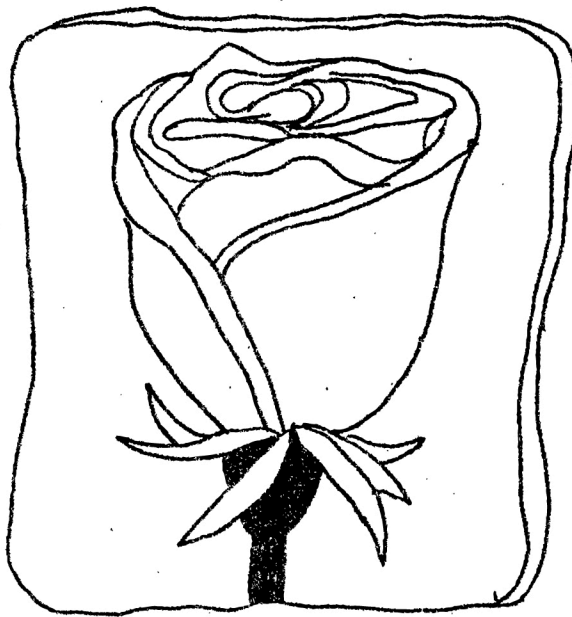


Carra News

"WE WANT BREAD AND ROSES TOO"

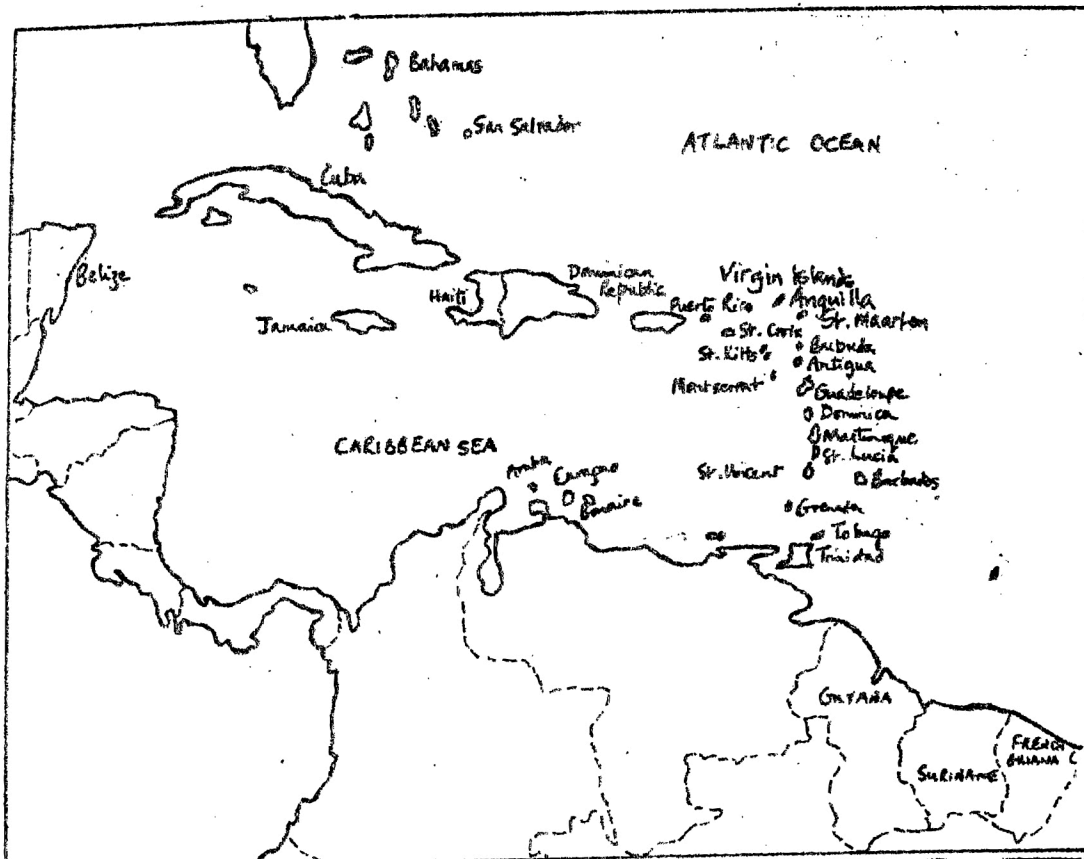


INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - MARCH 8th

Newsletter of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action

Vol. 2 No. 1

March 1988



CAFRA

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

General Aims:-

- To
1. (i) develop an approach to women's problems from the perspectives of race class and sex, specifically to show how the exploitative relationship between men and women facilitates the continuation, maintenance and reproduction of exploitative capitalist relations, and how the capitalist system benefits from this situation;
 - (ii) develop an approach to the analysis of relations between men and women in non-capitalist and socialist societies;
 2. develop the feminist movement in the entire Caribbean region; and
 3. promote the inter-relationship between research and action.

Objectives:-

- To
1. develop research priorities based on the needs of the women's movement in the region;
 2. provide a supportive atmosphere

for individual feminists;

3. bring a feminist perspective to bear on the work of existing progressive organisations and shatter the myth that "feminism divides the struggle";
4. provide a focal point for bringing together feminist organisations in the entire region;
5. foster greater communication and collaboration on events and issues relevant to the feminist movement;
6. develop a base of documentation on the women's movement in the Caribbean and issues relevant to it;
7. develop access to available sources of documentation which could be put at the service of women's organisations and struggles in the region; and
8. promote the continuous analysis of language in order to identify and correct the sexist assumptions embedded in its structure which are detrimental to women's expression and development at every level.

CAFRA News is published quarterly by the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), P.O. Bag 442, Tunapuna Post Office, Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago.

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editorial

One of the original aims of the founder-members of CAFRA was that the organisation could become a network of support and solidarity for individual feminists in our region. The other important aim was that this organisation could be a means of strengthening the Caribbean women's movement in a number of ways.

So far, the response to CAFRA from Caribbean women living and working within and outside the region has convinced us that indeed this was an idea whose time had come. Our growth and development since our launching in Barbados three years ago on April 2nd, 1985 has exceeded many of our expectations.

This newsletter is an important factor in the achievement of our aims. We hope that it can truly become an avenue for support and solidarity as well as an invaluable contact with developments in the Caribbean women's movement.

Share your thoughts, news, ideas with us and with all our Caribbean sisters.

Happy International Women's Day (March 8th).

Happy CAFRA Anniversary (April 2nd).

Rhoda Reddock

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Letters

concerning the Anthology of
Caribbean Women's Poetry

It was a great delight to receive your letter, and I'm enclosing required particulars. However the final selection turns out to be, I look forward to reading the Anthology. I wish you all the very best and await with tremendous enthusiasm the final selection.

Leonie Kessel, St. Lucia

- * -

Thank you so much for your encouragement. I am so excited at the thought of one of my poems in print. If it is selected (and even if it isn't) I would like to obtain a copy, so if possible could you send me a copy or let me know where they are available? Keep up your good work, and thank you once again for the opportunity.

Stacy Johnson, Trinidad and Tobago

- * -

Enclosed is the information you wanted for the Anthology. Even if my contribution doesn't quite make it, I wish you all the best in your endeavours. Poetry is a language that many women share, an expression that can build friendships, mend broken hearts, and cross international boundaries.

Thank you for your encouragement.

Leone Ross, Jamaica

- * -

It was with great pleasure that I received a reply from you. I remember vividly mentioning at a poetry reading for Poetry Day, 1987, that the poem I was going to read had been submitted to the CAFRA Anthology. The poem I have submitted is one which is very dear to me. So many of our sisters are under oppression all over the world, and my poem pays a small tribute to them.

I pray that the work of CAFRA would continue to be a model for others to follow. I wish you continued success.

Dawn Mahalia Riley, Trinidad & Tobago

Thank you for your letter. I am both surprised and delighted to be included in the final round of selections. You just don't know what a lift your letter was.

Anyway, I am enclosing the requested materials. I found the bio. part tough, so have included a relatively recent C.V. if you find any of it useful. On a personal level, am a child of many diasporas, born to a Jamaican mother and European father. Raised in U.S. and Jamaica by mother's side of the family (that's an old story!), returned home to remember and better recapture language, color and rhythm. Founding member, Creative Harmony Club, organisation of rural Portland women. Volunteer, SISTREN Theatre Collective. Spend 1 year in U.S. (Washington DC) working in offices, saving pennies, 1 year in beloved Long Bay, Portland, writing and encouraging. Working on collection of short stories while first novel percolates.

Again, thanks for the boost. Look forward to hearing from you and/or appearance of the Anthology. Also wishing you continued courage.

Randi Gray Kristensen, Jamaica

- * -

Thanks for the information re. the CAFRA Anthology. I was off island for a while, and couldn't respond before.

The poem was written on the occasion of South African Women's Day, 1987. Involvement in programmes during the Decade for Women, International Women's Day, and Anti-apartheid Committees has given me a keen understanding of the needs of women, and established solidarity with the suffering masses of women internationally, in particular our down-trodden but strong sisters in South Africa.

Celene Jack, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

- * -

It was a nice surprise to hear that my poems had been chosen to proceed to the final selection for the Anthology. I herewith return the enclosed form, and do hope to hear from you very soon.

C. Carrilho-Fazal Alikhan, Suriname

CAFRA PROJECTS

WOMEN IN CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURE

NEWS OF DOMINICA RESEARCH PROJECT

St. Vincent and Dominica are both Caribbean islands whose economies are heavily dependent on agricultural earnings. The two islands are at present the location of research into the involvement of women in agriculture.

The research made a formal start in January 1987 when the research team, together with personnel from CAFRA and supporting agencies, met at Layou in St. Vincent for two weeks to inaugurate the project and to orient all those involved.

Everyone departed from Layou to do their part to make the proposed research a reality. One year later, in February 1988, all the persons involved in carrying out the research met at Castaways, Dominica, to evaluate the work done in the interim.

Q: What really happened between January 1987 and January 1988?

A: We began by searching for documented information about women in agriculture in Dominica. We read everything we thought might contain data, but we could not find anything. No one had as yet documented information about women's involvement in agriculture.

Q: How do you conclude that no one had as yet documented this?

A: About the time that we were becoming frustrated with the archival research, we were contacted by an American University student who was

also researching this topic. A comparison of notes revealed that the only information found was a brief mention in *The Dominica Story* of women's involvement in the struggle to acquire land and their part in lime oil production. It was at this point that we abandoned the search for documentary information.



From a drawing by Danuta Radzik
Guyana

Q: What else was done?

A: While researchers were busy search-

ing for documented data, the research co-ordinator organised a team of people drawn from local developmental agencies - governmental and non-governmental - whose part is to give general support throughout the research. This is called the Back-up Team.

Q: What came next?

A: Based on information obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture, we selected three communities which are each representative of a particular feature of the island's agricultural pattern. The choice was ratified by the Back-up Team.

Q: How did you proceed from there?



From a drawing by Danuta Radzik,
Guyana

The researchers made initial contact

in the selected communities - with people whom we thought could be key informers. These people put us in contact with other informers and farmers. From the information we obtained from these contacts, and from our exploration and observations, we drew up preliminary profiles of these communities.

Q: What happened then?

A: We were familiarising ourselves with the communities; meeting many farmers; forming friendships with women farmers. We were becoming more aware of the situation of farmers - their work, their aspirations, their courage and perseverance. We discovered that some women farmed jointly with their spouses/partners. These women hold an important place in the farm's division of labour. Many women farmers are also single heads of households, managing the home and feeding the family. We found out also that even when a male partner exists, most women farmers are bearing the main responsibility for feeding and managing the home.

Q: Exactly how did you obtain the information on women farmers?

A: That was the main part of the research. We visited the communities and lived in them during the field data collection. In those weeks, the researchers had to be ready for more than 3% gwaye (struggle). We had to face all weathers at all odd times, like any farmer. We went to farmer's holdings, to their homes, to any place in the community where they could be found. We took some tumbles in the mud, and when we accompanied people to their gardens we discovered that we were good at talking agriculture but could do very little farming.

Q: How did the people receive you?

A: They were very polite, hospitable

and friendly. We had some amusing encounters, but no one ran us off their premises. Most people helped us to find farmers and households, and some gave us small gifts of their produce. Mostly, however, they wanted to know what we had to offer them.

Q: What are some of the amusing encounters?

A: There was one woman who cut across my introductions with a crisp, "Before you say one more word, what are you? Labour or Freedom?" Without waiting for an answer, she continued, "I am Labour; if you are not Labour, don't say one word more. Just leave!"

She was shorter than I and of smaller build, but as she stood proudly in her yard, her tobacco pipe in one hand and her eyes burning as she spat her patois at me, it was difficult not to feel intimidated. I considered my safety carefully before I replied.

In the same patois that she had spoken, I explained that I came from CAFRA, a women's organisation concerned with women's problems and finding solutions to them. Now her attitude changed. She had a problem. She told me in detail. When I got too intent on listening, she urged me, "You're not writing!" By the end of the interview we were laughing together as she loaded me with mangoes.

We also had amusing incidents among ourselves. Josephine Dublin, second in command on the team, was prone to continue her work during the nights. She strongly demonstrated that she could work 24 hours per day. In the middle of the night, we would be awakened by Josephine who, still sound asleep, would be conducting her interviews and laughing aloud at some joke shared with a respondent. In the morning, she would be amused at the stories we told her about herself. One night, she even did it in Spanish.

Was she discussing with a CIPAF consultant?

Q: What are some of the more memorable research experiences?

A: One is certainly the team work and team spirit which prevailed. It is not that we didn't have any problems, but whenever tensions arose, we were able to resolve them. This strengthened the team spirit and increased the love all around.

One researcher remembers a man who, when asked what improvement he would like to see in his community, stressed more involvement in culture. He really came alive then. He told her about his involvement in the village cultural band and enthusiastically offered to give a display on his accordion. Regretfully, she declined. The next appointment was only a few minutes away. As she approached the home of the next farmer, she wondered what other unexpected discovery the research would yield.

Q: Can you tell us more about what you discovered in the research?

A: Gladly! We have so much to tell that this CAFRA News does not have space to write it all. We can tell you about our achievements, and why farmers continue to grow food. We can tell you about problems too. Problems such as land shortage, labour shortage, market shortage, and even farmer shortage.

Q: How can I get more details of your findings?

A: We are going to present a final report. Out of the report, we are to develop popular education materials in various forms. We intend to make the information available to everyone. By mid-year, you will be holding your copy in your hand.

(from the WICA Research Team, Dominica)

This meeting was held in Dominica from 1-3 February, 1988. It was attended by members of the research teams from Dominica (Josephine Dublin, Bertillia Henderson, Martha Joseph and Cecilia Babb) and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Beverly Warren, Ancelma Morgan and Bonnie Millington); the Country Co-ordinators, Noreen John and Nelcia Robinson; one representative of each facilitating agency (SPAT and CIDW) and each back-up team; the Project Co-ordinator, Joan French; the CAFRA Co-ordinator, Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen; and CAFRA Secretariat member Rhoda Reddock.

The meeting evaluated the whole process that had taken place so far, not only in terms of the research/action process, but also the overall administration of the project; and decided collectively on the direction which the project should take, based on an analysis of what had so far been achieved and the resources available. It also examined the financial state of the project and made budget recommendations.

Participants presented their perceptions of the project's achievements and weaknesses, and observations by the CIPAF consultant and UNIFEM were also

considered. Broad ideas discussed for follow-up included national surveys, continued research work, return of findings to the communities, action programmes and direct assistance. Plans for community and national workshops were made.

The session on 'Outputs and the Experience' included testimonies from two women from the Dominican community who work in agriculture. Each stated that the research project had meant a lot to her. One said, "I am glad a body could be raised up to stand up for women. Maybe if we had a body to stand up for women, women - I - would not have borne what I bore, would not be worn out doing all kinds of things".

The meeting closed with a ceremony organised collectively by the Dominica team, and included cultural items by Bertillia, Josephine (see below) and guest poet Gregory Rabess. Presentations were made by the host country to participants from the other islands, and by CAFRA to Nelicia Robinson for her outstanding contribution and committed service to the project as Country Co-ordinator. Nelcia resigned from the project effective end Dec. 1987.

Research Experiences by Josephine Dublin

*Women in agriculture in St. Vincent and Dominica
Oh, it seems, part of our culture.
Women as producers and reproducers
Seem to be treated unfairly in all areas.*

*In Grand Bay, Marigot and Giraudel we stayed
Only to ensure the information was saved.
The team's potential we did see
As we went from household to household like busy bees.*

*This research, it was a challenge to us
As we wrote the report not knowing so much.
Common to all, agriculture was first,
And the women very productive, with no time for a toast.*

*The S.D.L. was not so distinct
For women did all the ting.
On the farm, they used their forks -
Sometimes the men could not do as much.
Tired as they were, they did their best,
And when night fall, the men force them into bed.
Women have no time for leisure,
While men always find time for pleasure.*

WAND / CAFRA WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

BARBADOS MEETING - VIEW FROM BELIZE

At a recent meeting attended in Barbados on 'Women's Oral History' in the Caribbean, sisters came together from different countries to weave common threads. Telling the stories of their lives, Mikaela Wewe from San Antonio, Ignacia Guzman from Dangriga and Pineta Espejo of Orange Walk made steps on this journey.

Mikaela and Ignacia were women moving in history, crossing the ocean to share of the embroidery, weaving and Garifuna healing powers. As Ignacia stood frozen by the moving stairs in Miami, Mikaela fastened the seat belt in the plane as if this had not been her first journey out of Belize.

It was quite inspiring to view excellent exhibitions of women's history presented by sisters of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.

The glimpses into the past were many times reflections of the present. There were, for example, women's embroidery patterns and samples of work which celebrate the beauty of what we continue to create through common threads.

The conference was not only about beautiful things, but also about women's struggles with violence, rape and prostitution. The exhibitions gave visual examples of the strength of women through the years, while dispelling some of the myths. One such myth was that East Indian indentured labourers came as complete families. We learnt that many came as single women. Through the 'Dutty Tuff' exhibition presented by the Sistren Theatre Collective of Jamaica we learnt of sisters like Amy Bailey and the Black Cross Nurses, who in their own way pushed for greater involvement of women in their country's development.

The spirit of the conference was one of celebrating the female creativity to struggle and more than survive. First there was the recognition of the Maya Indian women's designs which each tells a story. The question is whether this powerful form of women creating together can be a means of strengthening our bonds with each other. The Belizean sisters certainly found more common threads as we displayed the blouses and designs. We kept talking about organising and becoming stronger. This could be a basis for earning income rather than for pleasure alone.

Belize also presented pictorial work as well as a brief role-play on the Garifuna traditional healing ceremony of the dugu, which captures the cycle of life and death. Pineta Espejo, Deputy Mayor of Orange Walk, put the icing on the cake relating rich stories about her life as a female politician.

by Cynthia Ellis in The Belize Woman.
Vol 1 No. 5



Cartoon by Go-Graphics for BRWA.

PROJECT UPDATE - BELIZE WORKSHOP

The first major undertaking this year was the partial funding and support of a Women's Oral History Workshop in San Ignacio, Belize, Central America during the period March 6-17, 1988.

This period was divided between pre- and post-workshop sessions where facilitators worked closely with individual

groups, and a week-end workshop (March 12-13) where the methodology was applied. It was organised by the BRWA (Belize Rural Women's Association) and co-ordinated by Cynthia Ellis.

Foreign delegates to the workshop were Cindy Cohen of the Oral History Center, Cambridge, Massachussets; Savitri Singh and Irene Phillips of Red Thread, Guyana; and Ramabai Espinet, Co-ordinator of the Women's History project. Other participants represented groups belonging to the BRWA, and were largely women from the Garifuna, Mopan, Kekchi and Mayan ethnic divisions.

Cindy Cohen was specially invited to share with participants the methodology which has been developed at the Oral History Center and, in particular, to share the experience gained in co-ordinating Common Threads, an exhibit of traditional fabric arts and related oral history.

The workshop provided a stimulating atmosphere in which participants shared aspects of their own histories and then engaged in concretizing their personal insights by producing creative products. Topics were established by prior discussion among the groups, and were: Health, Food, Craft, Transitions in Women's Lives, and Youth Issues (a late addition necessitated by the nature of the participants, and also the largest group). The products created were a craft exhibit, skits on health (folk medicine) and transitions in women's lives, and a pictorial display.

Red Thread's work excited a lot of enthusiasm, particularly their beautiful batik tablecloths. Closer exchanges between Red Thread and various BRWA groups, notably those in Dangriga and San Antonio, occurred in the post-workshop sessions.

A memorable feature of the workshop was Saturday's Cultural Night, which ended with everyone doing the punta until 3.00 a.m. to the traditional



Some squares from The Cambridge Women's Quilts (1982)

Carifuna drums. Another memorable feature was the exquisite quilt created by the Common Threads project, displayed in the Central Meeting Hall. The quilt consists of 52 blocks, each 17 inches square, and each crafted by a different woman to depict a scene or person of significance in her life. Machine-sewn work, hand work, crochet, embroidery, appliques and a variety of fabrics combine to produce a richly-textured collage effect.

- PLANS FOR 1988

In addition to this workshop, there has been active planning for the year ahead. Two important areas of activity are: the Documentation of Women's History Projects in the region as they are identified; and the compilation of a Resource Directory to facilitate exchanges of expertise. Information in either of these areas would be welcomed, and should be sent to:

Ranabai Espinet,
Co-ordinator, WAND/CAFRA Women's
History Project,
CAFRA,
P.O. Bag 442,
Tunapuna Post Office,
Tunapuna,
Trinidad and Tobago

R. Espinet

INTER-AMERICAN LEGAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION (ILSA)

The Inter-American Legal Services Association (ILSA) has identified Jamaica as one of three Caribbean territories where it aims to set up a community-based legal training programme within the next year or so.

One of the main objectives of the programme is to empower through the law; and to achieve this, individuals representing various groups and organisations will be trained in areas

of the law most relevant to them. The programme will attempt to equip these persons with an understanding of the law, of how the legal system works, and will also attempt to educate on how the law can be used to effect social and economic change.

In order to identify resource personnel and participants for the programme, Professor Fred Zemons (ILSA, and Professor at Osgoode Hall), Dr. Leighton Jackson (Osgoode Hall) and Gaiety Pargass (CAFRA) met with various groups and organisations in Jamaica, including several women's organisations, over a two day period March 1-2, 1988. The need for such a programme and its relevance to their activities were clearly identified by the women's organisations, which included the Sistren Theatre Collective, the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre, the Bureau of Women's Affairs, and the Crisis Centre, among others.

Apart from identifying the need for such a training programme for women's organisations in Jamaica, CAFRA's role was also to set up linkages between this project and the regional 'Women's Rights and the Law' project.

A report of the meeting will be submitted to ILSA by Professor Zemons and Dr. Jackson, and follow-up action is expected within the next year.

Gaiety Pargass

ANTHOLOGY OF CARIBBEAN WOMEN'S POETRY

The projected publication date for the Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry is mid-1988. Poets chosen in the final selection process have been asked for brief biographies and photos, and the Anthology's Editorial Committee has already received many delighted replies (see Letter's, page 2).

Following are two examples of women writing about their art.

I am woman, womanish, leggo, female child of Catherine, sister to Leonie, aunt to Paul Patrick, mother to Shola Yetunde. I am woman but more ... more to my sisters whose hands rough from scrubbing clothes and pounding yam cry out. I am wo/man, womanish. My mother used to declare, threatening/applauding, "Two 'oman can't live in de same house". I, woman, who knew I had to comfort the mother who walked away from the drunkard husband and received a slap for daring to be independent and be her own boss when most other women sucked in their lips and mumbled under their breath; a mother who lived feminism before the word was coined and came to be a label, a badge of honor, disrepute and struggle. I am female, black, mother, lover, writer, student going against the tide, daring anyone to step in my path, swimming Yemoja's waves, calling on Oshun, remembering Ida D. Wells, fighting with Mary Nyarijuri, Mau Mau warrior, echoing Sojourner Truth's words; "Ain't I a woman?" Question! I don't need to ask; she asked for me; they sacrificed for me. Nanny, the maroon warrior, caught bullets in her teeth and made magic from soil. Miss Scott who put three husbands in the grave and was so stern that the most vicious bull dog hid his tail in her presence and crawled to safety in a corner.

I am wo/man, womanish. My poems are of these many women, acknowledging that there isn't just one kind of woman; their commonality is their strength, their determination to be their own bosses, to push their girl-women ahead with education, economic independence and birth control. The poems are of the market women whose pride is always borne on their heads, of the prostitutes leaning on the walls of Kingston dying for the day to break so they can hurry home to make porridge for their children and send them off to school with the money they collected for their slaving; for the women who are intimately connected to men and nurture them and are loved and abused by them; for the girl-women forced by lack of class privilege to grow up too fast; for the women who have always danced with the sun and felt the wind caress their hair; for the girls trying to defend themselves against societal and advertisement constraints that would box, categorise and limit them with a reworked package claiming it to be for their liberation. My poems celebrate women's need to be loved, to have sex, to be wild and crazy if the occasion calls for it. These poems are womanish, females, spirited, sponging Winnie Mandela's feet, rubbing the shoulders of the basket women in Kenya, raising the backs of Indian women; these poems are an introduction into another world of womanism.

Opal Palmer Adisa, Jamaica (living U.S.A.)

(illustration from Sisterhood in Support of Sisters in South Africa leaflet)



ABOUT POEMS

We damage poems so easily with our own need for self-justification, our need to be forgiven, to complain, and since a poem comes to light only in your hands, there's always the urge to use it to say only what you want (which is your particular propaganda), instead of allowing your spirit to be joined by the poem in revealing the images that because they live in all our minds and our lives, are our collective and cultural inheritance to resist the suffocating embrace of the "one true reality" as it is lived.

Poems release the images, reveal the hidden rage or love in what has happened, about what we have done, our experience as a people. Poems release the "yes" we each have chained to the dungeon wall, or that we let out only when we've dressed it appropriately that it may mix in the company of other well dressed "yesses".

Poems love to break down our constructions of the world. They set the most pitiful experiences, the most imperial forms of control to face each other as though they were equal (or reversed) in power. Poems are about rebelling against Now. That's what they do. They raise hell about how Now is unjust, uncertain. They anticipate how Now will be the next thing. And poems are eternal rebels against all social relations since these must be contractual arrangements of power which are always to the advantage of some elite and therefore causing misery in the hearts of the people (the home of poems).

Poems love causing disturbances. They are poor. They steal the gold cape of the king and run around in it like it was everybody's. They are considered inconsequential, but they have brought down governments (starting with the ones in our heads) and they survive not only empires but generations.

I once found an image of love as a great form hidden just under the landscape. We walk all over it not realizing where we are and that it gives the landscape its form. Suddenly we catch a glimpse of a shoulder, a great hand, what we thought was a hill, a peninsula, a river bed. Then I realized how poems are found, even when your eyes are cast downwards. And when love teaches you the courage to stand and look up, poems are high flying kites. A poem is a fierce faced kite too.

Nan Peacocke

St. Vincent and the Grenadines (working in Barbados)

Guyana: Red Thread

No, this is not a children's story or a fairy story. It is beautifully real. It is about women using needles to stitch patterns of hope. Women who, in the drab familiar hardship that is now Guyana, are creating beautiful embroidered tablecloths, sheets, pillow-cases, hand towels - and this time, not for free. This handiwork project pays.

The project has a coordinating committee which organises the purchase and delivery of cloth and threads, but it is the women in the RED THREAD community groups who are responsible for their own distribution, for quality control, and for recording goods received and payments made. When a piece of work is finished, the sister is paid right away. She doesn't have to wait until it is sold. The marketing is done at sales which are held from time to time.

What impact has the project had on the sisters? Before the project, most were dependent on husbands, brothers or fathers for their daily bread. When the men lost their jobs or went on strike - as has been happening more and more - it affected them tremendously.

At a recent Encounter of RED THREAD groups, one organiser reported: "The sisters say that the project enlightened their life. Some said that they can assist in their homes because their husbands are not working. Some said that they improved their beauty by going to the salon. One said that she repaired her house. One outfitted her children. They say the project has improved their lives tremendously."

Another sister said, "I would never like the project to close down because we can work at leisure. I am happy because I don't have to rush off to work in rain or sun from 7 to 4 to get my earnings. I am at home with my family, and still earning some money for them".

But even more amazing than the sense

of independence and the improved quality of life that the project is bringing to women is the enthusiasm for organising themselves. Groups choose their own structure, elect their own leaders, share experiences and adopt useful organisational ideas learnt from this sharing.

Having felt the power and pleasure of sharing together in addressing life's concerns, the groups are determined not only to stay together but to expand into other areas of activity. This year they plan to begin an education programme to learn more about themselves, their communities and the world around them, seen through their eyes - the eyes of women.

And so the RED THREAD continues to weave its pattern of beauty.

WOMEN IN SUGAR

At the Encounter mentioned above, Danuta Radzik of RED THREAD introduced and then showed her slide/tape show, "Women in Sugar" (also presented at the WAND/CAFRA Women's History Regional Seminar last October). Rookmin, a retired cane-cutter who is one of the women featured, then talked a little about life in the old days.

She was born in 1923 on the West Coast of Demerara. When she was 5 years old, her father died suddenly, leaving her mother, then in her mid-thirties, with children to provide for. Rookmin started to work when only 10 years old for, as she explained, "School na get money."

Her story has now been published by RED THREAD (who can be contacted Lot B, Houston, East Bank Demerar. The following is an extract:-

THE TANGERINE TREE

And dey had one tangerine tree which na bear. So me mother-in-law say, "Gal, dis tree na bear. You must chop am down".

So me say, "Man, na use me chop down this tree. One day this tree gon bear. It na see people. How it gon bear? When it see people, it gon give flower".

And me go in front de tree and me had me third gal in me belly. And me go and me tell the tree, "Watch! Da old lady a tell me chop you down. But me na gon chop you down. You must bear. You must give flower and bear".

Just so me tell the tree.

And me say, "Watch! Me a get one baby. And before me get baby, you must bear. You must give blossom and bear".

And so me talk and so done.

About three weeks after, me wake up fa cook fa me husband fa he go work. And me smell dis thing how sweet it smell.

And me go wake up me husband from bed.

Me say, "Watch! Get up and go see. Something a smell very sweet under dat tree like something deh".

He say me mad.

Me say, "Well, if me mad, me na go cook and you gon ketch work today with no food".

Well, he go with torchlight dat he does use fa ketch fish in creek with.

He say he see something white, but he na know what.

When me big son get up, he say, "Ma, like dis tree blossom, you know!"

As he say, "It give blossom," me get up.

Me say, "Boy, you grandmother been tell me a chop dis tree. And me na chop it. Me talk to dis tree and tell am it must give blossom and it must bear".

And when dat tree start to give tangerine, it give am big so ... bunch, bunch ... six, seven - one bunch.

And when dat tree start fa bear, me get me gal.

Her Story: Rookmin, Guyanese Woman Sugar Worker - 2, Red Thread, 1988



Drawing by Danuta Radzik

CONFERENCE REPORTS

CONGRESSIONAL STUDY MISSION AND CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN U.S.-CARIBBEAN RELATIONS. Barbados, 6-8 February, 1988

This meeting was a follow-up to the October CBI Symposium, at which I also had the privilege of representing CAFRA.

The women's contingent of four (myself; Earlene Horne of National Farmers' Union, St. Vincent; Peta-Anne Baker of Association of Development Agencies, Jamaica; and Peggy Antrobus of WAND) was this time reduced to three because of Earlene's absence. It was a tribute to the stage of development of the movement and the work we have done that the organisers, congressmen, press and other pannelists commented on the outstanding contribution of the women, despite their small numbers (3 in a panel of 26). As one pannelist remarked, "The three were like twenty, if you were to measure the input and impact on a numerical basis".

Two U.S. bills were presented for the consideration of the panellists. The first was the Gibbons Bill, which addresses trade concerns exclusively, and which was generally referred to in the discussions as 'CBI 2'. It seeks to extend the life of the CBI, increase the number and volume of articles accorded duty-free treatment under the CBI, and restore sugar quotas to levels existing at the time when the CBI went into effect.

The second bill, generally referred to as 'The Crocket Bill' (proper title, "The Caribbean Community Development Act of 1988"), addresses not only trade but also wider issues of development and U.S.-Caribbean relations. Most importantly, it is based on the recommendations made by Caribbean participants at the October meeting, and incorporates all of the major ideas coming out of that meeting. As such, it reflects the efforts the women's contingent made at that meeting to put women at the centre of development concerns; and the need for priority attention to women is explicit in the introductory paragraph of the bill.

Nevertheless, we felt there were areas in which the bill could be strengthened in this respect, and we introduced amendments and re-wordings to direct attention to women's reproductive roles as an issue in development, and to the need for the promotion of gender analysis in research directed at an equitable restructuring of social and economic relations.

We also specifically drew attention to the special plight of women workers, especially in the Free Zone industries whose expansion has been a major feature of the CBI years, and sought the inclusion in the legislation not only of the "extension of internationally-recognised worker rights" by employers, but of penalties to U.S. companies which verbally or in writing intimidated workers against organising on their own behalf, or made the disassociation from trade unions a condition of employment.

Whenever the consensus of the majority came under attack from the minority, we voiced explicitly our support for the consensus of the majority. Thus we were drawn particularly into the defence of a regional rather than a bi-lateral approach by the U.S. to the region; the defence of regional institutions as channels for U.S.-Caribbean relations, rather than private enterprise organisations; the direction of funds towards public institutions and not so exclusively to private companies as presently happens in some cases; and the opposition to the creation by the U.S. of parallel institutions to replace or duplicate those we have created for ourselves.

The need for respect as an essential element in U.S.-Caribbean relations was emphasised, as was the need to stop seeing the economic issues in terms of 'aid', but rather to see them in terms of economic cooperation. The point was made that the U.S. was actually taking more out of the region in dollar terms than it was putting

in, and had been doing this for a long, long time.

The opportunity of the meeting was taken to bring NGO's together to make a joint statement on the Haitian situation. I added CAFRA's support to the statement as I thought it was in line with our principles. Unfortunately, I did not actually participate in the putting-together of it, as I was out of commission at the time because of a bad attack of laryngitis, and was resting to see if I could get my voice back in time for the consultation discussions on U.S.-Caribbean relations.

Joan French

Statement on Haiti

We, the representatives of NGO's within the Caribbean Region, view with alarm the cynicism of those Caribbean governments who though admitting that the January 17, 1988 electoral process in Haiti was seriously flawed, have hastily recognised and pledged support for the new regime. They have extended their contempt for the Haitian people by pleading the cause of the illegitimate president and government. We wish to disassociate ourselves from their position. We are encouraged that other governments have not embraced the notion that "Bad elections are better than no elections at all." We hereby express our deep concerns that the fundamental democratic rights of the Haitian people are being sacrificed to expediency in order to satisfy the needs of a minority of interest groups in and out of the Caribbean.

It must be noted that the government over which Dr. Leslie Manigat will preside is comprised of an overwhelming Duvalierist majority. Hence, any plea to "give Manigat a chance" is virtually a sanction of Duvalierist supremacy which the Haitian people and constitution have totally rejected.

In our view, emphasis should be placed on respect for the popularly endorsed 1987 constitution - the first in Haiti for thirty years. We are concerned that Dr. Manigat has already given indications of where he is heading - towards dictatorial rule.

We are committing ourselves to systematic monitoring of the developments relating to the situation in Haiti, so as to ensure that all possible support is mobilized towards democratic rule.

We urge Caribbean governments to withhold all forms of recognition from the regime in Haiti. We encourage CARICOM to mount a fact-finding mission to Haiti including representatives from the political opposition and Caribbean NGO's. We further urge that the findings from such a mission be used to form a new Caribbean position on Haiti.

Signed:-

Caribbean Human Rights Network (Caribbean Rights)
Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC)
Windward Islands Farmers' Association,
St. Vincent
Folk Research Centre, St. Lucia
Small Projects' Assistance Team (SPAT),
Dominica
Caribbean Project for Justice and
Peace, Puerto Rico
Women and Development Unit (WAND)
Association of Development Agencies,
Jamaica
Caribbean People's Development Agencies
(CARIPEDA)
Caribbean Association for Feminist
Research and Action (CAFRA)
Society for the Promotion of Education
and Research (SPEAR), Belize

Southern Palms Hotel
Christchurch, Barbados
February 6, 1988

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Asian Women Workers' Newsletter 6.4 (December 1987). Committee for Asian Women, 57 Peking Road, 4/F Kowloon, HONG KONG.

Belize Woman 1.5 (December 1987). Belize Rural Women's Association, 37 Nanche Street, P.O. Box 196, Belmopan, BELIZE.

DAGENAIS, Huguette. "L'apport méconnu des femmes à la vie économique et sociale aux Antilles: le cas de la Guadeloupe: note de recherche." Anthropologie et Sociétés 8 (1984): 179-187. (Offprint)

_____. "Méthodologie féministe et anthropologie: une alliance possible." Anthropologie et Sociétés 11 (1987): 19-44. (Offprint)

Hotline 5 (December 1987). Rape Crisis Centre, The Catholic Centre, 31 Independence Square, Port of Spain, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

Mujeres en acción 10 (December 1987). Isis Internacional, Casilla 2067, Correo Central, Santiago, CHILE.

Quehaceres 7.10 (October 1987); 7.13 (January 1988); 8.2 (February 1988). Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina (CIPAF), Calle Benigno Filomino Rojas, no. 37, Santo Domingo, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

Sistren 9.3 (1987): Special issue on Sexual Violence. Sistren Theatre Collective, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, JAMAICA.

Spearhead 1.4 (Nov/Dec 1987); 2.1 (February, 1988). SPEAR, P.O. Box 571, Belize City, BELIZE.

Woman Speak! 22 (June 1987): Special issue on Belize. Women and Development Unit, Extra-Mural Dept., U.W.I., Pinelands, St. Michael, BARBADOS.

Women in Action 3 (September 1987). Isis International, Via San Saba

5, Interno 1, 00153 Rome, ITALY.

Woman 2000 2 (1987): Special issue on Women and Drug Abuse. Branch for the Advancement of Women, Centre for Social Development & Humanitarian Affairs, Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, AUSTRIA.

BOOKS, MONOGRAPHS, ETC.

Ad Hoc Group on Equal Rights for Women at the VIC. Human Rights: Women's Rights and Development: Proceedings of a Meeting ... Vienna International Centre, Vienna, 8 March 1982. (Photocopy).

EICHLER, Magrit. Les six péchés capitaux sexistes. Québec: Université Laval, Groupe de recherche et d'échange multidisciplinaires féministes, 1985. (Les Cahiers de recherche du GREMF, 6).

MARLIN, Patricia A. Selected Funding Sources for Women, Health and Development in the Americas. Washington D.C.: PAHO/WHO, n.d.

RADZIK, Danuta and Rookmin. Her Story: Rookmin. Houston, E.B.D., Guyana: Red Thread, 1988. (Guyanese Sugar Worker 2).

ROBINSON, Nelcia. Melée: A Collection of Poems. Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines: The Author, n.d.

_____. Pictures Remain: A Collection of 12 Poems. Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines: The Author, 1987.

Université Laval. Groupe de recherche multidisciplinaire féministe. Approches et méthodes de la recherche féministe: actes du colloque. Québec: Université Laval, Groupe de recherche multidisciplinaire féministe, 1986.

LIONHEART GAL: Life Stories of Jamaican Women

SISTREN with Honor Ford-Smith, ed.

Lionheart Gal is a brave and necessary piece of work which Caribbean women in particular should stand up and salute. It is the first Caribbean articulation of the daily struggle in the lives of individual women by those women themselves.

These life stories are crafted with a rhythm and a coherence which makes them simple and readable. But such simplicity is deceptive: the practised eye and skill at selection and editing are the tools that pull them into focus. And that such a "seeing eye" belongs to the editor, Honor Ford-Smith, is never in doubt. From the detailed and analytical introduction to the arrangement of the tales in the book, it is clear that a securely-grounded artist is at work. There is evidence of an eye for order, for effective rendering and a practical approach to stage direction which keeps the whole object of artistic endeavour in full view at all times.

Of the contributions themselves, the Sistren whose lives these are, the most striking chord is that of a bare-faced honesty which can only have come out of a real confidence in themselves, allowing them to take such a risk. We are who we are, and whatever that is, we are worthwhile, these stories proclaim. Not a common or an easy virtue, in my experience, among women anywhere. Has this confrontational act of BEING come out of Sistren's work over the ten-year period that the group has been in existence? The facts suggest this, in itself a remarkable achievement.

Ford-Smith's introduction explains that the stories explore the two images of woman in the Caribbean woman's psyche: the warrior and the nanny. Because these images are opposed, common and contradictory, they are to be found in almost every single one of these life histories. "Rebel Pickney", for all of its undaunted spirit, ends upon a reflective note deeply concerned with woman as mother and nurturer. "Criss Miss" and "Rock Stone a River Bottom No Know Sun Hot" are bewildered, groping attempts by young girls without real information to find a footing in the world. Their

errors, made in isolation, are compounded by repetition of familiar behaviour. And they emerge, scathed but alive and certain of the worth of their own painful experiences. And in "Grandma's Estate", the woman reflects on her grandmother's life:

'Grandma, you miscalculated,' I thought, for she

had failed to bargain for change ... it was relatively easy to promise myself that I would try to challenge every social convention in which her world had tried to imprison me. (pp 196-97).

All these stories are individual authentic accounts of what life consists of for these Jamaican women. Not one can be left out of the reckoning.

The language used is Jamaican creole, but it is rendered in a system of spelling which, we are told, is a mixture of phonetic spelling, English spelling and that which has become



accepted through usage. The non-Caribbean reader may have some difficulty at first, because the initial impact of the speech as a different language, not English, is strong. Reading the text aloud until one grows accustomed to the sound system is an easy solution. The reader is also helped considerably by the scrupulous attention to consistency in the spelling.

Lionheart Gal does more than the telling of the life histories of the women included here. It is literally a telling of the story from the inside - the home truths, the shameful facts, the fears, hopes, dreams, conflicts, and above all, the isolation in which

these issues must be sorted out and resolved. The very existence of this book is a step out of that isolation and into a community where experiences can be shared. This collection is one of the concrete products of the Caribbean feminist movement. As a step forward for women everywhere, it is of no small significance.

Ramabai Espinet

Lionheart Gal by Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith

London: Women's Press, 1986

North American edition: Sister Vision Black Women and Women of Colour Press, 1987.

CAFRA REGIONAL MINI MEET

CAFRA members attending the WAND/CAFRA Women's History seminar last October in Barbados took the opportunity to hold a meeting. Those present were Cynthia Ellis and Diane Haylock (Belize); Joan French (Jamaica); Nan Peacocke (St. Vincent); and Rhoda Reddock, Ramabai Espinet, Stephanie Pile and Tina Johnson (Trinidad and Tobago). Also attending to find out more about the Association were Danuta Radzik (Guyana), and Shaheba Ali and Rowena Kalloo (Trinidad and Tobago).

An introduction to CAFRA was given for the benefit of non-members, followed by an update on the various projects in which the Association is involved. The problems of CAFRA as a regional organisation were discussed, and the need expressed for the role of National Representatives to be defined and clarified. It was seen as essential to develop the Association's institu-

tional framework to make it really work and respond to the needs of women in the region, bridging the language barriers.

It was recognised that there was a pressing need to have a full-time office staff to administer the projects. It was generally agreed that, if the administration was not to be overwhelmed, there should be a temporary brake put on commitments, with no new projects being undertaken in the immediate future.

It was felt that funding strategies needed to be discussed, possibly at a special regional meeting. There was a suggestion that one basic document could be prepared and used in a number of ways.

Copies of the minutes of the meeting were sent to National Representatives.

Meetings · Courses · Fellowships · Etc.

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) offers small grants for operational and behavioural studies of maternal nutrition and health in developing countries. For a description of this programme, contact: Joanne Leslie, ICRW, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20036, USA.

Radcliffe College and the Carnegie Corporation of New York are pleased to announce a fellowship programme at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute, open to mid-career and senior women (applicants from the Caribbean are particularly encouraged). During the fellowship appointment, the recipient must work on her project and give a major public lecture at Radcliffe College. For more information, and application forms, write: The Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College, 34 Concord Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138, USA.

The World Bank Volunteer Services announces the Margaret McNamara Memorial Fund Grant, a one-time award of approximately US \$3,000, awarded to a woman from a developing country pursuing further education at an accredited school in the U.S. with the intention of returning to her own country within 2 years. For information and application forms, contact: WBVS Office, Room I 1-172, The World Bank, 1818 H Street N.W., Washington DC 20433, USA.

April

First International Conference on Women Writers of the English-Speaking Caribbean, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, USA, 8-10 April. The main objective of the conference is to bring Caribbean women writers together to discuss their work and establish them as a major area for literary study. Among writers expected to attend are Merle Collins, Erna Brodber, Zee Edgell, Merle Hodge, Paula Marshall and Jamaica Kincaid. CAFRA Secretariat member, Rhoda Reddock, will present a paper entitled: "Feminism, Nationalism and the Early Women's Movement in the English-speaking Caribbean (with Special Reference to Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago)".

Fourth CARICOM Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis, 24-29 April. At this meeting Dame Nita Barrow of Barbados, will be awarded the CARICOM triennial award for women.

June

Third International Feminist Book Fair, 14-19 June, University of Montreal. The Book Fair provides a unique opportunity for feminists to network and discover each other's work while, at the same time, making feminist authors known to a wider audience. The Fair will be bilingual (English/French) but some of the events planned will be held in Spanish. A series of seminars, panels, workshops and readings by both internationally renowned authors and new writers will take place throughout the fair. Three theme days have been chosen: Memory, Power, and Strategies for Feminist Thought. For those who wish to plan a vacation around the fair, there are plenty of things to do in and around Montreal. The International Women's Film Festival takes place the week before the Book Fair and the annual International Jazz Festival is being held just after it. For further information write to: Third International Feminist Book Fair, 4060, boul. St-Laurent, Suite 204, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H2W 1Y9.

July

Conference and Festival on the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the East Indian Presence in the Caribbean. Festival: 2 July. Holiday Inn, (downtown) Toronto, Canada, featuring dance, drama, exhibits and poetry readings. Conference: 6-10 July, York University, North York, Ontario, Canada. Keynote speakers are: Dr. Cheddi Jagan of Guyana and Mr. Basdeo Panday of Trinidad and Tobago. For more information write to: York/Indo-Caribbean Studies, Rm. 337 Bethune College, York University, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3.

Women, Households and Development: Building a Data Base, an international workshop to be held at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA, 11-22 July. This workshop designed for government and academic re-

searchers and for professional workers and educators in developing countries who need data on women and households for programme planning purposes. It deals with concepts and techniques for collecting and analyzing data on women in developing countries, in their multiple roles in the household, work-place and community. All instruction and readings will be in English. A limited number of partial scholarships will be available to participants from developing countries. Write to: Dr. Frances Magrabi, 274 Bevier Hall, 905 S. Goodwin Ave., Urbana, IL 61801, USA.

October

Second Caribbean International Peoples Book-fair and Bookfair Festival, Trinidad and Tobago, 16-30 October. The main focus of the second bookfair and festival will be the process of economic, social and political transformation of the Caribbean and Third World societies. For further information

contact: David Abdulah or Donna Coombs-Montrose, c/o Oilfield Workers' Trade Union, Paramount Bldg., Circular Rd., San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago.

Call for Papers

Second Conference of Caribbean Economists July 1989. Theme: The Caribbean Economy of the 1990s. Papers will deal with the following subjects: the world economy and the Caribbean; theoretical issues and Caribbean economic strategies of survival of Caribbean PEOPLE (our emphasis); issues of national economic management; and alternative development for the Caribbean. Deadlines:

ABSTRACTS: 30 June 1988

ACCEPTANCE: 30 September 1988

PAPERS: 31 March 1989

Contact: Norman Girvan, Consortium Graduate School of the Social Sciences, UWI, Mona, Kingston 7, Jamaica; OR Judith Wedderburn, F.E.S., P.O. Box 735, Kingston 8, Jamaica.

LAST WORDS

REGIONAL MEETING

A big regional CAFRA meeting in November, to be held in Barbados, is in the planning stages. It will be appended to WAND's 10th Anniversary celebrations and should last a minimum of 2 days. We hope to present the results of the on-going Women in Caribbean Agriculture project, and a published Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry, in addition to the business of a full general meeting. So, start looking around for funding to get yourself there - and start sending in suggestions for the programme.

FEMINIST ENCUESTRO

A co-ordinating team based in the Dominican Republic is planning the 'first Feminist Meeting of the Caribbean Isles' to be held in that country in the summer of 1989. They are interested in being in contact with individuals and groups around the Caribbean to get suggestions and recommendation. Please write to Nirvana, Sergia and Maria Isabel, Apartado Postal 482-9, Los Jardines, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

I.W.D. CELEBRATIONS

The next issue of CAFRA News will focus on the celebration of International Women's Day in the region. Please send reports, photographs, drawings, etc.

SKILLS BANK

Members are asked to send in their C.V.'s as soon as possible to CAFRA, to establish a Skills Bank.

CAFRA

CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION

We are an organisation of feminist researchers and activists committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of exploitation in the society and who are working actively to change this situation.

Members of CAFRA define feminist politics as both a matter of consciousness and of action.

PRIORITY RESEARCH/ ACTION AREAS

PRIORITY AREAS FOR RESEARCH

- (i) The Caribbean Basin Initiative.
- (ii) Population Control Policies in the Caribbean.
- (iii) Peace in the Caribbean.
- (iv) History of women's labour and struggle in the region.
- (v) Women's cultural expression as an instrument for the building of power.
- (vi) Sexual violence.
- (vii) Women and trade.
- (viii) Social and Economic conditions of women.
- (ix) Women in Caribbean Agriculture
- (x) Caribbean family forms:— history, present trends and future directions.
- (xi) Women in Caribbean Literature.
- (xii) A directory of feminists and female professionals in the Caribbean region.
- (xiii) Examination of existing feminist theory as developed in Europe and the U.S.A., and its application to the Caribbean situation.

STRUCTURE OF CAFRA

1. The Secretariat
 - (a) The Executive
Co-ordinator - Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen
Admin. Assistant - Tina Johnson
 - (b) The Committee
 - Ramabai Espinet
 - Patricia Mohammed
 - Gaietry Pargass
 - Stephanie Pile
 - Rhoda Reddock
 - Cathy Shepherd
 - Gemma Tang Nain
2. The National Representatives
 - Barbados - Kathleen Drayton
 - Belize - Diane Haylock
 - Dominica - Noreen John
 - Dominican Republic - Magaly Piñeda
 - Guyana - Indra Chandarpal
 - Jamaica - Joan French
 - Martinique - Lilliane Marchal
 - St. Lucia - Alicia Mondesire
 - St. Vincent - Nelcia Robinson
 - Trinidad and Tobago - Gemma Tang Nain

In the following countries, CAFRA has members but no appointed National Representatives: Anguilla, Bahamas, Curaçao, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, St. Christopher/Nevis, St. Croix, St. Maarten, Suriname.

There are Associate Members in Canada, England, The Netherlands and U.S.A.

MEMBERSHIP

Open to Caribbean women within the region who support CAFRA's general aims and objectives. Caribbean women living abroad may join as Associate Members.

Annual Membership Fee

Individuals: U.S.\$10.00

Organisations: U.S.\$15.00

(Payable by cheque or money order in U.S.\$ or equivalent local currency).