

WOMAN SPEAK!

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT CARIBBEAN WOMEN

No. 21, December 1986

An International Anti-Racism Film Festival

October 11-17 1984
in communities across Toronto

HEALTH CARING

WOMAN SPEAK!

Editor: Nan Peacocke

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COVER

A poster designed for Colour Positive—An International Anti Racism Film Festival organized by the Development Education Centre, Toronto, Canada, with the aim of raising consciousness about the issue of racism within communities across the city.

Photography and poster design by *Stephanie Martin*, a Jamaican artist living in Canada.

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Mangrove, St. Philip, Barbados (l to r Lillie Allen, Veronica Duke, Pat Rodney, Adisa Douglas-Reese (with hands) Brenda Thomas, Sylvia Wilson (hidden), Angela Davis, Wanda Reid).

“We have to come up with ways in which we can begin to look at internalised oppression and eliminate (it as a barrier to our effectiveness). We have started coming together in ways to specifically address these issues; (to address) all those things that have been said to us as women: that we are not worthwhile; that we can't do (certain things); or that the work we do is meaningless; that we are not leaders.” Lillie Allen

EDITORIAL

In 1977 the 13th World Health Assembly adopted a resolution popularly known as “Health for all by the year 2000”. This means that governments and the World Health Organisation should aim for “the attainment by all the people of the world . . . of a level of health that would permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life”.

In 1978 at Alma Ata, USSR, an international conference declared primary health care to be the key to attaining health for all and issued a declaration and 22 specific recommendations emphasising education, life style, adequate supplies of food and water, and basic sanitation, as well as medical services.

In 1970 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution concerning health as an integral part of development. That such a global strategy can be discussed at all indicates the growth of medical technology and its potential application in the scientific age. That the vehicle for such a strategy is seen to be community participation indicates that the enormous official international bodies from which these declarations descend recognise that a global standard of good health requires “political determination to ensure that health issues remain at the heart of the political process”. (WHO Geneva July 1985)

But what economic interests prevail at an international level that during 1985 while famine killed and displaced millions of the people of the earth, European governments spent £265 million destroying food?

The production and distribution of food, the strategic interests of powerful nations, the displacement of the democratic rights of workers by multinational systems of production, violence directed against women, children and the poor, racism, sexism — all these affect our well-being. The question of health, understood in holistic terms, brings forward the context in which that question is addressed. Is the child healthy? laughing and playing with friends? going to have “a future”? The answer has as much to do with issues of social justice, agricultural and trade policy, individual dignity and a people's right to self-determination as it has to do with our knowledge of nutrition. Many women's organisations, peace groups and others grasp the links between these and attempt to build links of resistance against the growing crisis.

THIS ISSUE

This issue presents two very different experiences of women organising. A workshop in St. Augustine provided a rear-view mirror of women's groups historically in Trinidad and Tobago. We also look at the work of the National Black Women's Health Project and self-help as an organising method for the empowerment of constituencies within a community.

NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue will carry information on the work of some women's organisations in Belize, Central America.

Knowing the Reality:

Black women working in self-help groups within their communities all over the United States are becoming health advocates. They are being seen as people who have information to share and as those in the community who are committed to changing the health status of the community at large. In August, 1986, the National Black Women's Health Project co-sponsored a

workshop with WAND in Barbados. Women from the Project and from several Caribbean territories met to look at health issues as they affect women in our respective regions. Through the self-help philosophy the Project organizes networks which are breaking down barriers of isolation and powerlessness.

Self-help Networks for "Empowerment through Wellness".

Byllye Avery was a worried woman in 1983. Looking at the situation of black women in the USA there was—and still is—a lot to be worried about. Black women between the ages of 45 and 64 are twice as likely to die from diabetes as white women in the same age group. Hypertension is a major problem for black Americans who are almost 18 times more likely than whites to suffer kidney damage, requiring dialysis or organ transplants. In 1983 the maternal mortality rate for the black population was 18.3 per 100,000 live births as compared with 5.9 for whites. Although black women have a lower incidence of breast cancer than white women, they have a poorer 5 year survival rate. Of the estimated 52,000 new cases of cervical cancer diagnosed in 1986, over half would be among black women and three times as many black women would die as compared with white women.

"The special health problems of black women are integrally tied to the socio-economic problems of the black family. Poverty, unemployment, family fragmentation and inadequate education are all forces which make black people more prone to stress-induced illnesses, higher rates of chronic diseases." Homicide rates for black women are four times higher than for women in other racial groups. Some statistics suggest that the situation is getting worse. From 1965 to 1981,

black infant mortality declined 4% annually, but since '81 declined 2.6% annually. 75% of American women who are AIDS sufferers are women of colour and 80% of their children are affected.

So Byllye Avery, a health worker in Atlanta, Georgia, was uncovering this profile of black women's health with increasing concern when a single piece of information struck her most forcibly. 'Normal' black American women were recorded as describing their level of distress as greater than that described by white women who had been institutionalised as 'crazy'.¹ This information set off alarm bells in Byllye, the woman. She could not assess the data as a researcher removed from the personal implications of what she had found. It linked her to millions of other black women. It pierced her consciousness more than a statistic, more than a cry of distress, it moved her to action which was joined by hundreds of women in America.

1. *The experience of white American women at the hands of the white male medical establishment and in mental institutions has been documented, e.g. Women and Madness, Phyllis Chesler. See also SAGE, Vol. II No. 2 (Fall 1985) 'Health' for an account of medical experimentation on slave women in C19.*

The National Black Women's Health Project was born in 1983, attended by a wholly unexpected 1000 women. Sharon Gary Smith, director of the self-help programme said, "We rolled out of a conference into a movement.

The Project's National Office in Atlanta networks with 52 'chapters' in the USA, in St. Thomas (US Virgin Islands), and Nairobi, Kenya. The story of how 3000 women (present estimate) took up with the National Black Women's Health Project and are becoming a voice for black women in the USA is important for women in the Caribbean. We experience similar kinds of health problems (diabetes, hypertension, obesity) and although we live in small, poor countries where African and Asian people make up most of our numbers, the legacy of colonial society and continuing global economic realities have created for us a similar experience of powerlessness to shift the giant structures which deform the development of Caribbean society.



We write with soft pencils and use big erasers.

How are black women making the Project a dynamic force for change? They call it simply 'self-help' but it's a complex process through which women embrace a sustained recognition of our own power.

First of all is the validation of black women's experience among one another in a culture which has relegated black women to the back of everybody else's busses. The Project uses a concept of organizing which begins with the woman (me) working from a position of her own knowledge in a collective. A workshop called *Black and Female: What is the Reality?* developed by Lily Allen is a kind of group therapy session on internalised oppression which brings women together in an atmosphere of caring, support and love that they may individually find it possible to look upon the pain of their own lives, to acknowledge their own fears, needs and strengths. Through this raised consciousness begins a process of personal/collective/political empowerment as women unite around holistic health issues.

Lily guides this workshop with humour and compassion. She combines the milk of human kindness with the courage of Ni, the Maroon warrior, and can be as outrageous as a calypsonian. Drawing on the deeply spiritual well-springs of black America, the beauty and power of this experience give women 'permission' (many for the first time in their lives) to help themselves. "We've worked on everyone else's issues, it's time to work on ours."

The National Black Women's Health Project is broadening the concept of health by addressing the social context of the individual's state of health. At a workshop in Barbados, Sharon described the self-help organizing process as growing in three stages. The first embryonic stage is the emerging group. A small group, sometimes only two or three friends, decide they will meet and talk about the issues in their lives. After some time the group strengthens, "the cord has been established". In this developing stage, "they have begun to really talk about their experiences and what

"Black & Female: What is the Reality?" is the creation of Lillie's willingness, boldness and caring to discover who she is as a Black woman. Through this discovery, she has designed a unique process that allows a person to participate in self-analysis, to understand the influences of one's rearing upon attitudes, beliefs and actions. This process is allowed to unfold in a safe environment where difficult issues are talked about, worked out and understood in an enhancing manner. It is truly a gift to be able to help women open up, share their experiences, keep themselves and everyone else free from attack, and stimulate growth and empowerment."

Byllye Avery

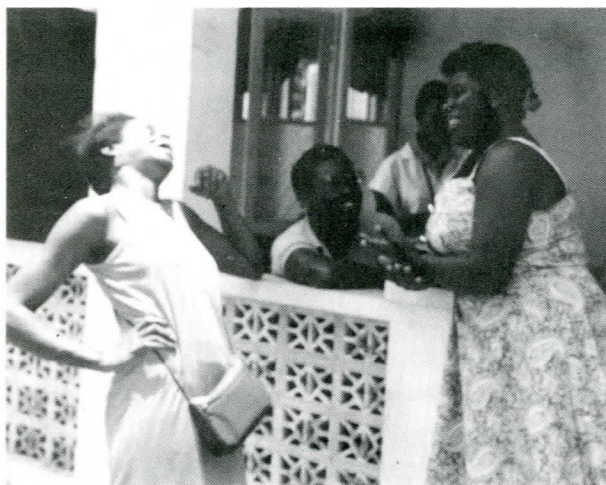
concerns they have that have not been addressed".

After they have participated over a period of time and they have established a continuity within the group they move into the active stage. "They are starting to look at health issues from their personal perspective. They are starting to gather and share information and they are also calling upon us (the national office in Atlanta) for assistance, whether it is fund raising, grant writing or review of proposals. We are helping them to identify community resources. They are becoming a presence in the community. They're starting to participate on task forces,² or raise questions about health so that black women's health issues are not left off the agenda in the community or the country."

2. The quarterly meeting of the NBWHP is made up of women who participate in self-help groups throughout the country.

The National Office provides support to the group and in turn expects from groups information about their activities and about the characteristics of the community, the major health issues raised. This gives the Project a national perspective defined by women within their own communities through their own experience on such issues as teenage pregnancy and reproductive rights.

"That's how we get the information, so our organization is not static. It's constantly moving in a cyclical process. Information comes up to us out of the women who are doing the work and asking the questions. We take that information and develop it into a position and a national direction and then the information feeds back to the women who take it and test it in the community and tell us this makes sense and this does not make sense. This Project works from the top up from the bottom. It works from the sides in."



BONDS

**Women awakening to each other
Through new vehicles
Forming friendships
Through common issues and needs
Sisterhood developed out of a concept
Of hope and longing
Struggles finally linking us
Where no other force could reach us before
The sheer will of woman power
Descended upon us in a simple yet dynamic force
Each of us looking at ourselves
and seeing the mirror image of each other
Suffering from the same ailment,
from the same stereotyping,
from the fact of being black
Now that we have come to terms with each other
and have discovered the reality of you being you
and me being me
Nothing can stop us.**

Pat Rodney
August 1986

Dedicated to Byllye Avery

1 24 86

**We are dusk
Making our own day
Coloring a world happy that would
drown us in our own tears.**

**We are darkness
turned bright, turned healing
kept soft by constant
intercourse with pain—
turned soft, strong soft
and necessarily healing.**

**We are love
turned into ourselves
multiplying like the
loaves and the fishes.**

**We are truth
truth as love—as healing.
We are all things that are anything
We are our new day.**

Marsha

Joke sweet! NBWHBP and The St. Joseph Community Action Group meet in Bathsheba, Barbados.

WHAT ABOUT MEN?

A lot of men ask us constantly as we do this work, "Where are the men?" "Why is it the National Black Women's Health Project?" Well, what about men's health? What about the fact that they are dying at their own hands? What about the fact that they are the fathers and the sons and the brothers of us? How can we help them, care about them and support them?

But we have to take some time to look at ourselves very closely. It's important when we talk to men who may be defensive because they're not sure what this means that we let them know that we are working on what we know best—black women. We're working from a position of our own knowledge and they should be doing this work also. When they come and tell us they are creating a group of men to talk about what we have been talking about as women, we need to applaud it, we need to support it. We need to help them by spreading the word to other brothers, to sons. We need to hope that one day we will both come together here in the Caribbean and talk about what it is to be black and female, white and male, white and female and all the rest of the spectrum so we can move forward in this world together healthy and whole. But we can only do so much work anymore and I want to work as hard on myself as I have on everybody else.

Sharon

TEENAGERS DIALOGUE

One of the activities suggested by the sisters who wanted to get a self-help group started in that area was a mothers and daughters night.

We had a discussion about it and they wanted a mothers and daughters night because just like diabetes, just like heart disease, just like cancer, they saw teenage pregnancy as one of the primary health concerns of their community, and they wanted something out there for their teenagers. We went to the film *The Colour Purple* because we thought that would be a good film to have a discussion about.

When the activity started only two mothers showed up and fifteen teenagers. They came because they wanted to talk, but they didn't know what to talk about. No one had ever given them permission to talk. No one ever cared what they thought or about what they had to say. They just wanted them to be silently obedient and that's fine and I will ignore you. They did not have a dialogue going because no one had ever asked them how they really felt. They had never thought about being open and honest about what was going on in their lives. But they knew that they wanted something.

Cheryl



Cheryl Boykins, NBWHP organiser, works with women living in housing projects in the U.S.A.

A HEALTHY RESISTANCE

“None but ourselves can free our minds.”—Bob Marley

There is a tendency among oppressed folks because of colour or of sex to think that the oppression itself, merely that, gives you the right to be self-righteous, to feel better than somebody else and lay your stuff on everybody else. It's not the oppression, it's the resistance, it's the struggle, it's what you are doing in relation to the oppression. This takes me specifically to what the National Black Women's Health Project does and why I'm feeling like all these bits and pieces of my life are coming together. The theory and the activism, the film production and the programming are all coming together.

The National Black Women's Health Project is a much broader thing that its name would make you think. We are not a group of ladies who meet to help the poor and downtrodden. We are a group of ladies who meet to help ourselves. We meet not only to help ourselves around physical issues (around which we really need a lot of help) but we meet to help ourselves with a whole lot of head stuff. Our major health issue is internalised oppression.

The whole way we work with internalised oppression has helped me articulate the film, media and communications theory in a way that the women I work with in the project can understand what it is and has helped me see how those things function in real life. We believe firmly that the good, subversive media we want, all the changes in society we want will not come by spontaneous generation from our righteous blackness of our righteous womanness—no way! We've been here too long. We have to own a lot of shit and we've



got to do the work. That is one of our mottos. *Do the work*. Our pronoun is we. I'm not saying that we have to claim slavery or any of the historical things that have been done to us. I'm saying we have to claim our own position and move from there.

“We are not fearsome,” as one of our members said, “cause we be.” Because we struggle. When we struggle what we come out with is empowerment.

Cheryl Chisholm is a filmmaker and Director of Atlanta's Third World Film Festival and Media Co-ordinator of the National Black Women's Health Project. Above is an extract from her address at the opening plenary of *Viewpoints A conference on women, culture and public media*, held at Hunter College in New York, November 7-9, 1986.

Unity in Diversity

Unity in Diversity: An Adult Education Strategy for Peace and Development is the theme of an International Seminar to be held in Barbados from June 24 to 30.

The seminar is being hosted by the Barbados Adult Education Association (BAEA), the Caribbean Regional Council for Adult Education (CARCAE), the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) and the Government of Barbados.

Planners anticipate approximately 100 participants, about 75-80 of whom will be from the Caribbean Region (Spanish-, French-, Dutch- and English-speaking).

A variety of methodologies and techniques will be used so as to facilitate both a high degree of participation and interaction among workshop participants and involvement within the wider/local community.

If you are interested in participating, please contact:

CO-ORDINATOR: Dr. Patricia Ellis, Executive Secretary/Treasurer, CARCAE, c/o Extra Mural Studies Unit, University of the West Indies, The Pine, St. Michael, BARBADOS.

Telephone (809) 423-8115
Telex UNIVADOS

APPEAL FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Ivy Cikiswa Gcina, a community leader in South Africa, has been detained without charge or trial under nationwide state of emergency regulations that have been in force since 12 June 1986.

The leader of the Port Elizabeth Women's Organisation, she is 49 years old, has four children and works as a school cleaner. She was detained when South African security police raided her home several hours before the state of emergency was announced. Since then she has been held on the authority of the Minister of Law and Order, who is empowered under the emergency regulations to order indefinite detention without trial.

She was detained in similar circumstances from July to November 1985 under the partial state of emergency then in force. In a sworn statement, she stated that she had been assaulted by police at Louis Le Grange Police Station in Port Elizabeth on 30 July 1985 and had tear-gas deliberately sprayed in her face. She alleged also that the police had threatened to shoot her children.

Amnesty International believes that she is being detained because of her non-violent opposition to the South African Government's *apartheid* policies. She is among many hundreds of peaceful opponents of the government currently detained or restricted under the state of emergency regulations.

Please send courteous letters appealing for her immediate and unconditional release to:

Mr. P. W. Botha, State President of South Africa,
Union Buildings, Pretoria, SOUTH AFRICA

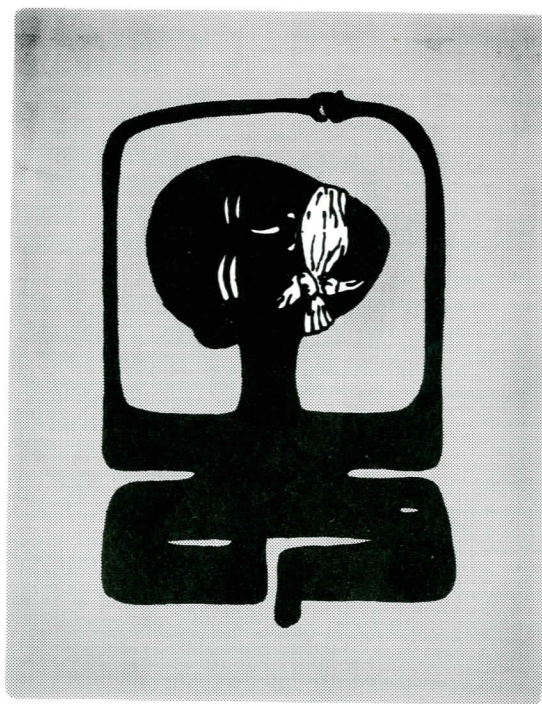
DAWN MEETING

The steering committee of the international research action network DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era) met in New Delhi, India, August 20, 1986.

The Crisis and *The Women's Movement* are the themes of two research projects being undertaken by the network. The themes, according to a report by the Research Working Group, "will be treated separately but linkages would be developed between the two so that issues and methodology would be evolved along parallel lines".

With regard to the debt crisis, DAWN has identified some issues for investigation. Among these are: the history of the crisis, import substitution policies and their effects on women of different classes, export crops, subsistence agriculture and changes in women's roles in production and reproduction. Other issues to be examined are: the changing nature of the state in Third World countries, the role of multinationals, capital migration and sexual division of labour, labour control and authoritarian political regimes, new technologies, the international division of labour and women, the arms race, the relationship between militarism and the economic crises, and women's resistance.

The project on the women's movement comes about in response to the lack of documentation of the worldwide upsurge of mobilisation and organisation of women in the Third World. The present project is designed to document "the emergence, the solidarity, the visions and divisions among women as they attempt to create new structures, alternatives and culture in dealing with issues of subordination and emancipation".



*An appeal postcard by
Amnesty International in its South Africa
campaign.*

What's the Reality?

This question has not left my mind since returning from the workshop. Being young, female, studying at Codrington College while doing a full-time job, has made me keep asking this question, over and over again, sometimes more than once a day. On Wednesday, October 29th, an eventful thing happened: I served with a priest in the College's chapel. It was the first time in the history of the 157-year-old College that a female performed those duties—assisting the priest with the Holy Eucharist and reading a lesson.

Of course, I was nervous. I was making history. But I wanted to face the reality. I wanted to remove the façade, the mockery present in this establishment. I made some of the students uncomfortable, I know. One, who seemed supportive, prayed during the Intercession, for the hope that the Anglican Church in the Caribbean would allow women to exercise their fullest potential in whatever ministry God allows them to. This, to me, was a manifestation that hope for the Church was on its way.

The reality of being in this situation daily—a female in a traditionally male-dominated institution—sometimes scares me. Not because academically I cannot do well in my studies, but because it seems to me that sometimes I am viewed as a threat to the establishment of the institution, and the Anglican Church as well.

The reality of searching for Christ and searching for what it means to remain true to oneself, of personalising theology in my practical and everyday experi-

For Those Days When You Wish You Weren't a Woman?

I stop, turn round and read the advertisement again. *For those days when you wish you weren't a woman?* Have I ever wished that? No, I always wanted to be a woman, no doubt about that. So why does it speak to me: "for those days when you wish you weren't a woman"? Perhaps it reminds me of those days when I wish the simple fact of being a woman meant no extra barrier, when I wish my womanhood didn't exclude me from being treated like any human being. For those days when you wish you weren't a doll, a sex object or a possession? Right!

What do they offer then, for those twenty-four hours a day? Anger? Protest? Get up, stand up for your rights? Far from that: easy-to-swallow capsules. But how could that ever work, easy-to-swallow? In fact, they are talking about vitamins—Iron, Zinc, Iodine—for the days preceding and during a woman's period.

They are talking about those days that remind you of your capacity to give birth to all human life on earth, regardless of whatever sex. A capacity only women have. Nothing wrong with vitamins. But those

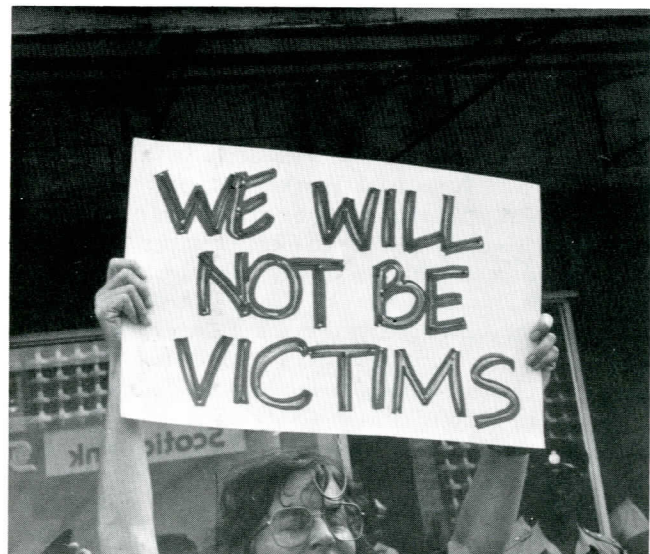
ences, are not easy tasks. Particularly is it difficult when one discovers the misconceptions one holds of the Church, priesthood and Christianity. Were they misconceptions?

To be or not to be a Christian is sometimes a thought which can destroy one's reality, one's sanity, especially when a person is female. Very often the question is not—or should not be—whether to be ordained to the priesthood or not. This, God has already affirmed from when time began.

The reality is the fact of being female in a male-dominated environment where even visitors ask, 'What is she doing here?'. Is it masculine or feminine to reflect on theological thoughts, to ask theological questions? Is it masculine or feminine to wear arm-holes? To smile even when you are angry? Sometimes the question is whether to be female or not.

Facing the reality is not easy; it is monumental, to be more precise. Facing the reality can cause mental disequilibrium, creating an unhealthy soul, body and mind. Sometimes facing the reality is nerve-wrecking and death-like. But not facing the reality is worse—death while yet alive. All I want to do is to face the reality. But what is reality? What is it?

Sonia Hinds



Wendy, with feeling

days when you wish you weren't a woman?

Take good care of yourself, says the advertisement. Indeed, do so: Get up, stand up for your rights, women!

Cornelia Frettlöh

TRACING THE THREAD

report on the panel presentation

“Women’s organizations & women who organize”

This panel presentation was an afternoon activity at the Inaugural Seminar of the Women and Development Studies Seminar, *Gender in Caribbean Development*, 7–19 September 1986.

Tuesday, 16th September 1986. Pax Guest House, Mount St. Benedict, Trinidad.

The news of June Dolly’s death imposed a flatness on the afternoon. And it seemed from the resigned posture of the trees that the mood had moved from the semicircle of women into the enclosed garden at Pax Guest House.

The panel presentation and discussion, *Women’s Organisations and Women who Organise* had troubles of its own. One of the three panellists, Gema Ramkeesoon was confined to bed and many of the participants would be leaving early for the memorial service being held for June. So it was very much in the spirit of “mek do” that moderator Andaiye, Women’s Secretary of the Working People’s Alliance, Guyana, introduced Nesta Patrick, life-spring of what seems like a hundred organizations, most recently Counsellor at the Rape Crisis Centre in Port-of-Spain, and Thelma Henderson, Education and Research Officer of the Transport and Industrial Workers Union.

The presentations spanned six decades of organizing activity by women. Nesta read Gema’s paper which began with the energetic social welfare work of no nonsense upper class ladies in the ’20s. Gema recalled, for example, the influence on herself as a school girl by Beatrice Craig, a Scotswoman and owner of large estates in Cedros at the extreme tip of Trinidad.

“It was in 1926 that Mrs. Craig insisted—I will not say encouraged, as social workers have by their very nature been women of strong character—that I help a group of young girls which she formed called the Cedros Bees. You might think the term ‘bees’ denoted the activity of the proverbial bee, but not so. There is in the deep forests that cover that part of the island, an orchid known as the Cedros Bee, I gather found nowhere else in Trinidad. But I remember seeing a specimen of the brown and yellow striped orchid, hence the name.”

Gema traced the introduction of professional tech-

niques through “the Grand Dame of social work in Trinidad”, Audrey Jeffers, and her influence on a large body of upper and lower middle class women and girls. Gema, herself the wife of a clergyman, joined the Anglican Mother’s Union becoming its first president. “My husband’s work,” she said, “took me to parishes in many parts of the country.”

a view from above

In her “bird’s eye view” of Trinidad and Tobago society in the early ’20s, Gema described the lives of women like herself restricted to the private and domestic realm, for such women seldom “went out” to work. Energetic, educated representatives of the newly emerging West Indian middle class and articulate advocates of its values, they turned their eyes upon those closest to home, the domestic workers employed there, the sufferers in a class structure which enormously benefitted the benefactors.

“When they came to work in a household, domestic helpers had to bring their children with them. Cooking meals for an employer’s family in those days was a prolonged chore. There were no refrigerators, no stoves. Every meal on coal pots took hours to prepare. One started cooking midday lunch from nine o’clock in the morning. So a domestic mother had no time to cook for her own children. They were fed and clothed in the employer’s home. In the ’20s and ’30s one saw the need of the poor at closer range. One could envisage the need of domestics, factory workers and the grassroots of society not only for higher wages but for places of safety for children.”

And they provided many such places. “In the ’20s there was nothing. The need was seen but how could we tackle it? Then along came Audrey Jeffers, who did as she had learned in England. So she set about forming her cadre of social workers who gave the lead in setting up day nurseries and crèches where children and babies could be cared for during the day. She

organized homes for the blind, a school feeding programme where meals were given free or for a penny from those who could afford it. Her pioneering spirit encouraged women to set up these facilities all over the country."

Later on, these women made the first tenuous moves in the direction of labour relations. "In 1952, government set up a three member panel to adjudicate over the Minimum Wages Council, forerunner of the Industrial Court." Two of the panellists were women, Gema being Deputy Chairman of the panel which covered the Wholesale and Retail Industrial Wages Council, "the baking, laundry and catering undertakings".

In Gema's opinion, "We were far more caring as a society than we are today. Many jump on a bandwagon of a thousand different causes, but in the '60s, '70s and '80s the pioneering work in these had been done and we all followed on".

the origins of "community development"

In her own address, Nesta referred directly to the colonial framework in which the organizations of her youth developed. Such groups were early characterized by their small membership of skilled and professional women concentrating on economic assistance for the poor. By the 1940s the Federation of Women's Institutes appeared "through the efforts of a public health nurse (Audrey Jeffers) who had seen this movement in England and felt it would assist women at the grassroots level in our own country. More women became attracted to this organization. This idea was in fact to introduce the concept of community development into village and community councils and was later adapted for the overall development thrust for the society".

emotional issues

Having noted the historical influence of the women's social work movement on development thinking, Nesta showed a part of her experience which every woman there, young or not so young, recognized from some knowledge of her own. Referring only briefly to the organizations themselves, Nesta looked very personally at three highly emotional issues arising out of her work and her being female. These were: how men saw the women involved in organizations at the time, how their families were affected and why women chose to work and persist in these groups.

"How did men see us in these organizations? Never with any sympathy or understanding of us going to meetings. If your husband did not ridicule you, he got advice from his friends about how to deal with you and that could mean anything.

"There were constant abuses even from calypsonians. They made a mockery of our involvement. I remember vividly in my days as a young woman, going out with the League of Women Voters. We were jeered at and missiles thrown at us in addition to the vile abuses. We travelled with loudspeakers around the country with our seniors speaking and us supporting.

We had slots put in on the cinema screens with sayings like 'Your Vote—Use it Wisely' or 'Your Vote is Your Precious Right' and coming out of the Deluxe Cinema one night a few young men walked up to me and really frightened me.

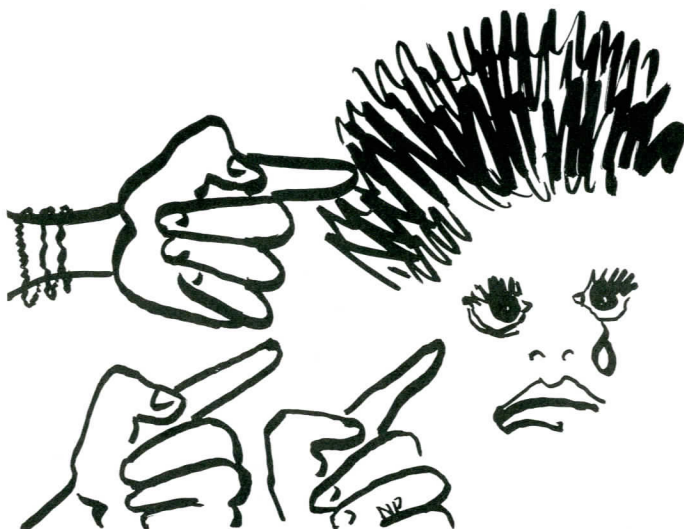
"Men were not ready to accept us as partners who could think and then speak. They felt uneasy with a wife whom they knew as articulate and other men felt was too involved. Many of us have stories of our spouses' anger because we continued to be involved. One time I had to shed my top garments in the porch before I could enter the rest of the house because I would have been bringing in germs to the family having met with 'all kinds of women'.

"The entire society seemed prepared to put women 'in their place'. Trained women teachers were forced to resign if they got married. In other professions when women got pregnant they had to give up their jobs.

"How did organizations affect our family life? The women of my time were castigated for supposedly neglecting our families. I recall the reports in the press against us and our committees. Our men took the opportunity to analyse us as women and make unkind remarks.

"Those of us who had children and unsupportive husbands and who wanted to remain involved had to make all kinds of adjustments to our family life. I went into the first training programme for social workers at UWI and it was residential and we were on government scholarship. One morning I was met by the tutor, a dear Welshman, who said I could no longer continue on the course because it was reported I did not stay on campus. Well! At the time I was more outspoken than I can be in my old age and I told him what I felt about him and his coming to Trinidad to tell me what to do and further that I was not staying on campus but I was coming to the course and that was that. So he realized he couldn't have any further discussions with me, so he just allowed it to go on, nobody asked me any questions and I got my certificate. That was the kind of thing.

"But the main fear women experienced as a result of their involvement in organizations was the condem-



nation of other women. Because of this there was a guilt which crippled our zeal to keep our commitment. It is true to say that women are more unkind to women than men in this context."

Yet women like Nesta chose to continue working through these organizations. They had an unshakable belief in themselves as shapers of their society. The limitations of their scope, the rigidity of their class bias and the prejudices of their contemporaries notwithstanding they soldiered on. "As I look now at my life and at the lives of many women of my time, we were trail blazers and change seekers of our century. We came together with a willingness to learn. We had lawyers and solicitors explain the new bills presented to Parliament. We attended lectures on health and formed groups to make presentations advocating extended health services. It was the women of at least five groups that instigated the need for health centres as they exist today. We were in various groups all seeking free education for children, for school meals and book allowances.

"It was this women's strength that marked the People's National Movement Women's League in 1956. As I look back, I can see that the effectiveness of so many political and social bodies in this country was because of the efforts of our women."

the continuum



Thelma Henderson's task was to analyse the development of the contemporary women's movement in Trinidad and Tobago with emphasis on the trade union, feminist and political organizations. She contended that more research was needed which would show the continuum between the early women's movements and the contemporary movement. "I believe that the modern day movement would benefit tremendously from an analysis of these past movements with their many ambitious programmes and yet their limited success."

Thelma drew on this theme throughout her address as she did for example when she noted the efforts of the National Union of Domestic Employees to organize household domestic workers, recalling that in 1957 the Women's League of the PNM had talked about organizing domestics in Trinidad. "I don't know whatever became of that and it would be interesting

again to trace the thread from the early movement."

The whole scope of political organizations in Trinidad was ignited by the ideas of the '70s. There was an upsurge of radical groups including women's organizations.

"The Black Power Revolution of 1970 took the struggle of the dispossessed, discontented and alienated black masses of industrial workers, unemployed youth and students into the streets of this country. The experience also brought into focus for a number of women involved, myself included, the question of gender."

The brothers in the Movement cautioned that the supportive women's arm was to have nothing to do with women's liberation of North America and Europe. In other words, it was not to become part of the international movement for the rights of women which was experiencing tremendous growth during this period. Maybe it is this which accounts for such contradictory positions as articulated by the women. For example, this can be found in *The Blackwoman—A Handbook* by NJAC, March 1974: ". . . Black women we must change from the slaves that we are to the free Black women we must be"; then in the same breath, warningly, 'remember it is the man who is the leader of the family'. In the same article it is revealed that in a house a man must have a separate corner of the room where his tools, books, *et cetera* are placed alongside those of his son so the two of them can relate to each other. Similarly a girl should share the mother's corner or room and so could develop a better understanding about a home from the things she sees her mother doing. In other words, the role patterns are being set, yet this is supposed to be coming out of a revolutionary movement."

Another radical group from this period, National United Freedom Fighters (1972 to 1974), which was involved with guerilla-type operations never specifically addressed the question of women's liberation although there were a few women in its ranks. "The name of Jones has gone down in the history of this country as a young female liberation fighter who died at the hands of the state."

The vociferous HAT (Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago formed in 1975) centered its activities on consumer protection issues. Although its objectives included "encouraging the exchange of information and ideas for promotion of joint action among women in the national interest" HAT was unable to attract working class women. "HAT identified the issues correctly, but for some reason was unable to carry through a consistent programme of mobilization."

The women in HAT who publicly articulated issues sensitive to women and other sectors of the society were not appended to any particular political organization. In so being they restated the point, which was to outlast the two year life span of HAT itself, of the value of an autonomous movement.

Later in the decade, political groups emerged which challenged the existing organizations with an alternative based on the lines of scientific socialism. Some of these such as the United Revolutionary Organization and youth and working class movements sprung from the earlier, United Movement for the Reconstruction

of Black Identity and Young Power. As a characteristic of their metamorphosis, there was no separate women's arm in these organizations which took up the issues of gender discrimination alongside those of race and class discrimination.

"The URO in a paper entitled *The Myth of the Equality of Women in Trinidad and Tobago Society* pointed out that to be black and not propertied is to occupy a subservient position in the social and economic spectrum; but to be all this and to be feminine was to be relegated to the extreme position of inferiority."

reproductive rights

Women put their energies into a movement which differed from most of the women's organizations of the pre-Black Power era in two ways: they analysed the structural causes of poverty, oppression and inequality; they were dominated by men. The URO for example, recognized the issue of reproductive rights and supported the rights of women to abortion and birth control and therefore the concept of women's control over their bodies. The socialist revolution would so transform the basis of society that women along with the rest of society would be truly free.

separate mobilization

As it has been with so many movements for radical change (the Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam War movements in the USA, within black communities in Britain and other anti-imperialist movements in the Third World, the student and peace movements of Europe and the Pacific) women in Trinidad began to articulate the experience of their sex and develop a radical consciousness of that struggle. "It was in mid-1976 that some women who had been actively involved in these groups and who had been articulating the need for highlighting the woman question and mobilization of women along issues central to women, after much heated debate, decided to embark on a programme of separate mobilization of women. We banded into a small group called the Committee for the Defence of the Rights of Women. After several meetings it was agreed that our approach would be to initiate at the national level the debate on women's liberation. To this end two issues of *The New Woman* (November 1976, January 1977) were published."

After only 18 months the Committee suffered the fate of so many other groups. "The task of research necessary to the group fell on the shoulders of one or two persons. The age old problem of evolving organizational structures which permitted for maximum participation in organizational tasks, therefore integrating members into the organization was not adequately dealt with and so there was an eventual fall off in participation."

Thelma described some of her own experiences working with women in a trade union arm. Again she proposed that an important area for research would be the attempts of the women in that trade union aux-

iliary to become active and more vociferous and what happened to them.

"A lot of issues were raised at that time (1971): the question of equal pay, equal opportunity, women and religion, sexual harassment on the job, etc.. The early meetings started off with about 50 people. What happened was that the more vociferous people had more radical views on sensitive issues such as religion, and the women with more traditional views stopped coming to the meetings. Maybe 20 people would stop coming and when you approached them they'd say they cannot agree with what was said about abortion or anything like that. In other words they felt more comfortable with traditional discussions. If you had remained in the 'cultural group' talking about the tea party or the social event they might have stayed. By 1973 we saw a decline in the group."

In 1975 a change occurred in the political direction of trade unions. Many became involved in the United Labour Front, a political party which grew out of the union movement. Women once again took part at the level of discussion in the women's arm on the National Insurance Scheme, maternity benefits for women. The women wished to change the name of their grouping from 'auxiliary' to 'arm' and this was approved by the union executive.

"One of the frustrating things about women operating in a larger organization is having to get permission from the male dominated organization. Women would meet, discuss, pass several resolutions which were forwarded to the executive of the union which never treated them seriously, and in fact were very contemptuous of some of them. This has been one of the limitations to the involvement of women at the level of trade unions."

paper resolutions

In the 1980s another attempt was made by the women of several unions again addressing the question of what women saw as the issues confronting them and what they wanted to see done at that point. "We had workshop and seminar discussions. Women were asked specifically about the problems they faced as women workers, as members of a trade union, in their workplace, in the man/woman relationship, and to identify any other problems. The results of that discussion were not published, but they are put together and they are available for anybody who wants to look at the response. Women have made suggestions, which again the unions have not taken seriously, that child care be organised while the meetings are going on. You have the identification of the problems, you have the suggestions, but you have no action. This is still the approach even in a very progressive trade union.

"The Council of Progressive Trade Unions did a paper on women in revolt which considered the oppression of women over the centuries in Trinidad and the Caribbean. This was presented to a seminar of joint trade unions. In an effort to dramatise the situation, the women organized a meeting at which Phyllis Coard, then a minister in the PRG, addressed us on 'Women as a Force for Change'. Coming out of those

meetings were resolutions to the executive of the trade union and I can safely say to date there has been absolutely no action on a single one of those resolutions. How does one deal with this problem when you don't have more female participation or a group outside the trade union to articulate this?"

Such an outside group might have been the Concerned Women for Progress which identified the struggle of women against their oppression with the struggle for human and social liberation and linked it with socialism. Remembering the failure of HAT and others to mobilise women, CWP attempted a broad outreach programme. They raised issues which interested many

women in their communities (e.g. rape and the succession bill which had implications for common law marriage). Women came out for these meetings but would not join the group or participate in its activities or raise other issues. Eventually CWP fell into the familiar pattern of "a few people who were doing the research and talking to themselves in meetings every other week".

The onus is on women to evolve a method by which we can mobilize and sustain mobilization of people by looking at what has happened, looking at the international movement and our own situation."

FLOOR MOVEMENTS

I think there has been a backlash against women organizing in the trade union movement. During the period when women were most vibrant ('74-'75) a women's conference took place where all the people sitting on the platform were men (the executive). Comments were coming from the floor, from the women, that this should not be so. The men were highly annoyed by these criticisms. They never expected that kind of forum to open up.

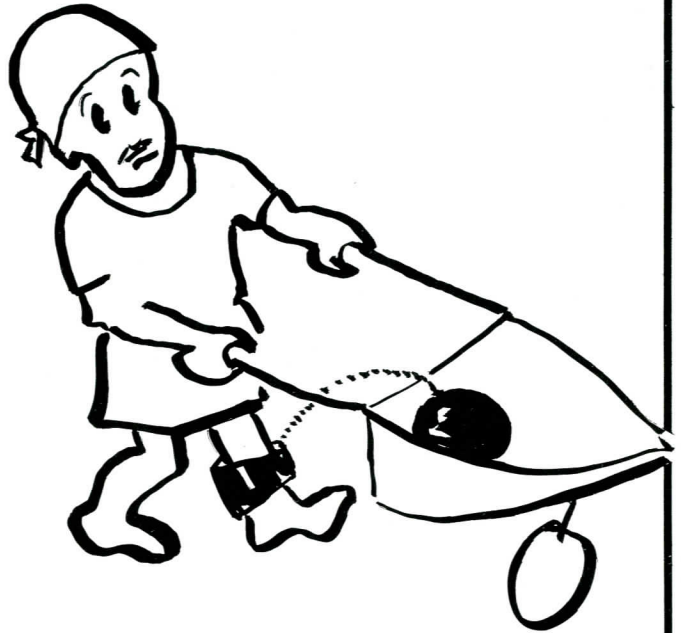
In some cases there was a divide-and-rule approach. The controversy and division created in the movement meant that less and less women would take an active part. Then because women were not vocal anymore that was the excuse not to have as many women. Even the token representation with a strong floor movement had meant you could have some kind of discussion going. But there is no longer even token representation.

Very few people are voicing this. The issue is virtually a dead one, for which the present structures are very happy because they are not under any attack, there is nobody to tell them anything. They felt they had opened a Pandora's box at that point in time which they are very glad to close. I don't think that will change unless you see a strong floor movement.

Thelma

The habit of certain kinds of structures is reassuring for people. Even when those structures are not working—not working period, and certainly not working in the interests of women themselves—those are still the structures people are accustomed to. There are institutions that they are accustomed to (political parties for example), there are forms of struggle that they're accustomed to. It seems to me a massive problem to realize how true that is. That, for example, a person will say to you that he or she does not believe these elections to be free and fair, and then proceed into a conversation about the next election because their notion of how you alter the world is via elections.

So in addition to leadership something else is required. It is about creating something which carries with it sufficient of what people demand. It must carry sufficient of whatever they are looking for in the old institutions, old structures, old forms not to alienate.



It must begin to build enough strength to reassure, because if you want to counterpose, to drive those old things out, you must have something that can say, "Look, I am strong enough. This is strong enough to drive that out". And it really has to be extremely powerful. I'm not suggesting to you that I have any notion of the answer, but that it is an overriding problem.

One of the things women have been talking about is what we are to do as women with this tribalism that has been created around us. Whether the tribalism is called "this party versus that party" or "Black versus Indian" or whatever, it is tribalism. And whatever women are supposed to do in tribal warfare, that's our work. They are not our tribes, we didn't make them, but they dominate our thinking.

Andaiye

WAND URGES SUPPORT FOR INQUIRY

The staff of the Women and Development Unit calls on women's organisations throughout the region to support the efforts of Pat Rodney and Pauline Rodney who have appealed to the President of Guyana for an independent inquiry into the circumstances of Walter Rodney's death on June 13, 1980.

Please write supporting the request for this investigation to:

**President Desmond Hoyte
Office of the President
Georgetown
GUYANA**

POETRY ANTHOLOGY

The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), invites women living in the Caribbean and Caribbean women living abroad, to contribute to an Anthology of Poems by Caribbean Women. Publication of the Anthology is intended to challenge the male-centred bias which has dominated West Indian literature and to provide an opportunity for women writers to have their work published.

Poems may be on any topic and should be unpublished. Since the Anthology will be multilingual, contributions in any Caribbean language would be welcomed.

The deadline for submitting material is August 31, 1987. Poems should be typed using double space and should be sent with a self-addressed envelope.

National Workshop in Layou

Phase I of a National Level Training Programme in St. Vincent took place August 25-29 at St. Anthony's House, Layou.

The programme is being co-ordinated by Yvonne Francis-Gibson, the Co-ordinator of Women's Affairs, St. Vincent, and Sandra Davis of the National Council of Women and of the staff of the Community Development Department.

Fifteen participants included Agricultural Extension Officers involved in the CAEP SONDEO, representatives from the National Farmers Union, the National Council of Women, Community Health Workers, a staff member of CANSAVE as well as persons involved in the leadership of CANSAVE projects, teachers and other community workers.

The facilitating team included the Training Officer from the Government Training Unit, the Community Facilitator from Rose Hall, the Director of CANSAVE and the WAND Programme Officer.

The focus of Phase I was to assist in building group solidarity, to elicit the areas of need to inform the content and focus of the programme, clarification of expectations and the planning of the forthcoming modules. We also explored the concept of development, the role of the community worker in the development process, issues of leadership and participation. **JB**

SUPPORT PAT RODNEY'S CALL



**for an
independent inquiry
into the death of
Walter Rodney**

POSTER DESIGN WPA WOMEN GUYANA

BREAD AND JUSTICE

During the month of September the women of the Working People's Alliance, Guyana (the party of Walter Rodney) conducted a signature campaign for "bread and justice".

The campaign gathered signatures for an appeal to the Ministry of Trade to ensure the distribution of wheat flour to all shops and for support for Pat Rodney's appeal to the President of Guyana for an independent investigation into the death of her husband, Walter Rodney.

Posters, copies of Pat Rodney's letter to President Hoyte and other materials were sent to women worldwide. These included Dame Nita Barrow, Edna Manley, Lucille Mair, Winnie Mandela, Cory Aquino, Angela Davis, Coretta Scott, Hortensia Allende, Joan Jara, Alimenta Bishop and Pauline Rodney.

Pat Rodney's letter to President Hoyte, dated June 27 and released to regional organisations at a later date,

was widely covered in Barbados where she lives with her three children. It was also reported on the CANA "Caribbean Today" programme and in the non-state press in Guyana.

Pauline Rodney

On October 8, 1986, Pauline Rodney, mother of Walter, headed a small delegation of women bearing 2574 signatures supporting an independent inquiry into Walter's death. The signatures were formally presented to the Office of the President in Georgetown. In her letter, Mrs. Pauline Rodney said, "I am using this opportunity . . . to speak to you as a mother who has suffered the pain of the loss of a child, in this case, my son, Walter. I share fully in the sentiments expressed in my daughter-in-law's letter and in the petition . . . and the stand taken by Angela Davis and other women of courage and compassion."

(from WPA Press Release 9.9.86, and *Dayclean* 18.10.86)

GENDER IN CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT

The steering committee of the Women and Development Group, University of the West Indies, comprising representatives from our three campuses and WAND (Extra Mural Department) had sought assistance from the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague for the planning and implementation of a programme of women's studies at UWI.

The request, now formalised, is initially a three-year programme entitled *Project of Co-operation in Teaching and Research in Women and Development Studies*. The UWI undergraduate programme began at St. Augustine in October, 1986.

A month before, an inaugural seminar, funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Board of Global Missions entitled "Gender in Caribbean Development", was held at Mount St. Benedict in Trinidad (September 7-20). The course, presented by the Women and Development Studies Group of UWI, sought to provide a forum where the staff of the new UWI programme could engage some of the practical and theoretical issues concerning Women in Development in the region.

While the seminar was designed for the staff of the women's studies programme and its participants drawn mainly from teaching, research and documentation areas within UWI and from the University of Guyana, women who identify primarily as activists, many of whom were from outside the academic sphere, also participated.

Resource people came from both within and without the region. The latter, fewer in number, included Kate Young who has encouraged the initiatives of Caribbean women for a decade and who in 1984 directed a three-month seminar called *Women, Men and Development: policy-related research for gender equality in social transformation* at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, from which the basis for the design of the inaugural seminar and its director, Pat Mohammed, emerged.

Most sessions used the traditional lecture method on a range of disciplines touching the subject matter of women's studies. Topics included: *Placing Women's Studies in its International Context, Development and the Caribbean Experience, Feminism - Historical and*

Conceptual, The Social Relations of Gender, Class Consciousness and Gender Consciousness. Then the course looked at the historical development of traditional disciplines and the challenges that a gender analysis brings to these. Four sessions focussed on some areas of concern for the study of women and development: *The Caribbean Experience of Women in Development Programmes, Ideology and Culture in the Caribbean, Women and Health and Women's Organisations and Women who Organise*.

The session on health was led by Joan French of the Sistren Theatre Collective. The workshop methodology used here implies a relationship between artistic and scientific approaches which proved valuable for understanding the effects of social and economic structures on the health of the community. Participants explored their own resources for personal and collective well-being. These resources empower women to identify policies, programmes and attitudes which destroy the cultural basis for a healthy society and empower women to act for change. **NP**

Full Faculty Course: St. Augustine

"Women in the Caribbean" was first offered in October 1986. 28 third-year students, both female and male, are registered for this multidisciplinary course which is taught by five members of the St. Augustine Women's Studies Group: Dr. Bridget Brereton, Dr. Majorie Thorpe, Dr. Rhoda Reddock, Dr. Rosina Wiltshire and Mrs. Gwen Williams.

(KD Report of Fac. of Ed. UWI)

ST. LUCIA APPOINTS WOMEN'S AFFAIRS CO-ORDINATOR

Congratulations to the recently appointed Co-ordinator for Women's Affairs in St. Lucia, Marcia Lesmond. Ms. Lesmond was appointed to the post in September 1986.

One of the first major activities of the Women's Affairs section was the organisation at the end of November of a Workshop on the Status of Programmes and Activities of Women in St. Lucia. Participants from both NGO and government agencies attended the workshop which provided the Women's Affairs Department with programme ideas and directions, both short term and long term. A WAND officer assisted in facilitating the workshop. **NSB**

Dominica NCW Southern Group Rally

A rally organised by the Southern Group of the NCW was held at Grandbay Secondary School on Sunday, November 30, 1986. Eighty women representing over twenty women's organisations participated in this one-day event.

WAND programme officer and Dr. Natalia Kanem, Paediatrician at the Dominica General Hospital, integrated their two lecture sessions, "Organising for Change" and "Health Issues", into a participatory exercise which involved the women in discussing their health concerns and problems, and ways in which they can organise to improve and enhance their health. The session stimulated free discussion and a number of concerns and recommendations were to be presented to the General Executive Body of the NCW.

The Dominica NCW has started a newsletter, *In Touch* in an effort to link women's groups in that island and for better communication with the NCW executive. **PR**

Youth and Media Workshop

On September 23, 1986, the Women and Development Unit in collaboration with Caribbean Broadcasting Union and Radio Netherlands Training Centre brought 40 young people, mass media representatives and resource persons together for a one-day workshop in Barbados. The workshop facilitated the informal interaction between youths and media personnel, enabling each to understand their individual roles and to share ideas while knowing each other's constraints.

All participants were divided into four working groups (radio, the print medium, documentary television; a second TV group looked at the development of a magazine programme co-ordinated by youth in Barbados), and were asked to choose a medium, look at its youth participation and come up with a project for that medium or suggest a proposal which could enhance a present programme or project.

Although the print medium was not represented by any journalists, a group looked at that medium and proposed to produce a four-page insert for one of the local newspapers. All groups decided that other young persons would be encouraged to work in one of the three projects presented at the end of the workshop.

The proposed date for the Regional Seminar is April 1987. **WR**



Youth and media workshop (inset) Ken Corsbie taking aim; Michelle Brathwaite, Vilma Boyce, Pricilla Moore, Jeanette Clarke (behind Michelle) taking note; Wanda Reid taking off.

The Region

WAND programme officer Pat visited Martinique in November, making contact with Liliane Marchal, who had come to Caribbean Celebration in March 1985 (see *WS!* no 18). Pat visited Pointe des Negros Vocational School in Fort de France. Some of these students will visit Barbados at Easter 1987 to meet their counterparts studying the clothing industry and to visit a fabrics factory.

Pat also met with *Fanm Leve Fanm Doubout, Comité Permanent de Soutien aux Femmes Agressées*.

The Comité was formalised in 1980 but came into existence in 1978, a year during which the people of Martinique noticed an increase in violence against women. Women gathered together and waged a campaign to denounce the violent assaults on three women in June that year. They called public meetings, distributed pamphlets and talked to the public.

"Our Comité is a non-profit, non-governmental, autonomous body and open to all women," explains Lysiane Florent, president of the Comité. "Violence was the first issue we focussed on because of the alarming increase of violence in our society, but at all times we discuss the other important issues, such as unemployment, for example, contraception and abortion, children's education, sexism at school and in our everyday life, men and women relationships, women and women relationships."

The Comité addresses political issues at a local, regional and world level. Feeling the necessity to meet other Caribbean women, they first got in touch with some groups through a festival in 1978 and maintain contact through their brochure and newsletter.

Greetings from **FANM LEVE** **FANM DOUBOUT**

Translated from kweyol, means "Women get up! Women stand up!"

It is as a woman of the Caribbean region that I address you on behalf of Le Comité Permanent de Soutien aux Femmes. Since 1981 our organisation on the occasion of a Gala Celebration of Caribbean Women wanted to meet with other Caribbean women in order to witness the identity of our struggles and our desire to participate in an autonomous way to change our society.

In fact, Caribbean women have shared the same history. They have an identical ethnic and cultural heritage which determines their originality as Caribbean women. Their lived experience is characterised by oppression. We want therefore to express that for us solidarity is not a vain or empty or meaningless word, and that a common history must lead to a common struggle. We must work together to improve the conditions of living of Caribbean women.

Feminist salutations,
Lysiane Florent

TO DAD . . .

When I was young
Insects were one
Of child's worry
Until the day
Dad told me
Ten thousands
Ten millions times
Bigger you
Are
With a smile
Don't you
Think
They're
Afraid of
You
I accept
That wise
Advice
So when
A few years
Later
Walking along
Les Pitons du Caribets canal
I met a beautiful
But lethal
Blue tarantula
My dad's secret
Came to my mind
And Lady Spider
Amazed by my quietness
Decided to go on
Her trip

Liliane Josephe Marchal

MANMAN DOUDOU

Man si senk an
Senk an selman
Tjè mwen pa rété plas
Pou sa ou fè ban mwen
Man ni senk an
Senk an selman.
Ti grenn di ri jòdi
Baton viyéyès dèmen
Wou ki mété mwen la, manman,
Pou man pé di'w tou sa selman
Mèsi manman.

Jou an jou, lafèt-de-mè
Pa pou fèt an sel jou,
Sé travay jou an jou.

(from *Antizyedou Koze* by Terez Leoten ©1986)

SPIRIT LASH

You cannot provoke the ghosts of the collective ancestors of all our dark races forever, and receive no comeback. A lash is coming from beyond, and the spirits riding that lash (all the swarthy spirits) will show no mercy as you, the real spooks: colour of bone-ash and driftwood bleached for centuries in an aging sun, fall before their wrath. We call such force a spirit lash.

When a hawk beats
His dying wings into a vermilion
Sun — once gold and flaming
And carries rainless eyes
Yellow with rage
Into his final uncaring
And cats' eyes weep
Dogs' days burn hollow . . .

Dread the hillsides
Dreadful too the scorched
Sea-lashed earth
Holding no grace but salt

In such dread times
Of sallow sea-fever curses
Yellow rime and quicksand
An eagle — bald and riven
With curses of a thousand
Griefs,
With old contradictions
Choked upon but swallowed whole,
Random, uneven calculations
Of destiny
Now becoming manifest

A bald eagle
Forever distanced
From breaking into BEING,
And no righteous man
No grace
No song unsung . . .
His haunted visions
Sweetening the breathing cadences
Of the winds of war, volleys
From the battle for love
Of a precious familiar clay
(and now being fought at a cellular level,
with germs, sickle-cell splicing, mosquitoes,
napalm, pesticides, ddt, micro-chips,
food chain, gene pools, eco systems,
plain and simple misfortune,
and other unimaginable evils)
A clay almost gone sour,
No grace
Not even salt

Only a schoolbory's coarse
Lecherous fancies for the moon and sun
And all eternal desire
Crammed into his puff-fished face,
While the whole staggering world
Creeps on —
Myopic, unbelieving, grasping at
Every stray tendril of sunlight,
Blinded by fakelights
Christmas tree blinkers
Neon fanlights
And such . . .

But our dead are with us still.
They do not sleep, unstilled
Like yours whom you fear.
They are not white-coated spooks
Striding through the dark
Haunting the undead
Railing at the unrighteous
Usurping your terrors
And killing your children.

They remain, unaffrighted,
Sturdy as immortelles
Searching with us for
A world alight with being.

And your still waters,
Now disturbed,
Will die too:
Not so much by eternal
Fire-rage
At Sodom, Gomorrah
Or the Pillar of Salt,
But by slow, blind
Uncaring.

The hawk lashes,
The bald eagle frets,
The seas run together
The dying sun wears down.

Ramabai Espinet

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN

In New York City alone, 40% of children — some 700,000 of them — are living in families that the government classifies as poor.

Among them, 10,000 do not have homes of their own and live in shelters for the homeless.

Still others suffer from social disorders related to poverty: 3,000 children are born addicted to drugs each year, and 12,000 are removed to foster homes because of abuse or neglect.

“The system is being strained beyond its limits by the magnitude and pervasiveness of poverty and family breakdown,” Andrew Stein, President of the City Council of New York wrote in an article published in The New York Times. “Children are being abused and mistreated at record levels, abandoned like excess luggage, and we are simply running out of places to put them.”

Poverty among children is hardly confined to New York. Nationally, the poverty rate among children has grown from 12% in 1965 to 25% in 1985.

Among the casualties in the First World War only 5% were civilians; in the Second World War that figure rose to 50%. By the Vietnamese war, the civilian death toll had reached the 80% mark, only to be eclipsed by current day conflicts, such as the one in Lebanon in which over 90% of the victims are women and children. Indeed, of the 20 million recorded deaths in the 150 armed conflicts since 1945, more than 15 million have been civilians. Three times that many have been left physically or mentally handicapped.

Statistics compiled by the World Health Organization (WHO) reveal that smoking is on the rise in the Third World and is posing a major health threat to its women and children.

(from Action for Children, Vol. 1, 1986)



Published by Leeds Postcards 13 Claremont Grove, Leeds LS11AX, ENGLAND

Two reasons (why we should question tobacco production)

Originally published as a poster advertising **Tomorrow's Epidemic?**, War on Want report which examines the growth of the tobacco industry in the poor South and the dual standards practised by companies involved in producing and marketing tobacco.

Adverse Effects on Women

The International Organization of Consumers Unions has published *Adverse Effects: Women and the Pharmaceutical Industry* which is being promoted by the IOCU as being sure to add fuel to the growing consumer campaign against unsafe as well as unnecessary drugs.

Focusing on the particular problems faced by women in relation to the drug industry, *Adverse Effects* is an anthology of articles from both the Third and First World. It covers drugs used in population control programmes, mood modifiers, hormone manipulation, DES and EP drugs. Authors from India, the USA,

Philippines, the Netherlands and Canada write of their experiences and analyse the issues involved.

Not only does *Adverse Effects* expose some of the dangers faced by women from the powerful and often irresponsible, multi-national pharmaceutical industry, but it highlights attempts being made by women themselves to challenge the drug companies' power and offers insights into what a more caring, woman-oriented health system would look like.

(from IOCU release 29.10.86)

Report on Regional Peace Conference

Cornelia Frettlöh



Billboard image of Augusto Sandino after whom the Sandinista Revolution is named. 'No Pasaran' ('They shall not pass'), a slogan which originated in the Spanish Civil War, is popular in Nicaragua, referring to the CIA-backed 'Contras'.

JUSTICE, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

During a popular call-in radio programme in Jamaica a woman said that for 30 years of their marriage, her husband and herself never quarrelled. But on further questioning the woman revealed the fact that during those 30 years her husband and herself had not spoken to each other. "That is one kind of warfare. It is not peace," commented the programme presenter.

What do we mean by peace? was a question often raised at the Regional Peace Conference held in Kingston, Jamaica, December 5-6, 1986 which was organized by the Jamaican National Committee for the Commemoration of International Year of Peace (NCCIYP). Participants included delegates from Guyana, Trinidad, Barbados, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico and Ecuador.

"Justice, Human Development and Peace", the slogan of the conference, already pointed to the direction where an answer was to be found. Peace does not mean silent submission nor can it be thought of in only negative terms—that is as the absence of war. Peace, if it is to be real and lasting, must face those issues that divide and separate people and at times provoke conflicts within societies or among nations. Therefore topics such as human rights, economic justice or rights of women lay the foundation-stone for peace itself. It is obvious that peace cannot mean the absence of differences or serious problems between people and nations as these are part of human life. People—at the individual, national and international level—must learn how to deal with conflicts and how to settle their disputes without violent means. Tolerance then is a

fundamental requirement. But tolerance must be located in the context of justice and equity. The process of peace—for peace is not a static state but a dynamic development—must result in just relationships and just distribution of power. The struggle for justice, in essence, is the struggle for peace and human survival.

Against this background, the contribution toward peace of the Caribbean lies in its response to the process of militarization presently taking place in the region—region defined as the insular Caribbean and those continental countries with strong historical and cultural ties to it. (Cuba is not located in Eastern Europe nor Puerto Rico next to Manhattan; and the achievement of peace in Central America will be vital for the demilitarization of the Caribbean.) The process of militarization expresses itself in e.g.:

- growing diversion of economic resources from social to military expenditures;
- expansion of the state security services;
- enhanced weight of the military in articulating state policy;
- penetration of traditionally civil spheres of the state bureaucracy (e.g. police, customs) by the military or their organization along military lines;
- growing resort to force as a means of buttressing the dominant position of the ruling classes;
- revision of the legal framework to respond to the military's interest or outlook (e.g. State Security Legislation);
- promotion of military forms of organization and values in civil society.

(from presentation by Jorge Rodrigues Beruff, Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace.)



Violent cultural products

To these general trends in the Caribbean as a whole, the presence of bases and installations of military forces (nuclear and conventional) external to the region must be added and the diverse military activities ranging from training to direct use of force.

In the past five or six years, the military and police forces of most of the countries in the region have grown in size and strength. US military assistance to the region has expanded explosively from \$2.7 million in 1979 to a requested \$249 million in 1986, with the biggest increases going to the Eastern Caribbean, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Panama. Commercial export of weapons from the US grew from \$1.7 million in 1979 to \$7.6 million (estimated) in 1985. US training of military officers went from 385 in 1979 to a proposed level of 965 in 1985. According to SIPRI, Cuba increased its military spending as a share of government spending from 8.9% in 1979 to 11.2% in 1983 and expanded its militia forces to 1.1 million. (Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace)

Militarism has become a crucial issue for all Caribbean societies all of which are bombarded with cultural projects that promote militaristic values and a Rambo-like cult of violence. A Caribbean peace movement that wants to be successful has to address the central issues of democratic development and social and economic policies geared to the basic needs of the majorities of their countries. It must, on the other hand, reject the definition of these processes of social change as an expression of the East-West conflict.

At the end of the two-day long conference, a number of resolutions were passed by the gathering. One of them asking for the Caribbean to be declared a Zone of Peace stated: “. . . to establish the Caribbean Region as a Zone of Peace, a nuclear free area, whose sovereign nations agree not to lease or otherwise yield their land or sea rights to any foreign power for any military purpose whatever.”

Another resolution addressed the formation of a national and a regional peace organization in order to enlarge the number of people involved in the peace movement and to develop a network among the various regional national groups. Particular emphasis was put on the need for an educational programme that should:

“. . . educate the people about the violence in their society and to awaken their awareness of the wider issues of the violence of militarization and the nuclear threat, regionally and internationally.

That this education should demonstrate that among major root causes of violence and conflict are:

- a) prejudices of all types e.g. Apartheid is an example of this evil;
- b) the economic disparities between and within nations;
- c) the inequality between men and women.

This is seeking to promote and accept unity in diversity of the value, dignity and self-worth of our peoples and our countries.”

No Justice without Human Development and Peace; no Human Development without Peace and Justice; and no Peace without Justice and Human Development.

Excerpts from

ANGELA DAVIS' PUBLIC LECTURE IN BARBADOS

Angela Davis visited Barbados in August 1986 with 20 sisters from different parts of the US and the US Virgin Islands to participate with Caribbean women in a Workshop organised through the joint collaboration of WAND and the National Black Women's Health Project.

On August 7th, Angela gave a public lecture at the Queen's Park Steel Shed, Bridgetown, sponsored by the Women's Studies Group, UWI, Cave Hill, The National Cultural Foundation and WAND/UWI. Angela was introduced by Kathleen Drayton, Senior Lecturer of UWI and Co-ordinator of the Women's Studies Group at Cave Hill.

ON THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION

The propagandists of the Reagan Administration have been attempting over the last years to project an image of the United States, a distorted image in which racism has been virtually eliminated; an image which presents working class people as having achieved a measure of material wellbeing. So what I would like to do is share with you some of the realities that confront us today.

The Reagan Administration is the most racist, the most sexist, the most anti-working-class and the most bellicose administration we have seen in many, many years in the United States. And I don't want to convey the impression that Ronald Reagan himself is responsible for this. It is important to recognise that he is a person who has learned fairly well how to read a script and memorise it. That script has been written by the most dangerous sectors of the corporate structure in the United States today, primarily those who constitute the military-industrial complex and are responsible for what is happening in South Africa, and responsible for the unprecedented threat of nuclear homicide that confronts the world today.



Angela Davis speaking at the Steel Shed.

ON THE ECONOMIC REALITY

Not very long ago in the city of New York, in the Bronx, a black woman by the name of Eleanor Bumpers, who at that time was 67 years old, faced some problems with coming up with enough money to pay the rent on her apartment. Vast numbers of black people face the same difficulties; vast numbers of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans and native American Indians and Asians and white people find themselves in dire straits economically today. Eleanor Bumpers did not have the money to pay her rent. She was threatened with eviction. The housing authority police came to her house, threatened her with eviction, then left. When they returned at another time they proceeded to break the door down. Eleanor Bumpers did what any rational person would do faced with the possibility that someone is trying to break into her or his apartment. She went and grabbed the first weapon she could find, a knife from her kitchen drawer. The police broke into the house (she had no way of knowing it was the police trying to evict her), saw her standing there with a knife and proceeded to pump bullets into her body.

I mention this because for me this symbolises the situation we face in the United States today. And for those of you who may have been following the official reports, you may find this as somewhat of a surprise. All over the United States today police crimes are on the rise. In a very real sense the murder of Eleanor Bumpers is a symbol of the brutality that we face especially as black people. But also she was a poor woman who could not pay the rent through no fault of her own. It was as a result that especially older people have suffered greatly at the hand that has put the axe to the budget.

ON UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE 'DEFENSE INDUSTRY'

The case of Eleanor Bumpers is also symbolic of what is happening to our young people. The unemployment figures are staggering. In some urban areas more than half of our teenagers are unemployed. Young black people are constituting a permanently

Rebecca Knowles

unemployed sector of the labour force. If you wonder why there's a problem with drugs, if you wonder why there's a problem of so many young black people going into the prisons, if you wonder about the problem of teenage pregnancy, if we want to understand why it is that our young people find themselves entrapped in a predicament that seems to be dismal today, we can't simply focus on our own families. Of course there are problems in our families which we must examine and understand, but we must see the larger picture which involves an assault on the black community by the military-industrial complex.

Why is it that young black people cannot find jobs? It has to do with the fact that the funds which would normally go into the creation of jobs which would be available to our young people are now creating MX missiles, cruise missiles, Pershing missiles. One billion dollars a day is spent on the military alone. Do you know what one billion dollars could do in terms of the kinds of jobs that would give our young people some kind of hope for the future?

The so-called defense industry is highly automated, highly mechanised, highly computerised and robotised so that with one billion dollars you can create only about 25,000 jobs in the military where, with the same one billion dollars, you can create 75,000 jobs in the area of education.

This is just to give you a sense of what the connections are, what the reasons are for the horrendous predicament that we as black people, as racially and nationally oppressed people in general, and as working class people, find ourselves in, in the United States today. But instead of recognising that in the black community, for example, the real problem is one of jobs, local, state and the national government say that the problem is one of rising crime.

Young people have nowhere to go, have no jobs, have lost the ability to get an education. The proportion of black students attending university has dropped drastically. Those young people who can't find work, can't get scholarships and therefore can't get an education—there are few recreational facilities available to them in our communities. If you have been to Harlem you have an idea of what things are like for young people. There isn't even a single high school in Harlem. Did you know that? A hospital was just recently shut down. But there are a lot of policemen in Harlem, a whole lot of policemen. And this is what the cry has been, "More police!" Obviously young people are going to "get into trouble" if there's nowhere for them to go and nothing to do.

ON THE ULTRA RIGHT

People are dying at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1980s. In a suburb of the city where I live, Oakland, California, a young black man was found hanging from a tree, was lynched. That same night two black men were stabbed by two white men dressed in sheets. The police said it was a prank. To stab someone for a prank? To dress in the uniform of the Ku Klux Klan which if we go back over the years conjures up thousands and thousands of murdered, lynched black men and women and children? In the state of

Idaho there was a mass meeting to put together a coalition of ultra right organisations. The Ku Klux Klan was one, various factions of the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nation was another, the racist, anti-semitic Nazi Party was another.

There are those who will say these people are not so much of a threat because they are relatively small in numbers, but I want to suggest to you that when you witness the emergence all over the country of fascist, ultra right organisations to the extent that we are witnessing today, that is a comment on the nature of the social and political conditions that prevail in the country. It is a comment on the potential that exists in the future, the fascist potential that exists today. And therefore I have become extremely frightened.

ON THE DEATH PENALTY

It is always said that one can determine the nature of the society that one is examining by looking at how that society treats its prisoners. We have more people in prison per capita than any country outside of South Africa. There are half a million people in the United States in jails, the state prisons and the federal penitentiary, and about half of them are black. More prisons have been built, yet the conditions are worse than they were in 1970 when the Marin County prisoner rebellion took place on this very day 16 years ago, when Johnathan Jackson, William Christmas, James McLean were killed by San Quentin guards. Conditions in Attica are worse today than they were in September 1970 when the Attica revolt took place. There are more people on death row. There are more than two thousand people awaiting death in the United States today who will be electrocuted or hanged (they have developed what they call a new humane method of putting people to death by using lethal injections: some will be injected to death). Not a single person on death row is rich, and don't tell me that rich people don't commit crimes. The death penalty is racist and anti-working-class. We must fight for the elimination of the death penalty.

ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE US

One of the dynamics that, unfortunately, the women's movement in the past has not understood—but it is rapidly beginning to understand today—is that in focussing on the specific problems of women who are the most economically secure in the society, in winning victories for those women they win victories only for those women and all the other women are left behind. Sandra O'Day Connor (first woman US Supreme Court judge, appointed by Reagan) moved right on in to the Supreme Court and immediately proceeded to lobby against the reproductive rights of the masses of women in the United States.

But on the other hand if the women who are at the very bottom of the structure, if the women who are the most oppressed—poor women, African American women, Puerto Rican women, Chicano women, native American Indian women, Asian women—if we move up, if we win victories we necessarily push the whole structure upwards and everyone benefits from the victories that we win.

ON MEN AND WOMEN IN STRUGGLE

I want to suggest that the very same holds true with respect to women and men. When we as women move forward then our brothers will necessarily reap the benefits of these victories. I want to say this because in the past there has been the tendency to allow ourselves to be divided against each other. For us to fail to understand our commonalities, our common interests, the inter-connectedness of our various oppressions.

If we as black women decide to focus on issues that affect us in particular, when we talk about our health issues, when we talk about child care, when we talk about the need to create the conditions that will allow us to be employed, maternity leave, our reproductive rights, when we talk about the need to eradicate the pervasive violence which has been inflicted upon us from the time we were children until we reach the grave, when we begin to talk about that, sometimes our brothers feel that we have abandoned the struggle of black people. But are we not at least fifty percent of our people? Can our people be healthy if we are sick?

It's about time that we understand that we need to stand together and our brothers need to support us. More men need to get involved in the women's movement. Men should understand that the sexism that has been inflicted upon us, in terms of attitudes, in terms of institutions, is not something that our brothers are responsible for, so you don't have to feel defensive when we start talking about challenging sexism, because our brothers have also been hurt and injured by sexism. It is a horrible thing when a man has to feel that in order to be strong, to be dignified, he must find someone who is weaker than he in order to oppress that person. That is not strength. That is not masculinity. That is not dignity. So we need to talk about some of the attitudes that prevail among our brothers. The attitudes which represent us as being inferior simply because we are women. And if you look at the history of black women in the United States, black women in the Caribbean, that history itself should be enough to convince you that we have been far from inferior. If we had been inferior from the point of view of our gender, our peoples never would have survived slavery. We never could have gotten along with the half strength of our brothers. We needed the whole strength of our people and our men should rejoice and celebrate that, and accept that as what we need in order to move forward as a people.

This is our special perspective as black women. That perspective involves a challenge to the sexism that our men manifest, and we have to begin to do that more and more and men should challenge other men too, and say, "Brother, you should not talk about the sister like that. She is a person as you are". These are the ways that will allow us to develop the kind of unity and togetherness that we need in order to move forward. This is an enormous task that faces us in the United States. The challenge that lies before us today is the challenge of forging the kind of unity that will allow us to prevent the continual erosion of our rights and the erosion of all of the victories that we have won over the last several decades.

COMMENTS ON MOVEMENTS FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

We must look to Nicaragua as a beacon of light, as to what is possible even under the worst of circumstances. The Nicaraguan people are serious and in a sense they are carrying the torch of the Grenada Revolution as well. Women are emerging in a way that has been unprecedented in their history and in the history of most other countries. For example, in Nicaragua today it is no longer possible to use a woman's body to advertise a product that somebody wants to sell.

There are some serious problems in Iran. Scores of women who are active politically have been murdered. There are thousands of women and men who are political prisoners under the Islamic Republic of Khomeini. But the people of Iran are attempting to continue carrying out a democratic revolution which began with the ouster of the Shah and which was thwarted by the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Zionism and racism have a lot in common. I want this to be clear . . . I believe as intensely that we must eradicate anti-semitism as I believe we must eradicate racism, but I think the Palestinian people have a right to their land. They have a right to their national integrity.

The people of South Africa are on the front lines of history. They are fighting for all of us. If we want to understand the dynamic that links women to the struggles of their peoples, there is no better example than South Africa. It is not accidental that the struggle there has already entered its final phase. It is only a matter of time before apartheid comes tumbling down. When children confront machine guns and tanks with nothing more than sticks and stones and their songs, you know that apartheid has entered its final phase. It is not accidental that this has been a period of intense involvement of women in the struggle in South Africa. 1984 was the 'year of the woman' in South Africa which preceded the year which marked the end of the UN Decade for Women. And during that period enormous numbers of black women became involved in the struggle, became involved in the military dimension of the struggle in Umkhonto We Sizwe (Our People's Army) of the African National Congress. It is not accidental that Winnie Mandela has emerged the spokesperson for the struggle.

ON PAT RODNEY'S REQUEST FOR AN INQUIRY INTO THE KILLING OF WALTER RODNEY

I am appealing to you to join Pat Rodney, write a letter to President Desmond Hoyte and request that a public inquest be conducted into the circumstances surrounding the killing of Walter Rodney. He represented all over the world the quest for justice and equality, the quest for a better life for people all over the Caribbean. If that struggle is to go forward then certainly we must guarantee that the perpetrators of his murder are brought to justice as swiftly as possible.



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