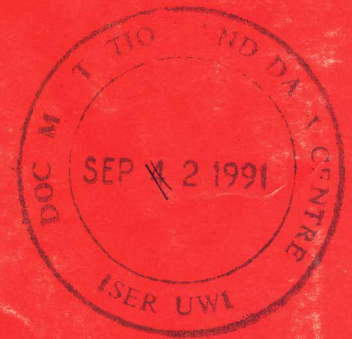
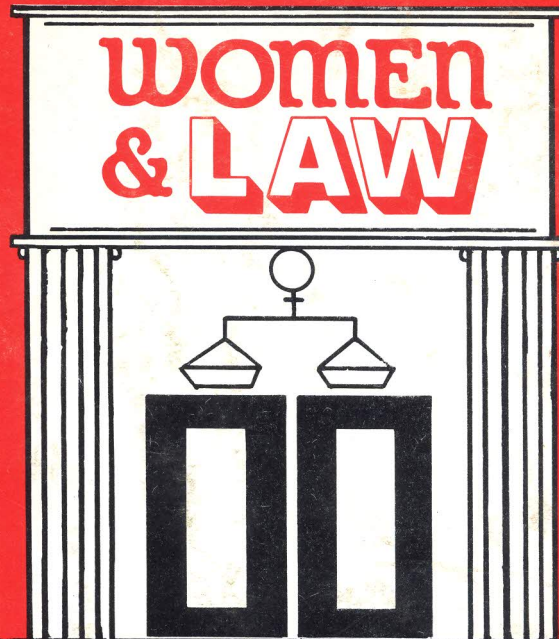


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VOL. 13 NO. 1
JULY 1991

SIREN

\$10.00



**DOES THE
CONSTITUTION
BENEFIT
WOMEN?**

**WOMEN BEHIND
BARS**

**CHALLENGING
THE WEST INDIA
COMMISSION**

**POLICE WOMEN
MOVING UP**



SISTREN OUT DEH!

LOCAL:

Sistren offered workshops in 30 schools island-wide. Students saw performances and engaged in thoughtful discussion on **Drug Abuse** and **Teenage Parenthood**.

Bev, Hilary and Honor joined other Jamaican actors in 'Celebrating Scott', performed excerpts from the plays and poetry of the late Dennis Scott, to mark World Theatre Day.

Sistren member Bess Thompson-Rose completed a four month training course at the Social Welfare Training Centre, U.W.I.

Sistren worked with Director Cynthia Wilmot, to create the video 'Carrying A Heavy Load', which explores Structural Adjustment and Caribbean Women.

REGIONAL:

Annie Blake worked with Eastern Caribbean Popular Theatre Organization (ECPTO) to present the views of Caribbean Youth to the Caricom Regional Meeting.

Hilary Nicholson received training in computer skills at the International Women's Tribune Centre, New York.

Sistren ran workshops for DAWN (Bahamas) on Domestic Violence and Reproductive Health, June 21-23;

We "lent" Hilary and Marion to the Caribbean Federation of Youth in May to facilitate Conference on Women in Community Organizations.

Afolashade (Pauline) represented Sistren at the WAND-sponsored Regional Conference on Quality in Reproductive Care in June.

Sistren along with ECPTO planned for the Popular Theatre Conference to be held in Namibia in August.

AT THE MEETING PLACE

UP AND COMING

Sistren Theatre Team will begin research for a new full-length production on the Generation Gap. The Workshop Team is planning workshops for schoolers, guidance counselors, and community leaders.

VOLUNTEERS AND FRIENDS

• **Marion Elgar**, resident of Ottawa, Canada worked with us as a CESO (Canadian Executive Service Organization) Volunteer Consultant. Marion generated many ideas to help with Sistren Magazine.

• **Fiona Hinds**, student of Windsor, Canada was with us for 3 months participating in our outreach programmes and on the Sister's Celebration Committee.

• **Jo Eekhoff**, Master of Social Work graduate, completed her degree here by working with the Workshop Team for five months. We were glad to keep her as Acting Editor for this edition.

• **Cornelia Fichtl** from Germany is including Sistren in her Ph.D. thesis in Anthropology. Thanks Cornelia for driving us to Workshops!

• **Just Passing through:** • **Rev. and Mrs. Farquharson** from Canada. **Dr. Eileen Kane** from Ireland; **Sandra Graham** and **Cathere Williams** from England. **Roshan Dhunjiboy**, Film-maker and Editor of Sweet Sugar Rage. **Vanda Radzig**, of Guyana brought news of Redthread's work with Amerindian women. **Kurlyne Alleyne** from WAND stopped by to say 'hi' and buy a few T-shirts.



Joy leads a surprised Joan to her goodbye party. Marion is shocked, but has Carmen to hold her up

EVENTS

• **A.D.A.** and Sistren exhibited books, videos, research papers at our Headquarters in March as part of **International Women's Day** activities. All these materials are now available at Sistren's new Research Room. Stop by Monday - Friday, 9 - 5.

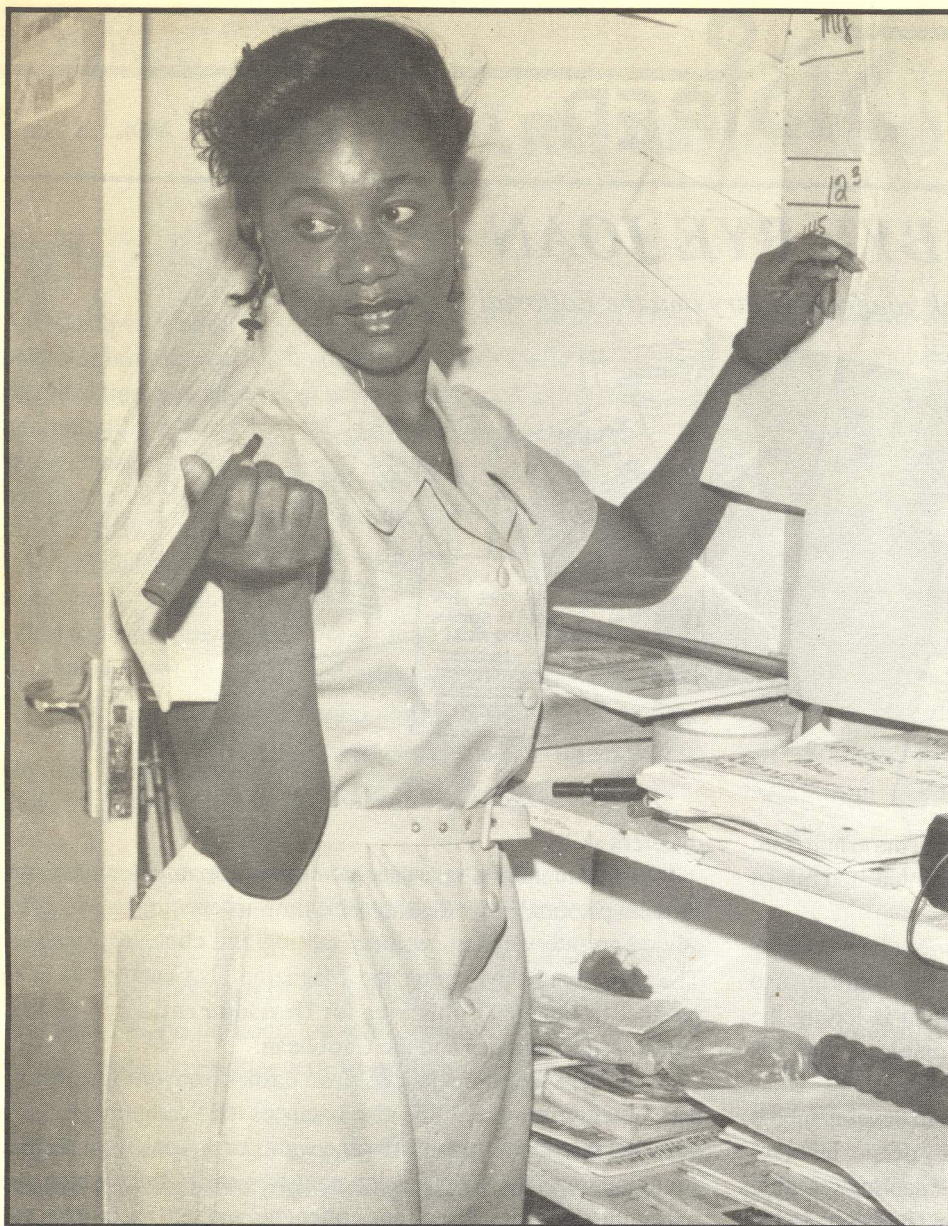
• **Sistren's Workshop Team** held a series of monthly "issues" workshops for women. Topics included: Our Bodies --- Who Chooses, IMF and Women, Empowerment, Group Building and Leadership Development.

• **Farewell parties**, including festival, fry fish, and frolicking, were held for **Joan French**, **Joan Ross-Frankson**, and **Marion Elgar**.



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Editorial Team	Annie Blake Pauline Crawford Joy Erskine Lana Finikin Bev Hanson Becky Knowles Jerline Todd
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Sistren is produced three times a year by the Sistren Theatre Collective as part of its on-going efforts to highlight issues of concern to women in the society. Sistren is a non-profit making collective of women. Other activities include theatre, workshops using Drama-in-Education methodology, and research. Sistren has also experimented with film and video and produced a book of members' life stories, **Lionheart Gal**. Sistren Textiles is the group's income-earning project. Contact: 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica, West Indies. Tel: (809) 92-92457/92-96171).



Annie May Blake

SISTREN PROFILE

Introducing Annie May Blake, Company Stage Manager and Theatre Team leader. Born in Paradise, St. Elizabeth, Annie is the third child in a family of fifteen. She started working with Sistren four years ago, after graduating from the Jamaica School of Drama. She has played major roles in 'Muffet Inna All A Wi' and 'Buss-Out', as well as assisting the group to develop new theatre skills and techniques.

When she is not working, Annie enjoys reading and going to plays.

How has being with Sistren developed her? "I've learnt how to defend my rights as a woman and to be confident inside myself, as well as developing my leadership skills."

Her wish -- for Sistren's future is this 'tongue-in-cheek' proposal: "I'd like to see Sistren as the next government because the present systems are not working! Sistren is actually doing the work that any interested, people-oriented government should be doing."

PERSONAL NOTES

MOVED COUNTRY: Joan French, left us to work at the Caribbean (NGO) Policy Unit in Barbados. Joan, it is nice to know you are comfortable and doing well.

COOLING OUT: Cerene Stephenson is on leave and probably eating peaches in Atlanta, Georgia. Bev Hanson on leave and traveling. Enjoy!

CONDOLENCES: to Marion Bernard whose father passed away, to Jerline Todd who lost her Aunt, to Joan Ross-Frankson for the tragic loss of her sister and to Joy Erskine who lost her grandmother.

OFFICE CONTROL: We are happy to promote Carmen Hanson to Administrative Assistant. We welcome Georgia Gillespie, Junior Accountant, and Adrienne Brucato, Peace Corp Volunteer in Textiles.

MARRIED: Imani Tafari to Idi - it is never too late to wish you happiness.

CONGRATULATIONS: to Maureen Rowe (Sister P), new Director of the African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica (ACIJ); to Pat Donald, Acting Director of Combined Disability Association; and to Joyce Hewitt, new President of Woman, Inc.

'FRESH' CONGRATULATIONS to Susan Wentworth (Sistren Textiles) and Angela Welsh (Print Media), and Antoinette Haughton (our Lawyer) on their new born babies, all BOYS!

MOVING ON: Sharon Bernard and Michelle Davis, of Association of Development Agencies. Both Sisters were stalwarts at A.D.A. and will be missed.

BYE BYE JOAN

A thank you from Hilary and the Editorial Team

Joan Ross -Frankson, our outgoing Editor, says that developing the Newsmagazine was like "growing up with your daughter - traumatic! But it makes a better person of you!"

Sistren and Joan came together in '84. "They're the kind of people I choose to work with, move with. It was inconceivable for our paths not to cross." Joan was at that time a reporter with JBC. "I knew about the group from long before. As an activist person of course it interested me, it was energetic, growing and creative!"

When Joan met Sistren's Newsletter it was a baby gestetnered one-page leaflet. The relationship grew. After nurturing it to Newsmagazine status over the past 7 years, Joan is letting the adolescent go out on its own to a new stage of maturity. She has given it a solid foundation and a wide circulation.

"I've enjoyed developing it, and allowing it to develop me. It has stretched my skills in journalism and led to my deeper involvement in community development. Sistren is an enabling group: it allowed the '87 study on prostitutes to be done. That alone led to many other things! Joan received an award from the Press Association of Jamaica for her **Women on the Streets** articles.

There were lonely times too. Her Editorial team members would be off doing workshops on the other side of the island just when she needed their support. "SISTREN has shown me you have

to be very practical."

Joan feels her best accomplishment was facilitating the series on sugarworkers, in '86, researched and written by Pauline and Becky of Sistren. They lived with the sugarworkers for a couple of days to gather raw material. "It was a tremendous example of sharing our very

different skills".

Sistren members have dear memories of Joan. Ever interested in their personal growth, she took time to encourage and offer advice on interviewing, writing, editing and choosing graphics. The process of developing the Magazine also enabled Joan to produce the manual **Publishing for Development**, a step-by-step guide used in Jamaica and the Caribbean.

An ever vibrant freelancer, Joan dashes from one fascinating assignment to another. She also balances her "assignments" as a wife and mother of three. Now she wants to do some moving-on: strengthening DRINC (Development Resources Inc.) which she runs with a long-time friend and colleague, and settling into her life with her children.

Joan adds: "I am very interested to see what'll happen with **Sistren** because, after all, we're all still in the pot brewing."

Joan, you put all a' your soul into **Sistren**. We thank you! Though you're just around the corner, we'll miss you.



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WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES?

This issue is about "Women and Law". Suzann Dodd reviews the Jamaican Constitution, and laws which allow for discriminatory treatment of women. We look at initiatives in legal reform from around the Caribbean and present them as models as we seek to revise our Constitution. Thinking about law prompted discussion about crime, the police, prisons, and how each issue relates to women.

What do budgetary allocations mean to us as women? The new budget caused us to question Government's priorities. Sistren's Drugs and Youth skit suggests that if some of the money allocated to the security forces were reassigned to youth and education programmes we all would benefit.

Jamaica considers itself a "developing nation". We looked at budget figures from two so-called "developed" nations with very different priorities. Do we allow our government to follow the footsteps of the United States - spending a third of its budget on defence, or shall we choose the way of the Netherlands - spending a third of its budget on education?

Traditionally, women make up the majority of the nation's educators. Defence, for the most part, employs men and implies violence. How can women be more active in budgetary decision making?

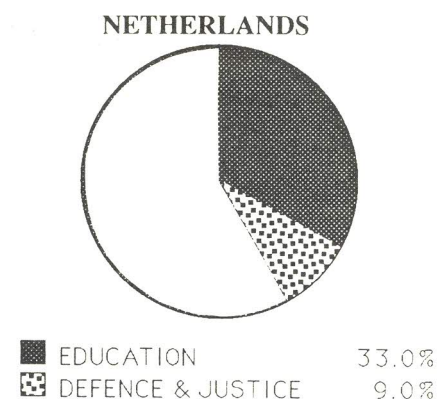
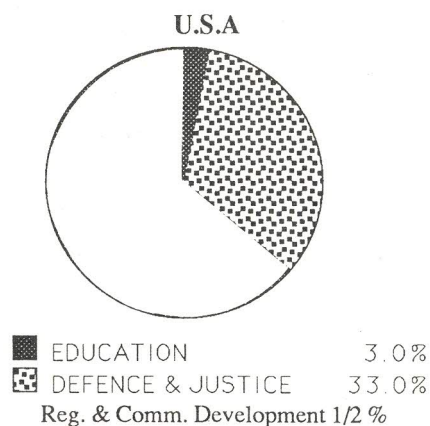
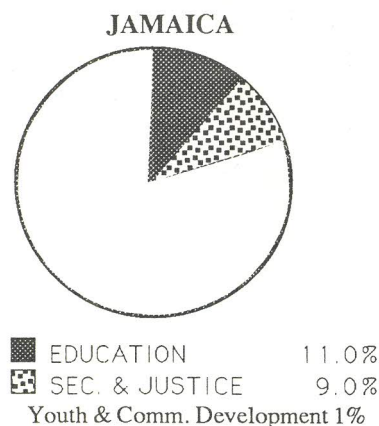
Economic pressure is squeezing tighter than it has in years. The Jamaican dollar continues to lose value, prices escalate on basic food while the government has removed subsidies. Bus fares went up, higglers were forced to pay increasing duties on imported goods. When assessing this gloomy situation some say "de whole a Jamaica a go turn tief." Indeed, economic stress along with poor judgement forced some of the women we spoke with into illegal activity.

We found some positive movements. I.C.I.s (Vendors) are organizing themselves in admirable fashion, as are Domestic Workers. The Jamaican Council for Human Rights, the Mediation Centre, Teens in Action, LICK and Frances Madden, and women in a ghetto housing scheme are all taking steps to challenge the oppressive structures.

Sistren Magazine Editor of 7 years, Joan Ross-Frankson, has left us. She brought this magazine from a stenciled newsletter to what it is today. We hope to be able to match her standards in the future, in the meantime, she is greatly missed.

Trying to get this magazine on a financially sound basis has led us to seek advertising. Expect a new look in the next issue, along with some tasteful advertising.

These simplified charts show two "developed" countries with WIDELY divergent budget allocations for defence and education. Should Jamaica follow the model of the U.S. or the Netherlands?



MY SMALL CORNER

Licking Inner-City Blues



Francis Madden with students at LICK

Frances Madden is making a difference. Her grassroots approach is improving a community where children link employment to drugs, rather than education and

where children who do make it to school often drop out by third form.

Frances recently opened the Learning Insti-

tute of Central Kingston (LICK). Teenagers come to LICK every weekday to be tutored by three teachers. A Guidance Counselor holds rap sessions in which positive self-images are encouraged. Kids learn how to use the library, how to be peer counselors, and optimally - that they can complete their education. The project, visioned and supervised by Frances, is bursting at the seams with 83 high school students now in attendance.

Development is more than just funding projects, says Frances. People need education and management skills to make projects succeed. An example is the Callaloo Project which generates income for 60 women who have learned to grow, distribute, and market their product.

The projects Frances supervises are sponsored by Grace and Staff.

C.F.

ROWING THE BOAT:

WO-MANNING THE OARS

Meeting Audrey Phillips was delightful. What made this woman so bright, energetic and engaging? Perhaps all Marine Engineers possess these characteristics? Maybe spending four years training in the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy had something to do with it? Most likely being the only woman in a staff of 59 (not including secretarial staff) at the Port Authority has contributed to Audrey's commanding presence.

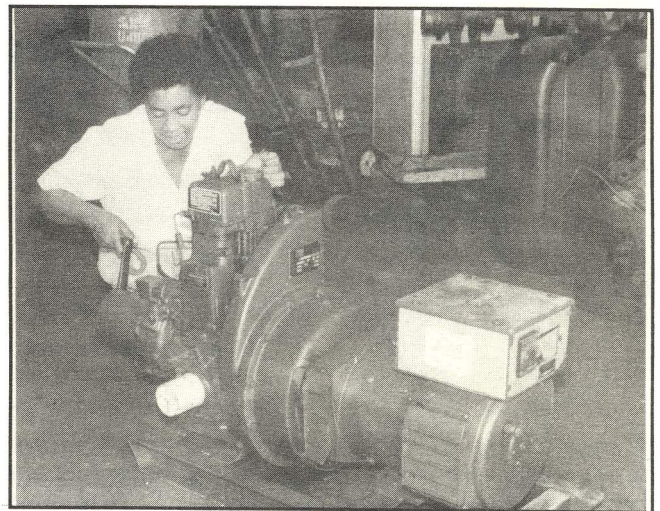
Audrey's workplace is one of boats, beacons, buoys, and lighthouses. Her job involves supervising maintenance of engines and equipment used to ferry passengers from Kingston to Port Royal. Other responsibilities include caring for her daughter at home and taking computer courses on the side.

When Audrey first joined the Port Authority she "experienced a certain amount of opposition because some people felt threatened and some felt I wasn't capable, but nowadays I blend right in." I witnessed more 'taking charge' than 'blending in', especially when it came to technical aspects of machinery repair.

Audrey's advice to women entering traditionally male-dominated occupations is that nowadays there are women in nearly every field, "so find out what is your niche in life, what you enjoy

doing most, and go for it, because eventually you will be rewarded."

J.E.



Audrey inspects a lighthouse engine

CARIBBEAN I.C.I.S GET TOGETHER

The first ever regional conference of Informal International Traders (I.I.T.s) was held in April, in Dominica. Thirty higglers and Informal Commercial Importers (ICIs), many of them women, came from all over the Caribbean.

Participants were thrilled to share experiences and intrigued by their similarities. They all must negotiate with customs, cope with currency restrictions, national regulations, and dehumanizing transportation conditions.

They agreed that a Caribbean currency would greatly simplify their transactions, but regional divergencies pose a puzzle. Hussling for foreign exchange has led to the down-to-earth realization that they must export. They shared ideas on what each country lacked, that another could provide. A practical example came from the Jamaica Sidewalk Vendors Association, which exports an attractively packaged line of herbs and spices.

The meeting was hosted by the Dominica Hucksters, women who travel by boat through the islands trading in agricultural produce. Participants were impressed to hear that through their negotiations, the

Hucksters exert a level of control over the government shipping service they rely on. Their success was inspiring to the vendor who had just lost \$2,000 worth of bananas when a private boat owner cancelled a voyage without notice.

Participants called on their governments to recognize that the "informal" sector is part of the formal economy (it involves vast numbers of women). Training programmes and incentives need to be provided in the same way they are to larger investors.

Most importantly participants recommended initiatives that higglers themselves can take. They propose to set up more local traders' associations, collaborate through the region, and lobby in an organized fashion.

The seeds were sown for a follow-up forum next year. As participants exchanged addresses before heading home, the mood was one of exhilaration.

H.N.

(From conversations with Judith Wedderburn, F.E.S., Dennis Dewar, C.C.C., and Dr. Michael Witter, U.W.I. Also involved CUSO, ADA and IAF).

IRENE ROBINSON, CRAFT VENDOR

Irene Robinson attended the Regional I.I.T.s Conference as a delegate from the Jamaica Sidewalk Vendors, Higglers and Markets Association. She felt women had ample opportunity to express themselves. She appreciated learning about the problems facing vendors in other countries, often worse than those facing Jamaicans. Irene is concerned about the non-availability of loans and feels that vendors' associations have a role to play there. Caribbean traders need to get together more often, she says.

Irene sells crafts and clothes in her two shops in the Montego Bay Arcade. A mother of nine, she began 13 years ago with five dollars, selling baskets and hats on the streetside. Today, she travels on business to Panama, Haiti, Cayman, and Curacao. Just before the Dominica Meeting she took a group of craft vendors to an exhibition in Cayman. However, they encountered some problems, and instead of exhibiting they had to travel from shop to shop selling their craft. Sales went well, and another trip was planned for June 25 this year.



Higglers play "Cat and Mouse" to practice speedy "strategising" skills, led by facilitator Judith Wedderburn.



CLAUDIA LAVALL (Dominica) and IRENE ROBINSON (Jamaica), participants at the IITs Conference.

Constitutional Reform

by Suzann Dodd

Did you know that there is no law against discrimination based on sex?

Women ought to be in the forefront of the demand for Constitutional Reform in Jamaica. Women are granted no rights, and no protection by the Constitution of Jamaica.

The framers, ever sensitive to racial characteristics, to the diversity of religious denominations and intense political rivalries, were careful to put in a provision to prevent discrimination which was defined as:

"Affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective description by race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed—"

There is no way that provision can stretch to encompass women.

Did you know that there is a law which specifically bars pregnant students from attending school?

One may not be denied a place at school because one is a Rastafarian, but a woman can be barred from schools, clubs, or denied promotions because they have no recourse to the Constitution of Jamaica.

The only law which could be utilized is Sex Disqualification (removal) Law of 1944.

But this law as it stands cannot 'force' an institution to admit women.

The Constitution must be amended so the word 'sex' comes directly after race, making discrimination against women unconstitutional. By doing so, one will be able to 'force' the hiring, the enrollment, the promotion of women.

Did you know that if your husband wants to divorce you he must specifically state whether you have any children which he did not father, however you are not required to do the same?

When a woman stays at home being a maid, housekeeper, bed partner, cook, secretary, receptionist, etc., while her husband goes to work, she is not entitled to share in his property.

The most glaring flaw in our laws is the lack of recognition of Common Law Status. In a nation where the majority of children are born out of wedlock, where most citizens live in common law unions, the puritanical refusal to recognise the situation is unjust and hypocritical.

A man may live with a woman for decades, and if/when he tires and disposes of her he need not worry about being asked for maintenance. A common law wife is not entitled to maintenance although her children are.

Women have struggled to 'build' up their man, and when it is time to reap, she finds she's been replaced by a younger model.

It is only under the **Intestates Estates and Property Charges** the common law spouse is recognised. Yet, it is only a slight compensation.

For example, at the death of Peter Tosh, his 'wife' was not allowed to make arrangements for the disposal of his body. She may take a percentage of his estate, but the treatment obtained in law is one of a concubine paid for services rendered.

Did you know that a woman cannot extend her citizenship to her husband, or child?

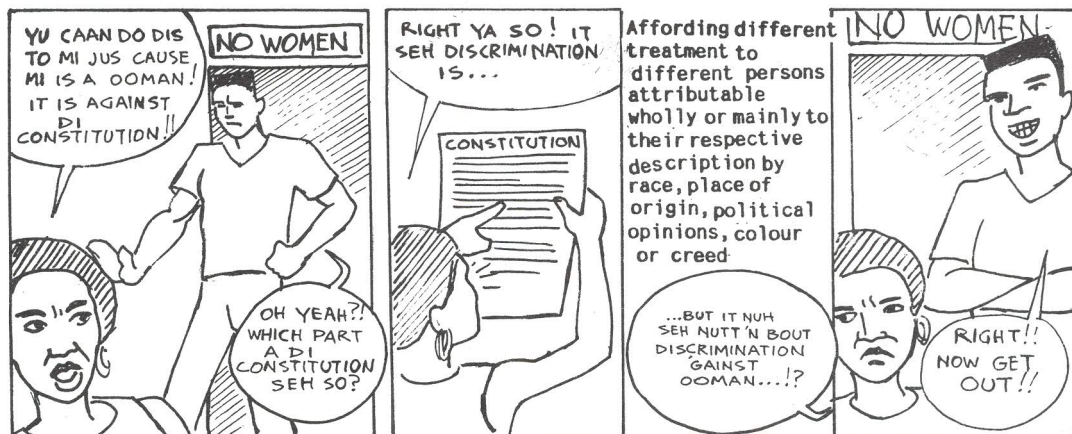
If a Jamaican woman marries a foreign man, he does not become a citizen and is treated as an alien, requiring work permits and Immigration's permission to remain here. But if a Jamaican man marries a foreign woman she automatically gets residency, work permits are waived, and she can have citizenship if she wants it. If a Jamaican gives birth to children abroad, those children are not automatically Jamaicans, but take their father's nationality.

Did you know there are no women who are high court judges who hear divorce and matrimonial matters?

Hopefully, women will recognise the importance of taking the initiative in the debate on Constitutional Reform. With this ought to come a reawakening of social consciousness.

If we sit by and allow 'them' to argue and postpone amendments, and pretend there are greater issues than our rights, we will have no one to blame but ourselves.

I do not think it was in the mind of the proponents of reform to alter the Constitution to the benefit of women, but we must make it so.



Massive lobbying by women's organizations has resulted in some of these successful or pending law changes.

PUERTO RICO

The Law For the Prevention of Domestic Violence, 1990, affords protection from domestic violence by granting a Protection Order. Whether violence has occurred, or been threatened, the law states:

- the aggressor can be removed from the household
- the complainant can get custody of children
- the attacker may be made to pay maintenance for the family
- funds are to be made available for public education and rehabilitation of offenders



From I.W.T.C.

Initiatives Around the Region

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Sexual Offences Act of 1986 achieved the following changes:

- the sexual reputation of the complainant is protected.
- anonymity of the complainant is assured
- hearings are to be held in camera
- husband can be convicted of sexual assault (rape) of his wife in certain circumstances
- it is a crime to sexually harass employees who are minors.

Trinidad is currently considering the Domestic Violence Bill of 1991 which removes the concept of domestic violence as a "private family matter". The bill aims to provide police with powers to arrest where domestic violence has occurred or been threatened.

BAHAMAS

The Bahamas enacted in 1989 the Sexual Offences & Domestic Violence Act which increases penalties for sexual offences, including incest and sexual harassment.

CARICOM MODEL LEGISLATION

Caricom Women's Desk is currently considering model legislation in the following areas:

- domestic violence
- reform of laws relating to sexual offences & sexual harassment
- transferring citizenship from mother to child
- equal pay for equal work
- inheritance laws (specifically to protect dependents without adequate provision).

Government Ministers with responsibility for Women's Affairs agreed in principle to the proposed solutions at a meeting earlier this year. We look forward to hearing the outcome of CARICOM's deliberations!

CAFRA* 's Women and the Law project involves research into the legal status of women around the region. Out of public hearings, strategies for legal reform will emerge. Popular education materials (pamphlets, radio shows) on legal issues are being prepared. Earlier this year, CAFRA hosted a regional meeting which focused on the legal issues surrounding sexual offences. Out of the meeting, a major need was recognized: public education at all levels to challenge the culturally imbedded violence we face daily.

H.N.

*CAFRA = Caribbean Association for Feminist Research Action

VACANCY

The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) a regional grouping of feminist researchers, activists and women's organisations, invites applications from Caribbean women, for the position of:

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

For more information contact:

Co-ordinator
CAFRA

P.O. Bag 442, Tunapuna Post Office
Trinidad & Tobago

Fax. # (809) 663-6482 or 663-9684

POLICE WOMEN

Information provided
by Charlene Robinson,
CARIMAC Student, U.W.I. (Ja)

They say its a man's world... that warfare and security are men's jobs. For nearly 100 years this was the case. Prior to 1949 the Jamaica Constabulary Force existed as an all-male profession. That changed with just five female recruits. Today there are over 585 women in active duty - 10.5 per cent of the Force.

Having gained a foothold, these women have successfully challenged old assumptions about their capabilities. They have progressed from the ordinary rank and file to positions of authority and decision-making in the Force. Moreover women are making qualitative changes particularly in relation to the respectability of the Constabulary.

Police women have made some occupational breakthroughs, but not at the level that the media would sometimes have us believe. While we have popular female successes such as Inspector Ionie Ramsey, the island's first female motor cyclist traffic cop, the majority of female officers are frustrated with their rate of progress. Only a select few have made it to the gazetted rank and upper echelons. The highest rank achieved has been that of Assistant Commissioner (three ranks from the top). No women are yet involved in the Marine and Mounted Troops Divisions. One officer stated that women have shown no interest in these areas.

Female Officers Develop Good Community Relations

Female officers were initially employed to develop good community relations and

instill discipline in juveniles. It was felt that the employment of women would relieve the men to do more "masuline" duties such as participating in raids. So rather than joining the Force as equals, women became juvenile protectors, community relations officers, clerks, typists and telephone operators.

Indeed, for many years their training was biased towards these roles. It was not until 1977 that women became more exposed to the same level of training as men. The Jamaica Police Academy, Twickenham Park, trained officers from 1975-1989. With a capacity for 275 recruits, a maximum of only 36 females attended at one time. Reason stated - the Academy was not built to accommodate women. One officer remarked that in one instance over 200 women qualified but lost their opportunity to less qualified men. However, a new

training centre was opened at Cobbla in 1989 which has a capacity to train 150 recruits. In September 1990, 138 women graduated from the Cobbla Centre, increasing the number of women graduates four-fold.

Nowhere to house trained graduates?

With the increasing number of women receiving training yet another problem raised its head. There is inadequate appropriate accommodation for female graduates.

Married women can enlist if they have no more than one child

In the past, policies stated that married women and/or women with children could not enlist. It was thought that family commitments would interfere with their dedication to the force and their ability to be transferred (apparently men with families did not have similar commitments). Nowadays, women who are married can serve although they are restricted to having only one child on admission.

Cultural stigmas laud male aggression, while they frown upon assertive or physically forceful females. Attitudinal biases lead some people to believe that women need special treatment, such as transportation after work and daytime working hours. Through the Police Federation, women have successfully challenged the bias, and now work on all shifts. Women used to receive promotion only within the Women's Section. Since 1989 when the force became one body, women and men have competed equally for positions.

As is the case in wider society, women have to work extra-hard to advance in this male-dominated occupation. Not only have they surmounted obstacles from within (the force), they have had to deal with societal



Inspector Alvina Ewan unable to find child care for that day, brought her daughter.

expectations for them to perform as super women.

Minister of National Security, K.D. Knight, has appointed Assistant Commissioner Winnefred Hall-Ray to head the Inspection Branch, where she regulates the operation of stations island-wide. She is the first woman to take part in decision-making within the Commission. The Minister says this promotion shows women that there is opportunity for upward mobility.

***Women Exhibit Dedication,
Less Corruption, Less Abuse of Power***

Women do in fact bring unique attributes to the constabulary. Deputy Commissioner Leslie Harper notes that women exhibit dedication and attentiveness to their work, less alcohol use on the job, less involvement in corruption, and less abuse of their power.

With all these much-needed qualities, we hope more women will be recruited. It is the induction and promotion of women that will clean up the tarnished image of the Constabulary and raise its standard.

"We aspire to a model of development where we do not deny our role as 'reproducers.' We project a future of peace where our sons and brothers do not have to resort to war as the only solutions to our problems...In our new country, our sons will cease to be soldiers for wars, and we women will stop serving as 'factories' for armies."

Statement from the "Women's Platform" of Women for Dignity and Life, a growing Salvadoran women's movement.



A Revolution in Conflict Resolution: An Alternative to Costly Legal Fees

Do you experience conflicts at the workplace? Unable to settle the dispute with your spouse over who gets what? Your landlady demanding rent though she has not yet repaired the broken pipe?

A new and creative form of dispute resolution is now available: Mediation. Mediation is a process by which two disputing parties accept responsibility for their actions, and with the assistance of a neutral third party, a trained mediator, they arrive at mutually acceptable solutions.

Forty-four professionals have been trained as Mediators and over 2000 persons have been sensitized about Mediation.

Clients find it a productive and satisfying process as they are actively involved in resolving their problems.

Information provided by Masana De Souza
Coordinator for the Jamaican Mediation Centre, 131 Tower Street (3rd floor) Kingston
Phone: 92-25012



Life funny.
Life short.
Life bitta.
An it bruk inna yuh heart
An run ova tasting like gall
Like sorosee
An yuh turn yellow,
Like when leaf ripe pon tree
An drop off.
Yuh reach out to yuself
An yuh find
Say yuh fraid
Yuh weak
An most of all
Yuh not there.

Tabioca

Young Jamaican Women Find Solutions

by Honor Ford-Smith

Early one evening in 1987, a thirteen year old girl was sent to the shop by her parents. Hours later, when she still hadn't come home, search parties combed Seaview Gardens, the low income housing scheme near Kingston's waterfront, where she lived. That night, she was found hanging from the roof of an unfinished school. She had been raped and murdered. Shocked and angry, the community spontaneously demonstrated against what had happened.

Becky Knowles is a resident of Seaview and a member of Sistren. When the murder happened, Becky moved fast: she met with two young women living nearby. "If I start something for young women, will you join?" she asked them. They said "Yes" and Teens-in-Action began with seven members, meeting at the unfinished community centre. Today Teens has double the membership and an impressive record.

Seaview Gardens

Seaview is a large low income housing complex, built on the swampy reclaimed land near Kingston Harbour. It is separated from the old city dump, itself a squatter community, by an open trench. It is bordered by the polluted

waters of the harbour and the factories of Kingston's industrial wasteland.

As in many other low income housing schemes, the utility services and social services for Seaview have never been adequately put in place. The buildings originally intended as markets or schools are incomplete shells. Some have been taken over by churches. The roadways and pathways are impassible when it rains.

Seaview has an extremely high unemployment level - women under 25 are the hardest hit. The frustration and anger of the young men have often found an outlet in gang violence. A burgeoning underground economy, of-

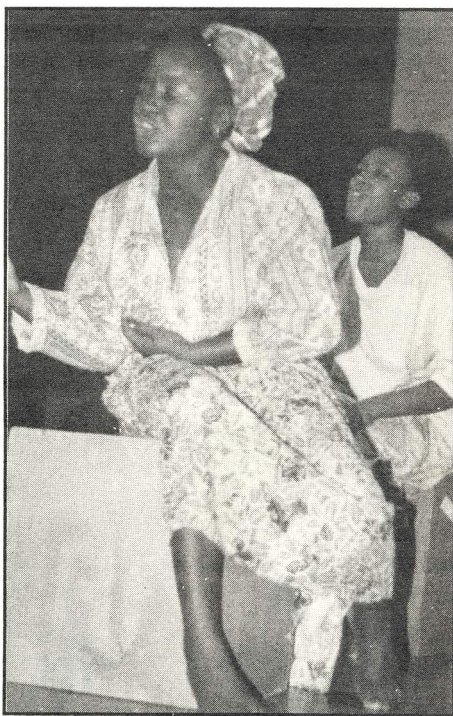
ten based on the drug trade, and a political culture based on clientelism have exacerbated the situation. In addition, sexual violence in Jamaica is on the rise and Seaview residents suffer the consequences. As one young woman put it "It's scary . . . I wonder if I'm going to get raped. Sometimes it's people you know"

Drama, discussion and action

Teens-in-Action offers the young women of Seaview a chance to deal with their problem creatively. In internal workshops they discuss issues like sexual abuse, and communication between parents and children. Later they share their views with the Seaview community and other groups around Jamaica. Teens-in-Action are known for their drama presentations, but also for their open discussions in the community, their participation in radio shows, and for their letters to the media.

In Seaview Gardens itself, Teens are remembered for the service they offered after the disaster of the 1988 Hurricane and for last year's tree planting drive, aimed at improving the bare landscape of Seaview Gardens. Out of 60 new trees, only 13 have reached the one year mark, due to the destructive forces of some community residents. Teens also painted the houses of some elderly persons.

Junior Teens was originated this year by Teens member Marvia Morgan.



Roxanne and Nadia play young mothers sharing their suffering



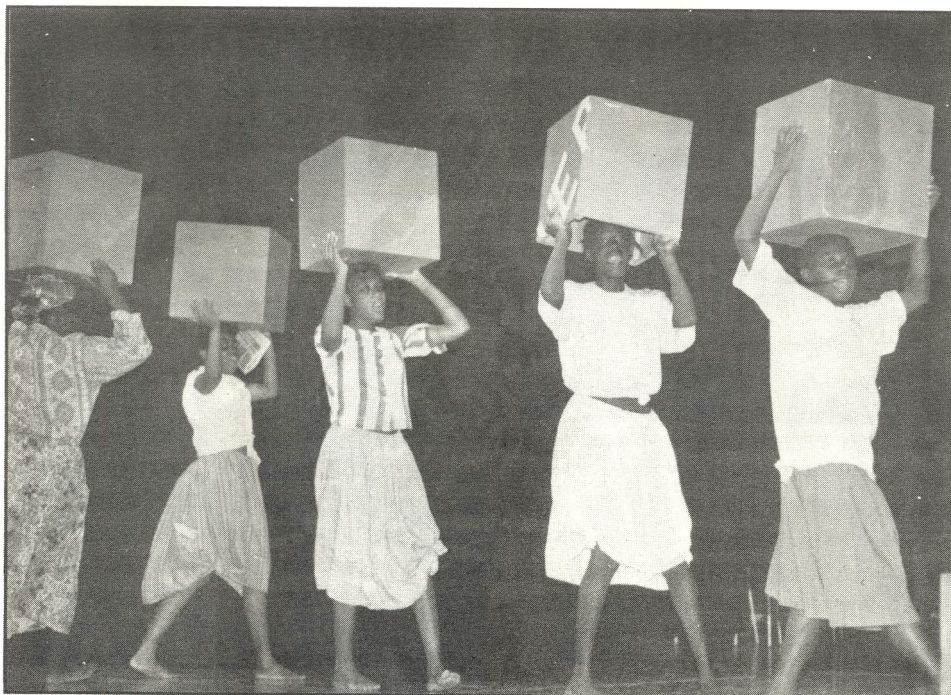
Becky Knowles with some members of Teens. Marvia 2nd from right.

The younger girls (9-13 year olds) kept coming to Teens' meetings asking to join. Marvia seized the opportunity to work with these motivated youngsters and tries to instill the kind of responsibility that will better the community.

Teens-In-Action created and performed the play "Inflation", which carried them to this year's Eastern Region Drama Finals. The play, depicting how the economic crisis affects

teenagers, won Teens three awards in Acting, Overall Performance, and Directing.

Forming the Teens group was a positive action taken to address violence and the disenfranchisement of youth. Like those 13 surviving trees, Teens roots are firmly planted within the community and with enough care, they will continue to grow.



Teens in "Inflation"

SELF-PORTRAIT:

MARVIA MORGAN

I'm seventeen now and I've been living in Seaview Gardens for six years. Before that I used to live in Mavis Bank, a rural community high up in the Blue Mountains. I lived with my Granny (I call her Mum). I loved Mavis Bank. All my cousins lived around and my other Grandmother lived next door. Mavis Bank is rural: fruit, open land, river. We used to swim in the river and go as a group to wash clothes, catch janga (river shrimp) and bathe. It was great

Then I passed common entrance and I had to move to Kingston to live with my mother so I could go to high school. It was totally different. I never had any friends. The house was just one room then and I used to just walk round it - lonely. I met a church sister and her kids. For a long time they were the only friends I had.

I hate the environment. The Riverton City dump is next door. They say they've moved it, but they haven't. When they light the garbage the smoke comes all over and it smells bad. The trench right round the area breeds mosquitos. Sometimes it's like a curtain of mosquitos in the air.

I joined Teens-in-Action to meet new people and help deal with the problems facing young women.

I want Teens-in-Action to help people to build a better community. I want to go into other communities in other depressed areas and help them. Teens has brought me out of my shyness. I can communicate better now.

SISTERS' CELEBRATION GOOD VIBRATIONS

As International Women's Day was marked in many parts of the nation, a highlight was SISTERS' CELEBRATION.

Thousands came to the Concert - sistren and bredren - to salute the country's women. They enjoyed melodies from down memory lane, as well as dub-style words of youthful wisdom from Little Natural, youngest artist of the night.

Hortense Ellis made her first public appearance in many years. Her voice was a delight! (Since that performance she has been booked for a number of shows.)

Sisters' Celebration was dedicated to women in the agricultural sector.

Special guests were the Hillside Women Farmers Association from Clarendon. They displayed (and sold) heaps of fresh farm produce and kept the celebrators well-fed all night with delicious home-made grater cake and puddin', bammies, ginger beer and much more.

As a result of the Concert, a scholarship will be offered to a young woman from the Hillside community to pursue agricultural studies. Thanks go out to all the performing artists and supporters who made it all possible.



Hortense Ellis sung her heart out - a medley of positive live vibes



A proud smile from a member of the Hillside Women Farmers Association (Clarendon) offering peas, pumpkin an 'nuff niceness



Big Youth - DJ 'royalty' - danced, pranced his way through dub to ballads



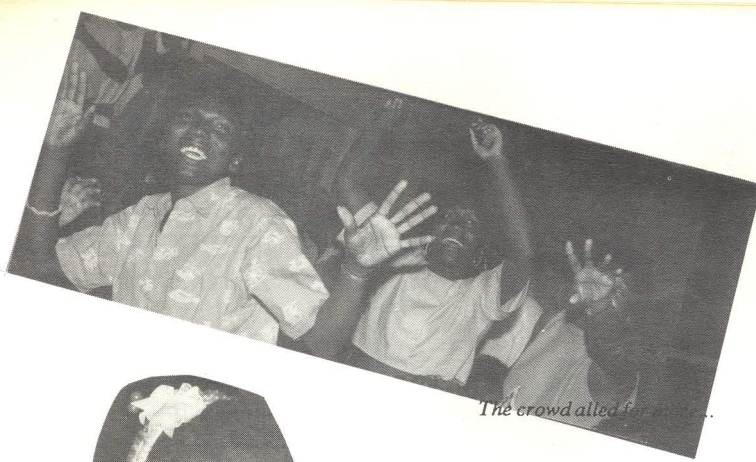
SISTERS' CELEBRATION veteran Carlene Davis in a lover's duet with husband Tommy Cowan.



Cynthia Schloss made an exciting comeback



A surprise: Beres Hammond thrilled the crowd...



The crowd alled for...



Little Natural tells it "like it is" - parents listen to the children!



Mutubaruka in controversial style as always - a longtime supporter of SISTERS' CELEBRATION



Bello and Blacka



Cheryl Natural

POETS AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

"Mommy, why you don't put on something for children?" 7 year old Little Natural asked her mother Cherry Natural, one of Jamaica's leading female dub poets. Cherry rose to her daughter's challenge and planned the concert "Poets Against Child Abuse." It was held in Mandela Park, Kingston on May 18 to mark Child Month.

We were so glad to see many proud fathers with their children on their shoulders, in their laps, and by their sides. Children regularly seen in the park also took in the concert: Half Way Tree's street children. They reminded us of the pervasive abuses experienced by children the world over, such as the 40,000 children who die each day from ordinary malnutrition and disease, and the 100 million 6-11 year olds around the globe who are not in school.*

Cherry received support from 16 of her friends from the Poetry Society, who donated their talents for the free concert, the first pure poetry show of this size to take place here.

*Source: UNICEF (1991), The State of the Worlds Children.

MOTHERS DAY by Tabioca

It is on days like this
That I recall
How vague as a child
The word mother was
I learnt the correct
Usage of the word
When I was old enough
To spin the pages
Of my Oxford Dictionary.
My mother didn't kiss away
My tears
When I fell
And bruised the skin on my knees
She never smoothed away
My fears
When the changes
Of youth started to begin
She never was there
She still hasn't reached here yet.
I pioneered my childhood days
Alone.
Under those shades
I chased away my own shadow
Discovered my own ruins
And built my own bridge
To take me across
That which I feared most.
Mother
I remember you
Because you are still
On my horizon
Like a shadow
On the wall.

PRISON LIFE

by Jo Eekhoff

A bumpy dirt road leads to the crumbling stone walls of Fort Augusta Correctional Centre. It lies at the end of a long promontory, surrounded on three sides by the sea. Of Jamaica's current 3,700 prisoners, 184 are women (5%). These women, four of them with newborn babies, are housed in Fort Augusta - Jamaica's only women's prison. One-half of the prisoners are foreign women, and most of the prisoners are there on drug charges. The prison population continues to grow yearly.

In a country where the entire infrastructure is in a state of disrepair, one would expect prisons to be anything but glamorous. The scattered buildings inside the fort, the desolate area surrounding it, and the topless palm trees destroyed by Gilbert, lend an ominous aura to the prison area. Fort Augusta was intended to be used only temporarily and plans for a new women's prison were underway, but budgetary constraints halted that process.

The prison accommodations consist of ten dormitory-style cells. Fourteen to twenty-four women share each cell, with a cage-like gate at the front and bathroom area at the back. The toilet stalls have small doors allowing full view of head and feet of those using the facilities. Whether prisoners are on their bunks, in the shower, or on the toilet, they can be seen from the cell-front, making privacy impossible.

Prisoners' daily routine is breakfast from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m., a noontime lunch, and dinner at 2:00 p.m. The food is described as a lot of bulk items such as rice, flour dumpings and porridge, but tolerable enough. Most of the prisoners are locked in the cells all the time apart from one hour for meals. A doctor comes to the prison weekly. Occasionally a sewing or hairdressing in-

structor comes to give classes, but the visits are very sporadic. At the time of my visit it had been two weeks since any training programmes had occurred. Adult literacy classes used to be offered, but no longer continue, and recreation programmes have ceased.

PATSY

Patsy was poor and she saw little opportunity to better her situation, so she chose to smuggle some ganja to England. She made it as far as a London jail, with five pounds of the compressed herb strapped to her body. She spent nearly two years in Fort Augusta and had her baby there.

While serving time Patsy learned a little about hairdressing, shoemaking and sewing, and received a few JAMAL (Jamaican Movement for Adult Literacy) classes, but says she didn't learn enough to use those skills outside of prison. Life in Fort Augusta was rough, "Yuh sleep the whole day til yuh torment and yuh ask the dormitory wardress if yuh can go outside, even to pick up the papers them."

She was lucky her sentence wasn't any longer, because as her baby reached seven months she was released. If a baby reaches six months old and the mother still has some time to serve, her family's living situation may be deemed unsuitable by the courts who then send the baby to a Children's Home.

If Patsy could, she would change the attitude of the wardresses, "Them watch and peep and them kinda lickey lickey too, like if yuh give them money them deal with yuh good."

Patsy got in one fight with a wardress in which she battered the wardress' chin and stabbed her with a spoon. Two wardresses stopped the fight by busting up Patsy's head with a belt. She was so close to being released that she avoided punishment in the "dark room". The "dark room" is one of three solitary confinement cells said to house lizards, fleas, roaches, and ants that can crawl in your ears and cause temporary deafness. Patsy said the cost of living could force her to smuggle again.

STEPHANIE

Stephanie was being beaten by her boyfriend and begged him to stop. When he didn't stop she stabbed him with a kitchen knife. Unfortunately he died. Stephanie, previously a high-level professional is serving a six year sentence for manslaughter.

She was held in jail for three months prior to her hearing. "Jamaican police men are very abusive verbally. I was already condemned before I was sentenced...they thought if women were being hung, I should be the first."

What shocked Stephanie most about life in Fort Augusta was how women treated women. She expected women to be more understanding of her motive.



The hardest part of prison life according to Stephanie is the lack of privacy. There are a lot of petty jealousies and inmates abuse each other. Kindness and friendship are not valued. If you are kind, you end up being used. The constant contact in here breeds animosity and tension."

At Fort Augusta, prisoners are allowed one fifteen minute visit per month (two if the warden feels benevolent). "I've lost a lot of friends, but if I lose them, they're not friends anyway, right? From being here I know there is more loyalty in the ghetto than in the middle-class."

"Prison is a college. You learn to read people. Prison shows you hatred that I never knew before. I'd rather go to dovecot* than come back here."

JANET

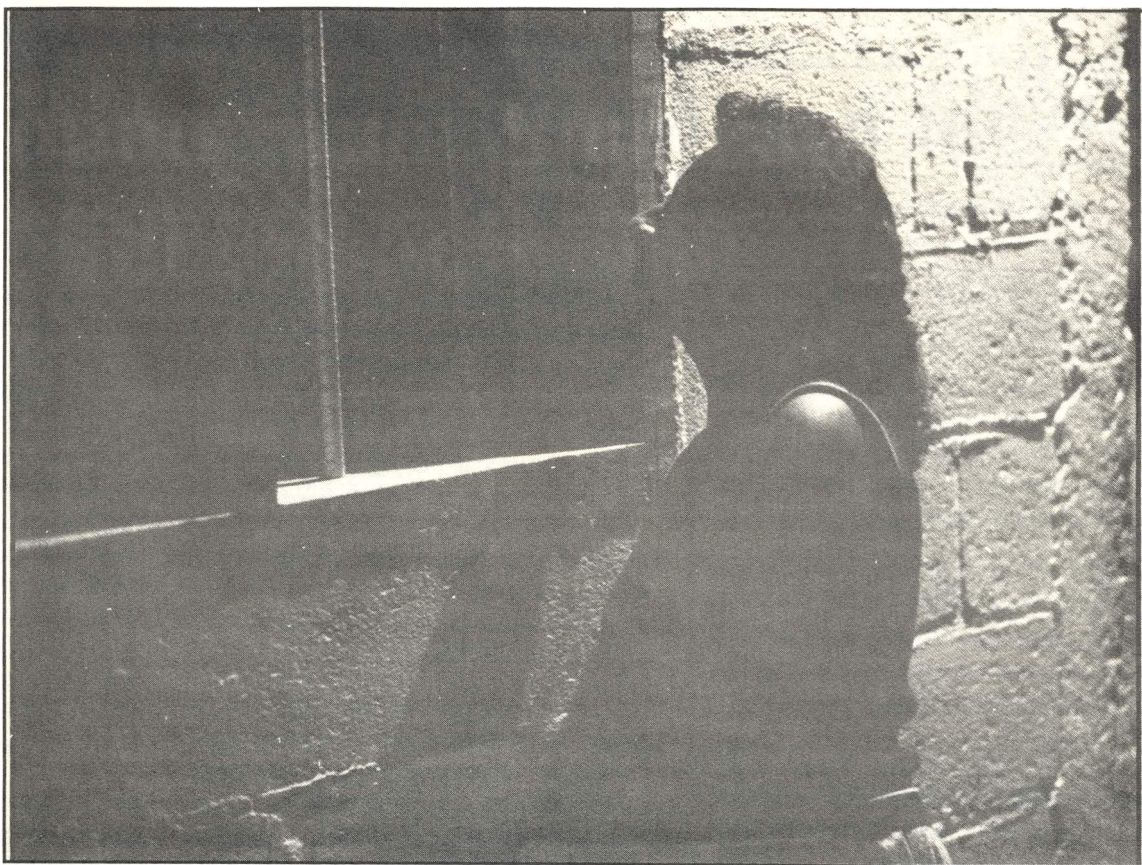
Janet had a surprisingly bright and positive demeanor. She considered her almost completed six month sentence a good learning experience. She would not try to smuggle ganja again to make a quick dollar.

Janet sees a lot of illiteracy and low self-esteem among her inmates. "They really don't have anything in here as far as rehabilitation. There are lots of creative people in here, they just need programmes. Like I read Sistren magazine, couldn't you come in and do some workshops?"

WHAT NEXT?

All the women mentioned feeling loss of basic human rights when entering prison. They all described feeling subhuman or like a child, unable to communicate in familiar ways or even think like they used to. "You learn to tolerate injustices, not to speak out."

*(Dovecot: "burial park"/cemetery)



A British Sociologist, recently studied the prison situation throughout the Caribbean. She found most prison accommodations were "unsuitable", men's and women's alike. She gave some recommendations for improvement:

- For all women prisoners a daily programme of activities should be instituted so they are out of their cells the whole day, receiving education and training in income-earning skills.
- Outside organisations concerned with women's welfare should visit the women's prisons, organise discussions and other activities.

One hundred eighty four women are serving time at Fort Augusta, and passing the time is all they seem to be doing. Instead of leaving the Fort more violent and angry than they entered, they could be leaving with a skill that would deter them from the bandoollu juggling that landed most of them there.

Should a woman be turned into a hardened criminal for dealing in ganja? Should a woman who -- in defence -- kills her abusive boyfriend be locked up to waste away?

Upon release, what provision for employment is made for these women? If they land a job, is the level of salary enough to support their families? If not, the crime cycle is bound to continue.

OFFENCES OF WOMEN AT FORT AUGUSTA

Dangerous Drugs Law	81
Larceny	25
Felonious Wounding	24
Forgery/Fraud	12
Other Offences	9
Offence Against Person	7
Burglary	3

SOURCES:

Vivien Stern (1990), Deprived of Their Liberty: A Report For Caribbean Rights

Department of Correctional Services (1990), Annual Report: 1989

THANKS TO:

Mr. R.M. Roberts, Executive Director of Adult Services and to Fort Augusta Correctional Centre.

THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION MOVEMENT:

What Role for Women?

by Patrick Smikle

As CARICOM bureaucrats prepared for the July 1991 meeting of Heads of Governments in St. Kitts, one of the documents being circulated was the interim report of the West Indian Commission.

The Commission had for several months been consulting with the people of the region on the future of the regional integration movement, where they would like to see it go and how it could get there.

When the interim report was released to the public through the news media, it did not deal with an issue which was raised with the Commission at almost every stop it made in Jamaica. That issue was the role of women in Caribbean development and integration.

Firstly, there was the composition of the 16 member Commission. "Why is it that there are twelve of you up there and not one woman is up there?" a 12 year old school-girl asked at the public session in Kingston: (see sidebar)

Of the two women named to the Commission, explained chairman Sir Shridath Ramphal, Dame Nita Barrow had been appointed Governor General of Barbados and Gillian Nanton, of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, was no longer available. She had "other commitments".

"Anyone could look around the smallest islands in the Caribbean and find eight knowledgeable, competent and capable women", was the response from Hermione McKenzie, lecturer at the University of the West Indies.

She said that the UWI's Women and Development Unit (WAND), had actually considered establishing a 'rival' commission comprised solely of women. "I promise you Sir, that we would surpass you in dynamism and the practicality of our proposals because we are used to displaying these characteristics every day of our lives".

The absence of women from the decision-making fora of the region was contributing to the low status of women in Caribbean society. Mrs. McKenzie pointed out that the Jamaican economy survived on the low paid work of women in health, education, the free trade zone, and several menial occupations. Surveys had established that the poorest households at every income level were the ones headed by women. Women were more unemployed than men, and lacked job skills. Yet women's unpaid labour ensures the caring of children and the sick and the balancing of household budgets in the face of extreme inflation.

Caribbean economic development could not move apace unless the economic status of women was addressed by the policy makers and "not in a charity/handout way."

The abuse of women in the home (domestic violence), in popular culture (anti-woman songs) and in the media (the sexist advertisements) needed to be addressed. The Caribbean Women for Democracy (CWD) saw drug abuse, teenage sex and the lack of

early childhood facilities as the result of inadequate population planning.

Re-write Caribbean history to include women

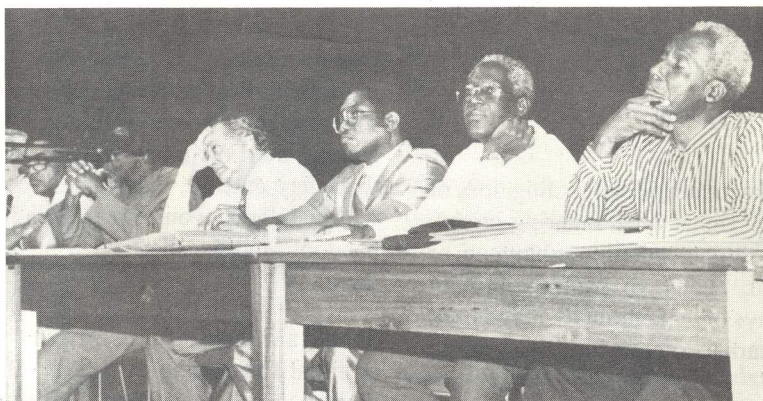
CWD's Executive Director, Senator Jeanette Grant-Woodham, felt that Caribbean history should be re-written to reflect the role played by women. **The Making of the West Indies**, one of the main school history texts, uses the word 'women' only nine times in more than three hundred pages, she said.

CWD was concerned that tribalism in regional politics should not divide and weaken the women's movement.

The response of the Commission to the submissions of the women's groups and individuals showed that the women had made an impact. Sir Shridath agreed it was not too late to coopt women to the group.

"We are drawing women constantly into the process. It's a matter that we take with the utmost seriousness. The role of women in Caribbean society, in development, in integration is being addressed with the help of the regional women's movement and that in a sense is more important than the composition of the Commission."

The women's groups made it clear they would be watching to see to what extent their role in the regional integration movement would be reflected in the final report.



"We would surpass you in dynamism"

A 12 year old takes the West Indian Commission to task

There was a line of about six people at the microphone waiting to speak to the 12 people seated on the stage. At the end of the line was a school girl. She wore her hair in the dreadlocks style of the region's rastafarians.

The West Indian Commission, which is sounding out views on regional integration was into its second day of hearings in Jamaica. More than an hour had gone and the Commission had heard submissions from individuals, organisations and the "forum goers", people who attend every public forum in Kingston regardless of the issue.

The young girl at the back of the line had arrived with a group of rastafarian women but she sat one row behind them. After listening for more than half an hour she reached into her knapsack for a notebook and started to scribble. She then joined the line.

"Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, commissioners, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Ishama Hope, I attend the Wolmers School for Girls and I am 12 years old. Why is it that there are twelve of you up there and not one women is up there." The applause was thunderous.

Sir Shridath said that the two women originally appointed to the Commission were no longer available.

"Then why don't you try to get more women on it?" Applause.

The Commission had been trying to recruit more female members, Sir Shridath explained.

"You should try harder than you're trying now" was the response. And without waiting for a reply from Sir Shridath, young Ms. Hope launched into her other concerns. She wanted to see more women in parliament in Jamaica and in the other Caribbean territories. She was concerned about the economic crisis. Politicians in charge of the economy could learn something from poor women like domestic helpers, who feed a family of six on \$130 a week.

The applause was loud and sustained as she walked back to her seat. The women with whom she had arrived beamed with pride. Sir Shridath muttered something about the future of the Caribbean resting with its youth. A "forum goer" behind me quoted, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings."
P.S.



Puerto Rico

Me Dear P,

I am very busy but me haffi keep you up to date.

Guess wah. The other night me and a few Jamaican say we a go walk street. Gal, you shoulda see well dress ooman! Me did waan fi get the new Puerto Rican style fi come back come show you. So me look so til me start fi look out a style cos dem foot-back tuff like me granny scrub board. We realise, dem some prostitute and guess wha? Dem a man!

Me get fi understand dat de prostitute dem well organized in dis ya country - man and ooman. Dem have legal right such as lawyer and union which talk fi dem. Dem well conscious bout de AIDS too. Dem check dem doctor every month end, and walk with dem "boots" fi protection.

Me respect dem people! Chile, you waan see de man prostitute when dem dress! Cremolin stiff like when mama used to starch her husband "long john", jerry curl wig, spike heel, and dem mouth red like annatto.

We will have to tink bout legal right fi wi prostitute in JA!

Tek good care!

Bye Bye,

Bess

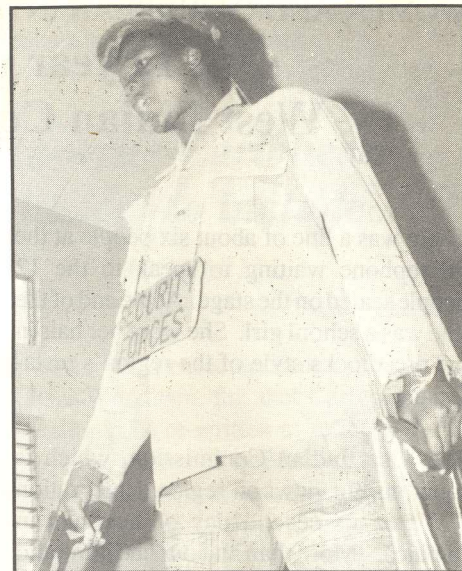


THE GUMMIE KEILA STORY

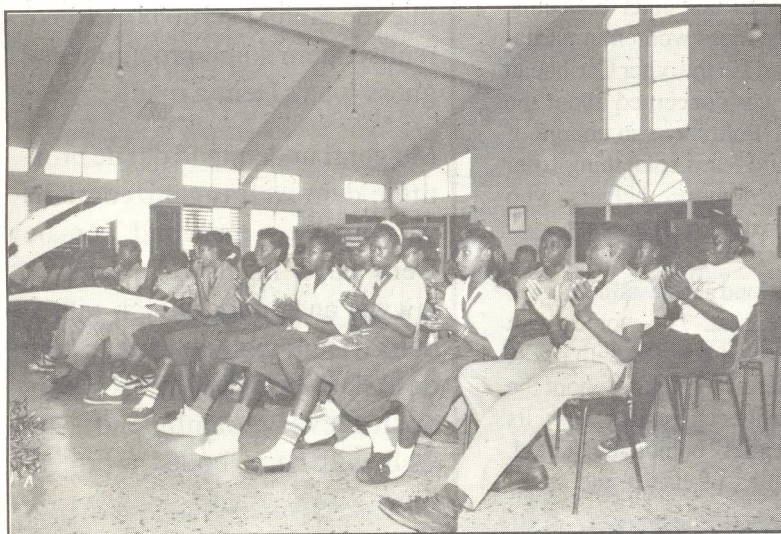
From Grange Hill, Westmoreland to Seaforth, St. Thomas, and nearly every parish in between, Sistren's 'Drug and Youth' Workshop is raising student awareness about drug use and abuse. The "Gummie Keila Story" is a skit showing ways which 'gummie keila', (a fantasy name representing any drug) affects three peoples' lives.

Old Aunty uses the herb for medicinal purposes, without knowing its street value. Sharon is a highschooler who gets involved selling the processed gummie keila. Ricardo is seen by students as a role model. He is a young boy from a poor background who chooses a difficult path by avoiding drugs to get his education. The story ends with a punchline about the government spending more money on Security Forces than the Youth Programmes.

"Is it Drug Abuse or Youth Abuse?" Sistren ask. Students are quick to identify the ways they feel abused. Their schools lack educational supplies and equipment for vocational classes. They have no skills training programmes available after graduation. They feel harrassed rather than supported by police. And to some of them, using and dealing drugs looks like the best option. Students leave the workshop chanting Sistren's rap "We got to move to di riddim of a different beat".



Becky as a security guard demanding respect from the youth

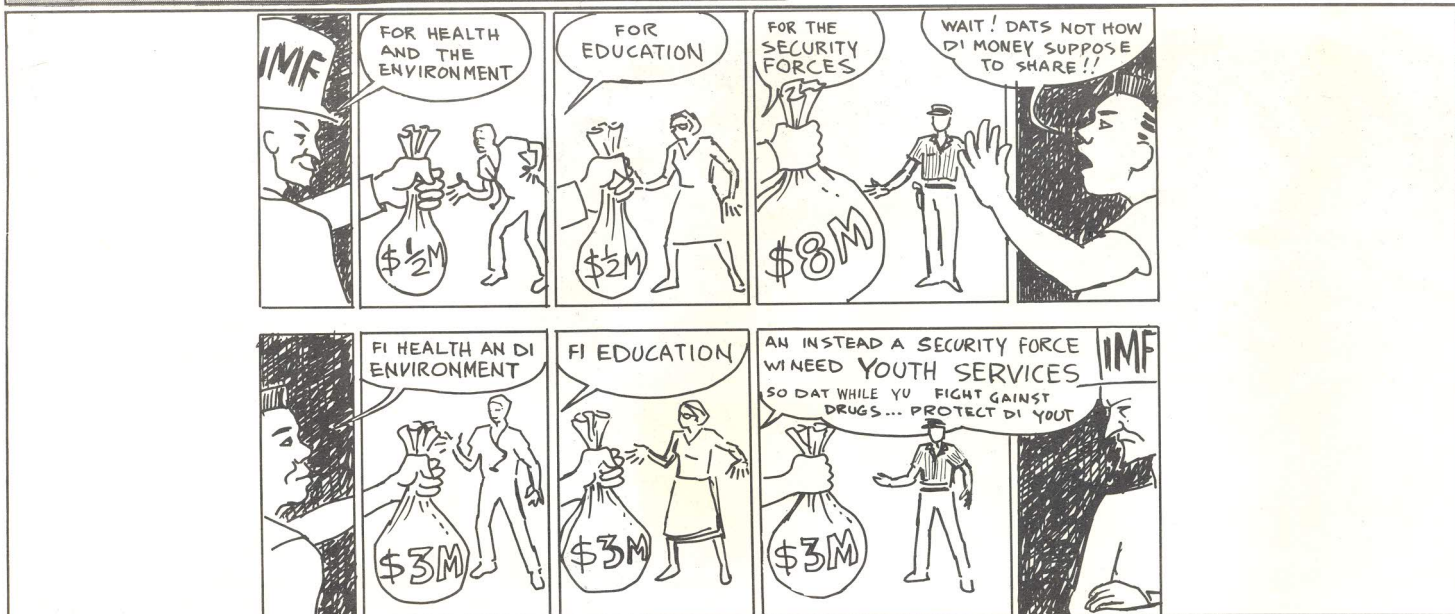


Is it Drug Abuse or Youth Abuse?

While yuh fight against drugs
Fight fi di youth
While yuh fight against drugs
Protect di youth

Get rid of the dons and the corruption
den yuh stamp out pollution
Di don a di man who spin di wheel
and have di youth up and down pon dem heel.

Youthman, a trap yuh get trap?
Dawta, a rap yuh get rap?
Suss out yuh self
Work out a plan
A plan fi yuh life
A plan fi di land



Sistren's Theatre-in-Education Method

by Cornelia Fichtl

Sistren has created one more piece of artwork. This time it tackles questions about drug use among teenagers. The short drama "The Gummie Keila Story" encourages students to look at the problem in a socio-political context.

I got the chance to accompany Sistren on some workshops and experienced the impact of drama as a means of education.

A Student's Response

"Drama can function as a mirror. You feel as if you are placed in it. You identify with people on the stage. You get to understand the facts quickly." If I had any doubts before, this statement by a teenage girl after a performance assured me that the dramatic arts can enhance the process of education.

Vital Part of Human Nature

The Jamaican educational system is in crisis, but Sistren perform and students under-

stand. Sistren's skit does not simply address functional intelligence, it speaks through music you enjoy, symbolism you try to decipher and role models which can be identified with or rejected.

Drama is a vital part of human nature. It relates to the experience of play in early childhood and to the "playing out" of every



Sharon (Joy Erskine) pleads with her "Don", (Becky Knowles) She wants to stop dealing drugs.

day life. These roots make drama an effective tool for education. The process of identification with the acting on stage opens up the student's minds while unleashing emotions and channeling them in a structured way.

The students have fun while getting involved in an intellectual process. They analyse the characters, the conflicts, the props, the language, and even the creation of the play.

A Non-Authoritarian Medium

Theatre-in-education is neither authoritarian nor oppressive. It allows communication between the actors and students which is unusual for an ordinary school situation. While the action develops on stage, it is up to the students to decide what is "right" or "wrong", or appropriate for their lives. Sistren's work evokes and requires creative thinking.

Although the play ends with a positive message, it leaves enough room for the students to figure out the possible developments of the characters by thinking of actions they could take or should not have taken. Drama is a medium for change towards a liberating, cooperative, enquiry-oriented process of education.

After the workshops, students filled out a brief questionnaire. In answer to "What improvements could be made", they repeatedly said "Come more often".



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~~SUN~~
no light

~~SAND~~
riots in the streets

~~SEX~~
gunshot

Experience the
Real Jamaica!



Jo Acting Editor for this issue

JO'S TRAVEL DIARY

The Jamaica touted by travel brochures is not the Jamaica I met when Bev took me to visit her yard. Her light and water were off and on (mostly off). Walking to the "Stone Love" dance we bumped into youths fleeing the police's invasion of the dance, and gunshot. Bus fares were hiked so we awoke next day streets blocked with garbage and old refrigerators. We picked our way past the rubble and artillery to get to work. Where's the beach, Bev?

Mothers, Sons & Police

by Jo Eekhoff

Mothers are learning to deal with the police, lawyers and the courts, but when will police learn to deal with youth? The newspapers regularly debate how changes can be made within the Constabulary so that police learn to deal more effectively with youth. Recently, a new outbreak of police raids took place, increasing reports of harassment and brutality.

Another gunman, gang leader, and escaped murderer is on the loose in Jamaica. Joe's ability to foil all police efforts to apprehend him has earned him near hero status. I spoke with women who were personally affected by the "Joe Raids".

ALL A DEM INNA ONE CAGE

Laura's son was on his bicycle when the police jeep drove by and picked him up. "When I reached the station and asked wha'ppen, dem tell me fi wait outside. The police picked up a hol'heap o'dem and put all a dem inna one cage. Dem say dem hol' me son in connection wid Joe. Me say him asthmatic, him cyaan lock up. They ask for proof him sick. We showed him (medical) paper and him puffer. They said him haffi stay overnight."

Other mothers there rescued the children's jewelry and money. "Dem said if the cops found money, or anything else they wanted, the kids could never prove it was taken."

The next day Laura had no luck getting her son released. She called a lawyer. The lawyer phoned the station but the arresting officer wasn't there and there was nothing they could do yet.

"Him slept pon the cold concrete. The cell, dem nah wash out. Chink (bug) inna most of dem. A whole heap a dem pickney pack up inna one cell and it nah have no ventila-

tion - one hole. Me whole fear was that because him sickly, him go dead pon dem. If him tek sick, dem nah carry him a doctor."

On the third day he still hadn't been released. The lawyer said she would file Habeus Corpus. By 6:00 p.m. he was home.

HIM LUCKY

Laura's son did not get charged, nor did he know Joe. "Him lucky fi get out of jail so fast."

"I met one ooman in deh whose son in fi three weeks. She didn't know her rights." Laura told her to call a lawyer. She did so, and got him home the next day.

"The police discriminate 'gainst you because of the community you live in. Kids learn fear of police. Sometime the criminals handle the citizens better than the police."

HUMAN RIGHTS

Flo O'Connor at the Jamaican Council for Human Rights says 80% of the complaints

they receive are due to police detaining persons without charging them. Flo says police in Jamaica seem unaware of the regulation stating "a detainee must be charged within 48 hours or be released." People have been held up to three months without being charged.

DETERMINATION OF WOMEN

Most cases at the J.C.H.R. are reported by mothers, grandmothers, babymothers or sisters. Flo believes "this reflects the determination of women to stand up for their rights." Very painful situations arise when males are detained, especially if that male is the sole breadwinner for the family.

When a detainee has not been charged within 48 hours, the Council files Habeus Corpus — bringing about a release 60% of the time. For those who are charged, legal assistance is provided and 90% of those cases are won.

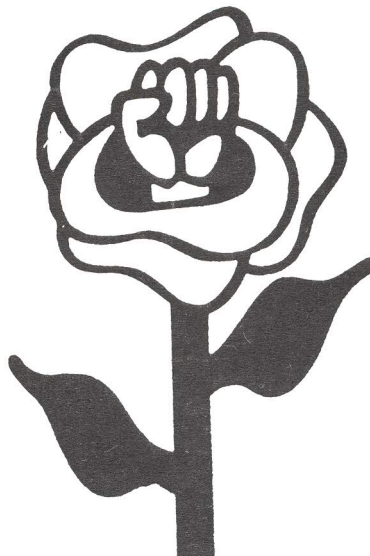
BRUTALITY

About one-third of complaints brought to the Council involve police brutality. Women are often denied the right to see the child because the police want to wait until the bruises go down. After bringing clean clothes to their sons in jail, some mothers are shocked to see the child's blood-stained clothes returned to them. Flo finds ill-meaning police frequently charge youth with illegal possession of firearms, an effective means of keeping kids in detention for up to six months while they wait for a Gun Court hearing.

OOMAN A CARRY DE LOAD

The major problem faced by families of detained youth is how to pay for legal assistance. The J.C.H.R. is forced to charge a nominal fee. Some women sell household items to make payments, while others are members of a "Partner" and arrange for fees to be paid at their next "draw".

Most of the police are men and most of the youth arrested by them are boys. But we still find women carrying the load. When the "Natty Raids" subside, women will no doubt continue to bear the brunt of disturbing police activities. How can we women, the secondary victims of police harassment make ourselves more of a force to be dealt with?



HOUSEHOLD WORKERS UNITE

Vulnerable to poor working conditions and low pay, Domestic Workers are one of the largest working groups in Jamaica. At last they have united as the Jamaican Household Workers Association (J.H.W.A.).



Entire Committee with Portia Simpson and other guests

The Jamaica Council for Human Rights was formed in 1978 by a group of Kingston lawyers concerned about poor peoples' plights with the legal system. They were further concerned about the overall deterioration of respect for human rights in Jamaica. The non-profit agency is funded by international organizations. A panel of volunteer lawyers take on cases, providing assistance to death row inmates, taking questions to the privy council in London, and producing public education programmes to try and maintain public awareness of human rights.

Eighty members strong, the Association held its opening meeting in July, one year after the government's Bureau of Womens Affairs began sponsoring workshops for interested household helpers.

Democratically elected leaders discussed aims and objectives for the Association, including positive working relationships

between employers and employees, with better understanding of roles, rights and responsibilities. They hope to address non-payment by employers of National Insurance Scheme funds, and to provide training opportunities for members, women and men alike.

Information provided by Harnett Baker, Secretary J.H.W.A.

COMBATTING THE HOUSING CRISIS



In the last issue we spoke (in rather secretive language) about women "Confronting the Housing Crisis" in a 20 year old, unfinished housing scheme. After a long struggle with the Ministry of Construction, the women have some success to share.

Mostly single-parent women, they have worked hard to install a standpipe for water, and wired up some electric current. The whole scheme is full-up now, housing some 100 families.

Someone from the Ministry visited recently. He assigned lot numbers and began to review sewage needs. The Ministry is supposedly assessing the fixtures put in by



the women and is devising a self-help scheme, in which a small rental fee would be collected, giving credits for the money spent on finishing the once-empty housing shells.

The women will be happy to pay the rent if it means they will finally be living with some stability. Let's hope the formalities are soon complete and the next update can be titled "Defeating the Housing Crisis".

UPDATE: As we go to press, all tenants have received letters from the Ministry asking that they sign papers to take over ownership. Congratulations!

Dennis, "Nuff Respect"

by Honor Ford-Smith

Sistren Theatre Collective joins with many others in mourning the loss of Dennis Scott - poet, playwright, dancer, director and educator.

Scott's years as Director at the Jamaica School of Drama were marked by an encouragement of new forms of drama and theatre. They were years of courageous experimentation supported by the development of innovative cultural organizations. Sistren was one of the many groups which benefitted from his unique leadership. It was with his encouragement that Sistren was established under the umbrella of the Jamaica School of Drama, its members trained in drama skills, and the approach which characterized its early work developed.



Dennis Scott hands Cerene her certificate at STC's 5th Anniversary Celebration, 1982.

Dennis was the impetus behind plays such as *Bellywoman Bangarang* and *QPH*, re-

garded as breakthrough dramas in Jamaican theatre. The scripts had the benefit of being developed in a climate of debate and discussion about the kind of drama which would best express the needs of the country, the talents of its people and its limited material wealth. This climate was nurtured by Scott, whose broad vision and tolerance allowed many kinds of dramatic approaches to grow.

As a teacher, Scott placed tremendous trust in each individual's ability to be creative and to enjoy the search for solutions to challenging problems. He had the unique ability to inspire students with confidence in their ability to succeed. In this way his presence was tremendously empowering, because it allowed for discovery free from rigid notions about talent or form or content.

We are sad because we have lost him. He has left behind a rich legacy of shining memories in the lives of many. Those who were privileged to work with him have gained the knowledge that play is the essence of creative discovery and that creative discovery is one of the joyous strategies of living.

SUBSCRIPTION BOX

If you have not yet paid your 1991 subscription for Sistren Magazine, please note the following rates for a one year subscription:

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TWO VIDEO REVIEWS

Written and Directed by Cynthia Wilmot
Produced by Association of Development Agencies

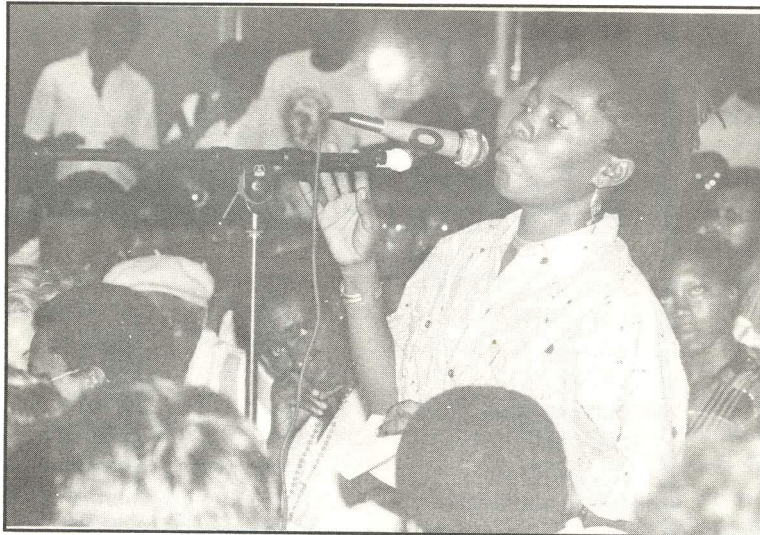
There has been much outcry about our economic predicament, but a shortage of ideas on how to get out of the doldrums. The videos *THE DEBT CRISIS: AN UN-NATURAL DISASTER* and *CARRYING A HEAVY LOAD*, are lively, often humorous videos which show the origins of the debt. They make the connection between IMF/World Bank structural adjustment policies and our day-to-day burdens. The videos encourage discussion about the debt problem, saying "there has to be a better way . . ."

Carrying a Heavy Load: Structural Adjustment and Caribbean Women

CARRYING A HEAVYLOAD speaks directly to women, who more than any, are feeling the squeeze as money drains from the social services.

With a cast of women (along with "Bello"), it uses an effective mix of performing styles: acting, frank talk, and Sistren's own Bev Hanson with D.J. dub. The lyrics in "Tighten yuh belt" rap out the problem in a catchy way. Women may sometimes "lose hope, but try to cope." There is mention of creative strategies that women devise to confront the devastating consequences of the debt. When the D.J. rap moves to "come follow me, come follow me" it is not toward a simplistic recipe for a "better way": It is rather a call for women to recognize their potential, the role they can play in questioning the current development path. Women are given a platform by which to share the difficulties they face in obtaining funds to manufacture, in getting access to credit, and in protecting their families' health. The ultimate goal is for women to make the links to national policies which we must challenge.

The Debt Crisis: An Un-Natural Disaster



Squeezed into the audience at the launch of the video, Claudette Wilmot asks for clear guidelines for consumers on how to "buy local", when we are told to open up our economy to the 'free market'.

Since the video was launched in May, it has been shown in communities in the Caribbean and screened on national television. Radio call-ins make it clear that people want to have much more say in decisions being taken by politicians.

Responses to the video have been strong: "shocking but informative", "this debt business dread, pure trickery", "distressing but challenging". Says Fleurette Blackwood of MEDA, "We are told to produce for the domestic market, but it's not easy. Small manufacturers are well supported by the community but they are frustrated by

restrictions placed by successive governments . . . if you try to produce on your own, it takes you so long, how do you feed your family in the meantime?"

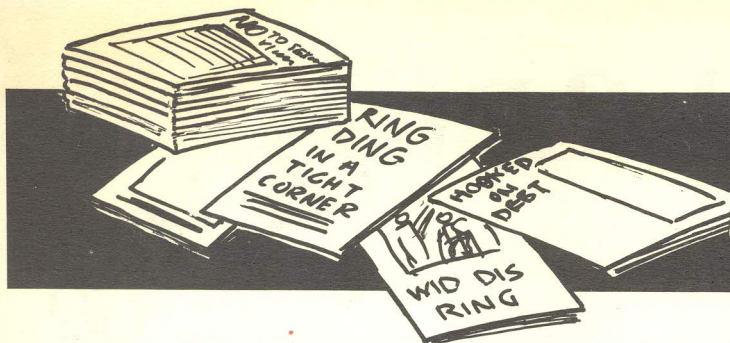
Callaloo and Cornmeal Dumplings - or American Apples?

Participants at ADA's public session on Debt called for changes in our attitudes and values. "It starts with the kiddies' lunch boxes" suggested one mother. "A child who brings callaloo and cornmeal dumplings for lunch is teased by others eating American apples and Pringles potato chips. It's up to us to explain the consequences of foreign-mindedness to our youngsters."

Everyone agreed we need to reason more within our communities, about alternative ways forward. As one group of women put it, "circle talk, circle talk . . . each one talk to one." Let us be confident that WE can find "the other way".

Both videos are available from Association of Development Agencies (809-926-7114) or Social Action Centre (809-978-1646)





SISTREN RESEARCH UPDADE

Earlier this year, Sistren Research, the group that produced *Miss Amy and Miss May*, seriously considered closing the Unit. Now, six months later, Sistren Research has a new office and is under the management of Marion Bernard.

Though it still battles a funding crisis, Sistren Research is fighting hard to hang in there. To refocus and keep going, the Unit needs to hear your suggestions for its future.

From Monday to Thursday between 9:00 & 5:00 Sistren's publications, along with materials from the regional women's movement and development NGOs, can be purchased from the small board house behind the Theatre Collective, on Kensington Crescent.

Sistren Research was set up by Honor Ford-Smith and Joan French in 1983 when they recognized the dearth of information about gender relations in Jamaica. Its mission was to research women's situation in Jamaica, popularize the findings, and lend support to women's groups in participatory processes. From 1983, the Unit carried out research on Women's Work and Organization in Jamaica, Women and Cultural Development, and on Gender Relations in Rastafari.

Sistren Research doesn't only do scholarly work. It has produced an exhibition *Dutty Tough: Women and Work in Jamaica 1900-1944*, *Ring Ding in a Tight corner*, *Wid Dis Ring*, the popular *No To Sexual Violence* and *Miss Amy and Miss May*, a slide-tape show, and several research papers. Sistren Research supported women's groups locally and regionally such as: The St. Peter Claver Free Zone Women's Group, the Women's Creative Writers Group, the Women's Action Committee, Belize Rural Women's Association and Red Thread in Guyana.



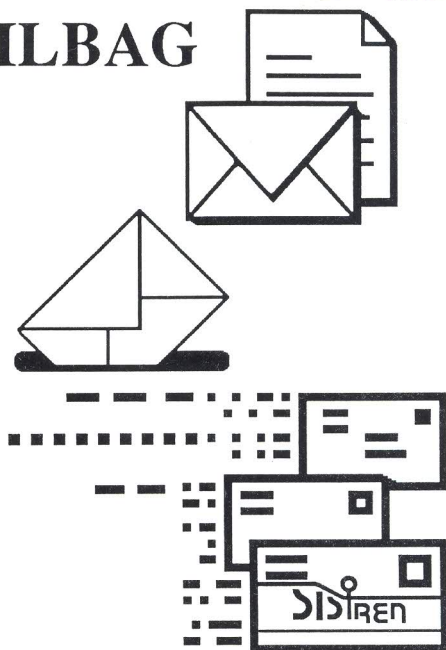
From 1989, the Research Unit faced a funding crisis and major losses in staff. This forced a re-examination of mission and identity for the 1990s. In a decade dubbed "post-feminist" what strategies are best for this small production centre? Through what forms can it best serve women, now? How can it build a local funding base and how can it earn while continuing to serve poor women first? Marion Bernard believes that a more business-like approach, will generate profits to subsidize the educational work.

Marion has organized a major thrust in marketing the Unit's products. An interim board is examining how Sistren Research can facilitate women doing research broadly and reassess its relationships both internally, to the Theatre Collective, and externally to other women's groups. It is here that feedback on the work is most needed. Please drop us a line or call Marion if you have ideas to share. Only with your support can we come through this difficult time.

PRICE LIST

	US\$	J\$	EC\$
Research Papers	5-10	30-40	17-30
Ring Ding in a Tight Corner	10	70	30
Wid Dis Ring	5	35	17
No To Sexual Violence	3	15	8
Ms Amy & Ms May (Video cassette)	250	350	220
Sweet Sugar Rage	150	275	175
Muffet in a all a Wi	150	250	175
Lion Heart Gal (Book)	20	153	55
Lionheart Gal (Audio Cassette)	7	30	20
Sistren Song (Book)	5	30	17

FROM OUR MAILBAG



Dear Friends,

I would like to thank all the people at Sistren who invited me to spend the past 13 weeks with them. Never in my life have I made 23 friends so quickly. Jamaican hospitality is no myth.

You women work so hard on your special projects of furthering the cause of women not only in Jamaica, but also internationally.

My job at Sistren was to help put the magazine on a sound financial basis. This was not always easy as I had been used to a cut and dried way of doing things in Canada where it is easy to get quick decisions made. The idea of a Collective, where decisions are made in committee, was confusing and often very frustrating to me. After I learned that I could call a meeting myself life became much easier. However, I learned everybody worked hard and people become tired and, yes, frustrated.

The Theatre and Workshop Teams often leave at 6:00 a.m. to reach school commitments all over the island.

Michael is the driver at Sistren, without whom all the trips could not be made. He does 101 other things for Sistren as well. He met me at the airport and has been a true friend ever since.

I will definitely be back, otherwise my departure would be too difficult. The party given for Joan Ross-Frankson and me was a complete surprise and a delight. You women can cook too! The framed picture of "Lionheart Gal" was a real compliment and will remind me of you.

I have learned a great deal from you and I hope in some small way I have been able to help you,

Come Soon Man,
Marion Elgar
Canadian Executive Service Organization

Dear Sistren,

I have been receiving the Sistren magazine since 1989. I always read every word and I look to see the impact of your work. I appreciated your tributes to Ms. Amy and Ms. Phoebe. As every woman read them, they said "what have I done or what can I do for women to deserve such tribute?" I enjoyed the "Training for Self Esteem" article as one way of giving dignity to women's work rather than looking for prestige in what men do. For these and many other ideas, I thank you Sistren for your inspiring work. I think it is also good to think of networking with Africa so that we can learn from each other.

My best regards to you all.

Sincerely,
Magdalena Ngaiza,
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

WHAT YOU SAID

Tucked inside our last issue many of you found questionnaires asking how we at Sistren could improve the magazine. Someone wants more information on the status of men. Well, we are a women's magazine and hope to keep on reporting of women's victories and struggles. A suggestion for a "Roots Page" making linkages to our Sisters in Africa is well-taken. The use of less posed photos, more health articles, information on the political climate in JA, more frequent issues, and a Sistren resource list are all suggestions we can work on. Responses were divided on Sista Ansa - some love her and some cannot understand a word she says. Overall the responses were positive, supportive and very much appreciated. Thank you readers!

CORRECTION

In our last issue the story "Neglecting the Fountain of Youth" cited information from a research project funded by UNICEF rather than UNESCO. We regret the error.

SISTA ANSA AN GRANNY A CHAT BOUT... LAWS WEH CONCERN OOMAN 77

