

WOMAN SPEAK!

DOUBLE ISSUE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ABOUT CARIBBEAN WOMEN No. 19 & 20 April/Aug. 1986

CONFLICT
& PROTEST

WOMAN SPEAK!

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COVER

Detail from "Law and Order", a painting by Lilian Nicholson. See page 35.

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Haitian higglers load their produce on a "tap tap" for transporting to market.



Leo Hewitt

March against rape in Bridgetown

EDITORIAL

I asked several women what the word "conflict" makes them think of. Replies were "contention", "issues", "fuss", "women", "struggle", "hit somebody", "strife", "quarreling", "chaos".

We often disapprove of the notion ascribing to it negative or destructive qualities. Yet conflict underlies all relations between unequal nations, classes, groups, individuals and the sexes, though it may remain suppressed for generations.

To put it simply, unequal power to dispose of resources is what causes conflict. Societies are in constant motion because some change in conditions causes the different interests and needs of people to come into sharper focus. "The resulting conflict and how it is handled is the main challenge for the future" as one of the participants observed during a discussion on the subject among participants at WAND's first "Women, Men and Development Studies" regional seminar held in Barbados in March this year.

The peoples of the Caribbean, are involved in protest at some level across a scope of issues. Haitians have been shaking up the power structure with the cry "dechoukaj", calling for a corrupt system to be taken from the root. In Jamaica, a tax on tertiary education galvanized students and teachers to engage the public in a discussion on the philosophy of education. In the eastern Caribbean, women have been taking into the streets and into the media a sudden fury about rape and all forms of sexual degradation. The war in South Africa has brought demonstrations of a growing consciousness of the international maintenance of injustice.

These popular, spontaneous protests characterise more direct participation in the political process and illustrate people's disinchantment with the professional political directorate.

A growing awareness of the mass struggles which have always formed the basis of social change, and the response of women to a dramatically changing social environment is bringing women to the frontlines once again.

THIS ISSUE

During 1985 our readers did an evaluation of WAND's publications. With regard to **Woman Speak!** suggestions that we widen our scope with information about women in the Spanish and French speaking Caribbean reflected a similar recommendation from the Caribbean Celebration of Women held in Barbados in March 1985.

Prompted by the overthrow of Duvalier this February, **WS!** chose to begin our efforts at breaking down the language barrier to information with a feature on Haiti, hoping to get some insight into the conflicts there.

WS! thanks the Haitian women who were so generous with their time, transportation and so patient with a non-French speaker, especially Michiline and Monique. Thanks to the women who provided the wonderful discussion at our meeting in Petionville. Thank you Arlene, Hippolite and Hugette. Thanks Joseph who saved us both with a masterful movement of the steering wheel, when a "tap-tap" (minibus) with a big picture of Jesus on the door nearly sent us to meet St. Peter.

Thanks to the individuals and organizations who responded to our request for material and particularly to those who volunteered articles and news. "We want more" from everybody.

NEXT ISSUE

WAND is looking forward to the visit to Barbados in August of the Black Women's Health Project and our next issue will report on the workshop "Black and Female: What is the Reality?" A number of women from the region will participate in this exchange with our sisters from the United States.

The BWHP addresses "health" in a political way. That is, the Project is concerned with health issues as they are defined by the neglected communities they affect, using self help and participatory approaches to critique health systems and repair the effects on the "social body" of black women in America.

Letter to Wand

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Thank you for sending me the issue 'Beyond a Decade'. I have read it with great interest and will circulate it further. Women will be encouraged to read about all the work that is being done in your area. There are times when we all feel intimidated by the enormous challenges that have to be met and time seems short. It is so easy to feel powerless so it really is important for us to exchange information. I have sent you the most recent bulletin from the movement for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific. Support for this has grown in the U.K. as a result of an initiative from some women at Greenham. I belong to the Manchester Greenham Women's Support Group and that spills over into all sorts of related issues. At the present time there are five women from the Pacific touring England who spoke to us in Manchester. This is a follow-up to a similar tour last year from Micronesia initiated by women at Greenham.

As you probably know the Greenham protest grew from just a few women camping at the base to protest against the siting there of Cruise Nuclear Missiles. The movement grew. Over the years there has been a developing awareness of the inter-relationship of all human aspects of human society that diminish and impoverish life and ultimately threaten life itself. Last December 12th the big gathering at Greenham had the theme 'Widening the Web' - poverty, racism, sexism, violence in whatever form - all these are the common enemy. All over the world we need to help each other and learn from each other. We need to recognise all we have in common, we need to know our weaknesses and our strengths. Poverty of material resources must surely be a weakness, yet alot can be done with little.

The situation at Greenham at the moment is that there are still women there permanently, but not

many. Life is almost intolerable for them. They are evicted daily and it is almost impossible for them to keep even the basic necessities of life. They sleep under plastic sheets as they can't have tents. The weather for the last year and a half has been very bad and wet. Any time now they are going to be forced off the land completely. It is expected that it will be fenced off in a military-style operation as at Molesworth last year. But they are not going away. They have much support from women from other parts of the country who visit and stay when they can.

There are always 'events' when the cruise missiles are taken out with cruise residence groups tracking them all the way to their hidey-holes. We are very weak as judged by those with financial and political power but there is quiet strength and dedication and hope. Do you know about the snowball? At intervals increasing numbers make a symbolic cut in the fence at various US bases and then give themselves up - fines and imprisonment result - the numbers are growing.

The other aspects of the 'work' go on everywhere. I am trying to do my part by writing to you and others. One of my particular areas of interest at the moment is opposition to nuclear power because of the great threat it presents particularly to our children.

Yours in Peace,

Doreen

Doreen McCann lives in England. Her daughter who works in the Caribbean has been sending her the WAND/UWI Issues Papers "Concerning Women and Development". She wrote Peggy Antrobus after reading her paper "The Issue Is Peace". Doreen hopes to make contact with individual women or women's groups in the Caribbean who are interested in the issue of peace and who want to exchange information with the Manchester Greenham Women's Support Group.

International Women's Tribune Centre

PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE

THE MEGATONNAGE IN THE WORLD'S STOCKPILE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS ENOUGH TO KILL 58 BILLION PEOPLE, OR TO KILL EVERY PERSON NOW LIVING 12 TIMES...



SCHOOLGIRLS MARCH

"The radio programme "Searchlight" was in progress. Someone phoned in to say that a student of the Girls' High School, dressed in full uniform, had had her head chopped off. This was unbelievable for I could not imagine that such brutality would follow so closely the gruesome murders of Yolande and Carleen. Carleen was killed in New York and was buried in Marriaqua, the scene of Anita's murder. This sad village gathered to witness Carleen's funeral and I am sure that Anita's alleged murderer was one of the crowd. Did he share the pervading feeling of sorrow and anger against the violence meted out to a woman?"

My reaction to the news of Anita's death was traumatic. I was gripped by so much rage that I felt that it was not enough to talk in groups about the increase in crime in

general and violence against women in particular. Too long had our women accepted their boyfriends' and husbands' bashing. Too long were women and children abused! Too long were women looked on as chattel! Something had to be done to make the whole society aware that it was time to take stock and devise measures to stop the violence in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So, when I was asked by a reporter from *The Vincentian* how I felt, I said that as headmistress of a school of over seven hundred (700) students I would lead a demonstration to protest against violence on women."

*Norma E. Keizer, Headmistress
Girls High School, St. Vincent.*



Zan Lewis

"Schoolgirls' March" held in Kingstown, St. Vincent, Dec. 4 1985. The March and Rally, dominated by High School girls protested the rising incidence of rape and was prompted by the murder of a schoolgirl who had refused the advances of a young man in the community.



Young, emotional crowd at the rally held after the march through Kingstown.

There was a sudden urge in me, I felt somebody must say or do something about this whole affair...

It was about 8:35 a.m. that Thursday morning, and there we were, standing in the Grimble Hall all the Fourth and Fifth formers. All except one, that one was a fourth former whose name was Anita. The reason for her being absent was that she had been murdered!

We all stood there listening to the Headmistress's words of shock, grief and anger. We stood there listening, staring, crying quietly, loudly, some were even screaming or fainting. Also there were questions going through our minds, the most obvious ones were Why? Why her? Murdered? Impossible!

But it was true the deed was done and the next morning we were left to mourn the loss of our dear sister and schoolmate Anita.

When ever we hear of death we automatically conclude that person was old, but when the person is young it strikes a cord – when the person is known to you it leaves a hollow feeling, when the death is murder, it is a double blow.

Anita's death occurred during the International Youth Year and everywhere I turned that day I saw the hopeless, stunned looks on the faces of the girls of the school. Then I got the urge to see what I could do to ease the pain.

I then went to the Headmistress to seek permission to organise a prayer for Anita's death. This prayer was for her parents and family and even the boy who killed her. The next thing I did was to go to the girls

T'was late the night. No tongue can tell
If words she spake when there she fell.
A cruel blow, by a brutal hand,
Her very breath did death demand.

Can you picture a fifteen year old on the ground dead?
Complete separation between body and head?
Do you think it's wrong to kill the one
who beheaded Anita Richardson?

She's dead, but what? The killer's here.
Being clothed and fed, he's free from care.
Yolande's dead too; they're both gone.
But the killers? They still live on.

Anita was so kind and gentle to all who knew
The thoughtful things she strove to do.
She was young and innocent and yet she's gone.
Tell me my people, should we not mourn?

Bernadette E.E. Samuel
(5C Girls High School 1985-86)

of Anita's form and ask them what they thought about having a prayer for Anita's family and friends. To my surprise the girls of her form and the girls of the other forms that I went to were very receptive to the idea.

We gathered into Anita's form: teachers, students, as well as her parents who had come up to the school to make arrangements for the funeral, and also to talk to the Headmistress. When I saw the crowd thicken after a few minutes while we were standing there, I was overcome by the love, concern and sorrow among us in that room. Then we all bowed our heads and prayed together, sang together and cried together. At that moment while we prayed, we prayed like a family, like a family through God.

Anita died at the age of 15 years and to most of us it seems like a very young age to die and also a very untimely death. We would also say that the person who killed her was a very savage, cruel and inhumane person and would like to see something equally as terrible happen to him.

But let us just stop and think for a while, no matter what bad thing we do, be it very little or extremely out of bounds, the Lord is always willing to forgive us if we come and ask him for forgiveness. So should we think about our brothers and sisters. Instead of condemning and turning against the person, we as caring Christians should go out of our way to see how we could help that person, even though it might be in a small way, just as the Lord would do!

Rosanne Small



Scenes from the March

Zan Lewis



Unemployment: Its Relationship To Violence

A spate of violence against women, manifested in rapes, murders, psychological violence and battering by husbands and boyfriends, hit St. Vincent in 1985. Meanwhile, sexual harassment of schoolgirls and working women continued as usual.

It is my view that these incidences of violence are directly linked to unemployment.

In the novel "Walkabout" James Vance Marshall records an incident where an aborigine hands a heavy dead bird to the English girl Mary, with the thought "was she not a lubra, (Aborigine girl) a bearer of burdens?"

History tells us that early man was the hunter. While he marched ahead armed against wild beasts, et cetera, women followed, loaded with food, clothing, and the children. This pattern of division of labour and skills has remained with us to this day.

It has been traditional for women to be "unemployed" and totally dependent upon men for protection, food, shelter, clothing for herself and the children, as well as permission to join in social activity.

Women have not learned the techniques of self defense. Why should they, when strong men were there to protect them? In fact, height and sturdiness figured highly in determining whether a man was good husband material.

It was the men's function to bring in the meat, and women's function to make it tasty. A woman's ability as a wife came to be judged by the meals she prepared and a man would beat his wife if his meals were not on time or satisfactory.

She came to depend on him for personal needs of clothing and toiletries. A man could withhold these favours if he felt his wife or girlfriend had annoyed him in any way.

This dependency laid the foundation for violence because a man's ability to own property put his wife or girlfriend at a disadvantage in the event of a breakdown in the relationship.

In addition, women confined in the home are less likely to be exposed to information that will enlighten them as to conditions locally, regionally, or internationally. They are also less likely to be involved in conscious-raising programmes after marriage, to develop self-confidence, and set goals.

One upper class business man I know of divorced his wife of some 30 years. In his opinion, "she had never developed herself".

Yet she had been busy during the best years of her life bringing up his children, keeping him clean, well fed, satisfying his sexual desires, while he was "developing" himself.

This is violence that too often goes unrecognised, and happening to a woman who is not working outside the home, whose labour is not classified as "employ-

ment", and who is in effect an unemployed person.

Based on the 1970 census, the Labour Department of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has produced the following statistics:-

	Female	Male	Total
Population eligible for work	24,080	18,860	42,940
Population without work	16,222	3,846	20,068

The table shows that while the number of women eligible for work is greater than the number of men, more men are employed. Where are the women? Dependent upon male partners or swelling the ranks of the unemployed.

That was 15 years ago. Now in 1986, many of these women have teenage daughters facing unemployment and exposure to similar violence.

Though these young women are willing to work outside the home, employment opportunities are limited, and many become pregnant at an early age. Financial strictures force them into unions where some of their basic needs of food, clothing, are met and they may find temporary emotional satisfaction, followed by several pregnancies. Very often the "father" deserts after the first child. Even if he doesn't, very few have a satisfactory relationship, since for the majority, maintenance for mother and child, is dependent upon sexual favours. Many women are humiliated in the Magistrate's Court, exposed to psychological and institutional violence while merely seeking maintenance for their children.

The Wages Council provisions help perpetuate lower pay for work done by women who do find jobs, a large percentage of whom are heads of their households, and have an economic need to work. Their earnings do not supplement a husband's or boyfriend's income, as is mistakenly felt, but are essential to maintain themselves and their children.

With such low wages, and a high cost of living, it is difficult to make ends meet, and some women form attachments which result in more pregnancies.

In addition to receiving a lower wage, many women are sometimes sexually harassed on the job by employers who demand sexual favours in exchange for jobs.

The menace of unemployment forces women to accept dehumanising and violent conditions.

What alternative does a woman have? She can only go back to the ranks of the unemployed, exchanging her place with another waiting unemployed woman who will face the same problems, already caught in the trap of unemployment and the vicious circle of violence.

Nelcia Robinson

The daily press reporting on Trinidad and Tobago's Sexual Offences Bill and its controversial Clause 4 is a study in itself.

The press responded to acute public interest printing dozens of letters, interviews and articles which widened the scope of the debate and in the process revealed the sexual politics of Trinidadian, and perhaps Caribbean, society.

First, are the numbers of men who are not ashamed to promote the view that the very basis of society rests on the sexual subordination of women and to advocate the continuation of this injustice. Then, are the numbers of women who put pen to paper in a sudden show of anger at the bold face claims of such men. Third, and an unexpected plus in the whole debate, are the numbers of men who support the women's position and are prepared to articulate that support.

LETTERS IN THE PRESS

Contention Over Clause 4

THE EDITOR: I have noted several letters to the editor pertaining to the famous or infamous Clause 4 of the Sexual Offences Bill. Most have been written by women, as individuals or representatives of organisations.

One of the underlying threads apparent in their letters or, more aptly, underlying frustrations, lies with what seems to be the continued officially sanctioned injustice. This is where the deep-seated fear or disgust associated with the act of rape, committed within as without marriage, and by husbands as well as total strangers, has either not been properly addressed by the bill, or been callously thrown out the window.

Why? Because it apparently offended the sensibilities of our legislators and their perception of the sanctity of the institution of marriage.

What appears even more infuriating and I imagine very disheartening, is that this was done by the supreme law-making body of our land, charged with the responsibility to ensure that justice prevails, regardless of circumstances.

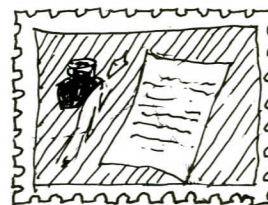
CITIZEN, Port of Spain

THE EDITOR: There were only a few lines in the daily press reporting the protest in Parliament by a group of concerned women, during the debate on the Sexual Offences Bill. The women wanted deleted Clause 4, which made it an offence for a man to rape his wife, returned to the Bill.

This has been rejected, thus far, by debaters for the majority representatives on the usual sanctimonious grounds that "it would interfere with the marital relationship which is a very sacred thing." Since when is rape sacred and holy? If the men who piously protect

these "sacred matrimonial rights" in Parliament were subject to forcible rape by men bigger, more powerful and heavier than they, matrimonial bed or no matrimonial bed, it's a safe bet the law would be changed in a hurry.

MAHABIR, Port of Spain



THE EDITOR: I am amazed that women continue to allow men to dominate their lives in these modern times.

I am 19 years old and a first-year student at the University of the West Indies and I am proud of my independence. A friend of mine who is also 19 recently told me that her married boss was making sexual advances towards her and she was wondering whether to give in. I looked at her in absolute disgust.

Whether it means being fired or not I refuse to give in to any sexual demands made by some frustrated man. It is time women learn to respect themselves. It is alright to say no and mean it.

MELISA, Maraval

The manner in which certain members of the press went about presenting the issues is an indication of how far the women's movement in the region has to go before workers in the mass media (with the exception of a few valiant individuals) take a serious look at the destructive social effects of its male bias. Headlines ranged from incredulity "Can a man really rape his wife?" to alarm, disguised as frivolity, "Day two women at the Rape Crisis Centre had their way with me" and "Close shave for husbands".

The Trinidadian press encouraged public debate over Clause 4 and in so doing recorded a growing public consciousness about the political nature of sexual relations and of violence against women. However, as Wendy Ifill comments in her column in the *Express* (29/3/86 p.35) so inadequate and self-serving were some of the responses to the clause, the public took up a challenge to male supremacist attitudes.

LETTERS IN THE PRESS

THE EDITOR: When I first heard about Section Four of the Sexual Offences Bill, I was pleased.

I thought that, even although Section Four was severely attenuated by requiring the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions to initiate proceedings, it was at least a start in removing the last vestige of female servitude.

Now I hear that Section Four has disappeared altogether. I understand it had to go because it created a furore.

I understand that it could not be allowed because it would "destroy the very essence of marriage", and would lead to vindictive, malicious and totally unfounded prosecutions by bitter wives.

I don't think I've heard more nonsense this year.

Rape is, in essence, sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent. If allowing a wife to charge her husband with rape is tantamount to destroying the very basis of marriage, then, in this view, the very basis of marriage must be rape.

What the offence of rape seeks to destroy is sexual intercourse without consent.

If destroying "sexual intercourse without consent" is the same as destroying "the very essence of marriage" then the very essence of marriage must be sexual intercourse without consent which is rape.

I really can see no way around this. Therefore, I must conclude that men who oppose Section Four on this ground either want to rape their wives, or that they are not serious. I prefer to think they are not serious.

So that leaves the question of false prosecutions. I don't think people can really entertain that ground seriously.

Women and men need to look closely at the arguments being promoted in some quarters about the relationship between rape and political activism by women. Growing social outrage at the attacks upon women is causing women to re-examine relationships between the sexes in terms of personal and institutional power and is leading to a deeper understanding about the complex social causes of violence. The reaction against this is like the reaction to any step in political consciousness by an oppressed group (and men also suffer as emotional beings because of the brutality directed at women in their lives).

Opposition of every description is set up to contradict this step toward social justice. In times like these, God is called upon to disapprove the women's voices challenging male supremacy just as God has been maligned to justify racism, religious bigotry and all forms of persecution.

As the law of rape (or assault, or larceny, or defamation, or contract) now stands, there is nothing to prevent anyone from making malicious, false accusations.

Yet no one suggests that the offence of rape should be abolished. In any context, there is the risk of duplicity.

That is why the law rightly insists that the offence of rape must be proved before a judge and jury.

I don't think that anyone (not even misogynist columnists) would doubt that any wife is going to have a much more difficult job to convince a jury that her husband raped her than to convince them that a stranger raped her.

The risk of potential abuse certainly exists; the likelihood of actual abuse is minimal. It can be discounted.

I find it difficult enough to visualise a jury in this country convicting a man of raping his wife. The chance of such a conviction being totally unfounded lies outside of my cognitive powers.

So, then, there is no reason not to allow Section Four; and there is very strong reason to allow it. Rape is an ugly violent crime. It is an act of violence.

It has nothing to do with sex. And, as much as it shames us, husbands do rape wives.

We need Section Four without sub-Section Four. We need it now. It's only justice.

I do not want to see black people shackled in South Africa and I do not want to see female people shackled in Trinidad and Tobago. I like my people free.

B.C. PIRES, Port of Spain.

THE EDITOR: The Rape Crisis Centre would like to express its agreement with the editorial in the *SUNDAY GUARDIAN* of February 23, concerning sexual abuse and the law. We also are very concerned that the section of the Sexual Offences Bill which attempted to protect women from sexually abusive husbands has been removed. A woman must now be legally separated from her husband if she wants to bring a charge of sexual assault.

The editorial suggests that the matter should be taken up by the National Commission on the Status

of Women, and by women generally. It might indeed be useful to discover whether the removal of the section has the support of women in the society, or whether, in fact, its removal was effected because there is a majority of men involved in discussing the Bill.

The Rape Crisis Centre would like to see that section of the Bill receives further attention, and/or the reasons for its removal made public.

TINA JOHNSON

Assistant to the co-ordinator,
Rape Crisis Centre.

The people working in the media have an essential historical role. They portray the conflict between these forces of change and forces of reaction against change. That role is enhanced when media workers and the public are critical of the instruments of mass communication behaving like the side kick of institutions and attitudes which degrade women.

Letters reprinted on these pages appeared in the Sunday Guardian and the Express of Trinidad.



THE EDITOR: Removal of Section 4 of the Sexual Offences Bill is unwarranted. The section could have been easily modified by deleting that part which related to "marital rape" while the parties were living together. To delete the section altogether is to give the husband a blank cheque as far as intercourse is concerned. In days of old, the wife was in effect regarded as her husband's property and he therefore had an irrevocable right to have intercourse with her. But, today, is it reasonable to say that a husband has a contractual right to have intercourse with his wife, no matter how she feels?

Marriage today is regarded more as a partnership between equals and it has long been recognised that the incidents of consortium, of which intercourse is one, is not a right of the husband but a mutual one. The sexual aspect of marriage is something which should be worked out between the parties with reference to their expectations of each other.

If they cannot evolve a mutually acceptable approach, it may be necessary for them to question the strength of their relationship or simply accept the marriage as it stands.

If the wife questions the relationship and finds that, for whatever reason, she has no alternative but to leave her husband and she does so either by agreement, judicial separation or otherwise, it is unreasonable to allow the husband to follow the wife and force himself upon her in such circumstances. It is not enough to leave such matters to the Family Courts as this makes the wife a second class citizen in the eyes of the criminal law.

This section should be looked at again and serious consideration given to at least retaining that part of the section which prohibits the husband from having intercourse with his wife without her consent once they are living apart.

Roger Hamel-Smith, Port of Spain.

THE EDITOR: As a woman, I feel obliged to comment on an article published in the EXPRESS on March 2, entitled *Close shave for husbands with Sexual Offences Bill* and sub-headed, *One Cabinet Minister told me he would decline to sit in a parliament that passed a law which created any opportunities for a wife to send her husband to jail on sexual grounds.*

The omission of Clause 4, which, according to the reporter, who, incidentally, quoted the Attorney-General, has "put the law into the backseat of motorcars or in a downtown hotel room," is a downright insult to women.

The comments I view as disgusting. In the first place, will that same Cabinet member sleep with a wife, or share the bed of a wife who, in his judgment, has desecrated the marital home?

There may be a multitude of reasons which can be proffered for either party to abstain from sexual intercourse, male promiscuity being only one of them.

Are we in fact saying that as a wife I cannot refuse sexual intercourse with my husband who thinks himself the "village ram" and therefore is liable to bring to the marital bed a multiple of social diseases – VD, herpes and newly discovered AIDS?

I think I own that right to say no to sexual intercourse – my "constitutional right as an individual under law." I also can say no or must be able to say no to a drunken husband who demands sex.

The bill presented says that protection for women is only in cases of legal separation or divorce. Is the law then saying if a marriage is broken down (I can now file for divorce if a marriage is irretrievably broken down) that while papers are being processed a husband can ravage me as he so wishes?

The laws of estates now recognises the common law union. Is the Sexual Offences Bill disregarding this union? Is it now saying that the woman in the common law union needs no protection from the ravages of men?

Concerned Women, Port of Spain

SINCE SO much of the female experience of life is based on the considered norm of the male right of sexual access under any circumstances, and at any age, I have been a little heartened these past few weeks by the public response from both women and men at the exclusion of Clause 4 from the proposed new Sexual Offences Bill.

Does this mean then that the wholesale political enslavement of women by men and their institutions – the church and the state – is being challenged? Or that the psyches of at least some portions of society can now bear to confront, from an ethical, political, legal, social and, moreover, from a woman's point of view, the extreme form of violence that is rape?

Perhaps it was the offensive headline: "Close shave for husbands. etc." and the whole tone of the article about the passage of the bill through the House of Representatives, which, as Ramabai Espinet says, "made it sound as if husbands were being deprived of some marriage perks," that piqued the public.

Whatever it is, the public has responded spontaneously, with both intelligence and compassion, their judgment guided and moulded by "the real facts" about rapes within and without marriage. Thereby throwing into sharp relief the traditional cultural glorification of violence against women, not as something out of science fiction, but something born and bred into the system, endemic to the system of life as we know it – further, something upon which the whole society thrives.

A picture which should at least move the weighty National Commission on the Status of Women off its feet and into the Senate to re-establish some basis whereby Clause 4 can become legitimate.

But it was the letter-writer who called for the publication of the entire Parliamentary proceedings on the bill that I must congratulate, since by so doing we can see, and know for sure, what manner of men represent us, and what they think of women in this society. And that includes their mothers, their sisters, their daughters.

For it has never ceased to amaze me how men can be so comfortable with such a pitiful portrait of maleness; how they could be so willing to endure such a dreadful image of themselves; how all those who consider themselves so humane, striking a blow, whenever they could against injustices all over the world, cannot seek to redress the injustices within their midst.

Express Sun. March 29, 1986 from A Feminist Notebook column by Wendy Ifill

Rape Crisis Centre Comments

The Port of Spain based Rape Crisis Centre has taken a stand on the Sexual Offences Bill. The Centre came out with its 'Comments' on March 11.

Clause 4 'The hysterical response'

One claim of Clause 4 opponents is that malicious women would abuse the law, dragging innocent husbands before the courts. The centre referred to subsection 4 which provides protection against false charges, and recommended the clause be kept in its entirety.

However, the statement went on that if majority opinion is against the husband being charged with rape while living with his wife "at least when living apart they should have the law's protection since financial hardship or other reasons may prevent many women from obtaining legal separation."

The Centre outlined the many reasons, given the reality of the situation, a woman would in fact be unlikely to bring a charge against a husband who rapes her.

In the first place they may be dependent on their legal husbands for support for themselves and their children and would hardly risk the loss of this support if they were to interfere with the existing relationship. In addition, if there are children involved, women are very hesitant to affect the lives of the children, or their relationships with their fathers. The undue publicity which could result from such a case may also prevent many women taking advantage of this clause. Most women (married) who come to the Rape Crisis Centre for assistance with problems of battering etc. within the marital union prefer to resolve the issue quietly, out of court, and usually with the men in question arrive at a better understanding of their relationships. There is no need therefore for the hysterical response to the Clause which, we feel was included in the first

instance to protect those women who have real need of it - ie. separated women - and secondly, the Clause in its present state does offer protection for both men and women.

Courtroom nightmares

The problems of rape victims with the law are universal. The centre's second recommendation reads, "We feel that if (rape) cases were held *in camera* there would be greater likelihood of more women being willing to report and prosecute cases and justice will be better served."

At the time of the statement, of the twenty two cases being dealt with at the centre, only three had actually been reported to the police and were being prosecuted in court. *The other nineteen women refuse to go through with the case or to even report it to the police. Of the three cases, one woman is being threatened by the accused's family so that she would drop the case, the other case has been pending for many months now and in both the latter cases of the three, victims are not informed about the date set for their cases. In each of these three cases, the victims spoke of the courtroom experience with distaste and regretted bitterly that they had reported the case in the first instance to the police.*

'Gi'we shelter!'

The centre is concerned that the Draft Sexual Offences Bill does not deal with a very important practical matter. Where and how are women and children to be accommodated when they choose to leave a situation in which they are being abused?

This continues to be one of the main problems encountered by the Centre in its attempt to assist these victims. We feel some provision should be made for such cases which may need accommodation for at least a short period.

Jamaica

Students Stand Against Education Tax

Students and educators in Jamaica and their supporters have been voicing strong opposition to the Jamaican government's "tax bomb" on education, as Althea Feanny, president of the CAST Students Union described the tuition tax which was lobbed at the students of the University of the

West Indies and the College of Arts Science and Technology in mid February this year.

Week after week protest took the form of public demonstrations, rallies and a National Convention on Education held at Mona Campus on April

20. All this has been sustained through a high level of communication between students and community and national organizations of all kinds and through a sense of alarm rising in all sectors as to the political and cultural repercussions of present education policy.

Education as a share of government expenditure has declined to 13% in 1986 from a high of 18% in 1973.

There has been a corresponding increase in the percentage allocated to debt repayment to the IMF, World Bank, USAID and other lending agencies.

At present, UWI (Mona) and CAST students must find \$10,000 per year to meet the cost of books, food, hall fees, health fees, educational materials, clothes and accommodation.

The new government tax adds another \$4,200 to \$6,000 to be paid at UWI and \$900 at CAST.

If a UWI student borrows \$5000 a year for tuition "assuming that boarding, living and other expenses are miraculously taken care of" at 12% interest per year, at the end of the third year, the student would leave owing a grand total of \$18,154. With ten years to pay off the amount, assuming the person is immediately employed, \$151 a month must be paid in capital. Add to this \$181 a month interest and the sum which must be paid by each graduate (likely to be an underpaid civil servant or teacher) reaches \$332 per month.

\$70 million is presently owed to the UWI.

One to two percent of CAST students presently drop out of that institution by the end of the first term because they cannot continue to finance their education.

There are reports of malnutrition among students in these institutions.

The story at other levels is no less discouraging.

Two out of every three 'O' level candidates in Jamaica fail to achieve even one pass.

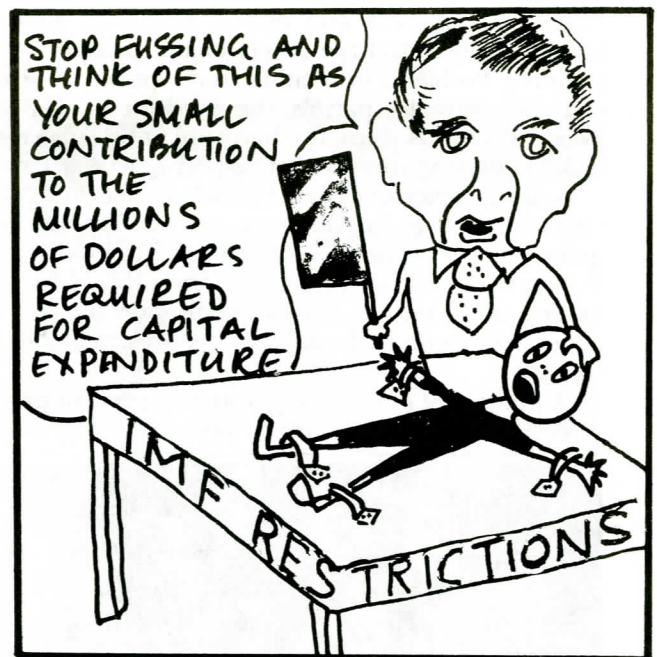
There is an increasing drain from the teaching profession prompted by inadequate salaries and deplorable conditions in schools including. . . the reduction of repair programmes; the short supply of desks, chairs, even chalk, the inadequate provision of equipment and materials for labs and the other basics of technical education; lack of spaces at secondary level and increasing overcrowding; deteriorating teacher-student ratios, haphazard school attendance.

Pervading the whole sad scene, is the general economic erosion of the poor and of the middle classes. "The effects of continuous IMF dictated devaluations result in burdensome costs of food, clothing and transport for sending children to school. . . Compounding this financial inattention and imbalance, is the unsatisfactory level of illiteracy both in the society and the school population (where one half are illiterate); the

continuation of elements in the curriculum that create gender stereotypes; alienation; increasing deterioration of discipline; undermining of self confidence as a people and ultimately of national sovereignty."

The Final Declaration of the National Convention on Education describes "a climate of arbitrariness and lack of consultation in decision making in the system. It brings into question the entire management and direction of the educational system counter to the needs of a democratic and self respecting society, and turning increasingly to reliance on foreign skills"

The information recorded here came from documentation on the rally held at Mona campus, February 21; a radio broadcast on RJR, March 23; the National Convention on Education and various other sources kindly provided by Hopeton Dunn of the United Students Committee.



Women respond to street violence with anti violence group

In February of 1985 several women approached the Director of the Women's Bureau, Dorla Bowman, about the specific problem of street violence which women in the King's Park Area were experiencing. In order to address this problem, the Bureau co-ordinated a series of activities which included weekly public meetings, personal visitations, data collection, petitioning and radio discussions.

Guest speakers at our public meetings were: The Prime Minister, Minister of Education, The Mayor, Commissioner of Police, lawyer, psychologist, psychiatrist, nurses, policemen, social workers, some of the women who were victims of violence and personnel of the Electricity Board.

The group started out under the name of: King's Park Concerned Citizens, then Violence Against Female Movement and finally Belize Women Against Violence Movement.

Concerns of women emerging in the discussion included the physical and mental effects of violence against women and the psychological prospective of violence. Problems in relation to the police were voiced, lack of police patrols, the need for booths with Police in various areas, the harrasment by Policemen, lack of concern and prompt response by Policemen.

In fact, women experience problems in dealing with violence throughout the legal system. Women fear going to court. There is a need for Family Court or Private Court sessions, for information about laws pertaining to violence against women, more knowledge about legal rights and court procedures, penalties for offenders.

A number of practical suggestions such as improved street lighting, workshops/Awareness Programmes

and counselling/support group for victims were made.

It is interesting to note that at each of our public meetings women have shared their personal experience of violence. The members of the Movement have noted with concern that every form of violence threatens women with physical or psychological violation and limits their ability to make choices about their lives.

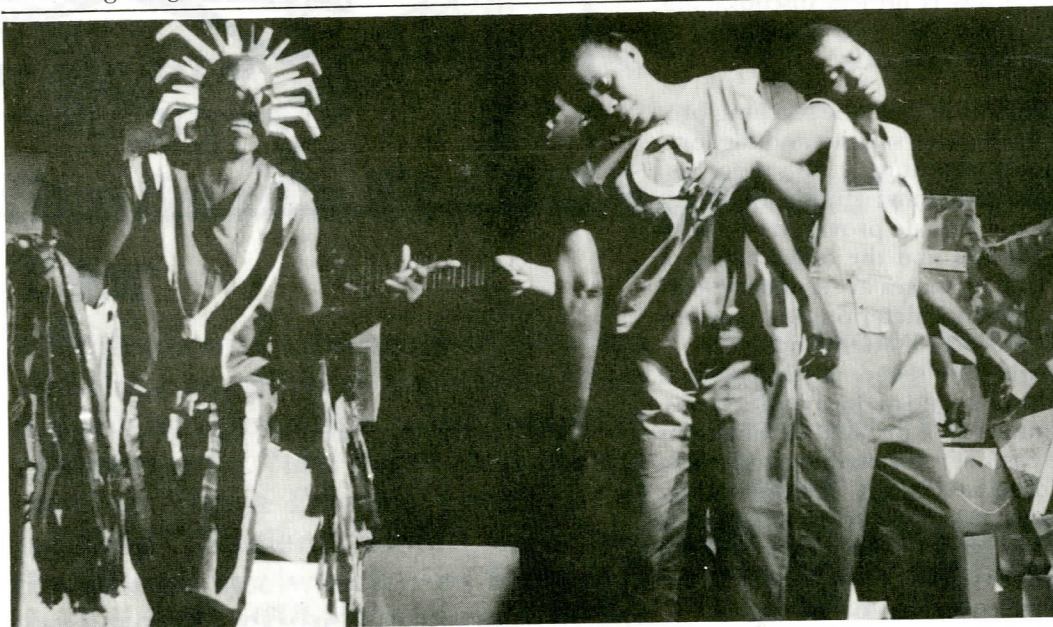
The Women Against Violence Movement was established officially in October, 1985. Its objectives are:-

1. To research the Violence Against Women situation in Belize so as to provide data on which policies, programs and projects can be developed which will change this situation for betterment.
2. To create an understanding and awareness of this specific situation of women in the country on a National, District and Village level with particular emphasis on leaders in government and the voluntary sector.
3. To offer direct services to women who have encountered Violence.

The executive of this Non Governmental Organization is made up of:

Dorla Bowman – Co-ordinator
Alene Card – Assistant Co-ordinator
Gloria McField – Treasurer
Veronica Myles – Secretary
Janet Harris – Assistant Secretary
Violet Gomez – Public Health Officer

(Dorla Bowman)



SISTREN ON VIOLENCE

AUCTIONING THE SPOILS: The trickster, played by Beverley Hanson (l) invites bids from the audience during an auction scene from *Muffet Inna All A We* which contrasts slavery with beauty contests. Photo: Ann Hodges

Haiti

Women Speak! met with some Haitian women in April (after the ouster of Jean Claude Duvalier in February) in an effort to break down some of the isolation between women speaking different languages in the region.

The "language barrier" we talked about at the Caribbean Celebration does determine what we can say to and know about each other in important ways. For example, because I could not communicate directly with most Haitian women, I had to rely on the sincere but nevertheless specific viewpoint of bilingual women who were urban based and middle class. The fact that this was the perspective from which we discussed women in agriculture and higgling, for example, was something they themselves were careful to point out.

However, we hope these articles on Haiti in this and the coming issue will give a picture of women's experience there. Thanks to those who spoke to me about their country and for communicating their commitment and enthusiasm in the process. We at WAND hope that the self generating Haitian rebirth will succeed.

Photographs by Monique Baussan



Monique Baussan

After a heavy rain, water has formed a pool in an empty lot. Women find it convenient to do their laundry.

CITY LIMITS – Peasant women are leaving the land behind for an uncertain future in the city.

In the last 13 years, the population of Port au Prince has nearly doubled to 1 million. In 1976, 80% of the Haitian population lived somehow on less than \$100 per year while 4% absorbed 44% of national income.¹ People are abandoning the land for the suburban ghettos hoping for jobs in city factories. For most, these jobs never materialise.

There is even greater inequality in the urban areas although 90% of all industrial activities are centered in the capital. In 1983 the government made 87% of all its expenditures in Port au Prince where 3000 families earned an average of nearly \$100,000 per year while others in La Saline, for example, survived on an average household income of between \$4 and \$35 per month.²

The factors which have created the migration of rural people are familiar to the rest of the Caribbean and elsewhere, yet Haiti has a story all its own.

The land predominates. Haiti's bony, treeless mountains testify "It was for me slaves rose up, defeated the army of Napoleon himself and established the first modern independent nation in the western Atlantic".

In 1804 the government began redistributing land from former plantations to the new Haitian people.

This process continued for a century and, in a survey conducted by the Haitian government in 1979, 72% of peasant farmers claimed ownership of their land. However, though land distribution in Haiti is not as unequal as in most Latin American countries, problems of land tenure and distribution mitigate against a strong agricultural sector.

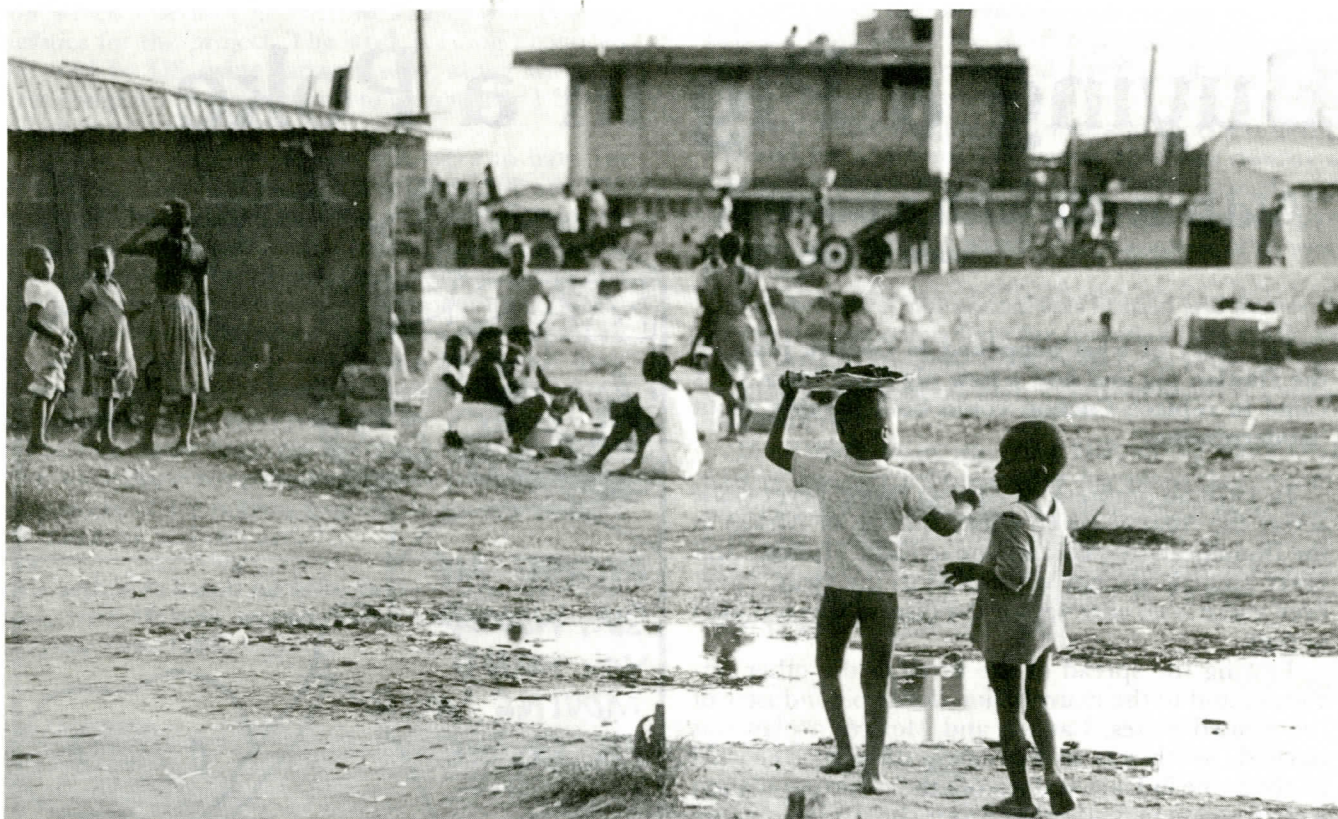
1971 figures show that 71% of all land holdings were 1.3 hectares or less.¹ There is a strong view that the past Haitian government surveys have under-reported large holdings. In fact, it is believed that the government itself is a large land owner. Another concern is that the best agricultural land, on the plains, is concentrated in large holdings by foreign or Haitian owned agro-business.

Peasants have inherited land divided and subdivided over the generations and few possess legal title. Many have lost their land through the manoeuvres of those who can engage the legal system on their behalf and through mass expropriations when some change (the construction of a road or the introduction of a cash crop) has increased the monetary value of their holdings.¹



Morne de La Selle. 40% of Haiti's land base is uncultivable because of soil infertility or ruggedness. Erosion of 15 million cubic metres of topsoil per

year means the loss of a corresponding land area of 6,000 hectares. Only 9% forest cover remains today, and it continues to diminish.



Empty lot in the heart of Cap Haitien where women work and chat while children help with the daily chores.

Monique Baussan

Dispite a strong revolutionary tradition in Haiti (a general slave uprising in 1791 brought about the abolition of slavery there in 1793) the class structure persists. In the rural areas, this structure is based on access to the resources of the land. By 1976 90% of the rural population lived in "absolute poverty", that is on less than \$135 a year.¹

The diminishing size of land holdings; peasants' financial inability to secure legal services or to take advantage of technological changes; the lack of credit facilities and the unavailability of agricultural extension services; deepening class-rooted poverty and the insidious influence of the Tonton Macoute have caused peasants to look away from their farms for a living. Peasant household members engage in agricultural wage labour, petty trading and migrate of Port au Prince in search of employment.

Having moved to the city, over 90% of those women who do find jobs in the "formal sector" find themselves unskilled workers in the manufacturing sector.³ Of 42,000 workers employed there, 74% are unskilled. 51% of the total are women. They are concentrated in three areas of production: textiles, electronic components and sporting goods. The last employs 3,500 Haitian women in several US companies to make baseballs for America's national sport. An employee may earn as little as \$3 per day for stitching 24 balls, yet one company turns away hundreds of applicants each week.⁴

The 1982 census records almost 40% of urban households headed by women. In Port au Prince women outnumber men by 30%.³ Women's traditional role as guardians of their families' welfare, does not change when the system of production changes. In fact, as wage earners the extent of their responsibility for their children and for other relatives measured against the choices available to them in a modern urban setting of rampant unemployment may be increased. Women in these circumstances abide with bad pay, long hours and sexual harrassment because as one woman remarked, "when you need a job, when you really are in trouble, you take the first thing you can find." NP

Footnotes:

1. Donna Plotkin. *Haitian Women's Participation in Development – Agriculture*. Report prepared for UNDP, 1984.
2. **Unicef News** 115 1983/1
3. Donna Plotkin. *Haitian Women's Participation in Development – Industrial Development*. Report prepared for UNDP, 1984.
4. **Los Angeles Times** Dec. 17 1985.

Buying a Pig in a Poke

"Aid travels with a bomb"

(poem by Jean Breeze)

The story of what happened to *Cochon plances*; the Haitian pig and how a new pig from Iowa, USA came to replace *Cochon* could be a parable about 'modernization'.

In 1978 an outbreak of African Swine Fever came across the Atlantic (from either Europe or Africa) to the Dominican Republic and on to Haiti. Humans and other animals are not vulnerable to the virus. However, there is no cure yet for the disease which is fatal to pigs.

Fearing the spread of the fever to the other territories and to the many billion dollar pig industry of the United States, Canada and Mexico, a plan was devised, which was an extremely simplistic one: kill all the swine in Haiti and restock the swine population with foreign pigs – either from the United States, Canada or Mexico.

The project was called PEPPADEP, African Swine Fever Eradication and Swine Industry Development Project. It took a budget of \$23 million, 13 months and a "pig army" of as many as 700 people to kill 400,000 pigs. 500,000 to 600,000 more died of the fever.

There is no question that the disease had devastating consequences of its own or that its spread was a serious concern, or that other methods were a risk. (The Haitian government, at the outbreak in 1978, exterminated pigs in a 15 mile radius, yet this did not stop the disease from spreading).

However, it is important to look at the second aim of PEPPADEP. Who stands to gain from the model of development promoted by phase two of the project? What is the likely outcome for the peasant pig farmer?

There are charges that the eradication project is anti-development and in fact re-inforces Haiti's under-development by increasing the poverty of the majority of its people, strengthening the wealth of 200 millionaire families of Port au Prince, and raising the level of dependency on the US.

Being introduced with a new breed of pigs from Iowa, USA is a stock breeding industry requiring particular conditions (special food, veterinary care) and a lot of money. As one woman in a group discussing the issue observed, "So far the people who have been really successful growing those pigs are big bourgeois. Pigs don't come from peasants anymore. Only peasants who are really well off can afford them".

Another beneficiary of the introduction of the new stock is the meat processing industry. A US corpora-



tion which operates in Port au Prince will lease its facilities for the project. The stock is being produced and sold by US swine farmers who, along with the meat company in Haiti "stand to gain nearly 1 billion dollars from the project".

Haitian pig farmers, meanwhile were to have received 9.3 million dollars, that is between \$90 and \$70 per pig, small compensation for a cornerstone of the peasant household economy. Farmers whose animals were slaughtered in 1978 (at the outbreak near the Dominican border) received no compensation. When PEPPADEP was announced, producers were alarmed into selling their pigs at less than a quarter of their current value to the benefit of dishonest officials in the government of the time.

Plans to build back up the hardy Cochon breed seem unrealistic after the eradication of such a large proportion of 1.2 million animals that existed before the outbreak and its cure.

This article is based on information from conversations with Haitian women and from Multinational Monitor Dec. 1985.

Apart from the unsuitability of the enormous but delicate Iowa pig to the Haitian peasant economy are the effects on the ecological balance. "The *Cochon plances* are an intrinsic part of the ecological system of Haiti. While digging for tubes and roots left in the soil and for ... worms and larvae, the hogs destroy a large quantity of insects harmful to plant growth and productivity eg the Maroka, larva of the common may beetle – and against which the peasant is otherwise powerless."

Furthermore, this animal eats human and domestic wastes thereby controlling the spread of bacteria from areas without scientific sanitary disposal systems. The Cochon's own waste is high in nitrogen and is a valuable manure.

In all these many ways, the Haitian pig was a vital part of peasant livelihood. But big plans, big money interests and big efficiency has done much more than eradicate a disease, it has struck deeply at a way of life that, however poor, offered some autonomy for peasant women who were largely in charge of the rearing and marketing of pigs.



Monique Baussan

Man enjoys a smoke and takes in the countryside.

Voyage Into Solidarity

by Cornelia Frettlöh

A peace conference assisted by CCC-funding was held in Puerto Rico from March 19 - 23. Attended by two members of Barbados based peace and anti-nuclear weapons group "Ploughshares for Life", a Jamaican delegate (youth coordinator of CCC and representing the United Church) and four Mexican members of "Latin American Unity". The conference turned out to be an experience for life. Thanks to the special commitment of all Puerto Ricans involved and a completely new conference approach which engaged the participants far beyond a superficial level, we witnessed some of the conditions of Puerto Rican day to day life and the struggle for peace there.

Instead of sitting in one particular conference room and producing another pile of papers, we moved all over the island to attend a number of meetings that were organized by different groups of the society: students, youth and various community groups. The actual cause was the promotion of the "Puerto Rican Committee for Latin American Unity" (see box) and the question of peace in the region. The Puerto Ricans gave information about the use of their island as an American military base. Apart from the many locations in Puerto Rico itself that are related to functions of the nuclear weapons system, they expressed their concern about the warships coming in and using the facilities. Out of 10 ships 8 carry nuclear weapons. Public pressure caused the government to organize a public hearing on the issue; in case of any emergency or accident Puerto Rico will by no means be prepared to handle the situation. In short, a nuclear disaster will extinguish Puerto Rico and, of course, affect the whole Caribbean.

Concerning the situation in Central America and Nicaragua in particular, members of "Latin American Unity" referred to the efforts undertaken by the Contadora group. For them only unity among the Latin American and Caribbean peoples would give peace a fundamental base in the region.

These meetings constituted one section of the conference. Another formed our visit to various groups and institutions that are related to the peace issue in Puerto Rico. Each group introduced its aims and ob-

jectives and gave a report of its work and future plans (see box). This enabled the participants to share experiences, to exchange information, especially of the sort that is not covered by the regional media, to make contacts and lay the foundation-stone of future co-ordination and networking. All groups underlined the fact that the exchange between the islands – whether they be English, French or Spanish speaking – was very important in terms of overcoming the isolation and (not only geographic) fragmentation in the region. Thus the conference and its new approach meant a step in the right direction.

Out of the frustrating experiences with other conferences and alike meetings there is obviously a shifting in "policies" to reflect a alternative approach. In order to reach grass roots people, much more emphasis will be put on Popular Education. At least, the awareness is there: mobilizing people and getting them involved in activities cannot be achieved by only giving the bare facts and figures but is as well a result of how these figures are presented. To get the message across, culture and Popular Theatre in particular could play an important role in this process.

The third aspect of the conference was a visit to communities. Ironically, we got a clear idea of the conditions under which the work of these groups is done. On Friday morning (the conference began on Wednesday night) we visited the "Institute of Human Rights" where we received a talk by its lawyer Roberto Maldonado. He explained the following case: "On August 30, 1985, hundreds of armed agents from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) violently searched the homes of dozens of Puerto Ricans. They took over the offices of a magazine and the home of a prominent artist. Thirteen persons were arrested without warrants and transported to federal prisons in the U.S. This injustice was carried out under the pretext that a search for supposed members of an armed organization was being carried out. Besides these flagrant violations of the human rights of the Puerto Rican people, there is irrefutable evidence of continuous telephone interception and persecution against pro-independence advocates and trade union leaders by the FBI." (extract from a protest note addressed to the Commission on Human Rights of the U.N. Office at Geneva).

In the evening news of the same day we heard about the arrest of Robert Maldonado and two other people who were charged with involvement in a robbery by the "Macheteros" pro-independence group. Next morning he was deported to the United States. Thus we came to understand what he was talking about on Friday morning.

Notes on Groups in Puerto Rico

Latin American Unity: Puerto Rican Committee of Latin American Unity: A group spread all over South and Middle America and connected to the concept of liberty as developed by Jose Marti and Simon Bolivar; since the Latin American countries have common historical and cultural roots and today are facing the same problems of poverty and underdevelopment, unity among them will strengthen their position and their ability to find solutions for the actual problems out of their own perspective (Contrador group, club of debtors).

Institute of Human Rights: offering legal advice and counselling to Haitian or Dominican (Republic) immigrants, groups connected with the independence movement (facing deportation to the United States), foreign visitors to Puerto Rico to whom the U.S. denies entry visas.

Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace: Promoting research, documentation and education programs with focus on the protection and use of natural resources, the affirmation of human rights and the impact of foreign economic, political and military intervention; development of resources for popular education and the establishment of communication and support among grass roots groups in the Caribbean.

Future activities: bilingual quarterly bulletin highlighting human rights, militarisation and economic de-

velopment; series of workshops for popular education reflecting on militarisation in day to day life; coordination of documentation centres in various islands.

Pax Christi: organising various activities related to peace; works on curricula for peace education in schools; plans to develop a third world perspective towards the topic of peace.

ATREVETE ("Theirs"): community based group of a public housing area; Basic education: courses for adults and young people who didn't complete their education and graduate with a diploma; methods used are based on popular education (Paulo Freire).

Health promotion: improvement of health situation through visits, talks, education etc.

Women: as more than 60% of the program participants are women, ATREVETE wants to start a special women's program.

Economic development: assistance to small enterprise/self help groups.

Future activities: to develop a methodology of popular education based on their experiences; expand service to other communities; training courses for students in the field of pop.educ.; cultural workshop.

CONEP: resource group that developed workshops, seminars and different material on topics related to the communities; they provide their service and assistance on demand.



"Why didn't you give up your houses?"

"Madam, we had nowhere to go"

(Cartoon from *Unidad Comunal* (Newsletter of the Puerto Rican League of Communities) October 1985 Ano 1 #4. Commenting on the disaster of the floods)

In the slums around San Juan unemployment, poverty, low schooling rate, illiteracy, drug abuse, crime etc. determine the day to day life. In 1977 the official unemployment rate was 20% but now the estimated figure is 30-40%. In 1966 about every third inhabitant of Puerto Rico received food from the "Food Stamp Program" of the United States. Today about 40% of the population are depending on welfare, due to the high cost of living. In 1980 Puerto Rico received a total of about U.S.\$2,4 billions aid from the United

States or, in other terms, U.S.\$750 per capita. In 1975 42% of all families and singles had a yearly income less than U.S.\$4,000, 53% less than U.S.\$5,000.

These abstract facts and figures were given true meaning as the approach of the conference allowed participants to experience how the Puerto Rican model of development presents itself from the perspective of the less fortunate. The following are personal sketches of a one day visit into Puerto Rican life below the glittering surface.

YOU HAVE TO BE MANY

We are leaving San Juan and its numerous suburbs; at every crossing along the highways people are selling newspapers, fruits, nuts or toys; a lot of them youngsters who should still be attending school instead of contributing to the family income. Our first stop is a village, one of the land rescue communities, not far from the metropolis. It is a settlement of poor people who took over the land and established a community. The driver explains; "You put a sign here that tells you 'No parking' but despite the injunction you park your car there on purpose to manifest your will to stay and to remain on that spot. Here I am, I will not leave."

On the left is a government housing project: nicely built stone-houses with all the facilities. On the right, just across the street, a settlement of wooden houses and huts. Everything covered with sand and dust, no paved roads, no water, no electricity, no sanitation. We are invited into a small house: one half accommodates the kitchen and living room, the other half is divided into two tiny bedrooms; sometimes they have to sleep in shifts because of the limited space. The lady apologizes that she hasn't cleaned the house; she will repeat her apology various times during our talk.

After offering a drink she says: "I have three children. You can drink, you can smoke, you can have any kind of vice, I have children. The youngest suffers from asthma. The doctor told me that he shouldn't stay here, because it will make him more sick with all the dust in the air. But I can't leave, I don't know where to bring him. When it starts raining the water rises and even comes into the house." (It is about a meter off the ground.) "The water stays and won't drain off. Everybody gets sick and most of the children suffer from skin irritation and other diseases. At that time we can't leave our homes or get out of here." Suddenly I remember the news of last year: a number of Puerto Ricans died after heavy rainfalls and lots of houses were washed away. The lady continues:

"It is now seven years that we are living here. The government has done nothing for us. After seven years we still face the same conditions: no electricity, no water, nothing." I ask her about the fridge and the TV. "We had to help ourselves to stay alive. We tapped the water (she carries it in a bucket to the house) and the lines. But the current is not good; the radio broke down, for the fridge it isn't sufficient." Does she get aid from the Food Stamp Program?

"Yes, but as I have no fridge to rely on, I cannot buy large quantities because everything spoils easily and it is not enough." Two of her children are coming, 11 and 13 years old. The eldest is still at church. "They are good boys, they are all working. My husband is unemployed. And I have a bill to pay for medical treatment." She gets up, comes back with some papers. "Here: \$1,500 for treatment in the hospital. And I don't know how I can manage to pay this sum." The tears that have been in her eyes during the whole time while she explained her situation, are now flowing down her cheeks. She cries quietly, soundless.

Again she apologizes. "If I had known that you were coming today I would have swept the floor. I feel so ashamed to receive you under these circumstances. I cleaned the house yesterday but with all that dust it won't last long. And still I don't know how to pay that bill." She shows another paper. "This is a prescription of medicine for my boy but I did not have the money to buy it. I went to the mayor. He knows everything about the village, he is familiar with the situation. I do not want to repeat the words he said to me. I do not want to make you hear this words." She tries to dry the tears that flow continually. Why doesn't she get free medical treatment which is part of the social welfare system?

"You have to possess a certificate and when you move from one place to another, you have to apply for a new one. My husband is not the father of the children. He has the birth certificates that you need along with your application. So I had to get copies at the registration bureau; that can take time. And if you get sick during the whole proceedings you have to pay privately for the guaranteed free medical treatment. I had to take the boy to hospital, he was sick. That is how I got the bill because the old certificate is no longer valid, and I really don't know how to pay the bill.

Even if you have certain rights they deny them to you. I will not go again to the mayor to ask for help; though I am black I have my pride. As an individual you can't do anything. You have to be organized, you have to be many. You have to fight for your rights."

On our way to the next stop I think about the dignity of that woman. I know that I will never forget her features in my life: alone you are lost; only within the solidarity of others you will accomplish to become a human being in its true sense.

The passage way to the beach is closed. Two armed patrol guards stop the cars. After a longer discussion they note down the drivers' names and the licence number: we can pass through.

Puerto Rican law prohibits the construction of any buildings within a certain distance of the sea. Various rich people purchased premises that formerly belonged to the government and started building. We can see their week-end houses and the tall fences they erected around their properties. Fishermen using the passage to reach the bay were prevented from passing by the new land-owners. After public protest and a campaign in favour of the fishermen, they were allowed to use the passage again until the case is finally decided by the courts. What did the lady say just an hour ago? "You have to be organized, you have to be many. You have to fight for your rights."

Villa sin miedo

"Village without fear." This is the name of the second village of the land rescue communities that we are visiting. Roberto, the community leader, illustrates its history. He has served as a soldier in the Vietnam war, an experience that determined his outlook on life. They were living in a land rescue settlement until the police came, destroyed the whole village and took over the land. It turned out to become a serious battle because the people were prepared to fight and didn't want to give up: they had no other place to go to. But despite their resistance the police expelled them from the territory. Instead of splitting up, everybody looking for his own survival, the community remained a unit, organized the protest and finally ended up on a compound that provisionally was given to them by the church. For two years they stayed there, first erecting tents and later huts and small houses. With the help of a German church group that provided them with a grant they were able to buy their own land.

When they had made their choice they had to start all over again, right from the bottom: cut the trees and clear the land, build their houses and set up a whole rural community. Still they had to fight: first a pregnant woman whose labour pains had started had to die. When it was raining no car could get through. Only after that incident did the government attend to its duties and install an access road to the village.

They set up a council and have weekly meetings of the whole community where they discuss their problems and affairs. Roberto says: "Everything was concentrating on me. I became an authoritarian leader. For all of us it meant a process of learning. It is a completely new approach. All members of the community have to participate in the decision-making. They succeeded in keeping the village free of drugs and pornographic literature which constitutes a big achievement in comparison with the rest of the society. As a result of that, some members had to leave the community. Proudly they show us their little library, a field, where they want to expand their activities.

We are invited to attend a birthday party in the village; we end up cooking a pot of food together and enjoying the Puerto Rican hospitality and friendliness that have accompanied us during our whole visit to this Caribbean island. This is the other side of a country where the Americans have tested Agent Orange, a chemical later used in the Vietnam war and where they have experimented with contraceptives and sterilized women without their knowledge. "Village without fear" – now I understand the meaning.

PUERTO RICO

La luna de amistad,
Casi llena,
Me guió a la jungla de su ciudad.
De repente sentí la represión,
Oí la violencia,
Vi la pobreza,
Oí las sirenas,
Gusté la solidaridad.
Las avenidas y calles,
Congeladas en tráfico,
Derretían.
Vendedores de naranjas
Inundaban el hormigón,
Un océano de caras,
Un par de ojos.
De repente tenían rostros,
La dependencia y la libertad.
Lágrimas secretas se cerraron
Encima de mi corazón.
La luna de amistad,
Casi llena,
Me guió a ustedes
Y así a mí.
Gracias.

Cornelia Frettlöh, Marzo 1986

International Day Against Violence To Women

THE MIRABEL SISTERS

The Committee for the Coordination of Women's Organizations in the Dominican Republic has made available in English a short account of the lives of the Mirabel sisters and the social context in which they lived and fought. The account is the Committee's "contribution towards making (November 25) this International Day Against Violence a success".

The date of the sisters' murder is placed before us as a reminder of the violence to which the subordinated female sex is daily subjected and as an affirmation of women's rejection of violence and subordination as well as our rejection of the monstrous social and economic systems which feed violence.

The Mirabel sisters were born toward the end of the period of "gunboat diplomacy" which discribed relations between the young, growing imperial power, the United States and its Caribbean backyard from which it unceremoniously dismissed the almost exhausted influence of old Spain. The US was realizing it could tell Britain just what to do and be obeyed.

During this period between 1898 (the Spanish American War; invasions by the USA of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines) and World War II, the USA used what President Theodore Roosevelt called "the big stick" military methods. The USA intervened in the Dominican Republic in 1903, 1904, 1914, 1916 to 1924 and in the post war era in 1966.

The infamous dictator Trujillo took power with US support in 1940 and was not removed until 1961. Then he was assassinated having grown so corrupt that his enemies were numberless and there were fears in certain quarters that if his regime persisted there would be a popular revolution in the country like there had recently been in Cuba.

The Mirabel sisters who were murdered in 1960 did not live to see Trujillo's demise nor the short lived (and elected) government of Juan Bosch which alarmed the power elite by attempting constitutional and land reform. Bosch's government lasted seven months. He was flung out by a military coup in 1963.

The eldest of the Mirabel sisters, Patria was born in 1924, the artistically gifted Minerva in 1927 and the youngest Maria Teresa in 1936. The three grew up with a consciousness of exploitation and shared with others (eg. the Democratic Youth of 1946, Spanish Republican exiles) a commitment to ideas which conflicted passionately with Trujillo's power.

Patria married at 17 and had three children. Their house was a base for an underground organization, the 14th of June Resistance Movement which Minerva also helped organise and which Maria Teresa actively supported. A plot to kill Trujillo was uncovered and

hundreds of members of the movement arrested. Among them were Pedro Gonzales Cruz (Patria's husband), their 12 year old son and Manolo Tavares Justo (Minerva's husband).

Minerva was arrested on January 22, 1960 and sentenced to 5 years imprisonment, later reduced to three. However, she was actually released on August 9 of the same year. Imprisonment was not new to Minerva. She had been incarcerated at Fort Ozama in 1949 at the age of 22 and prevented from continuing the study of law. The arrest occurred after she had struck up an association with another young student who had himself been arrested for anti-Trujillo activities. Trujillo had in the style of other "island kings" attempted to impose himself on her but she had rejected his advances. Later she was put under house arrest in Ojo de Agua where she continued to express her commitment to the exploited clases of the Dominican Republic through her creative writing.

Recalling the occasion of her arrest in 1960, the head of the Military Intelligence Service in the north of the country is reported to have said "... on her face we could see her anger and her courage. She carried herself far, far better than most of the men who had been arrested and brought before me."

Maria Teresa was arrested on the morning of January 20, released, rearrested and released.

Extract

On November 25th 1960, accompanied by their sister Patria and Rufino Cruz Disla, the driver of the jeep in which they travelled. Minerva and Maria Teresa visited their husbands who were being held in Puerto Plata. En route to Salcedo, they were intercepted by agents of the Military Intelligence Service (SIM) along a lonely stretch in the road.

They were taken to a nearby field and there subjected to the most cruel torture before what has been called the most heinous crime in the history of the country was perpetrated.

Later, their bloody, mangled, battered and lifeless bodies were placed in the jeep which was pushed over the edge of a cliff in a futile attempt at making it look like an accident.

The whole country was stunned and horrified by the murder of the Mirabel sisters.

It was yet another indication of the boundless violence of a decadent, cornered regime out of touch with the times and doomed by its methods.

IWD ART EXHIBITION

International Womens Day was highlighted by the mounting of a women's Art Exhibition. Items exhibited consisted mainly of paintings of various categories, sculpture, quilting, canning etc. The exhibition which was organized by the Women's Bureau was reported to be of a high standard. It was aimed at exposing the work of women artists thus creating greater public awareness and recognition of women's work in this field.

Other activities for the day included a radio address by the Prime Minister and a television interview by the Director of the Women's Bureau.

Activities organized by women's groups from the north and south of the island also formed part of the days observance.

(Women's Desk, Dominica)

SWORD IWD RALLY

The Southern Women's Organization for Rural Development (SWORD) a group of about twenty women in the village of Grand Bay in the south of Dominica, celebrated International Women's Day with a rally. The rally brought together women and men from the community for speeches and solidarity messages from the Parliamentary Representative of the area as well as from other groups.

A main emphasis of the rally was to sensitize the public to some of the issues the women perceived as affecting women in the community. Through song, dance, drama and poetry the women portrayed scenes of violence, against women, and the effects of teenage pregnancy and unemployment among women. This is the third time that the women have celebrated International Women's Day in a special way.

The themes for the rally were identified through a process of workshops which the Movement for Cultural Awareness, a group of animators involved in Popular Education, conducted with the group.

(SPAT)

NATIONAL COUNCIL LAUNCHING

After numerous meetings and consultations of a representative core committee from women's groups on the island, a National Council of Women in Dominica was finally formed on Monday March 3, 1986.

The convening of two major forums brought together delegates in discussion of a draft constitution. The Council aims to: a) be a representative body in

the interest of all women's groups, b) act as a vehicle for the articulation of needs and concerns of women in the country.

The launching

The occasion brought together Ministers of Government responsible for Women's and Legal Affairs, women at decision making and policy levels and delegates from women's groups and organizations around the island.

Carmeta Frazer, President of the Caribbean Women's Association (CARIWA) delivered the feature address while Peggy Antrobus, Tutor/Coordinator of the Women and Development Unit (WAND) and Hyacinth Elwin, Director of Dominica's Women's Bureau gave messages. The Attorney General, Brian Alleyne and Minister of Community Development and Women's Affairs, Alexander also gave messages.

Neva Edwards is President of the new Council. Vernice Bellamy and Pamela Liburd are first and second Vice Presidents. Noreen John, Secretary; Ena Burton, Treasurer; Dora Joseph, Assistant Secretary Treasurer.

Best wishes from WAND.

New Idea from Cochrane

The village women are on the move once more with new ideas for their community's improvement.

Nearing the end, is part two of a Family Life Education Programme for men and women, which meant spare time on the hands of the class participants. As is the case in the Cochrane village, the women once again came up with meaningful activity which will not only fill the gap, but will improve health as well. These are:

Yoga classes for men and women 18 and up; two dance classes for ages 5 - 25.

The Yoga tutor is encouraging sufferers of Hypertension, Diabetes etc. to participate, as their health will improve from the programme.

With Dance classes, Cochrane village can now look forward to full participation in their National Day Activities.

The Pilot Project in the cultivation of Salad Beans and Talias which is being supervised by the local CARDI team, has so far been a big success.

Farmers from the Warner village are now implementing a similar project and are constant visitors to the project.

Village farmers are now in the process of growing on an individual basis. Discussions are now being undertaken in this regard.

A joint Field Day was recently held on the plot by members of CARDI and the Division of Agriculture for interested farmers inside and out of the village. This was followed by a slide show of various stages of the project.

(Dominik Save, Cochrane Community Dev. Project, Culture and Health Activities).

EXPLORING APARTHEID

In February 1986, the Extra Mural Centre in Dominica launches a lecture series entitled "Exploring Apartheid". The objective was twofold:

1) To update the information base on the state of the struggle of the South African people against Apartheid.

2) To provide a forum for critical examination of the possible effects of Apartheid on Caribbean societies.

The lecture series was launched by the Minister for Legal Affairs, the Hon. Brian Alleyne, who made a statement of Government's policy on Apartheid. The second in the series was given by the Rev. Alan Kirton, General Secretary of the Caribbean Conference of Churches who gave the Church's perspective on the struggle. The third lecture in the series is scheduled for late April, 1986.

(Extra Mural Centre, Dominica)

CAREERS DAY

Wednesday March 5 was Careers Day at Roebuck Secondary School, Barbados. Students familiar with the radio programme, "People of Tomorrow" had requested the guidance counselling department of the school to invite the Small Business people from the programme to conduct sessions.

'People of Tomorrow' coordinator, Joyce Bynoe, and Jeanette Bell one of WAND's programme officers introduced the sessions.

The young business people told the students how to go about setting up their own business, the kind of questions they should ask themselves, the disadvantages and advantages of running a business, along with the kind of personality one should have to be a good business person.

The sessions were conducted in such a way, as to allow total participation by the students and the team members of 'People of Tomorrow'. Taymar Outram, one of the young business women, is the owner of Tasecona Business Services. She focused on what an employer looks for when one comes for an interview, how one should conduct him/herself at an interview, and the ups and downs of running a business.

Initially, only a small gathering of students was on hand, but as the day went by the classroom in which the 'People of Tomorrow' set up their displays and conducted sessions became crowded with students, some interested in setting up their own business, others who heard of the sessions and had come to take part.

The students raised questions like, does one feel content (happy) running one's own business? How does one go about setting up a business with just the skills and no money? Apart from being told how to get into small business, the ups and downs, self discipline was emphasised as well.

The students' response was overwhelming. Their feelings were expressed in several ways. We were later stopped by a group of students who said they enjoyed the small business sessions most of all. When queried further about what they enjoyed most, one young woman shyly said, "We were a part of what was going on". The People of Tomorrow sessions were the only one for that entire day, to offer live demonstrations and practical opportunities for involvement among students. She went on to say that she too can use what skills she has to create employment for herself.

One other young woman said she used to look forward to the day she got to sit behind a desk all dressed up, but now she knew there was much more to it than that. She was not interested in having a business, but her friend was and she wanted to pass on all she learnt to her friend who attended another school. It was very interesting to hear one of the students, a young man who said that he felt that more people should be encouraged to set up small businesses in Barbados.

A former student of Roebuck Secondary who is now very much involved in 'People of Tomorrow', Pamela, said the headteacher and other teachers remarked how proud they were of her and the good work the young people in the programme were doing and hoped she would encourage other school friends to get involved.

Veronica Simpson
Cheryl Simpson
Joyce Bynoe



Waiting In A Long Line of Troubles

A statement from the Women's section of Guyana's Working People's Alliance has called Prime Minister Hamilton Green's nationwide campaign for energy conservation a plan which conserves fuel energy by sapping human energy.

The plan is criticised on the grounds that it will increase human suffering at the same time reducing production, and, inevitably, foreign exchange earnings. A situation is being created where the task of daily survival is worsened by shortages in fuel supplies. Obtaining kerosene and cooking gas, it is reported, has become for many housewives an almost full-time occupation.

Another aspect of the problem is the increased potential for robbery and rape in areas where long periods without electricity heighten women's victimization and "sense of fear and powerlessness".

The statement predicts "a merciless increase in human suffering" in "lines, blackouts, interrupted water supplies" and "the devastation of an already abysmal transport service".

The WPA women analyse the intensifying effects of the energy conservation policy on women's domestic burden in the context of the traditional sexual division of labour . . . "Short of electricity, short of transport, short of running water and with whatever ordeal is required to obtain cooking fuel, Guyanese women are continuing to carry out 'our' function in the home. Nearly every worker, male and female is there because a mother, a wife, a daughter, an aunt or a paid domestic first battled against all odds to find the fuel, to cook the meals, to fetch the water, to wash the clothes."

Women are urged to recognise their central role in the battle for physical survival as precisely the source of power not yet fully realised by women. "Production in factory and field begins with our production in the home. May 1986 be the year in which we begin to recognise and use that power".

Since the death of Forbes Burnham and subsequent to the "Mustique Meeting" between some Caribbean heads of government and Guyana's President Hoyte, the government has announced that wheat flour will once again be imported. The statement by WPA women made on the occasion of International Women's Day, 1986 attributes this "one victory in hand" to the struggle, led largely by housewives and traders, for physical survival in a country where the acute foreign currency shortage has placed enormous burdens on the people.

MILK PLEASE

The government of Guyana is being called on by the Women's Progressive Organization to reintroduce the school feeding programme. The WPO campaign centred on International Children's Day (June 1) calls for "a glass of milk per day for each child".

YOUTH GROUPS MEET

As part of its activities for IYY the Guyana Association of Commonwealth Youth Workers focussed on bridging the gap between youth groups in Georgetown by hosting a series of inter group discussions. The series provided an opportunity to promote closer working relations and created an atmosphere for the exchange of views, ideas and observations on youth related matters.

Topics discussed included "Should Teenage Mothers be allowed to Return to School (Primary/Secondary)" and "Problems Affecting Youth and Causal Factors". The discussions generated interest and enthusiasm and it is hoped that the links established will be maintained for future activities.

(Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre, International Youth Year Newsletter. Issue No. 3 March 1986)

WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE WORKSHOP

The Belize Women against Violence Movement held a two day workshop on April 12, 1986 at the Extra Mural Department in Belize City.

District reports were made from Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo on the violence being experienced by women.

A discussion on "Men, Women and Power: What Violence Against Women Really Does To Us", was followed by small group discussion and reports on the recommendations made by them. The afternoon saw a panel discussion on parenting.

On the second day, participants joined workshops on "Guidance Counselling", "Neighbourhood Watch", "Self Defense" and "Drugs".

WAND's Women's studies programme got going at the first Regional Seminar, "Women, Men and Development" held at Mangrove, St. Philip, Barbados March 21 to 28.

The seminar attempted to build discussion of theory upon the perceptions and experiences of 28 development workers from various fields. These included: community development, health, education, drama, agriculture, women and development.

The format combined small group discussions with structured tasks for reporting back to the whole group and lecture sessions. The resource team included Phyllis Mac Pherson Russell, Pat Mohammed, Frank Alleyne, and WAND staff members, Peggy Antrobus, Norma Shorey Bryan, Pat Rodney, Jeanette Bell and Nan Peacocke.



The editors of SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women are soliciting manuscripts for the Spring 1987 Issue on BLACK WOMEN AS ARTISTS AND ARTISANS (Submission Deadline: January 15, 1987).

- articles on the historical and contemporary status of Black women artists and artisans
- personal accounts and narratives of Black women artists and artisans
- interviews of Black women artists, artisans, and arts and music educators
- discussions of the interface between Black women's art and politics
- analyses of themes in the work of Black women artists and artisans

For purposes of this issue, we mean to include musicians, photographers, filmmakers, visual artists, sculptors, jewelry-makers, potters, doll-makers, dancers, quilt-makers, choreographers and kindred creators. Because we recently published an issue on women as writers, we are EXCLUDING creative writers. Queries always welcomed.

CAFRA Anthology of Women's Poetry

The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action is compiling an anthology of women's poetry and appeals to women writers living in the Caribbean and Caribbean women living abroad to submit their unpublished work.

Publication of the anthology is intended to challenge the male centered bias which has dominated Caribbean literature and to provide an opportunity for women writers to have their work published.

Poems may be on any topic and since this is to be a multi lingual anthology, contributions in any Caribbean language are welcome.

Poems should be typed using double spacing and sent with self addressed envelopes to: Rawwida Baksh Soodean, Coordinator, c/o Dept. of Languages/Linguistics, U.W.I., St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION GUIDELINES

Manuscripts should not exceed fifteen typed, double-spaced pages. We assume that all contributions sent can be published and have not been published elsewhere. All manuscripts must be sent in triplicate to the Editors and must have a title page, which includes the author's name, an address (with phone number), and a one to three-sentence bio-sketch. The author's name should not appear elsewhere on the manuscript. Full bibliographic information must be provided for all references. Consult current issues of the journal for format.

A stamped, self-addressed envelope and post card must accompany each submission to cover the cost of correspondence regarding the status of the manuscript. No manuscript will be returned unless a written request is made and adequate postage provided. All authors whose manuscripts are published will receive two copies of the journal. Sage Women's Educational Press, Inc. holds joint copyright (with the author) of all manuscripts published in the journal.

**ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO SAGE:
A Scholarly Journal on Black Woman, P.O. Box
42721, Atlanta, GA 30311-0741.**

WOMEN'S RIGHTS WATCH TAKES ACTION

The first International Women's Rights Action Watch seminar was held in New York in mid-March, 1986 to coincide with the annual meeting of the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination (CEDAW). CEDAW meets each year to review reports from countries which have ratified the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the new international bill of rights for women adopted during the Decade for Women. By the time of the 1986 CEDAW meeting 85 countries had ratified the Convention. Countries ratifying the Convention are obligated to pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and to report on progress within one year after ratification and every four years thereafter.

The specific objectives of the seminar were: to introduce IRAW to a wider group of non-governmental organizations, scholars, and activists in the field of women's legal rights; to discuss the importance of the Convention and develop collaborative ways of publicizing it and assisting in compliance efforts; to develop liaison with the members of CEDAW and discuss how the interested non-governmental community might assist CEDAW in its work; and to seek advice on a prioritized plan of action for IRAW.

IRAW grew out of a series of workshops on the Convention held at the NGO Forum during the Nairobi U.N. Decade for Women conference. Those workshops and the numerous references to the Convention in the Forward Looking Strategies document adopted at the U.N. conference illustrated that a variety of women's organizations, parliamentarians, lawyers, and scholars were actively engaged in efforts to ratify the Convention and put its principles into effect. As a result of these workshops an informal network was created to assist with and monitor compliance efforts under the Convention.

IRAW was organized by the Woman, Public Policy and Development Project of the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, and the Development Law and Policy Program in the Center for Population and Family Health at Columbia University. Norma Forde of the Faculty of Law at the University of the West Indies in Barbados and Jane Connors, legal consultant to the Women and Development program of the Commonwealth Secretariat, served as co-presenters at the Nairobi workshops on the Convention.

As a first step, the two projects which organized the Nairobi workshops and the international Women's Rights Action Watch collected, developed and distributed informational materials about the Convention. These now include the official and a shorter, popular version of the Convention; a bibliography of relevant articles; an analysis of the structure of the CEDAW and of its work to date; and publications on the legal status of women in a number of countries. A computerized list of persons interested in or working on the Convention was also put together and will be expanded.

The importance of collecting and exchanging information is being stressed since governments cannot be expected to report negative or unfavourable information about themselves. The task of identifying *de facto* or *de jure* discrimination is most effectively undertaken by non-governmental groups. The Forward Looking Strategies document adopted at Nairobi suggests the formation of law reform committees to review all laws and undertake indepth research to determine instances where laws may be discriminatory. Norma Forde described how this was effectively done in her country after the 1975 world conference on women and how this led to numerous changes in laws, especially those affecting women and children.

Members of CEDAW, including chair Desiree Bernard of Guyana attended the launching of IRAW and welcomed the support and assistance of INRAW and other groups.



BOOK NOOK

**Compañeras:
Women, Art, And
Social Change in
Latin America
By Betty LaDuke
City Lights Books
San Francisco, California**

Social protest in art is nothing new; neither is violence in Latin America. What Betty LaDuke brings to light in *Compañeras: Women, Art, & Social Change in Latin America* is new. It is artistic expression as both liberator and liberation.

Preferring, as she says, "artists who probe beneath polite surface facades of their societies," LaDuke has pulled together the work of primitive and trained women artists throughout war-torn Latin America. What emerges for the reader is an understanding of what it means to be a woman living with war and poverty in countries which are in the process of political, religious, and social change.

It isn't possible to write about Latin America without including something of the politics of liberation going on there. LaDuke chooses as one example the work of poet, Ernesto Cardenal, in the Christian commune he helped found in Solentiname, Nicaragua. A collection of beautiful islands on Lake Nicaragua. Solentiname has become a symbol of the struggle for change taking place in Latin America, much like Guernica has become a symbol of fascist brutality in Europe. Now Minister of Culture in Nicaragua, Cardenal

helped the campesinos in Solentiname rid themselves of non-productive farm labor as a sole means of support, by turning their minds and hands to art.

Not that an artist lurks in the soul of every campesino, but what happened in Solentiname was a gradual awakening of a people to the *possibility* of a better future. One of the women, herself an emancipated campesina, explains, "We began to analyze our situation . . . to discover God created people with a right to live . . . with dignity." (Though the commune was eventually destroyed by the Somoza Guardia Nacional, the people did return to rebuild.)

Certainly the right to live in dignity has been the dream of every people seeking the path to freedom. In order to achieve that right requires more than answering a call to arms, though that is sometimes necessary, too. In Latin America, women are reaching back, often to their cultural past, to find a means by which to arrive at a better future.

For many what this means is picking up needle and thread. While some might take issue with the fact that women are "sewing," which traditionally means engaging in oppressive work in a situation of isolation, for the women of Latin America that is not the case. They are using a traditional craft, but in the process they are re-defining it.

One striking example of how they are accomplishing this might be the *arpilleras*, which LaDuke calls "embroideries of life and death." These are pieces of cloth which tell the stories of husbands, sons and brothers (*los desaparecidos*) dragged away in the night by police, of poverty and degradation, conditions of Pinochet's Chile. In short, the *arpillera* is a means of communication.

While these embroideries express violence and oppression, there are other women practicing the craft using themes of daily rural life. But in both instances, the simple techniques of embroidery had made it possible for women not only to earn money, but to take part in shaping their future.

There are other examples of needlework, such as the *Molas* (appliqued blouses) of Panama, and the birthing dolls of Peru and Brazil, which tell different stories.

What is common to all these women is that through their craft they are forming cooperatives, marketing their work, and jointly training others. In an ironic twist, the violence and pain that drives these women to their cultural roots, is at the same time opening a way out of the present.

While these women are not "trained" in any academic sense of the word, they are certainly not apart from those who are. What binds them all is the common expression of their condition.

Cecilia Rojas, cover artist for this book, began her career as a teacher, and later studied art. A common symbol in her work is the mask. She explains this by stating she felt "too old to develop the technical capacities of realistic portraiture." All the same, LaDuke points out, Rojas' masks are a powerful and wonderfully evocative artistic expression, rooted in the historical and folk traditions of her country, where the mask features in celebrations. In addition, the mask is a poignant reminder of the revolution, of the necessity to conceal identity in a closed society.

The many artists and the beauty and richness of their work detailed in the book, from Mexico to Haiti to Peru, some fourteen countries in all, are too many to cover in this review. It took Betty LaDuke four years to travel to all of them, often over rugged and difficult terrain. This collection derives from the many articles she wrote about her travels. Those articles subsequently appeared in art journals around the country, as well as this one. Also, for the student of art, LaDuke remembers to describe the artistic techniques in enough detail to be of use.

The uniqueness and simple beauty of the work, apart from those who comprise it, rests upon a unifying thread of confidence in the future. It is true that art survives because of its universality, its timelessness. With the dawning (hopefully) of a new age in Latin America, what strikes one most is the way these humble and determined women are using art to synthesize the past and present to build a new future. That synthesis may answer the demand for a universal message.

Barbara Ryberg

Reprinted from *KSOR Guide* (December, 1985)

Living In Britain

Heart of the Race – Black Women's Lives in Britain by Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe.

A long awaited very readable book which puts into focus for the first time not only what Black women feel now in the 1980s, but our contribution before that.

This book aims to cover the history of Afro-Caribbean women. It spans a wide range of themes such as health, education, employment in the five chapters. It also gives a very detailed historical overview, interwoven with very poignant comments, which make the book so fluid and come alive.

The women contributors are from a variety of backgrounds and ages, whether it be young girls describing their schooling in a culture which largely ignores their aspirations, working women talking about their commitments to families, jobs and communities, or grandmothers drawn to the 'mother country' talking about the reality of that particular situation and how they invested valuable time in their formative years in this country.

Here they speak with hope about their own lives and struggle, seizing some opportunities which never existed, whether it be on the shop floor at work, or with the housing officials. The struggles and frustrations are here together with forthright observations and feeling that the book is our testimony of our strength.

Mia Morris

Reprinted from *Outwrite Women's Newspaper*. Issue 41 (November, 1985)

In the year of Umkhonto We Sizwe

This is the year of the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprisings and January 8 was the 74th birthday of the African National Congress who has declared 1986 "the year of Umkhonto we Sizwe" (our People's army).

Powerful military forces and the workings of the international economy force South Africans to live in an anti-human state. Yet the inspired black struggle lives on, supported by growing numbers of people everywhere.

The ANC Women's Section is producing a newsletter, *Women and Children Under Apartheid*, hoping to keep their supporters in the international community informed of their activities.

Under apartheid, legal and economic structures combine with social institutions to perpetuate the system into the next generation. The editorial suggests how the following are linked: the legal condemnation of black women living in South Africa to the role of "minors" and "superfluous appendages"; a system of education which plans for black children a future as labourers in a white minority dominated, class structure; bantustans, where people are virtually banished from the citizenship of South Africa to be nationals of play-play countries (invented by the SA regime), forcing men away from their families to work in South African mines where the country's wealth is extracted for the benefit of others.

"Her defiance is her dignity"

Winnie Mandella continues to defy the unending harassments, the banning orders, imprisonments she and others have suffered at the hands of the regime. The newsletter places that defiance "within its wider context - women, children, trade unionists, consumer boycotts, all the oppressed, disenfranchised people daily suffer from the wrath of the racist regime."

News items included in the newsletter give an indication of the progress on the many fronts where this struggle for liberation is being fought.

There has been a drop in the annual turnover of SA fruit products in the UK from £1 million in 1984 to less than £500,000.

The recent formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions is a hopeful sign for new directions into badly neglected areas of labour organization. COSATU stresses the unity of employed and unemployed workers and acknowledges "the different objective conditions of women and men workers in order to forge real equality".

Child prisoners

Figures disclosed by the Detainees' Parents Support Committee estimate that 60% of those in detention are under the age of 25 and 23% under the age of 15. One 10 year old boy spent over two months in jail while his family and lawyers battled to have him released.



Victoria Mxenge



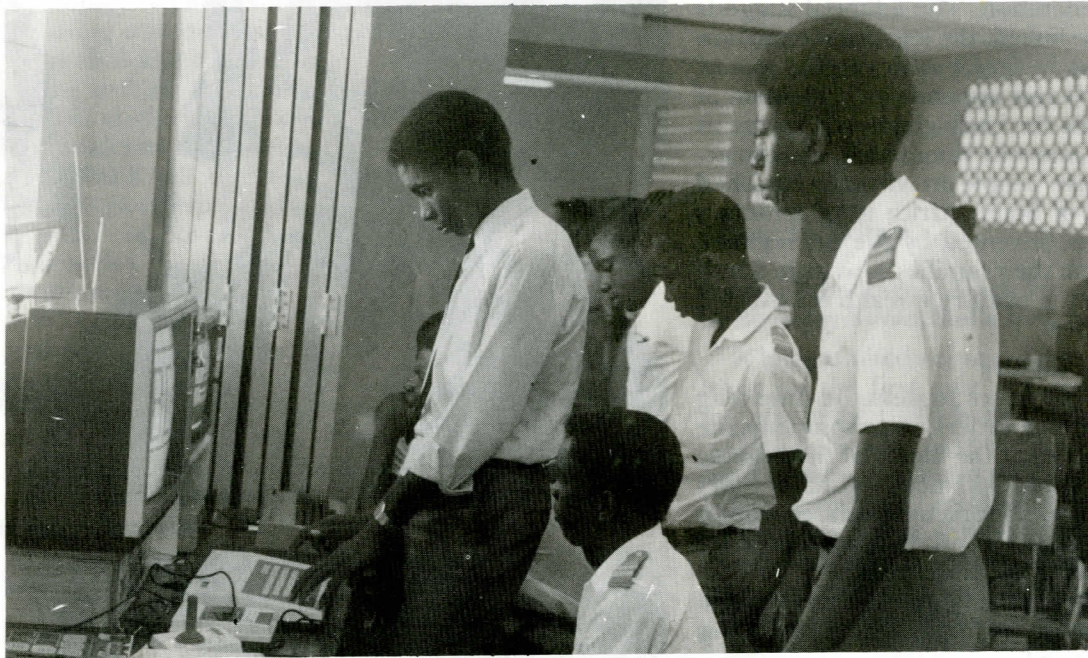
Albertina Sisulu



Winnie Mandella

Photographs from Amnesty International

IS THAT WHAT GIRLS & BOYS ARE MADE OF?



While the People of Tomorrow programme continues to make great strides and impact upon the lives of our youth, it is interesting to note that many of the learned behaviour patterns and socialising influences we unconsciously adopt and live out are harder to break through.

In spite of the many new approaches adopted in the programme and the inputs given (particularly during counselling and other personality building sessions) to broaden and open new horizons in employment and other related activities, the young men and women still gravitate towards the stereotyped and traditional types of work, interests and activities. It is as if some compelling hidden force tells the young women that they must only want sewing, cooking and other typical "female" oriented activities,

and the young men must prefer areas in keeping with those which we always associated men.

So that in spite of the options to offer Window Cleaning Services, Shoe repair, Mini-Laundermats, Travel Tutoring services etc! etc... whenever the final choices are made, the young women and men automatically select to do what they seem most comfortable doing because of systems that have made certain tasks or interests for "women or men only."

The photo accompanying the article captures the thought expressed even better and more accurately –

People of Tomorrow still has a long way to go for sure.

Joyce Bynoe

Staying In School

Being able to keep abreast educationally of peers, while preparing to become a mother and re-entering school without being a year behind the class is the desire of many adolescent girls who become pregnant.

Some might say that such an option encourages young girls to engage in sexual activities, knowing that if they become pregnant they can return to a school after having their babies.

The Women's Centre, opened in 1978 as a project of the Women's Bureau of Jamaica, definitely does not encourage early sexual activity.

The strength that emanates from those involved in the three Centres in Jamaica, is badly needed by the young girls who find themselves soon to become parents yet still facing the conflicts of being an adolescent.

The academic bridge, which allows the participant to keep abreast of her school class and re-enter school with confidence and determination to finish her education is strengthened by guidance counselling, the family life education sessions and extra curricula activities which are provided.

The counselling and rap sessions are very useful therapies which the adolescent needs at this time of uncertainty and depression. Her personality and morale can change during this time if support and encouragement is not given.

Although the adolescent must agree to use a contraceptive method in order to be re-placed in school, she is warned against using it as a passport to free sexual activity. She is encouraged against "spreading the word" about her using a contraceptive and is encouraged to strive for her career and life goals.

One regret is that because of financial difficulties, there are not Women's Centres throughout Jamaica and there are not any especially in the very low economically depressed areas where such Centres are badly needed.

Such support both in aiding the academic and emotional needs of the adolescent is needed in our Caribbean societies, and The Women's Centre programme, if introduced in other territories, can provide this support.

A regret is that all the high schools in Jamaica are not participating in the Women's Centre programme and only two schools re-accept their adolescent mothers. The fear of second pregnancies by the school authorities should be non-existent as the Women's Centre ensures that all its participants who re-enter school conform to the use of a contraceptive method. What is comforting about this insurance against second pregnancy, is the counselling which each participant received throughout her time at the Women's Centre.

Wanda Reid

More Than A Decade For Women

"When you go with Uncle Paddy you come tell me you going. Don't bowl out the house so ... You're not a man, you hear!"

A mother shouting to her daughter. 1985 ... end of the decade. The world and the works have dedicated a whole decade to women, covering three major themes: equality, development and peace focussing on the three subthemes of employment, health and education. In the objectives of the Decade, equality means that being born a man or a woman will not predetermine what position a person will achieve, what opportunities a person may get, or what a person should be doing. Development means that both man and woman should participate and each person's contribution to the development of her or his place should be recognised. Peace refers to what each person can do to guarantee a situation of peace, a necessary condition to build a better life for one and all.

Ten years for what?

A decade lasts only 10 years. It seems difficult for the world to understand that the needs, problems and views of women are important for the world to advance and continue to give life. The world over, women have tried to draw attention to this critical issue in different ways. Many times in history their voice, no matter how

loud it sounded sometimes, lost its pitch, flattened and became a faint breath which no one could hear again.

Now, women raised their voices once more; this time accompanied by 10 years of institutional support, a commitment of governments, international organizations and womens groups. Those ten years permitted a lot of work to take place at various levels, to analyse what inequality is about, what forms it takes in our daily lives; to question models and theories of development which our countries use and which so often fail in their social and cultural aspects; to put a finger on the problems which affect women in particular; to explain to the world what is what from women's points of view; to demand change; to rectify errors committed for centuries; to search for new forms and structures which may achieve real development — that is to say, a process of change in which we participate ourselves and which we can control ourselves, as any change bearing the name development affects our lives, interferes with our reality.

What moulds our lives?

The chances of getting a job are less for a woman than for a man. Access to higher professional educa-

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An idea trembles!

A decade allowed us to construct a theoretical and conceptual framework to explain discrimination and subordination of women. We have come to understand that development means much more than new western-style modern buildings, highways, bridges, new houses, water and electricity, a new car every two years, computers and dressing in the latest fashion dictated by the international "codes".

Women have mobilized and organized themselves or have consolidated their organizations with a clearer goal. They have managed to show that real development is development of humanity and that development is impossible or bound to fail if women do not participate on an equal footing with men. We have always known that women do a million things, combine them all and continue. But, we did not know what were the implications for her development as a person and for the development of society as such, a development which envisages the wellbeing of people as its objective.

Achievement and Advancement

Women's activities in the private sphere in the household and in the public sphere are becoming more and more visible, because now we have taken note of these activities, we have counted, measured and analysed them so as to be able to explain their implications. Each area we discovered appeared to be the cover of a big, full pot buried under the earth. We noticed that the buried pots were many and that we can't stir too many pots at the same time. The more pots we discover, the faster we want to move to finish the cooking. But, 10 years is short and fast soups taste salty. The computer technology has taught us that we cannot skip two steps when we have to make five; we have to take each step and complete each one properly. Even so, we managed to walk a good couple of miles.

Woman, when she raised her voice this time, affirmed herself, demanded, proved, asked, gave, learned, taught, vexed, laughed, sang and did as she pleased. And there she scratched the concept of development and sowed doubt: What then is development? A change which she did not participate in bringing about? What then can the change mean for the wellbeing of people?

Amendment of discriminatory laws in many countries of the world have shown the capacity of pressure by national groups. In the Netherlands Antilles at least three were passed: Abolition of the Law of Incompetence of Women to Act, 1975; Elimination of Discharge of Women From Civil Service when they contract marriage, 1983; the permit for a woman to register her own child, 1984. Some countries in the Caribbean passed a law which gives equal rights to children born out of wedlock as compared to children born in marriage. Family courts have been established in some Caribbean states. Trinidad and Tobago drafted a new bill to substitute the existing discriminatory Sexual Offenses Act.

In the field of political participation women have mobilized themselves and populations at large to fight for democracy and respect for human rights in many countries. In the case of the Netherlands Antilles women participated actively in the movement for independence and in the dialogue which searches for a structure for the constitutional future.

All these are necessary steps which mark some achievements, but much more work is needed at the other levels. All are related to many other issues which we did not even start to tackle.

This time we will!

Shouldn't there have been a decade then, if there is so much to be done? For all that we have said here, the answer is: Yes. That there was a Decade is very important. What women achieved this time changed many things and many people. It definitely made all of those who entered the battle field for change see themselves changing.

For as much as the flaring flame will lower down to a gentle fire after Nairobi, were the End of Decade World Conference was held in 1985, or after the year 2000, that is, at the end of the 15 years which the United Nations proposed for application of strategies that should help full achievement of the Decade's objectives, the flame cannot extinguish, and our voices cannot be flattened. Retreat is impossible. There is no way back! This is the major achievement of a short decade. The shout in 2000 will have to be: "You are a person, you hear! And you live in this world!"

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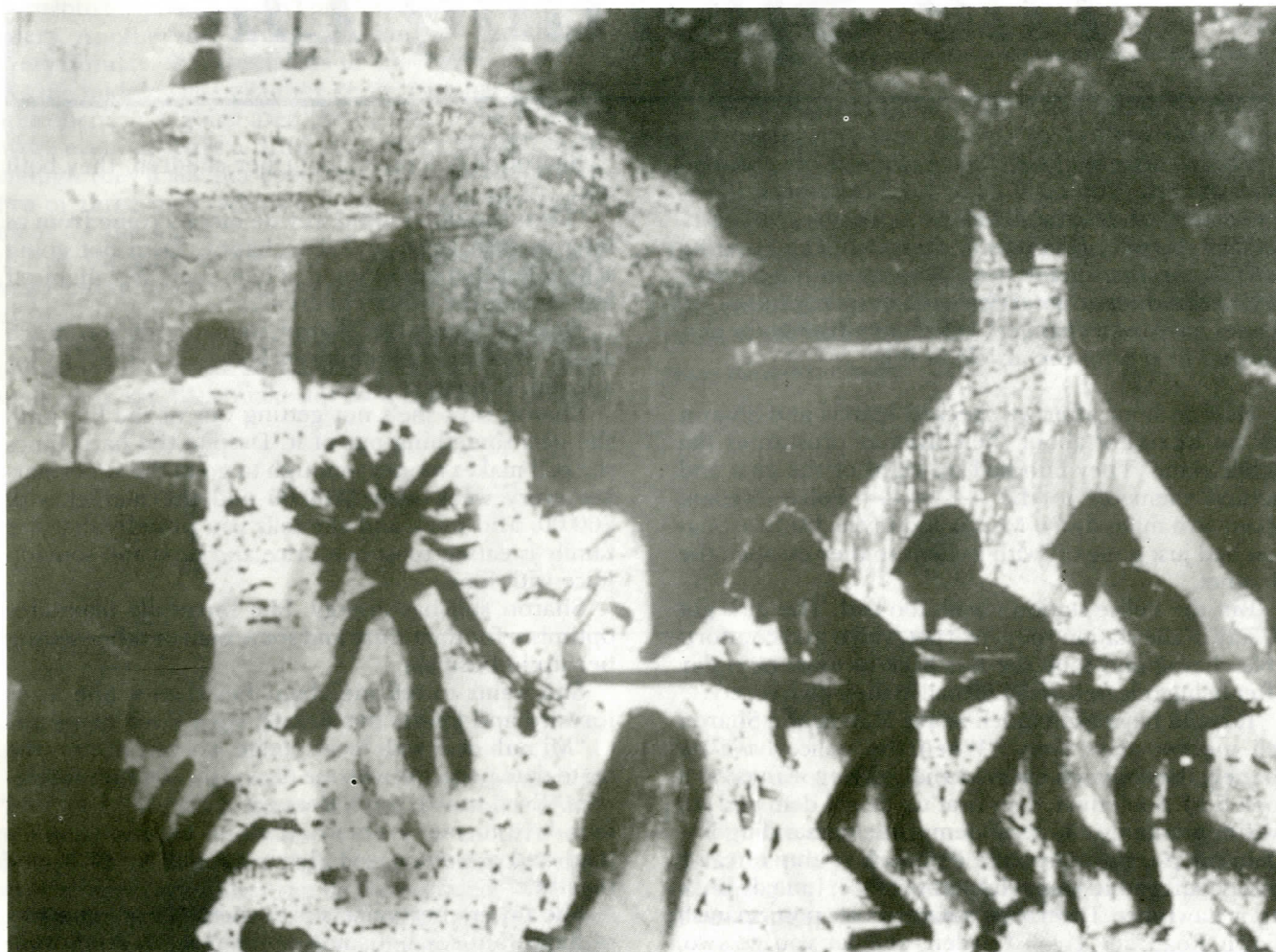
tion is made easier for men than for women (scholarships are available in subjects chosen by men rather than by women). With few exceptions, women continue to bear the full load of housework — planning and organizing it, and actually doing it. The full task of child rearing; preparing meals and the accompanying work; social obligations such as touching base with relatives and friends in need or corresponding; caring for the sick and the old, are nearly always women's responsibility.

Families and societies have a hierarchical structure which imposes pressure and control on the process which moulds the lives of the majority of women. We can see, for example, how a woman's life is moulded

under the pressure of power relationships in the family, in the circle of friends, in the world of people with whom or among whom she functions. These very relationships of power (which we prefer to call hierarchical gender structures) generate inequality of access to resources in a country. For example, there is a great difference between what we teach our sons and what we teach our daughters. The limitations which we impose on a child's development of his or her full potential are an aspect of this structure. These are some of the things we wish to change and control.

Sonia M. Cuales

Shaka Rodney



"Law and Order" painting by Lilian Nicholson

The Rule of Gun Law

Among the pieces of Lilian Nicholson's most recent exhibition of paintings (Barbados Arts Council, Pelli-can Gallery, May 12 1986) is one called *Lament*.

"It is my monument to the civilians who died in Grenada at Fort Rupert and during the invasion." Lilian goes on to explain, "It was inspired by President Regan's visit to Grenada earlier this year". Recently she's been observing that "in the kinds of wars being waged these days, the targets are the civilian populations of the planet."

Another work on the same subject also painted in Barbados but prophetically, in 1981, now hangs in a lawyer's office in Bridgetown. The subject evokes the Fort Rupert massacre though the painting predates that event and the features of a fort were sketched by the artist who has never been to Grenada.

"One of my tea-leaf paintings," *Law and Order*, emerged from a technique using black ink on white oil paint. It holds together an almost comic strip like sequence of events in one frame. First three figures hunched over guns come in from the right. Then a stick figure is falling into a white abyss, limbs and hair blown outward. Finally, a woman in the foreground

looks into the picture, her hand lifted and caught in a gesture of shock, defensiveness and horror.

Of course, the painting is prophetic because of its uncanny recognition of October, 1983. However, what also strikes the viewer is that frozen gesture of the witness in the foreground. It seems to anticipate the uncreative silence which has come upon us, the people of the Caribbean, over "Grenada". It is as though our response, our analysis, our comprehension of the whole experience is stilled. A people looks into its own heart and history through its music, its literature, its art. But we have made so few songs, plays, paintings, novels about this ill-fated flight to selfhood.

Ironically, *Law and Order* was part of a series called "Gun Law" inspired by her understanding of Jamaica where she lived from 1966 to 1977 and where gun rule filled the vacuum created in the ghettos where all other options (like education, jobs) and therefore all other forms of social organization were not available to the community.

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The Sporting Life

*This article by Joan Ross-Frankson is reprinted from **Sistren** (Volume 7 Issue No.3 December 1985), newsletter of Sistren Theatre Collective, 20 Kensington Avenue, Kingston 5, Jamaica. "The Sporting Life" is the first in a series, "Women on the Streets" and is based on an interview with two prostitutes. All names have been changed. **WS** thanks **Sistren** for permission to reprint the article in full.*

Half an hour after we checked Marcia and Sharon for an interview about their lives as prostitutes the police came. They bundled up eight of the girls and herded them off to the ----- Police Station, about five miles away. Marcia hid in the bushes. Sharon had just gone off with a client so they escaped the dragnet.

But the Police station wasn't too bad. The girls got to stay in the station room (carpet, video and comfortable chairs) and took the bus back to town next day after being released on \$4.00 bail in their own surety.

It could have been much worse Marcia and Sharon tell me two days later. "When the police have no money, them search every corner of New Kingston a look fi wi. Sometime, dem beat up de gal dem and tek way dem money. Some of dem come demanding p--- Dem say p--- or money else dem lock you up or carry you go lef you in some desperate place; inna de bush up a Lawrence Tavern or outa airport; pon Spanish Town Road; all Tivoli Garden, and let you go two, three o'clock a morning."

Prison is dismal. Chinks. Cold concrete ground and filth; cussing between the 'sports' and the girls who are in for 'crotching' (shoplifting). "Dem go on like dem scorn wi . . . say how wi a whore and wi have disease. But me have my doctor and mi go regular," says Marcia.

Marcia is 43 years old. Body fit, wiry and strong. She didn't get any education; doing domestic work from early. She's got five children, three girls and two boys. The eldest is twenty-three and the youngest thirteen. All of them have different fathers.

She started 'sporting' when she had her first. "The father didn't own the child and I had life hard."

After twenty-three years in the business, Marcia is tired. "If I get a job right now at \$100.00 (a week), I'd stop. You come out on the street and you bleach all night and you don't even mek a dime. And you have to pay rent, water rate, light bill. When mi check it up is over \$500.00 fi dis month."

Sharon is 36. She looks ten years younger. Her skin is black and smooth and she laughs alot; a heaty laugh, very warm, very attractive. Her education was limited by the fact that she got pregnant at fourteen. She's got seven children, and seven baby fathers. She talks alot about her "German" daughter, Cindy-Lou. She's proud of her pretty skin and hair.

Sharon is defensive about her children, they both are.

"Dem shouldn't mind wey de money come from as long as dem get it and dem happy. Dem not going school less dan dem should. Them don't feel themself less among the other children".

Neither Marcia or Sharon want to talk too much about whether their children know what they do for a living. It hurts.

Sharon says she's not getting out of the life until she gets something out of it. Despite the hard times she still makes money; enough to go to the supermarket every week with \$200.00 and the market with \$60.00. Mid-week and she tells you proudly that her family is eating roast beef, rice and peas and soursop juice with lime.

Sharon still has energy. She forcefully maintains optimism for the future and some man or other setting her up in business.

She wants to tell me about her clients. She leans forward and lowers her voice.

"Mi nuh deal with local. Judge, lawyer, doctor, the up to date people is who me deal with, and nice foreigners. Even movie stars, dem see mi and like mi and mek love to me. Women check mi to. Sometimes a man and a woman will check mi and we mek love together."

She lowers her voice still futher. "Three-quarters of dem want sex but some of them really don't want to have sex. Sometimes they just smell you panty and dem discharge. Sometimes them just mek you tek off your clothes and stand up and wine and dem come. Them just get kicks off dat. Some of dem you beat dem, tie dem up. Some want you fi walk like dog."

She laughs at me. I think I look disgusted. She tosses her braids, is defensive again. "Is just you and him alone, so you don't feel anyway because you working fi money."

There are those men who brutalise the girls. Beat them up. Cut up their faces and bodies, take back their money. Marcia and Sharon don't want to dwell on the details of dealing with those men. It's one of the hardships of the life, like police brutality and prison. Like f--- in the bushes or in the back of a car. Like catching sex-related diseases.

Neither Marcia or Sharon have a stable relationship with a man.

"I always say, if a man love a woman, he doesn't want to know that another man going to bed with her. And, in this life you not home at night to look after him . . ."

They describe the ladies who go into the 'sporting' life.

"You have high-class, second-class, middle-class, low-class, everybody. You have some type of girl that even though I'm a prostitute, when you look pon dem

you wonder if man really go to bed wid dem".

There's a nurse on the block they tell me. They found out she was a nurse when one of the girls had to go into hospital. She can't pay her bills on her nurse's salary. Another is a 'strong christian'; goes to church every Sunday. She specialises in 'blow jobs'.

One middle-class girl they know, who has her own apartment in a 'good' area, gets a taxi to the Pegasus every evening, buys a drink and settles herself. Soon enough they'll see her come out again, perhaps with two or three men, who she'll entertain at her apartment for the night.

But, the girls on the street don't have it officially to go and sit down in the clubs and the hotels and buy drinks.

Marcia and Sharon are getting restless now. It's past ten-thirty. The week so far has been bad. In a good week they say they make up to a thousand dollars.

But times are hard. Economic crisis is hitting the trade. Even the lawyers and doctors can't afford to check them like they used to. They admit that tonight even a 'local' would do.

They fix themselves up to go back on the job. They don't dress up too much in case potential clients think they're too expensive.

I drive them to their block. They greet the other girls. Business is slow, Marcia looks desperately up and down the empty street. Sharon laughs and tells me the other girls think I'm a client.

I wish them luck and leave them to the night. Tina Turner belts out "Private Dancer" on the car radio, and I think about the system which has created the thousands of Marcias and Sharons and condemned them to the sporting life.

Joan Ross-Frankson

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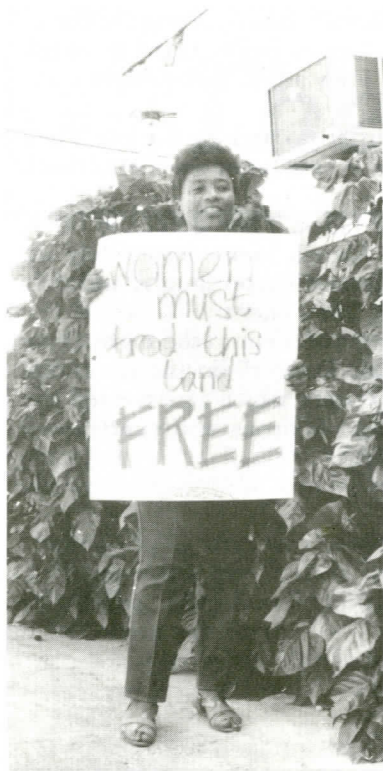
"All of this is summed up by the bellywoman in "*Lament*", Lilian says, again shifting the subject of her perceptions from one island society to another with the conviction that the experiences are interconnected and the implication they can be transcended. "She has a permanent quality which the other figures don't have. She was the first figure to appear, although the first figure I *thought* about was the woman who is covering something on the ground. She is older than the others. Her movement mourns an unnecessarily ruined life.

"The youngest figure is closed within herself, propping sorrow.

"But the central figure has a permanent quality which the others don't." Her presence is more distinct – challenging. Her stand and her pregnancy a promise of redemption in the midst of it all.

Nan Peacocke





Scenes from June 19 Bridgetown March Against Rape

Leo Hewitt



