

MERRY CHRISTMAS

SISTREN

THEATRE COLLECTIVE
VOL.6 ISSUE NO 2
DECEMBER, 1984



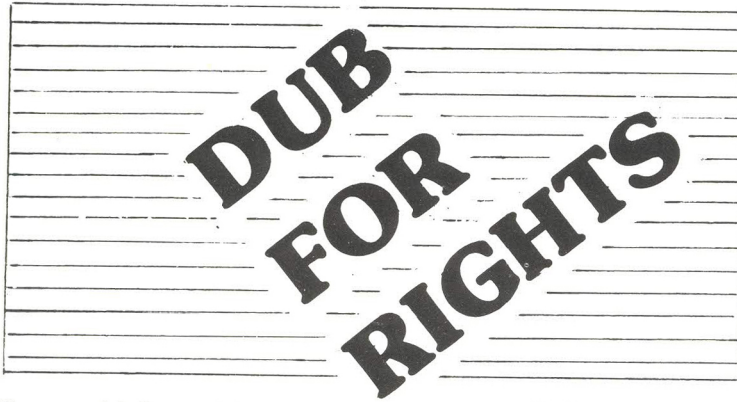
WORKSHOP NEWS:

SUCCESSFUL ISLAND TOUR '84

The big news in WORKSHOP HAPPENINGS is the second phase of our ISLAND TOUR '84 which came to an end in October following visits to communities in Clarendon, Manchester, St. Mary, St. Catherine, St. Andrew and St. Ann, We feel its been a success and we have learnt a lot.

The centrepiece of TOUR '84 was our major workshop production THE CASE OF IRIS

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**A TRIBUTE
TO
MIKEY SMITH**

From mid-August to mid-September, the SISTREN COLLECTIVE was busy with the various events marking one year since the tragic killing of dub poet, Mikey Smith. This tribute to Mikey organised by the MICHAEL SMITH MEMORIAL COMMITTEE of which SISTREN is a part, was dubbed A PEOPLE'S CULTURAL FESTIVAL ON THE ARTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

The FESTIVAL opened with a Memorial Service at the Mamby Park Baptist Church where Mikey's family and friends as well as various artistes paid their respects to the Jamaican poet.

Linton Kwesi Johnson, London based Jamaican poet opened a mixed media Art Exhibition on the theme of Human Rights at the Mutual Life Gallery on August 21. Poet and musicians performed pieces inspired by Mikey's message, and photographers and painters exhibited their works, pinpointing human rights issues and vividly depicting abuses of rights including Mikey's murder.

These events were followed by an exciting coming together in three days of workshop sessions at the Mico Hostel in Kingston which attracted a wide variety of participants from all corners of the island. They included representatives of agricultural cooperatives, urban communities, rural craft cooperatives, and youth groups as well as popular theatre workers and individual poets and artists who came together to examine the problems of violence and human rights in our society. Resource persons providing information and leading workshops were just as varied, with HONOR FORD-SMITH and the SISTREN COLLECTIVE in a line-up which included DR. MICHAEL WITTER, Head of the Department of Economics, UWI; ATTORNEY-AT-LAW and CHAIRMAN OF JAMAICA COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DENNIS DALEY and PAULETTE JUMP of MEL NATHAN GROUP. Poet, JEAN BREEZE, dancer PASTY RICKETTS and members of UMPH THEATRE got even the most reserved people involved in dance/drama pieces while WINSTON BELL and JOE RUGLASS guided budding songwriters.

SISTREN offered a drama-in-education session focussing on violence against women. Armed with statistics on the serious increases in reported cases of rape and key information on sexual violence compiled by the FRIENDS OF SISTREN Research Group, SISTREN exposed and challenged negative public and legal attitudes towards rape and domestic violence.

These exploratory workshops on ARTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS took on special significance as the society reeled from police "excesses", community mob killings and raids perpetrated by heavily armed gunmen. In this context workshop participants emphasised the importance of

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X M A S



TEXTILE



S A L E

EXITING! ORIGINAL! STYLISH!

T-shirts, dresses, cushion cover, blouses, skirts, wall hangings.

Ideal xmas gift check us out at **SISTREN** Headquarters, 100 Hope Road.

December 15-16, 10 am - 5pm.
Ref reshments on sale. **BE THERE.**

BABY BOYS GALORE!!!!!!

Congratulations to **TEXTILE PROJECT** Manager, **CYRENE STEPHENSON** who gave birth to a bouncing baby boy. Shortly before we went to press. Belated congratulations to **SISTREN's** lead drummer, **JOY ERSKINE**, **LORNA HASLAM** ('ROCKA' in QPH) and **JOAN FRANKSON**, a friend of **SISTREN** who helps with Public Relations - ALL of the them had boys since the last newsletter.

HERTENCER LINDSAY, Director of our award winning play, **Q.P.H.** is now the Director of the Jamaica School of Drama. Hail the Dawta!!

THE SISTREN THEATRE COLLECTIVE in association with the **FRIENDS OF SISTREN THEATRE COLLECTIVE** will host a forum on Sexual Violence at 7: p.m. on Sunday, December 9, at the Scouts Headquarters, 2D Camp Road.

This important forum will include the launching of a booklet " No To Sexual Violence", which shows the serious nature of the probelm and how it can be tackled.

THANKS

SISTREN THEATRE COLLECTIVE wishes to thank all those persons who helped to make ISLAND TOUR '84 such a big success. In particular we thank those who hosted us including the 3M Cheese & Dairy Making Project in Manchester, the Jamaica Teachers Association (JTA) St. Mary District Association the "UMPH" Theatre Company, Brown's

Town Community College and the Committee of Women for Progress.

Special thanks also to our sponsors – AL-CAN, Highgate Foods, Desnoes & Geddes, Projects for People, WORKERS TIME newspaper and JAMALCO.

A very special word of appreciation to the hundreds of workshop participants who formed the heart and soul of our memorable 1984 ISLAND TOUR.



RAPIST AND VICTIMS: SISTREN perform skit on Sexual abuse at A PEOPLE CULTURAL FESTIVAL ON THE ARTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS



BEV HANSON: as Iris in THE CASE OF IRIS ARMSTRONG



LILLIAN FOSTER



PAULINE CRAWFORD

FROM PAGE I

ARMSTRONG. IRIS as the case is affectionately called by those who know it, is about the situation of women who work in sugar – Jamaica's oldest and most 'national' industry.

Workshop participants become part of this mini-play joining in the songs and dances – Bruckins, Kumina and drum dance rhythms, calypsoes and lullabys, church songs and work songs.

The St. Mary experience where a group of elderly men who entertained us with dinki minni and taught us some of their dance moves was especially memorable.

In the process of the workshop the participants also learn about the different types of work done by male and female sugar workers – the backbreaking aspects as well as the in-

SISTREN ISLA

security of the contract work done by the women, the low pay and the lack of most basic protective clothing such as boots to wade through the mud or gloves to protect their hands from the fertilisers.

IRIS SPARKS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKERS AND HOUSEWIVES

The workshop participants became jurors in the CASE OF IRIS and examined issues raised by the mini-play: Proposals and recommendations coming out of the role-play and discussions during the ISLAND TOUR '84

I WON'T GO WITHOUT

*Without a man,
I am a man's woman.
Without a husband,
I am a wife.
Without a father,
my children must grow.
Without life, our lives must go on.
Without hope we're not hopeless.
Without education, we shall be educated.
Without food, we shall be fed.*

*Without a home we shall be sheltered.
Without a reality, we shall emerge
from our captivity.
Without all, we can stand tall, firm and strong
in what we believe in.
Forever we shall be without in this world that
we're living in.
BUT I am determined I WONT GO WITHOUT.
By Jennifer Williams (JUMBO)*

WANT ADS

ANYONE HAVE a small portable typewriter to spare?
Check VIVETTE at SISTREN'S PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT. She needs one urgently.

WANT TO UNLOAD YOUR OLD magazines? Let our TEXTILE PROJECT wor-kers

put them to good use. We are in need of 1983/84 fashion and Home Design Magazines.

Write to us or pay us a visit at our headquarters: 100 Hope Road, Kingston or telephone 927-8800 if you can help SISTREN with any of the above items.

AND TOUR '84

included the following:

1. THE RIGHT OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM AMONG WOMEN WORKERS TO HAVE A FORUM WITHIN THE UNION STRUCTURE TO SPEAK ABOUT THEIR SPECIFIC CONCERNS;
2. AN END TO UNEQUAL SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR AT THE WORK PLACE WITH THE PROVISION OF TRAINING FOR WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS OF THE PRODUCTION PROCESS;
3. THE PROVISION OF CHILDCARE

CENTRES TO ENABLE WOMEN TO WORK OR FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION WITHOUT THE ADDED BURDEN OF WORRYING ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN;

4. SPECIAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKING WOMEN;
5. MORE WORKER COOPERATIVES WHERE WORKERS RUN THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. WORKERS NEED MANAGEMENT WHICH ACTS IN THE INTERESTS OF THE MAJORITY AND NOT ONLY IN THE INTEREST OF COMPANY PROFITS.

IMPRESSIONS OF SISTREN FROM A WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

"Sistren approach us in the best manner..as if we and them are black sisters," said Marie

(CONT'D ON PAGE 8)

REDDOCK LECTURE:

IS THERE A CARIBBEAN FEMINIST TRADITION ?

“FEMINISTS ARE those who recognise the exploitation of women and its relationship to other forms of oppression, and who work actively to change it”

THIS DEFINITION was given by Rhoda Reddock, the Regional Co-ordinator of the Dutch Institute of Social Studies History project WOMENS MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS IN COLONIAL AND COMTEMPORARY SOCIETIES, during a lecture she gave at SISTREN, Thursday, August 23.

Ms Reddock who has written and researched extensively on the history of women in Trinidad, also conducted a workshop at SISTREN on the meaning of Feminism. Her lecture posed the question, “Is There A Caribbean Feminist Tradition?”

Identifying three strands within the women’s movement - RADICAL Feminism, LIBERAL Feminism and SOCIALIST Feminism – she pointed out that it was largely due to reports of the Western Press that the view of all Feminists as “bra-burners” and “man-haters” had developed. In fact, she maintained, feminism has a long tradition as a part of all progressive movements in history including the Caribbean, where women have actively worked to overcome exploitation.

AT THE MOMENT, Ms. Reddock said, one of the main struggles was to avoid being turned into powerless housewives or cheap labour.

The Project Co-ordinator noted the contributions of many Caribbean women to the feminist struggle in the region including Amy Ashwood Garvey, the first wife of Jamaica

National Hero Marcus Garvey. A friend of the militant British feminist, Sylvia Pankhurst, Amy Ashwood Garvey contributed to the importance with which women were regarded in the Garvey Movement and spoke out at International fora on women’s rights.

In the early Nationalist Movement in the Caribbean, many women particularly from the middle-classes were aware of the problems facing women. However, they tried to solve these problems of women’s labour and child-care through social welfare organisations but rarely confronted the question of women’s rights directly.

Ms. Reddock concluded her lecture by addressing the “myth that women are docile, cautious and politically backward.”

“The history of Caribbean women gives entirely the opposite evidence,” she asserted. “The presence of women is always evidenced in all colonial reports and newspapers, whenever there was a riot, strike or protest. Women have always played a central role in the forward movement of the Caribbean peoples”, she said.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Two members of the SISTREN team, Artistic Director, HONOR FORD-SMITH and Workshop Director, JOAN FRENCH are both involved in doing research for the project in Jamaica. Their subject is WOMEN’S LABOUR AND ORGANISATION FROM 1938 TO 1980. Other Caribbean countries included in the project are Trinidad and St. Vincent. The project is also supported by WAND, the Women and Development Unit at the UWI’s Extra Mural Department.

DUB FOR RIGHTS (FROM PAGE 2)

community action in defending the rights of citizens.

During the FESTIVAL, SISTREN also participated in a week-end drama workshop led by the GRADUATE THEATRE COMPANY in Port Maria. The stimulating sea breeze that blew through the workshops produced in record time a refreshing theatrical collage arising out of a collection of MIKEY SMITH'S works. This piece was one of the many items presented at the culminating event of the FESTIVAL – A NIGHT OF DUB POETRY AND MUSIC at Zinc Fence, where a host of artistes including Mutabaruka, Jean Breeze, Half Pint and Edi Fitzroy gave free performances in commemoration of MIKEY'S life and work.

We must make special mention of DELORES ROBINSON, SISTREN'S valuable secretary who was the key organiser of this event.

CARNIVAL TIME

in Santiago de Cuba

The SISTREN THEATRE COLLECTIVE participated in the annual carnival which forms part of the July 26th celebrations in Cuba. Our host was CASA DEL CARIBE, a research centre for Caribbean culture in Santiago de Cuba.

SISTREN went to perform and do workshops but we also participated in the week long Carnival. BEV HANSON (Iris in IRIS) said of the Celebrations "Everyone took part they approach it to say this is my country, I'm happy with it"

What did she enjoy most about the trip? "The street theatre! Me did just get the feeling of being out there. The days they had processions, nobody in the moving crowd was fighting... no indiscipline. The parade was like our old Independence parade with some differences. It's an all right thing, which you wouldn't get here You'd never find people stay up all night, because they're not comfortable."

During the festival, Sistren worked closely with the Cuban Theatre Company CABILDO, which also concentrates on popular theatre. CABILDO have developed a form of Street Theatre based on the traditional performances-similar to our Jonkunnu-which used to be done by black people in the streets of Santiago. CABILDO's distinctive theatrical style draws on Caribbean imagery and movement: We learned a lot about Afro-Cuban dance and song – like the 'gaga' and the 'bomba'. We found that as Caribbean people there are experiences and expressions we share in common.

LILLIAN FOSTER (Penny in Q.P.H.) recalled life as she saw it on the trip. "Clean Streets Men and women look so fresh and nice. I was expecting to see old shacks and poverty. Everyone keep their doors open; they didn't have to lock up like we here. Some stores, you can't get certain things to buy but as far as I could see they have a balanced diet everyday and everybody live fairly good. Domestic life, food, education, health is much better than here. I didn't see anybody with their hand on their jaw or looking worried".

Tour

(FROM PAGE 5)

from Riverton City after taking part in SISTREN'S ONGOING workshops for several months.

She continued, "Why I say this is because if they were different people they wouldn't come to our kind of area. They treat us as if we are brothers and sister from one mother and father, and like we are all one black people."

"They show a lot of interest in teaching us. They encourage us to come to workshops outside the community too, and invite us to rehearsals and discussion whenever it is possible. They inform us before the time and they make preparations for us and some small snack, and as small as the amount is they try and find it for busfare. I hope they keep it up so that I can get more instructed."

Marie included special praise for the Iris team Jumbo, Miss Iris and Busha, in her congratulations to all the workers at Sistren, the actresses and the drummers Calvin Mitchell and Jerome Edwards.

Heartfelt thanks to Marie for her note of appreciation!!

GROUP ACTION BRINGS RESULTS

SISTREN WORKSHOP GROUPS in Clarendon and Kingston are becoming more organised, and getting results!

In Clarendon there's been a major breakthrough by the Hayes Group in their main community problem - shortage of water. Following a one-off workshop which examined the problem and how to organise around it, a delegation from the group visited the Councilor with the result being a qualitative improvement in the provision of water to the community. Further action is being taken to get the community's water pump repaired and some key community personalities, including a basic school teacher have undertaken orga-

nisational tasks.

In an attempt to make the group more formal, a Planning Committee has been elected, to plan a programme for the rest of the year.

The Kingston group meanwhile, has been participating in several areas of SISTREN activity in addition to community meetings. The Group has been involved in the work around SEXUAL VIOLENCE being coordinated by the FRIENDS OF SISTREN and have taken part in rehearsals for IRIS as part of a 'test' audience. Representatives from this group also attended the workshop on the ARTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS organised by THE JAMAICA COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS with help from SISTREN as part of MIKEY SMITH MEMORIAL FESTIVAL.

These include several workshops with the Clarendon and Kingston Groups as well as for various organisations including the COMMITTEE OF WOMEN FOR PROGRESS and the SUNBEAM CHILDREN'S HOME.

The number of workshops for 1984 so far exceeds those done in 1983. SISTREN's total workshops last year amounted to forty-three, twenty-two of which were done overseas. By the end of this year we expect that the number of workshops conducted by SISTREN will have increased to over sixty with fifty-two of them being local, representing nearly triple the amount done locally in 1983:

We've also had about twice as many themes for workshops when compared with last year including Human Rights, Peace, economics, women and unions as well as Teenage Pregnancy and Agricultural work for women.

We're now beginning to look forward to 1985, when we anticipate even more interest being taken in our work resulting in larger number of workshops being conducted with broader themes.

INTERNATIONAL PULL-OUT



SISTREN'S PAULINE CRAWFORD (Mawga in IRIS) has been in Geneva, Switzerland since September as part of the INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SERVICE (ISIS) 1984/85 CROSS CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME. ISIS is based in both Geneva and Rome, Italy. Since 1974 it has built up a net work of 10,000 contacts in about 100 countries. It also has a data base of over 80,000 items of documentation by and about women and women's movements worldwide.

In 1983, ISIS launched a WOMEN'S CROSS CULTURAL LEARNING EXCHANGE PROGRAMME aimed at giving women active in women's groups and projects, a forum for sharing skills and experiences with similar groupings.

SISTREN was chosen as the Jamaican Group for the 1984/85 exchange between Jamaica and Papua New Guinea. While Pauline is away representing us, we're hosting a teacher from Papua, New Guinea, LUCY SOW

Pauline sent us the following news (from Geneva) about her work experiences:

"The workshops that I've conducted went very well. For the participants, the techniques are "an awakening", "the key to open the door to conscious raising", "a weapon to use when organisations are working on the issues that affect women". These are some of the quotations of the participants. The very first workshop that I conducted left the participants crying! (I mean physically crying!!) "The high point of this workshop was a technique I use in which they wrote a poem. This I learnt at the MIKEY SMITH workshop. I also taught them the GINGER ROOT SONG."

"I was the only (one) who presented my work physically. The others tell about their work verbally and with slide tapes and one woman (presented) a film. An Australian Aborigine woman tells stories and recites poetry."

"After presentations were done the first week, the other weeks are workshops to teach the participants techniques in the field they work in Sometimes I end up teaching (these). In fact the participants requested me to do workshops in Drama in Education in the evenings after the scheduled sessions are over!"

"The radio workshop was good. We (visited) a studio where an underground Radio Station is working from, and they make anyone who wants to use the studio to do their personal work just use it. We interviewed each other and used the equipment etc. It could never be Jamaica!!"

It is clear that PAULINE is gaining valuable experience in Geneva. Back in Jamaica we're involved in the other part of the Cultural Exchange. hosting Sister LUCY SOW, LUCY who arrived in the island recently is a member of the MAPRIK DISTRICT ASSOCIATION, which is one of the larger branches of the NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR WOMEN of Papua New Guinea. The Group has so far given assistance in the areas of agricultural extension, Primary Health Care. Appropriate technology and Leadership and Management

LUCY will be with us until the end of January next year and will be involved in exchanging experiences with us through workshops and field trips. We're hoping to learn a lot from LUCY too, particularly in the areas of songwriting and the traditional cultural forms of Papua New Guinea.

BARBADOS: MEDIA WORKSHOP

SISTREN as will help to develop a programme for the study of the media in schools using popular theatre techniques. This commitment was given by JENNIFER JONES, SISTREN'S Administrative Coordinator at the end of a four day workshop held in Barbados from October 31 to November 3. The workshop's title was "THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE MEDIA IN THE CARIBBEAN: CREATING ALTERNATIVES". It was organised by the CARRIBEAN INSTITUTE OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS (CARIMAC) UWI, and the FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG (FES).

Major concerns at the workshop were the "extremely negative impact" of foreign programming on regional development and the failure of the link between media, information systems and formal educational institutions to meet the challenges of citizenship and sovereignty in the contemporary Caribbean. Specific problems highlighted included informal censorship, lack of broad representation in the media, reluctance in financing local TV productions and manipulation by Corporations to maintain discriminatory social and sexual stereotypes and external orientation.

General agreement was reached on the need for media-sensitive to the task of recovering, preserving and advancing cultural sovereignty", a form of social control on the media and meaningful coordination between media and education systems. It was also agreed that here was a "decisive role to be played by the Churches, Trade Unions, and other people-based organisations in the development of media relevant to the region".

The group agreed to use its collective resources to bring about a re-examination of the laws of libel, the inscription of a right to reply in regulations governing the electronic media, more public access to and local control of the media, and an increase local and regional programming on the electronic media. There was unanimous recognition of the need for continued regional collaboration and discussion on these issues.

REGIONAL MEETING IN MEMORY OF MAURICE BISHOP

SISTREN'S Artistic Director HONOR FORD-SMITH, is recently back from Santiago-de Cuba where she took part in a three day meeting of representatives from all over the Caribbean hosted by the CASA DEL CARIBE and the CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAS from October 22 to 24.

The meeting was held in memory of the Grenada Revolution and its leader, MAURICE BISHOP.

HONOR presented a paper which put forward the female perspective of the two topics of the meeting – ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS ALTERNATIVE IN THE CARIBBEAN AND IMPERIALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY which looked at the role of the mass media, literature and the arts in the development of cultural identity.

The final communique of the meeting affirmed the need for cultural workers to find ways to put their work to the service of the broadest possible section of the people in their just struggles. It expressed support for Nicaragua in its attempts to find peaceful ways to solve the impasse between itself and the U.S. Administration.

The communique also condemned the recolonisation of the region and affirmed the need for Caribbean Sovereignty.