booklet is in a very simple and understandable way, it lets people know what the real situation is — showing the link between sexual abuse or rape and the economic pressures in the society, especially on the women in the society.

We would like many more young women to read it so they can become more conscious of the real world.

So it’s an educational purpose we’re hoping that the booklet will have at this time. At another point in time, who knows, it may form the basis for a campaign to get some of the demands we include implemented. Right now we don’t have the resources for that but if there are people out there who feel they could take up the challenge, using the material in the book, we would be only too happy to see this done.
REMEMBERING OUR PAST

GLEANER frontpage lead story acknowledged the election of Jamaica’s first woman Councillor.

- WE BET YOU DIDN’T KNOW – that February gone was the 46th anniversary of the FIRST JAMAICAN WOMEN’S CONFERENCE. The conference, which was held on February 20 and 21 1939 at the COLLEGIATE HALL in Kingston, was organised by the WOMEN’S LIBERAL CLUB.

A resolution passed at the conference called on the colonial government to: *allow women to vote on equal terms with men * remove discrimination preventing women from taking up certain occupations such as JP’s, jurors and in the civil service; provide more infant schools; open more vocational schools for girls; ensure fathers are registered in respect of children. After the conference the WOMEN’S LIBERAL CLUB led by AMY BAILEY, MORRIS KNIBB and INA BAILEY organised delegations to make sure the resolution became accepted by the governor. In March 1939, MARY MORRIS KNIBB became the island’s first woman councillor.

DO YOU THINK THE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RESOLUTION HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY ADOPTED OVER THE FORTY-SIX YEARS?

- BET YOU DIDN’T KNOW – that May is not only the 8th anniversary of SISTREN but also the 47th anniversary of the general strike of 1938 which led to self-government for Jamaica.

Many women were active in the events of 1938. Some were busy organising special school feeding programmes. Others organised food for the strikers and several were killed by the soldiers of the colonial government.

Sugar workers, then the backbone of Jamaica’s working class, were especially important in bringing the country to a halt and moving history forward more rapidly. In the famous uprising at FROME, WESTMORELAND, two women were killed and several injured.

One eyewitness, CORDELIA PLINTON, “MISS CUDDY” of FROME described the events there. “I was in de demonstration de Monday when solja and police start to come . . . When de people dem start to mash out de glass window up at Fроме, dem start to fire blank shot.”

A woman fling a stick and it lick one policeman dem did call MAGWA LION and ‘im drop. Den dem read de riot act and dem start to shoot.”

“Me stand up outa FROME gate wid de one dem call HAROLD. De first man dem shoot was a man name GRIGNON. Same as me see GRIGNON dead, me run off and when me look round, me see HAROLD pon him side. Dem shoot one Bellywoman, and she walk till dem ketch right dung a john crow piece gate. One big hog plum tree was dere and she drop underneath it and dead. Well de baby still a jump, jump, jump inna ‘im belly and one a de police shove de bayonet and kill de baby.”
MADDA, MADDA, OH MADDA

Lick me dung, you pick me up
you a madda, you a fahda.
dat is why you handle me so?
you love me, you hate me
and you can't do wid out me.
Madda Madda Oh Madda.

Never no a fahda only
me grandfahda
Grow up with me grandmadda.
fe a shurt while
She lead me to believe she
was me madda.
But Madda Madda — Oh Madda.

Me cook me wash me clean
do all domestic chores
Yet you lick me dung
you pick me up but me understand
you a madda, you a fahda.

Now me grow up, now me realise
what it was to grow me up,
all by yourself.
Try fe school me, feed me, clothes me.
It was a hard job being a madda and
a fahda.
Now me understand.
Madda Madda O Madda.

Lana Finikin

New York  Cont’d from P. 2

levels. That way they didn’t feel so shy about taking part.”

In other sessions, adult basic education practitioners told participants how their programmes helped people to learn to read, conduct a meeting, study the Bible, collect the documentation necessary for an effective petition campaign, fight toxic waste dumping in their areas and identify and meet other social and economic needs in their communities.

Participants agreed that in many countries, literacy and other adult basic education work was viewed as “a challenge to the status quo” simply because it sought to make poor people more self-reliant and able to make choices for themselves about the direction of their lives.

The participants also urged North American church bodies and agencies “to struggle to persuade people in their churches that they have global and local obligations for justice.”

SISTREN WANT ADS

We're in need of another filing cabinet for our office. CAN YOU HELP?

SISTREN and the FRIENDS OF SISTREN (FOS) are seeking sponsorship to do a second printing of our booklet No! TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

IF you can help with either of the above check us at our headquarters
100 Hope Road, Kingston 6,
TEL 927-8800.
A DECADE OF WOMEN IN CULTURE

Cont’d from P. 1

Some 358 delegates from 39 countries including Jamaican representatives from the SISTREN, the COMMITTEE OF WOMEN FOR PROGRESS and the PNP WOMENS MOVEMENT, took part in the conference. The conference agreed that the decade had brought greater awareness of the special needs of women and the strengthening of the women’s rights movement.

However, delegates also noted that equality and progress for women could not be achieved in the conditions of underdevelopment which plague the vast majority of countries in the region. In addition, the threat to peace in the region was seen as the main obstacle facing the peoples of the region.

The SISTREN FESTIVAL will not only highlight the advances made by the working class women who formed the group in 1977, two years after the start of the DECADE, but also aims at bringing together individuals and organisations to further spread the ideas behind the work of SISTREN—that women can find a forum for their problems and begin to examine ways of changing the root causes of these problems.

The FESTIVAL kicks off on April 12 at ZINC FENCE, 6 DUMFRIES ROAD, with the gala performance of two 60-minute presentations of reggae form in theatre. The two comprise a package of SISTREN SONGS including movement which expresses Jamaican traditional and modern dance, and the production MUFFET INNA ALL A WI, a piece based on movement, mime and music with thematic images of sexual and social violence.

These reggae in theatre presentations will run on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8.00pm with matinees on Sundays at 7.00p.m.

FILM

The premiere of the SISTREN documentary film SWEET SUGAR RAGE will take place at the MUTUAL LIFE AUDITORIUM, OXFORD ROAD on April 25 under the distinguished patronage of MRS. EDNA MANLEY.

Directed by HONOR FORD-SMITH and HARCLYDE WALCOTT, SWEET SUGAR RAGE brings into sharp focus the harsh conditions facing female workers on a sugar estate, and examines the SISTREN DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION WORKSHOP form as a major vehicle for both bringing out the problems of women and beginning the search for solutions. Ticket contributions will be donated to the HAYES WOMENS CLUB, which is located in NEW SUGAR TOWN, HAYES CLARENDON.

A special exhibition of SISTREN TEXTILES will be on sale throughout the FESTIVAL at the same venue from 10.00 am to 9.00 pm, each Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

A series of our TRAINING WORKSHOPS is also being organised during the FESTIVAL for representatives of womens groups, community organisers and others interested in learning about SISTREN’s approach to popular education. Any group or individual wishing to take part in these workshops can write or telephone the SISTREN headquarters at 100 HOPE Road (TEL: 927-8800).

The two on-going women’s groups with whom SISTREN works, in RIVERTON CITY, KINGSTON and HAYES will also be involved along with their communities in the SISTREN FESTIVAL. These groups are expected to hold concerts interpreting the FESTIVAL theme.

The SISTREN FESTIVAL will close with a bang courtesy of ARIES DISCO, at a fund-raising dance at ZINC FENCE on Saturday June 1st. Join us in celebration of A DECADE OF WOMEN IN CULTURE.

TICKETS ON SALE AT HIGH TIMES, AQUARIUS HALF WAY TREE, & SISTREN HEADQUARTERS 100 HOPE ROAD’.

MUFFET INNA ALL A WI & SISTREN SONG – $15.00 & $12.00
STUDENTS WITH ID AND GROUPS OF TEN OR MORE $10.00
GOLDEN AGERS OVER 70 YEARS: FREE; CHILDREN UNDER 12: $6.00
FILM PREMIERE $20.00 CONTRIBUTION.