

SIREN

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WOMEN, RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

- GOD AS FEMALE ?
- ON THE FRONTLINE
- REFORM RAPE & INCEST LAWS

V.15 #1/2, 1993
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SISTREN OUT DEH!

WORKSHOP

Sistren visited Canada at the invitation of the Women's Studies Programme of the University of Toronto to conduct a series of workshops for the Women's Studies Department and other communities and groups outside the University.

Topics included: Race Class and Gender Conflict, Anti-Racism, Violence against Women, Structural Adjustment, Culture Autobiography - Oral History and Popular Theatre. Women's Health - Reproductive Rights, Our Bodies, and Who Chooses.

Honor Ford-Smith, Lana Finikin, Myrtle Thompson-Rose, (Bess) from Sistren, and Annie Blake from Groundwork Theatre Company facilitated the workshops.

Some groups and organisations which participated are: Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers Rights, City of Toronto - Equal Opportunity Division, Women's Health in Women's Hands and the United Way of Greater Toronto. Sistren also worked with two popular theatre groups, Theatre In The Rough and Jamaica Canada Women's Programme Sojourner Truth Theatre.

One of the Special events marking International Women's Day at the City Hall was a panel discussion on "Women and Work".

A reading for the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Programme of York University was also presented by Sistren from the Lionheart Gal book, this presentation was followed by a

discussion. Nineteen workshops in all were conducted during the Canada visit.

Through-out the two and a half weeks tour, Sistren gained a lot of knowledge on several issues including new ideas which will enhance their international work especially on Racism. Responding to its work most groups said they will use Sistren's methods in their own work. They promised to keep the organisation informed of their progress.

Marion Bernard - attended the international conference on Racism and Inter-Cultural work in Europe. Her participation was made possible through the Women's Foundation and the office of the Cultural Cooperation.

Beverley Hanson participated in the WAND Strategic Meeting in Barbados - part of WAND's evaluation activities.

MEETING PLACE

Sistren finally put in place a Board of Directors. Appreciation is extended to members - Rebecca Knowles, Jerline Todd, Taynla Nethersole.

All the best Sistren. The Collective's Meeting Place is now undergoing "Face-lift" operations. Sistren hopes that re-arranging office will not cause major inconveniences to those we serve.

Sistren Artistic team - now rehearsing a new play Kulchafushan. Soon to be on the road - will first be travelling to rural communities.

PASSING THROUGH

Diane Saible of Inter Pares, Catherine Hyatt of Oxfam (two funding Agency Representatives) visited Sistren's office for an update on it's

activities. The activities were viewed in a drama piece presented in a Sistren International Workshop setting at the office.

SPECIAL THANKS

To Ann Hodges - who is very instrumental in the 'Face-lift' operations of the office.

To the painters, Messers Jones, Samuels, Austin and all others who have been very busy with the construction work aimed at giving the office a new look.



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The Women's Crisis Centre

CRISIS CENTRE UPDATE

Year	1991	1992
Rape	105	156
Incest	52	78
Domestic Violence	235	360
Domestic Crisis	855	1351
Shelter	50	123
Repeat	879	347
Other	1177	1032
Sexual Harassment		6
Total	3353	3453

The Women's Crisis Centre in Kingston continues to provide a haven for abused women. The centre which provides counselling and support to women who suffer domestic violence especially sexual abuse, was set up in 1984. Here is provided an update of the statistics relating to phone calls and office visits with which the centre has assisted. Sistren Vol. 13 No. 2 and 3, 1991 has details on the activities of the Women's Crisis Centre.

Sistren is produced three times a year by the Sistren Theatre Collective as part of its ongoing efforts to highlight issues of concern to women in the society. Sistren is a non-profit making collective of women. Other activities include theatre, workshops using Drama-in-Education methodology, and research. Sistren has also experimented with film and video and produced a book of members' life stories, Lionheart Gal. Sistren Textiles is the group's income-earning project. Contact: 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica, West Indies. Tel: (809) 92-9247/92-96171.

ACQUAINTED



Carmen Nerissa Hanson

SISTREN PROFILE

Carmen the mother of five is the Administrative Assistant at Sistren's office. She came to Sistren with a feminist perspective and the urge to empower women, particularly those of the working class.

Miss Hanson has been an active member of three groups in her community. Secretary to one, she was instrumental in keeping all of them together. Basically these groups organised women involved in the political parties at the community level particularly at election time. The groups also wanted to deal with the problems of it's members and

the other people living in the community. This was O.K. for awhile, but after assessing the women's involvement against the benefits and problems, the groups discovered that their particular issues were not being addressed.

After the 1980 Elections the activities of the groups changed and meetings became fruitless. "Is like all the effort we put into the groups went in vain. It was then that I decided to try and find a women's group to be a part of, I checked with Sistren but at

cont'd on pg 15.

PERSONAL NOTES

CONGRATULATIONS: to Workshop Team member **Beverley Edwards** on the birth of her bouncing baby boy. ☞ To **Ann Hodges** on the arrival of her new baby "It's a boy". ☞ To **Karen Harriot**, JSD graduate and professional actress: a girl. ☞ To **Cherry Turner**, of St. Peter Claver Women's Housing Cooperative, a girl.

WELCOME: **Marion Bernard** to her new role as Managing Director of Sistren - making new things happen. It is not an easy task. Changes, changes... to deal with dem, to tek dem on we haffe try something new, we haffe tek we strength an build we courage and set we eye pon something new, something strong, something to last long.

APPRECIATION: for recent launching of the "Hazel Byfield Scholarship Fund" to benefit students from the Kingston Technical High School.

CONDOLENCES: to **Dawnette Hinds** who plays 'Josie' in our new production **Kulchafushan**. She lost her baby brother **Maurice** recently. "He was so close to me, I'll miss him badly". 'Josie', although we cannot bring relief we do share in your grief. May the memories of the good times be with you always. ☞ To **Rev. Oliver Daley** who lost his loving wife. "You have lost a beautiful part of your life, but for the good of others you will always strive".

MOVING AROUND: **Hilary Nicholson**, Long time member of Sistren, has been working part-time with Women Development Studies at UWI. She also assists filmmaker **Cynthia Wilmot**. Cynthia and Hilary recently completed the training video "Gender Analysis in Planning a New Approach" for the Bureau of Womens Affairs. ☞ **Annie Blake**, is busy at Groundwork Theatre Company coordinating the Schools Theatre Programme and stage-managing a number of productions on the local theatre scene. ☞ **Imani Tafari Ama**, is home (welcome back!) and also at Ground-work in the community Animation Programme.

SPECIAL WELCOME: to actresses **Dawnette Hinds**, **Maxine Osbourne** and **Gracia**, who have joined the Sistren Theatre "Kulchafushan" Team.

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GOD'S GREATNESS TRANSCENDS MALE & FEMALE

The challenge to make God reflect the oneness of mankind is what faces those who are struggling for the advancement of women in the Church.

The process of growth and development is inevitably characterized by changes. The changes may result in gradual, often imperceptible movements or may be radical and dramatic. Whatever the manifestation what is important is that higher levels of performance are achieved.

It is from this perspective that once again Sistren was forced to delay publication of its magazine, for this we apologise. The extensive evaluation of the Organisations work is now complete and Sistren Research & Publications which is now responsible for the publication of the magazine is reorganizing to serve you better. We wish, therefore to be held to the commitment that in addition to this Issue you will receive the remaining two issues for 1993 thus putting us back on track. Once again our apologies.

This Issue focuses on the role women play in religion and spirituality. In this regard the Magazine has joined the debate triggered by the decision of the Church of England to ordain women to the priesthood. Sistren takes a look at the undisputed fact that women make up the bulk of the membership in most religious and spiritual organisations. With a few exceptions they may equally participate in pastoral work and undertake the bulk of church chores. But why in the main are they confined to being 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'? As one writer asks are they no more than ecclesiastical domestics? Would the church not collapse if one day women were to leave? Why is this large constituency at the 'bottom' not reflected at the levels of leadership.

The absence of more women at the top levels of leadership in religion and spiritual organisations is blamed on tradition. A tradition which is rooted in the interpretation of the scriptures which seek to identify women in the role of villain. Liberation Theology among other things is challenging this interpretation, and correctly so. It provides the basis for appreciating God's greatness which transcends male and female. Is there any doubt that all of mankind will benefit when the other half is allowed to give of their fullest? The challenge to make God reflect the oneness of mankind is what faces those who are struggling for the advancement of women in the Church.

The numeric dominance of women in the congregations provide them with a tremendous source of potential feminist power. Power not only to overcome but to organise for issues facing women in the wider society. The question is do they sufficiently recognize this and are willing to organise among their membership to realize this potential?

In some other instances there are outstanding female leaders in religious organisations whose positions defy this tradition. Some of them provide our readers with a wonderful insight into how they arrived at those positions and how they are organising to make God less gender specific.

Sistren in this issue also looks at the proposed reforms of the rape and incest laws, speaks with three female artists and brings back several of your popular requests.

Enjoy the issue and do not hesitate to let us have your comments. ♀

REFLECTIONS ON:

FEMINISM AND CHRISTIANITY

by Rev. Marjorie Lewis-Cooper

I experienced my four year old daughter pointing to a picture of the Statue of Liberty and saying, "Mummy, that is God" . . . My mother, a Protestant, in times of crisis when only the female face of Christ will suffice saying, "Hail Mary full of Grace. . ." . . . Still remembered phrases of Woman's self-worth, woman's independence and woman's power echo in my ears. . . "You must hold up yu head girl." . . . I became one with my late great-grandmother who could heal with prayers, the touch of her hands and herbs . . . I became one with the Christianity and cultures which make her reluctant to speak of these powers as people think that maroons work obeah. . ."

This type of reflection is in the tradition that many Christian women studying theology now adopt. These women are usually part of the broad school of liberation theology into which is incorporated "feminist theology" and "womanist theology." Liberation theology reads the bible from the point of view of those oppressed because of race, class, gender, political and economic systems, and relates the Bible's message of deliverance to the specific situations of oppression. The need for justice is recognised as a prerequisite for peace and wholeness of community (Shalom).

Women have been concerned that Christianity in many forms and expressions seems to have sanctified patriarchy (male domination). The language used in the church suggests that God is a man, and often woman is portrayed as the evil temptress (Eve, Delilah), leading men to ruin; as persons to be tolerated in subordinate roles, submissive to husbands and silent in church. Many women with a feminist outlook have opted to leave the church, which seems to offer them no affirmation of self worth, and limited scope to exercise leadership roles.

Other feminists have remained within the church and engaged in Biblical research.

They are rewriting church history to recover the female images of God in the Bible. They are telling the stories of the mothers of the faith, who made contributions throughout the history of Christianity.

Attention has been paid to the language and symbols of the faith. The word used for spirit in the Old Testament - "ruach", is feminine, "wisdom", one of God's attributes, is portrayed as a woman. One of the words used in the Old Testament to mean God, "Elohim", combines masculine and feminine constructs . . . thus suggesting that God encompasses both female and male. Jesus used the image of a woman sweeping to find a lost coin to describe God.

The point of this research is not to replace a male God with a female goddess, but to seek to appreciate God's greatness - a greatness that incorporates and transcends "male" and "female" and which presents a reality that can strike a familiar chord with the totality of human existence. Efforts have been made to use inclusive language in reference to God and to members of the Christian community, not all of whom feel comfortable being called "brethren".

Women have also sought to reclaim their image as persons of worth and dignity, created in God's image as equal in status and responsibility to their male counterparts. "So God created human beings, making them to be like Himself. He created them male and female and blessed them . ." (Gen. 1:27)

They note that in Luke's Gospel it is re-

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corded that Jesus also had women as disciples and that he affirmed women in many ways - talking to those who were ostracised by society, offering a healing touch to those deemed ritually unclean, and revealing the truth of his resurrection first to women.

This new way of reading the Bible has fuelled the debate on the issue of ordination of women to the priesthood. While some churches still resist, mainly on grounds of tradition, women in the church celebrate Biblical role models like Huldah the prophetess, Junia the Apostle, Phoebe the Deacon, Mary and the others who received the message of the Resurrection and told the good news to the male disciples. Women rewriting church history identify role models like Julian of Norwich in the Middle Ages and Theresa of Avilla, a 16th Century Carmelite nun, whose response to the suffering by the restrictions placed on her finds echoes in many hearts in the 20th Century . . .

"When thou wert in the world, Lord, thou didst not despise women but didst always help them and show them great compassion. Thou find more faith and no less love in them than in men . . . Lord . . . thou are a righteous judge, not like the judges in the world who being after all men and sons of Adam refuse to consider any woman's virtue as above suspicion. Yes my King, but

cont'd on pg. 15

LEADERS, HEALERS AND MEMBERS

by Barry Chevannes



In the religious tradition of the Jamaican people women occupy an important place, serving as spiritual leaders, healers and members.

The main religion in Jamaica is, believe it or not Revivalism. Most people are members of the Church of God, Baptist, Anglican, Catholic, Pentecostal and scores of other denominations. Despite the teachings of these denominations, however, most people in their daily lives believe in and act out some of the fundamental beliefs and practices of Revival, a religion more than 200 years old.

Revival is divided into two traditions: Revival Zion and Pukumina (which the whites and coloureds tried to discredit with the name "Pocomania").

In Revival there is a deep tradition of women serving as healers. Healing requires the gift of being able to divine. A good healer does not wait to be told what is wrong, but is able to tell the patient what is wrong. Healing also requires a soft touch, a gentle and winning approach, qualities that are associated more with women than men. Alexander Bedward, for example, was one of the greatest Revival healers, but it was as a preacher that he gained the greatest fame. Mammy Forbes, his con-

temporary, was best known as a healer, rather than as a preacher. After she died, her daughter, Mother Rita, received the gift and carried on the tradition until her death not long ago.

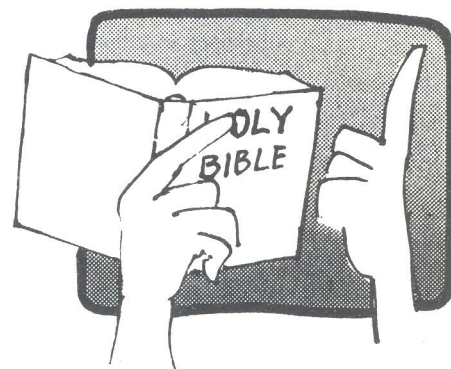
And so it continues today that while many of the great healers are men, many more are women. According to one scholar the reason for this is that the art of healing is much more in keeping with nurturing and caring, activities that are socially associated with the role of women in domestic life.

Resistance to the ordination of women serving as spiritual leaders is found mainly among the European denominations, Protestant and Catholic, whose theologies reflect this bias. Jamaican religious tradition, however, allows for women to serve as leaders, that is the highest authorities in their particular religion. Some are founders, others rise to become Mothers of their congregations. In Kingston today two of the leading Revival Bishops are women whose leadership is accepted by males.

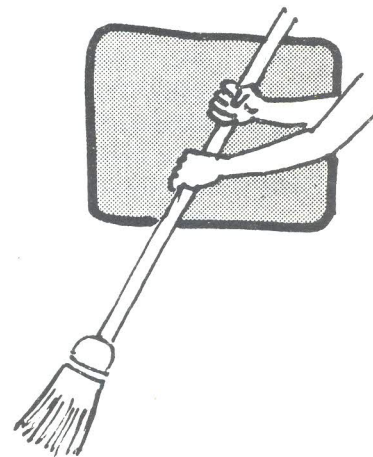
Nevertheless, Jamaicans seem to associate the role of preacher with males rather than females. Great female preachers, like the Reverend Carmen Stewart, are the exception rather than the rule. Even where women are the founders and spiritual leaders of Revival churches, the role of Pastor is often reserved for males.

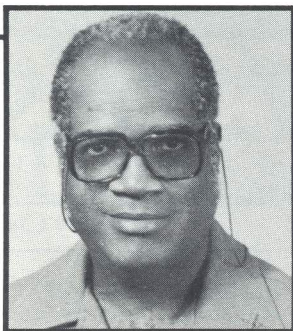
Why is this so? A possible explanation may be found by examining the cultural practices associated with the spoken word. Word games like the 'dozens' for example, are predominantly male and so are the traditional forums for displaying artistry with words — rum bars, street corners and other public places. Add to that the traditional gender division of labour: women as the managers of the home, men the mediators between the home and the world outside; or as a Rastaman once expressed it, the woman is the Minister of the Interior, the man the

Foreign Minister. Preaching as artistic public speech is thus defined as a male role. That is why in the 'Drop Pan' numbers game the number for pulpit is the same as the number for penis. This tradition is reinforced by the rise of the male DJ over the last 25 years.



A striking feature of religious practice in Jamaica (and most countries, except Islamic) is the predominance of women over men, in far greater proportion than their share of the population. Only among the Dreadlocks Rastafari do men outnumber women. Alternately, among non church-going people men outnumber women by as much as two to one.





by Rev. Herbert "Herb" Panton

What would happen if on Sunday morning, women everywhere were to boycott church services? What would happen indeed! The question has been raised every now and then, usually in jest, but when

one considers that within almost any Christian church or denomination, women have always made up the most active element in terms of human resource, service, and active membership, then it becomes a serious one. Whether one thinks of the choir, the linen and vestments, the general appearance of the church building, or the Sunday congregation, women make up the majority of those who contribute labour, talent and presence.

What has been the role of women in the church? Have they really had any role apart from that mentioned above? Have they been no more than glorified ecclesiastical domestics who take care of the laundry and the choir?

Even in churches where women have traditionally been involved at every level, including that of leadership, one often finds that they are utilised in activities considered to be women's work and concerns. In some churches women are excluded from ordination, but have in some cases been grudgingly allowed to participate in certain aspects of the liturgy traditionally the part of male church members.

In the last 10 years women have voiced strong concerns about a number of factors. One of these is their place in the church. Another is the evident male-oriented approach in terms of activities. They have questioned insensitivity with respect to policy and statements, the language used in prayer, rituals and services, and the general place of subservience allotted to them, more often than not using the Bible as justification.

Liberation Theology has created a space for the consideration of women from the point of view of equality. Slowly, some churches are accepting women for ordination.

I perceive that the gender issue is moving towards the top of the churches' agenda. Women have become more insistent, persistent and vocal, while a number of men have cast their marginalised persons. All of this is long overdue. The combined strength of sensitised women and enlightened men must surely signal the moment for the powers-that-be in church circles to realise that women have a role in church, a radical, integral and meaningful one at every level, including leadership and policy-making.



Rev. Herb Panton is a Roman Catholic Priest with over 30 years experience. He works in the development community

LEADERS, HEALERS...

cont'd from pg. 7

In our religious tradition, women serve in virtually all capacities: evangelists, missionaries, deacons, ushers, secretaries. If women as a group were to withdraw their membership all churches would cease to function as viable social entities and many would go out of existence altogether. This is a great source of potential feminist power, though up to now little use has been made of it.

Jamaica is repeatedly described as a religious country. However little recognition has been given to the fact that it is the activity and support of women that is primarily responsible for this. In this respect women play a major role in the maintenance of values shaped by religion. One such is orientation to this world. In the Revival outlook there is no dichotomy between this world and the next. Among the European religions the next life is seen as that world where everything that is not right about this one will be rectified: justice to the unjust, happiness to the unhappy, and so on. This is the source of the "pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die" teaching that so many European churches are now trying to discard. However, in the Jamaican tradition, God's justice, His reward and love are made manifest in this life. In this life He showers His blessing; in this life does He bring retribution on the wicked. People therefore do not necessarily associate wealth and riches with evil, though they recognise that many riches are ill-gotten. Honestly acquired wealth is a blessing of God for which the blessed should be thankful.

Such beliefs make religion a potent force in the drive of the people for self improvement and upward mobility. As the leading social force in religion women are therefore the leading force in self-improvement. That is why they sacrifice so much for their children's education; that is why they themselves are so much quicker than men to avail themselves of the opportunities for advancement.

Barry Chevannes is a lecturer at the University of the West Indies.

KULCHAFUSHAN



"Ma Dell" representing traditional values

SISTREN Theatre Collective is back on the road with a new play "KULCHAFUSHAN". As usual very topical, realistically presented and dealing with conflict and its resolution in the wider society. In this instance the conflict of the old versus the new is represented by a clash of the cultures, of "Folklore vs Dance Hall". There is no sparing the lyrics and the motion and at times fans will wonder whether they are at a stage show of DJs or a drama presentation.

Kulchafushan deals with the "...interfacing of traditional values with modern day thinking." The audience is confronted with 'Josie' a granddaughter who wants to plunge head on into today's world represented by dance hall and the material trappings that it brings - big house, benz, dish and 'cellula'. On the other hand there is the powerful influence of her grandmothers one of whom is determined to protect her and the other who encourages her adventure. 'Josie' is bent on escaping the poverty which her mother suffered before her.

The launching of Kulchafusion was short and spicy. After the serving of Kulcha cocktails at SISTREN's office on April 29 Dr. Carolyn Cooper of the University of the West Indies briefly outlined to a small but appreciative audience the nature of the play and the social context in which it was set. Next came the first scene, a preview by 'MA DELL' (Lillian Foster) who identifies the characters, the roles they will play and the basis for conflict in the unfolding drama.

The audience witnesses the temptation Josie faces with the attraction of Dance Hall and the painful exchange between her grandmother and herself as she departs the traditional life.

Then, **participatory theatre at its best** as Dr. Cooper gets comments from the audience relating to their understanding of the conflicts being enacted on stage. Who is right or wrong, does dance hall represent a new level of slackness, how different is the current dance/music from kumina, dinki



"Junior" the predecessor, present day values

mini or Bob Marley's love songs? Are the differences real or imagined? Are the seeds of the dance-hall culture to be found in traditional values? Can these two cultures fuse? The meaning and value is not whether we can appreciate dance-hall, but can our young find true meaning and viable solutions to life's problems in this way?

As Sistren puts it in the introduction to the play "As life in the dance-hall of modern day realities pose new problems and choices, she (Josie) tries to achieve equilibrium... and walk the tight-rope with a balancing pole of old and new values above a treacherous and deceptive 'sink hole' in which lurks vile and unscrupulous double-dealers."

After a rural community tour, Kingston audiences will once again benefit from Sistren's excellent performance.

Directed by Pablo Hoilett who studied theatre at the Jamaica School of Drama and the Banff School of Fine Arts in the Alberta, Canada the play will have you seriously reflecting on the current state of our society and the resolution of its conflicts as well as provide you with hilarious laughter. Created collectively with final script by Owen "Blacka" Ellis. The play draws on the ideas of Lorna Goodison and Olive Senior. The original script, which has been significantly revised, was done by Pat Cumper. The stage is simple, inexpensively and creatively done thanks to Sistren's Lana Finikin who is also the Production and Stage Manger.

The nine member cast is equally qualified featuring SISTREN's traditional actresses with years of experience to their credit as well as some new faces. Rebecca Knowles (Becky) plays Towsa/Bagaback; Lillian Foster ("Ma Dell"); Afoloshade (Bibsie Loo, Radio DJ, M.C., World Tour) she alternates with Maxine Osbourne; Dawnette Hinds ("Josie"); Garcia Thompson (Junior) alternates with Beverly Hanson; Joy Erskine on Drums and Jerline Todd ("Chorus") and wardrobe mistress. Lights by Claff Browning and graphics by Mbala.

Rebecca, Lillian, Bev., Joy, Jerline and Lana have all been with SISTREN since the beginning and have participated in former productions.

Outstanding Pastor, Mother and Friend

You lose count of the awards... the plaques, trophies and citations, the cheery photographs of family and friends. You are in a sea of goodwill and you feel the waves of humility flowing... One plaque reads "In recognition for her years of outstanding Leadership, Devotion and Love as our Pastor, Mother and Friend."

You are in the church office of Rev. Carmen Lois Stewart, Pastor of the Pentecostal Gospel Temple, Custos of St. Andrew, Educator, Community worker and founding member of the group of organisers of the annual National Prayer Breakfast, recipient of Prime Minister's Award, Kingston 300 awardee and Honorary Lion of the New Kingston Lions.

Sistren recently exchanged thoughts with Rev. Stewart about her leadership as a female pastor, the role of women in the church and the challenges they face, as well as the changes she would like to see among church women.

She occupies the highest position in the Pentecostal Gospel Temple, with a membership of over 1,000, eight affiliate churches in Kingston, St. Andrew and St. Thomas and two in Long Island and Fort Lauderdale, USA.

Rev. Stewart readily admits that women make up the bulk of the churches membership and this is not sufficiently reflected at the level of leadership. She anticipates that the recent decision by the Church of England to allow women into the priesthood will see an increase in the number of women in the leadership of the church. Neither does she see significant resistance to this development in Jamaica. How else could she, who has successfully led her congregation for 27 years, view this development?

How did Rev. Stewart get to the position she now occupies? Sistren asked.

Dressed in a bright green shift and white jacket topped off with her silvery natural



Rev. Carmen Stewart - Pastor of Pentecostal Gospel Temple with over 1,000 members with 8 affiliate churches and two overseas branches

hair style, she smiles charmingly. "I was uniquely placed to assume the role". I had been involved in church work for years, my spiritual life is in excess of 50 years and dates back to a little church in Ramble, Hanover when, clinging to my grandmother I sang my heart out, "I've two little hands to give to Jesus."

"I was also involved with my husband in founding the church in 1963 and being his constant companion I shared deeply his commitment to see it succeed." As a health educator Rev. Stewart was also well schooled in the art of community work, human relations and communications - an excellent background for pastoral work. And she had recently returned home from completing her Masters degree in Health Education.

On his death bed in 1966 her husband, Wilbert wrote a letter to the church asking that she be allowed to take over as leader. A church cannot have two heads he wrote, so to avoid any rift which might have developed from those vying for leadership his request was made and the congregation readily acceded.

ON THE FR

VISION

Did she experience any resistance to her leadership? She is quick to respond, "... very little overt resistance and certainly not because of my gender." Over the years Rev. Stewart has ably demonstrated her capabilities, her vision and hard work. In addition to the growth in the church, she founded the Wilbert Stewart Basic School in 1967 in memory of her husband. It now has an enrollment of some 200 children. She is currently focusing on raising funds for the building of a skill training education complex for non-high school students to "get a second chance."

Rev. Stewart, as she will tell you was fortunate to be trained in management and has applied these skills to the orderly running of the Church's business.

What is your role as pastor? How do you influence policy and the implementation of decisions? Sistren queried.

"My role is administrative, managerial and spiritual. In ordinary words I chair committees, plan church activities, preach, coun-

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sel, conduct visits, etc. etc. and report to the Board of Elders and the congregation on a regular basis."

There is a Board of Elders (in a secular organisation they correspond to a Board of Directors) which meets monthly. There are quarterly meetings with leaders of the branch churches. There are annual retreats where we plan the projects, programmes and activities of the Church. There is an annual convention which focuses mainly on the spiritual needs of the members. Selection to positions of leadership is done by consensus and ratified at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The agenda at the AGM includes discussion on the activities of the Church based on an annual report compiled from reports from each department. This report is pre-circulated.

STRUCTURE

What is the male/female balance of the Board of Elders?

"There are seven members, there is one other woman beside myself.", she said laughingly as the impact of the numerical inequality hits her. She finds it necessary to clarify. "Most of these members were there in the beginning and have evolved with the growth of the Church. But women dominate at the middle management level". The same thing is true of the wider society we agreed.

In order to ensure the total involvement of each member the church is structured into 16 departments. Among them are the Welfare, Training, Finance, Young People, Lady's Fellowship, Men's Fellowship, Prayer and Music departments.

Why is it necessary to organise the women in their own group?

"The main reason is for them to get involved. I am committed to a philosophy of total involvement of each member, everybody must find a little niche to which they are committed. The group allows some

specialization. It deals with the specific concerns of women, teach home making and organise educational nights among other activities".

What role do the women play?

Rev. Stewart responds, "They carry out all functions except baptism. They engage in all forms of pastoring, there are women elders, ministers, saints and ushers."

Why do they not do baptism?

Baptism is done by emersion in water and it is easier for the men to do it. They are strong and they are there "to get their feet wet", she laughs.

Rev. Stewart is sufficiently concerned about the women outnumbering men at the middle management level of the church, so much so she has started the implementation of a programme "...to build our men". Society needs both men and women, she quietly emphasizes. "They are fathers or will become fathers, and they have to learn to play their part too". One of the special measures aimed at building the men is to insist that they serve on all church committees. Recently coordinating committees were set up to keep tabs on the members. Noticing that the coordinators were mainly women they immediately introduced the concept of a male co-worker. Hence each Committee has a male and a female coordinator.

"I do not necessarily believe in being an aggressive woman unless you are naturally so. I believe you can be a leader with whatever are your attributes, you do not have to try and be like a man. There are fine women in the church, educated, economi-

cally successful. One of the tasks of the Church is to find suitable mates for them hence we have a responsibility to groom husbands". She is quick to add, "Of course that is not the main focus, we encourage them to be excellent women, we encourage them to display a high self esteem and to be the best persons they possible can.

"As women in roles of leadership we are often forced to organise ourselves to create a greater impact because as a woman you have to prove yourself... I don't think it's a bad thing.. I think it is a good thing because you are challenged. This is the reason the few women leaders in the church are so good (this is not self praise) but you are under a challenge to perform and we do. So one way for women to move forward is to be the very best you can be, learn everything that it is possible to learn and give it your best shot.

"Women sometimes have a tendency to hang back and wait for the men to take on certain tasks, but I suggest, volunteer for the difficult tasks, they may not put you on the front page but eventually will result in upward mobility. Make yourself indispensable. Target the difficult task, give it what is required and do well."

Asked why the women in the church were not organising themselves as a social force to create a greater impact at the national level. Rev. Stewart responded... "I am in agreement that you look at the needs of the total man, but regardless, the church is the agency most responsible for the spiritual aspect of the society. Everybody cannot do everything... and it is not that you leave it up to others but in my own experience it is not possible to extend yourself into every nook and cranny and I see my calling as mostly dealing with the spiritual aspect. I must focus on this because I need to do a good job. Still, I have to recognize that other things impact upon your spiritual life but the question is where do you place your priority."

♀

"As women in roles of leadership we are often forced to organise ourselves to create a greater impact because as a woman you have to prove yourself... I don't think it's a bad thing.. I think it is a good thing because you are challenged."

Her Faith is Her Life

She talks of her life's work in simple, direct speech, without emotional fervour, but with deep conviction; occasionally charging her speech with the cadences of traditional Baptist preachers. She is Marine Cunningham, lay preacher and a Vice President, at the national level, of the Jamaica Baptist Union.

A lay preacher, she explained, is one who is not an ordained Minister of Religion, but who has had some training, formally or informally in theology, and who is involved in the work of the church in a supportive role of the Minister.

Time was when women who wanted to become more actively involved in ministering to congregations were frowned upon. It has been a male-dominated sphere from its inception and the church, particularly the Roman Catholic faith, has held firmly to this position. The Baptist faith takes a less rigid, less gender-oriented position.

Marine is the third of six children born to her parents; her mother was a Deacon in the church. She came to her position naturally and at an early age. Baptised at 14, at 18 she was the youngest officer on her church's board. Acceptance of her leading role, therefore, has never been a problem.

She is also a wife and mother and her husband, Chaplain at Calabar for the past two years, has been supportive of her role. An area of particular concern to Marine and one in which she has been very active is the counselling of the youth.

I GET ANXIOUS

Marine is very familiar with the experiences of youth. She worked for almost 18 years with the Social Development Commission as a Family Life Education Officer, Community Officer and Parish Manager in Manchester (9 years), Trelawny (7 years) and St. James. She then moved to the Association of Development Agency (ADA) as an Education and Research Officer. All of this work has put Marine in



Marine Cunningham lay preacher and Vice President of the Jamaica Baptist Union

direct contact with the youth and her finger on their pulse. Her activities in the church has strengthened and facilitated the work she has done with the youth. When asked if she ever gets depressed or feels overwhelmed by the problems facing today's younger generation, she replied softly, I don't get depressed, I get anxious, for there are times when I contemplate what's happening now and what happened when I was a child; the kinds of values which were instilled then and now, and wonder how can I help? What can I do? For at times I feel that my hands are tied, mmm? Although I have this opportunity to minister I can go so far and no further, for I cannot foist myself on others."

REWARDING AND UPLIFTING

The Cunninghams' ministry takes them to different postings around the country and Marine's concern for the younger generation has found an outlet through her counselling in all the communities they have lived. On the whole, this aspect of her work has been rewarding and uplifting because she has seen tangible results.

ON THE FR

In Manchester where they lived for nine years, she worked in a community skill centre. "I taught Family Life Education and this gave me a great opportunity to work with the young people there.

"They were not all church oriented, but I was able to bring some kind of order to their lives. Many of them dropped out of primary and secondary schools and were just trying to fit themselves in," she said. "They developed a relationship with me and could come and talk with me about anything. I did not use value judgements, nor did I bring my own religious views to cloud how I dealt with them, and a number of them were helped. A thousand or more students passed through Marine's hands during her stay in Manchester.

A LOT OF LOVE

When her husband was transferred to Trelawny she started the process all over again, beginning a community centre in a disused building, teaching 30 girls handicraft, needlework, embroidery and a little home management. The Cunninghams stay in Trelawny was to be a real test of their faith, courage and commitment. It was here that they took into their home and cared for a drug addicted 13 year old girl, whose advent in their lives was disrupting and potentially destructive. It was here, too that their first-born and only son was diagnosed to have leukaemia at age 12, and from which he died seven years later.

Speaking of the young girl who had been deemed hopelessly "bad" by the community, and by her own mother who threw her out, Marine said: "It was not easy. It...it was HARD; it took a lot of will, it took a lot of prayer, and it took a lot of love. There were times when she wanted the drugs and couldn't get them and then she was like a wild horse that you'd take and tie up. Deep in her heart she was a loving child, she still is a very loving child, but she learned to dislike herself and had very destructive

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images of herself. But she also had something in her that wanted to do better, to be better." The Cunninghams put her through secondary school and gave her a skill. She is now 21 and living in Kingston but she still keeps in touch with the couple she calls Mummy and Daddy.

In 1987, shortly after Marine took home the troubled young girl, her son, Rayan was diagnosed as having leukaemia. How did she cope, we wondered. "I was going back to University for my second year and the church supported me, prayed with me, encouraged me. So much so that when I left for University I did not worry about the child, and for that year he was in perfect health. He took the first dose of medication and when he went back for his check-up he was O.K., and he remained that way until I went back home in '89."

In 1990 Rayan became ill again, and from then until his death in November 1991, it was a very stressful period for the whole family, particularly so for Marine who carried the bulk of the burden for caring for him in hospital, in Montego Bay. "There

was a shortage of nurses and he couldn't help himself".

In addition, she had the care of the other children at home in Falmouth, her duties as Parish Manager for St. James, her church and choir work, all with no transportation. "People wonder how I'm so strong and how I managed all of that and didn't break down. But I got support from many people; they called to say 'we're with you in prayer. They came in person, they came to look for him (the child), and that did so much. Shortly after he died I was talking with someone, and she said to me: 'I don't have a faith; I don't know how I would managed.' 'I said, I thank God for my faith in Him because that is what kept me going, and I got the assurance that this was in the will of God for the child to die.'"

It was a situation in which most people might have felt that God was persecuting them in some way. We talked about this and whether she had been able to say "not my will, but thine be done." "Yes," she replied simply and with assurance. And one is compelled to believe her. ♀

New Dimensions of Rastafari Women Emerge

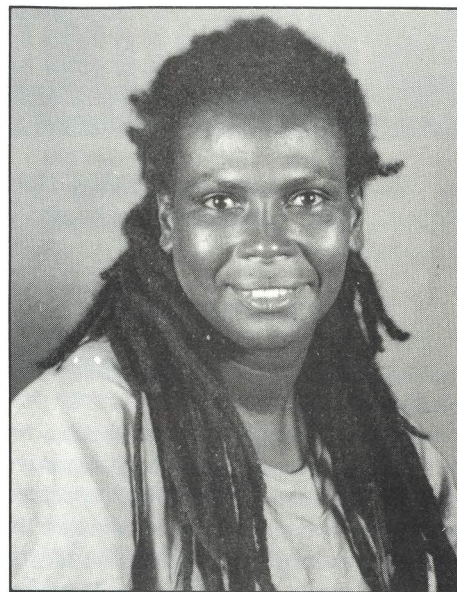
Rastafari is a way of life. Our belief is manifested in how we conduct ourselves and live on a daily basis. Common to all Rastafari is the belief in the divinity of his Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie and repatriation (return) to Africa.

You are compelled to listen to Sister Yvonne Hope as she very softly but firmly outlines the essence of her spirituality and life.

"In days gone by, the physical manifestation of Rastafari was the wearing of locks..." says Sister Yvonne "...wearing locks is no

longer a symbol of Rastafari it is now fashionable to go into a hairdressing parlour without a kink in your hair and emerge with 'locks'. Therefore to identify a true Rasta you have to watch their movements and you have to talk to them."

Rastafari culture initially emerged in Jamaica with the coronation of Haile Selassie as King of Ethiopia in 1930. Rastafari view his coronation as fulfilling the prophecy of Hon. Marcus Garvey which directed blacks to look to the crowning of a King in the East as their God and King. In addition his direct



*Yvonne Hope practising Rastafari and
General Manager of Food for Life.*

descendance from the Biblical David anchored the search of Blacks for a God in their own image. Today Rastafari is celebrated worldwide and has gained significant recognition.

There are three main groups within the Rastafari movement in Jamaica the Nyabingi, Twelve Tribes and Bobo Dread. Each group relates to its women in different ways. For example the woman has to 'hold her quarters', separate herself from the Rastaman for the duration of her period (menstruation). Seven days of separation is the more common practise but in one case she maybe isolated for as long as 21 days. This is the period during which she is said to be unclean.

Commenting on the progress of the Movement, Yvonne puts it this way "Rastafari has come a long way." They are not being stoned anymore or have to walk in gullies, but are occupying outstanding positions in the wider society.

Overall Rastafari has had a significant impact on the national culture. Areas of Jamaican life style such as dress, food and music manifest the influence of Rastafari. There is a strong emphasis on dressing in traditional African cloth and eating natural rather than processed food. But even more important is its impact on the music. Jamaica is synonymous with internationally acclaimed reggae which has been strongly influenced by the protest music of Rastafari. Its influence on reggae has been reinforced

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by the late Reggae Ambassador, Hon. Robert "Bob" Nesta Marley who was a Rastafari Bredrin.

MALE DOMINATED

Rastafari, traditionally and manifestly a male dominated movement, has been perceived as confining the Rasta woman, referred to as Sister or Queen to a supportive role for her man. Their place appeared limited to the home, to nurture and care for the children and not venture into the outside world of work. Today many Rastafari women, perhaps more than the Rastaman, are involved in various businesses and occupy significant roles of leadership in the wider society.

Yvonne, for example is the General Manager of a Health Food Restaurant "Food for Life" on Dumfries Rd. in New Kingston. She tells you emphatically that the business is owned in partnership with another Rastafari Sister, Maureen Rowe and her husband Mutabaruka.

She points out that the idea that the Rastafari Sister was confined to the home is a myth. Confinement to the home was not atypical of The Rastafari Sister who, in the 1970's was trying to identify herself and seeking after the truth. She was also engaged in home based economic projects which assisted the household income. In addition the corporate society was not very receptive to her and she in fact had difficulties getting jobs.

The inequalities which she was perceived to suffer were no more than the non-rastafari sisters encountered. In fact in many instances she received more help in the domestic chores because it is well known that Rastaman like to cook and assist in the care of the children.

However, the Rastafari Sister like the other women in the wider community was being influenced to come forward as a part of the wave of consciousness which was gripping the whole country in the '70s. Today that consciousness which has elevated the woman into prominence has also im-

pacted on the Rastafari woman and she too is progressing into more visible areas of the economy. The areas into which they have evolved are often a natural extension of their way of life. Yvonne, for example, is a vegetarian, she runs a health food restaurant and takes great pride in her contribution to healthy living. The ownership style is also representative of Rastafari life style and is an example of their belief in cooperative enterprises, caring and togetherness.

CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

Commenting further on the role many Sisters are now performing, Yvonne says they are doing work which, while it appears to be confined to the development of the individual goes towards the development of Black people in general. "And I expect that this work will naturally emerge into a collective," she states with conviction.

The change in the role that women play is also taking place within the movement. Some women are organised into groups such as Daughters United, Mama Wadda and Queen Omega, groups of daughters who are struggling to have women play a more positive role in Rastafari. A group has also been started for the children from across the island who would meet monthly to discuss issues in their communities. This Yvonne describes as a big step.

There were times past when you would not see a woman leading a chant at a Nyabingi, least of all with her head uncovered in the Tabernacle (Nyabingi gatherings are spiritual assembly of Rastafari and are roughly equivalent to the church gatherings in other spiritual groups). If the women had something to say, they had to direct it through a man who would speak on their behalf. Not so today, women are going under the Tabernacle and speaking up. There is also less objection to the women coming forward as they younger generation of Rastafari man are more receptive to the women coming forward.

Asked about organised and regular worship of Rastafarians Yvonne says "We do not go

to church on a set day, we worship all the time, but we have special occasions when we celebrate events such as his Imperial Majesty's coronation day, Ethiopian Christmas and African Liberation Day. On these occasions, our spiritual gathering takes the form of a Nyabingi chant and prayers in the Tabernacle.

SO MANY POSITIVES

Addressing the question of her personal development Sistren asked Yvonne to tell us of an achievement that she was particularly proud of. She had difficulty replying. "There are so many positives in my life." However, of significance for her is the time in the 70's when the focus was on self reliance. She moved to the hills of St. James and there she became more attuned to nature. Her spiritual life blossomed and she felt great pride in eating what she grew with her own hands. She felt a warmth and comfort from living in the small house she and her family built.

Now that they have moved back to Kingston, has Yvonne lost some of her rootedness? "We are no less spiritual or disconnected from our beliefs, it is true that running a business and living in the hustle and bustle of Kingston has its distractions but we plan our relaxation and get away to the country as often as possible."

Yvonne not only undertakes the day to day running of the Restaurant/store but plays an active role in her children's life. Mother of two daughters, 18 and 14 she organises their activities to help them live a full life. They also help in the family business and are very supportive of their mother. She is an active executive member of the St. Andrew Parent Teachers Association. Her daughters are practising members of the Rastafari movement and were grown that way, they have the option to change now that they can decide for themselves but I do not expect them to, says Yvonne.

Born in Kingston she has one brother and six sisters. She has been married for 24 years to Dub poet Mutabaruka. Yvonne was attracted to the Rastafari movement in the 1970's when still a student in Sixth Form at high school. Yvonne represents the new dimensions into which Rastafari women are emerging. ♀

I AM A PASTOR'S DAUGHTER



I enjoyed Church. The singing was great, the bible stories fun and the walks home fantastic. Travelling home with Daddy in the car was no joy, I loved to walk with my neighbours.

I hated the way people were placed on the back bench whenever they did something 'wrong'. I couldn't understand why a religion which taught forgiveness was so harsh on those who had 'fallen'. I hated the way young women were forced to leave church, if they fornicated. I hated the way no counselling was offered to help them understand their sexuality.

I felt anger when young girls got pregnant and left the church. I could not understand why mothers were so unforgiving and were often the first to label their daughters. I was sickened at the way sexuality was swept under the carpet, never discussed and treated as dirt.

But there was something I hated even more, and that was the oppression which came with the Christianity we practised.

My father's interpretation of the Bible and its rules led to these feelings. He looked down on dressing up "render your heart and not your garment", an illiterate interpretation I thought.

The positive influence, and balance in my

life was my Mom, a strong individual who believes that women should be independent and positive in their outlook. Her reply to Dad was always "I'll preach the word, but not like a beggar." My mom believed in tasteful clothes.

Very early in life my Mom recognised the rebellious spirit in me. She advised me that women are not on earth solely for the pleasure of man. "Your Daddy was misinformed, and his ego is too big to see it." I believed her and later found out that he was raised to think that way.

I can remember the many times Daddy removed Mom's earrings and threw them away and how she replaced them the next day. I still recall the way he shoved his opinions down our throats because he was the 'King of his castle'.

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the day will come when all will be known. I am not speaking on my own account . . . but when I see what times are like, I feel it is not right to repel spirits which are virtuous and brave, even though they may be spirits of women."

Black feminists, concerned that the feminist movement has skirted the issue of racism, use the term "womanist" to better describe the black feminist. So too have

He felt women should never go anywhere or do anything without their husband's consent. He demanded that none of 'his girls' ever wear makeup or jewellery, and grudgingly allowed us to process our hair, but only after my sister and I braided ours.

On my 13th birthday, my mother gave me a make-up kit with several shades of eye shadow, some lipstick and a compact mirror. Daddy blew his top and demanded that I give them to him. I never did.

He also believed in finding suitable boy-friends and husbands. Thanks to my mother and to a lesser extent my grandmothers, I am not in an unhappy marriage to some oppressive man chosen by Daddy.

My Daddy also took pleasure in showing off his high-school children to his 'flock'. Every first Sunday the church members oohed and aahed over us (something I hated) as they showed their gratitude to the man who made his children go without, while he fed and clothed them.

I can remember the day Daddy took the entire contents of the two large barrels Grandad sent from America to the country to "give to the needy". "They need it more than you", he said. We were not even allowed to see the things we had been sent. To me this was oppression.

The fact that he quoted the Bible to defend his chauvinism was to me most abominable and a misrepresentation of Christianity. I told him so.

I pity my father. Intelligent though he is, he has overlooked the role women played in biblical days as well as today. My only hope is that he has learnt from the opinions of his children and has changed his thinking.

black feminist theologians involved in the voicing of womanist theology. However particularly in our part of the world, some women are uncomfortable with the use of both "womanist" and "feminist". Perhaps we will evolve our own concept. What is certain is that much more needs to be done to challenge the church, to challenge Christianity as women to continue to keep this goal of the Kingdom of God in mind, and to affirm women as they participate in the struggle.

INCHING TOWARDS JERUSALEM?

There are eight dioceses in the West Indies Province of the Anglican Church. Five of these have voted in favour of women being ordained to the priesthood in a situation where each diocese needs a two-thirds majority from each of three houses - the House of Bishops, The House of the Clergy and the House of the Laity. Of the remaining three dioceses only one more "yes" vote is needed to allow women to become Priests. Both the Church of England, which is considered to be the "Mother Church" and its Episcopal counterpart in the United States have implemented the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Jamaica was the first diocese in the Province to vote in favour. Sistren asked some Anglicans for their thoughts on the issue.



*Easton Lee, Communications Consultant/
Playwright:*

I think the support so far has been disappointing. I feel that we are still a very conservative people in a lot of ways, and I think that a number of our menfolk are not ready yet, particularly, Caribbean men are not ready to deal with women as equals. But I have no problem at all. I grew up in a house with my mother and five sisters, and I have no problem with relating to a woman as an equal being, even though sometimes, because of the society that we grew up in, sometimes I catch myself thinking in a way that I shouldn't. A wide majority of them (our Caribbean men) cannot relate to a woman as an equal, as they'll see her in all sorts of other ways. It will hold back the implementation in the Caribbean, because there are still men who in other ways are

quite liberal and forward looking and modern in their thinking, but a number of them are saying "Oh no, not a woman" etcetera, etcetera. In my view, I think a woman is an equal partner to a man in every single respect, and in a lot of ways totally supervisor, and I think that it is going to hold back the implementation of the thing but the sooner we wake up the better.



*Selena Tapper, Regional Field Officer,
CUSO:*

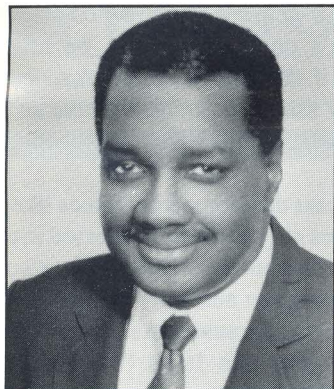
It is something that is not new, and something that I have been part of discussions about over time, and I think certainly from a number of perspectives it makes absolute sense. Take the philosophical level - the whole movement for women, the other half of creation, to participate fully in all aspects of national and community life is some-

thing that is part of the whole ethos of development and has been for a long while. The churches in the Caribbean play a very important role in peoples' lives. As a people we put a much wider value on life than just material, and so if there is a movement for women, to participate fully in development in all other spheres, then what could be the argument against them participating fully in the sphere of their spirituality. The church should in fact catch up with the rest of the community.

I know that within the Church of England and for a number of fundamentalist Christians they might have a disagreement from the theological perspective, the old power line argument, about women should be silent in the churches and so on. But for those of us (and I'm no theologian) who have had even more than passing contact with the church we realise that those were Paul's own perspectives. He saw women in a particular light and it was his own bias that came through in these things. The whole of the Bible, and the New Testament, are both replete with examples of women being used by God as prophetess, used by God to save, used by God in just the same way as men, so for me that argument doesn't hold water.

And then those two aside, probably what is most important for me is the very practical concerns. The churches nowadays have lost and are losing young men from the ordained priesthood in droves. You go into any church anywhere in the Caribbean and men are outnumbered by women. The participants for the most part are women, and it is women who are active in holding the church up in almost every other way. So women are the ones supporting the church in every other way, why can't they support the church in giving guidance, teaching and caring?

I think the fact that it has happened in England will open the niche a little wider here. But I think that getting the vote passed is the easier part of the battle. Actually making the decision alive and active and real would be in my mind the greater battle and part of that would have to be a re-education to remove deep seated prejudices.



Rex James, Banker:

I think it is a very progressive move that the Church of England has decided to ordain women. In the Caribbean, in the West Indies, women already play a major role in the church, and I think we will find that we live in a changing world, and just as in the business world, women are now assuming jobs which were previously held or "reserved" for men, I think it is very likely that we're going to see the same happening in the church. Women will more and more be taking on these roles. So I would say the implications for the West Indian community is that we will soon, very soon see women being ordained in the church.

The question however, that we must ask ourselves, is whether it is a good thing, whether it is desirable, and whether it is necessary that women must do all the jobs that men do in our society. I think we need to examine that question very very carefully because I think women have a real role to play in society and simply to run after a job because it has been reserved for a man in the past is really the wrong approach to solving our problems.

I don't think [women in the priesthood] is necessarily a bad thing. I think there could be a real conflict between family life and church life because certainly at the church where I happen to worship the priest is a very busy person and church life is very

demanding. I think that at a certain stage of a woman's life she could find herself having a real conflict between her own personal private family and the church family, and one has to be careful how we just go headlong and just ordain any woman if she has a very busy schedule with her children. I suspect the family life and the children may be the losers in the long run.

The way we have been socialised is that we see ourselves as the breadwinners - the men in the society still remain the breadwinners and traditionally women look after the family. It has changed, it is changing, and I suppose it's going to change all the way, but I feel change for change sake is not the right answer.



*Barbara Gloudon, Talk Show Host/
Communications Consultant/Playwright:*

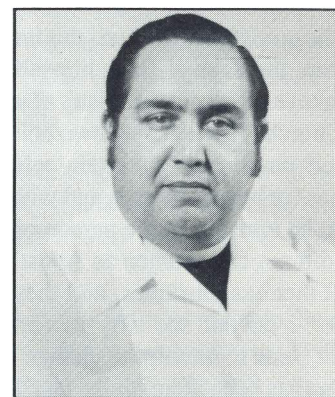
First women became deacons, and as deacons they do most of the rites except for the communion. A deacon is someone who is ordained to perform most of the priestly functions except the administration of the Eucharist. What usually happens in the case of the men is that more often than not they start out first as deacons, spend a year in the diaconate and then go on to the priesthood, there's a difference between deacon and deaconess. Deaconesses are not at the stage where they then proceed to the priesthood, and the mission of the deaconesses has always been quite different, they've assisted in various other ways, they're in teaching ministry, health ministry, all of that sort of stuff. But the thing is people have wondered why we the women of the church have not been aggressive about it. I don't think you win some battles that way. Aggression in this case is only going to beat your head against the wall, because the rule has to be changed, and I think that people have been involved- there are men and women working on it - to see

that the rules are changed, when the rules are changed you can't leave out anybody, you can't find another rule to leave out the person.

It is not as if the issue is dead here, it is the way of the church to seek consensus, to be able to say that everybody within the ranks of the church feels that they are a part of it, and in the case of the West Indies in particular they have been very careful not to create an alienation or a rupture by fighting anybody.

It's very painful. I call it inching slowly toward Jerusalem. It has to happen, because the process has already started. It mightn't happen this week or next week but it has to happen, because otherwise the West Indies is going to be isolated.

So it's more complex than whether we want women priests, women in fact are already ministering, except that they cannot do the final right which is part of a eucharistic mission. It's been painful, and it is still very painful, but what I have learnt out of it is that maybe the victory (and I hope I'm alive when it comes) will be sweeter, because we've all exercised the patience to outwait those who don't understand it.



*Fr. Ian Macpherson, Rector,
St. Margaret's Church:*

The decision of the Church of England is something made within the context of England, as it affects that church, and of course each Anglican Church is a self governing unit within each intents and purposes it barely scraped through, and right now there are regrettably approximately 1,000 Anglican priests who are seeking entrance into Roman Catholicism, and the former Bishop of London is presently having dialogue with Rome about this, to set up - I don't know how it's actually going to

work - an Anglican unit within the Roman Catholic Church. The same thing or something similar happened in the United States within the Episcopal Church, and there is actually a parish in Boston which went over to Rome lock, stock and barrel and are permitted to use the Anglican rituals in that church although their allegiance now is to Rome.

The implications for the Church in the Province of the West Indies is no greater at the present than any other province within the Anglican communion that has elected to ordain women to the priesthood. The fact is there are three dioceses that have still maintained the answer no and within our own dioceses a resolution was put before Synod this year (actually I moved it) that we should reconsider the whole business of ordination of women to the priesthood because one very important factor is I do not think that the congregations understand.

No dialogue has ever taken place, no discussion has taken place, nobody has gone out and explained to them exactly what it means, what the implications are as far as the tradition of the Church is concerned. Some people regard it as being women's lib, at last women getting to the last bastion of male chauvinism, which of course is rubbish. The Church has always acknowledged the ministry of women - this has gone back from the days of Jesus himself. Nobody has ever denied the ministry of women in the Church. However my own opinion is that God has ordained certain roles and functions for human beings, and within the Church, he himself, in the person of Jesus Christ did not call women as Apostles, he did call them as Disciples, and they were faithful. I do not see why there is this indecent haste to attempt to change something that has been there for the last, maybe 2,000 years. My problem lies with the fact that anything that happens in the United States, when they sneeze everybody else catches cold, and I don't see why we should be led in that direction with this kind of indecent haste.

The West Indies is acknowledged as a matriarchal society. Nobody denies that factor. But the strange thing is in my congregation, in another diocese that I have been privileged to serve, which is 80% female, 80% of that number voted against the ordination of women. They told the lay repre-

sentative of the Synod to vote on their behalf accordingly. If that is an indication as to how the majority of people think... I know there is one Bishop in the Province right now who is on record as saying that if his Diocese was recommitted to the vote today, he is not sure that it will pass. In my own opinion it is another hurdle that we're going to have to cross in the whole business of Christian unity - coming back together. And rather than create division I think we have to work towards unity.



*Deaconess Patricia E.N. Donald,
Guidance Counsellor*

I feel that the vote for ordination of women to the priesthood in England, and the subsequent ordination of several women is a resounding victory for the whole of humankind. A wonderful affirmation of all the marvelous, exciting and peculiar gifts that the female half of humanity offers in complementarity to the male half and a mighty rushing "whoosh" of the spirit of God towards completing the creation process that began in the mythical Garden of Eden. I believe it is in the will of God and I am passionately convinced that it is a part of the salvation story, for even as the whole church is a vehicle for God's redemption of the world, I believe the whole church, male and female must share in the task, at equal levels, each according to their openness to God, willingness and ability to serve, and not according to their biological structure which determines gender.

I am convinced by my experience as an assistant pastor working with a Priest, serving five churches and later a programmes officer in the Education and Youth Department of the Diocese for the Anglican Church in Jamaica for nearly 10 years (14 if one counts the training years), that the commu-

nity, both those of the "faith" and those beyond it, is deprived when a portion of that community is limited in how it can mediate God to them or serve them.

Priests are the Chief Executive Officers, and main administrators/managers of churches in the present Diocese structure so even in the introduction and implementation of new programmes for the development of the church and wider community a woman's contribution can be severely limited if she is not a skillful manoeuvrer, cleverly assertive or simply have an insecure man (priest) with whom to work.

Significant developmental issues like gender issues may never be addressed in many church communities, if there is not a woman with significant authority and influence to introduce it, because a male church leader (priest) may see it as "disruptive" or threatening.

Even the approach to ministry, with its rigid, hierarchical, autocratic, non-participatory manifestation in many churches may be very different with the "other" dimension. Women have been proven possibly because of our sociological and biological roles and functions, to respond very differently - at times. This I believe could create a truly balanced ministry, as they offer not just an alternative or a better way of "doing things" but working alongside men and not behind or beneath them, offering a complimentary ministry.

Some male clergy in Jamaica have already declared that they will leave the Diocese if Women priests are ordained. It will be their loss. More women I believe will definitely offer themselves for the ministry which may provide the church with more effective and consistent leadership. It will only be a formalizing of the present reality where woman 'really run things' in the church.

I only hope that one implication will not be that the incredible remuneration of the clergy would creep even more slowly upwards if the men slither out of the profession as the women surge in. For we have noticed in other vocations such as teaching and social work, that where many females amass, the money "likkle bit" as after all women are not "heads of households" with house to buy and all of that, are we?

GENDER & MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS

by Hilary Nicholson

Media practitioners and policy makers were recently challenged to sharpen their awareness of gender issues and promote more positive female images in the media industry. They were encouraged to explore ways of promoting more positive gender-sensitive issues and to ensure gender balance in the media at a consultation on Gender and Media Developments hosted by Women's Media Watch.

A broad cross section of media practitioners looked at the current state of alternative and mainstream media; women's access to media technology; steps being taken towards a national policy and the relevance of gender as an issue at this level as well as a

variety of ideas for action and strategies. The consultation was sponsored by WACC - World Association for Christian Communication.

The opening session looked at Alternative and mainstream Media: "What's really going on?" Resource persons Claude Robinson, General Manager of JBC-TV, Carol Embden (print editor), and Marguerite Newland (radio) compared strategies used by the different media. Facilitator Joan Ross-Frankson challenged participants to identify what it is we really want from the media and to confront the practical realities which create hurdles for media practitioners. Realities such as senior editors requirements and sponsors demand - often conservative and gender-biased, in order to promote the values of the dominant elite.

It was agreed that the products now delivered by mainstream print and electronic media largely fail to satisfy the information needs of the majority of the population, and women in particular. Participants wanted more educational, analytical and less sensational and violent material. They agreed that the problem was often a matter of perspective - that is how news/features are reported more than what is reported. It was felt that currently the reporting style reflects the imbalance of the power in gender relations, as well as race and class relations.

Participants grappled with questions relating to women's access to media technology, and heard about the challenges faced by women in Belize who started a women's radio station.

The steps being taken towards a national media policy and the relevance of gender as an issue at this level were explored on the second day of the consultation. A variety of ideas for ACTION were developed such as strengthening links between

community media, Women's Media Watch and the Press Association of Jamaica. Making better use of talk shows to discuss the issue of gender, initiating dialogue with senior editors and programme directors on gender sensitive journalism and broadcasting were identified as other ways of taking action.

The over 60 participants were media professionals and communicators from mainstream and alternative media, urban and rural included. They represented the national press, radio, and television as well as community newspaper and radio stations, commercial and community video production organizations.

Other resource persons and organisations included Marcia Forbes - Phases Three, Pat Lazarus - Apex, Debra Lewis and Sandra Karr - BOWLAND, Belize; Suzanne Jon Frontin - CCN TV, Trinidad, Anthony 'Mamba' Liverpool, Ben Brodie - NEWS, Beverly Manley, Radio Jamaica representative, Cynthia Wilmot and facilitator Elaine Wint.



"We need less sensational and violent material in the media" this participant seems to be saying in a workshop at the recent consultation on Gender and Media Developments

Women In The Arts

A TALK WITH THREE ARTISTS

Sistren talked with Judith Salmon, Samere Tansley and Marguerite Stanigar - all accomplished artists, each with a different style and a different perspective on what their art means to them, and what it means to be an artist in today's Jamaica.

JUDITH SALMON (JS)

Painter and printmaker, attended the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts (USA), majoring in painting; her programme included a semester in printmaking. In 1988 she received the New York Certificate of Excellence in Printmaking in the International Art Competition, and the Directors Fellowship to Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop. She draws from personal experience for subject matter, as well as from cultural patterns, and her social commentary is strongest in her prints. She has been a regular group exhibitor at the annual exhibition held at the National Gallery since 1977, and has had solo exhibitions at the Olympia International Art Centre (1977), and Gallery Montego, Half Moon Hotel (1978).



Marguerite Stanigar

MARGUERITE STANIGAR (MS)

Painter and ceramicist, studied at The American College. In Paris, and the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam. She has exhibited her work in Holland and has been exhibiting regularly in Jamaica since her return in 1984, including two solo shows.

SAMERE "SAM" TANSLEY (ST)

Painter, studied at Stourbridge and Bir-

mingham Colleges of Art and, later, at the Central Schools of Art & Craft and Goldsmiths Teachers Training College, London. She also taught for two years at North Paddington Secondary Modern School, London, to a largely West Indian boy group of students.

Sam came to Jamaica in 1970 as part of a Jamaican Government Recruitment scheme and first taught at Camperdown and subsequently at the Jamaica School of Art. Her distinctive portraits are signed simply "Samere".

Of the three artists, only Samere paints exclusively. Judith's printmaking supports her painting; Marguerite simi-

larly with her ceramics.

Samere leads off the conversation by expressing how she deals with the turmoil and violence of our society. It is almost like therapy.

ST: You just have to find some way of living through it and not going insane!

JS: Yes... I think that's the thing. Our art, whichever way we do it, keeps us from going insane. It's a safety valve.

MS: For me, it's a confrontation, over and over again. I'm not a social painter who's going to bring people up to date with what's happening, but my whole being is affected by the turbulence in society so it will affect what I paint.

SIS: It's a medium of expression, and if you can express what you're feeling, isn't that a release?

MS: Yes - but it's also like problem solving. I tend not to watch the news, but I feel what's going on. I feel the strain. These things are moulding me into who I am here as opposed to who I probably was abroad. My paintings she says, tend to be very somber.

MS: They're not light-hearted and therefore not the sort of thing that someone will look at and say "Oh, that will look good in my drawing room!" It's not what everybody wants - and I don't expect anybody to buy it - I love it when people buy my work!, but I don't expect anyone to buy it."

ST: How do your ceramics fit into the concept then?

MS: Well now, ceramics I hope will support my painting, and that is the reason I majored in ceramics at school.

SIS: So, in a way, ceramics for you is like Judith with her printmaking?

MS: Exactly - except that I have had experiences in ceramic factories where you do hundreds of the same thing ... it was so tedious and awful. I am now just doing one-of-a-kind pieces and I find that clay is very therapeutic.

The definition of 'fine art' was also discussed and it was felt that mediums such as



Samere "Sam" Tansley

batik (designing and painting on fabric) were probably categorised, in the mind of the public, as "craft-work" as distinct from fine art.

ST: And that's not right, because they are forced to charge less for their work than someone who paints in oils, for example. But its the same training, the same amount of work - everything!

SIS: How sophisticated do you find the Jamaican audience of fine art?

JS: Well I think the public has been lulled into a sort of plastic reality,...but wait - people buy works that are not plastic or unrealistic. So in a way it's not fair to say that, but generally I think there is some truth to it.

ST: You're all such snobs! What are you comparing it to? You're comparing it to North America and Europe, right?

SIS: When I say sophistication, it means do people go in and buy a panting because they really like it? Or do they buy it because its a well-established artist who is all the rage?

MS: You have all sorts; you have your few but really serious art collectors and they're looking at the work - not just a

name. The biggest thing now is "art is a good investment."

ST: But what's wrong with that? I see nothing wrong with that!

MS: What I object to is...art is a good investment like real estate is a good investment.

ST: O.K., your alternative to that is the state keeps the artist like they do in Holland - right? In England the artist is on the dole; in America you have grants and foundations

but only the select few get them - what's the alternative?

MS: I don't think these are healthy alternatives at all. I'm saying don't push art as an investment - push art as art! That art is good to buy, not that it's the latest, best commodity.

JS: That is one aspect of it. But the other aspect is that people are buying artists who are not known by name to the general public. I know of this little gallery with quite a selection of moderately priced work. Where people who might

be a little intimidated by the larger galleries go and find something, more artists therefore earn from the spin off. I think, though, it's healthy that people consider that art is worth having for its marketability. Judith is taking a course in marketing to understand what motivates people to purchase. She feels that this will assist her in selling her prints and paintings.

MS: Well with this marketing and thing, I say thank God there are the galleries and I hope they will do their part for me where, if it's somebody's couch which it will match.. or their curtains... *There are shouts of laughter at this because it had been part of the earlier discussion that some people were motivated to buy art simply because it complemented their decor and not necessarily because they liked the work.*

JS: I don't have a very good relationship with the galleries. I really feel that they should be doing more for the artists than just earning something from their work. So I have sort of stood back from the galleries and set about developing shows at home. I was really surprised at how successful it was so, you know, the galleries are not the only route.

Getting materials locally is another problem for them; it is horrendously expensive



Judith Salmon



Edna Manley

once the duty and the store's mark-up has been added on, and they all tend to buy when they go abroad. "You can't always get what you want either," said Sam.

Women artists, it was generally felt, encountered the same pressures of working women in any field. They had to work and take care of the home, husband and children if any, the same as their counterparts elsewhere. Although some of them have established a more equitable sharing of responsibilities with their mates.

We also discussed the role of women artists; the fact that there are more prominent male artists than female, and wonder whether this is a carry-over from Europe.

ST: I don't think so because the art scene here is relatively new and it was started by a woman Edna Manley. So I don't think it's a case of following any particular tradition established elsewhere. Part of it has to do with a blurring of the lines between what is fine art and what is craft, and a lot of women artists who are practising one aspect of fine art are considered 'crafts' persons. The Jamaican art scene is unique in the Caribbean, except for Haiti. Its very vibrant and there are more artists making a living here than anywhere else I can think of. The thing is that the Jamaican public loves art. The art of Jamaica has to do with their national identity, with their growth of consciousness,

SIS: What advice would you give to youngsters who are just starting out?

MS: I would say to the young people enjoy their youth but not throw it away. Make a commitment sometime. If they choose art they must be committed to this choice, go into it with their eyes open, try every field. Go and find out who you really are.

ST: Encourage them to keep working...just to keep working at it, and to exhibit as soon as they can.

JS: It has to be more than that. People need support and it would be good if young people, art school leavers, had a support group, someone they could turn to for advice on how to manage their new career...The need for a mentor is something which, perhaps, already established artists could offer to youngsters.

L LOBBYING FOR WOMEN

Fourteen women participated in the 1993 National Elections, both major political parties the Peoples National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) fielded six candidates each and two women ran as independents. This represented a decrease of one over those who participated in 1989 (13 from both political parties and 2 independents) while in 1980, 11 women contested seats nine from both parties and two independents.

Sistren contacted 12 of the 1993 candidates and asked them...

How do you see your role as a female leader in your political party?

How would you lobby for the special interest of women and how would you organise to do so?

Heather Robinson



I have never been one who has genderized my status in politics. I have always seen myself as someone who is just another human being trying to do

something for my fellowkind. I do not have a history of being a member of a women's organisation. I never have and I really don't plan to (become a member). I am really just interested in trying to ensure that all Jamaicans get as good a life as they really need to have at this time.

Lobbying must begin first among your peers and colleagues, both inside and outside of politics. To that end I think I would be a good advocate, especially since I have never been one who has been associated with women's groups. If my colleagues hear me asking for something for women I think they would stop and think, "... it must be something really very deserving."

I believe that women are deserving of special status and special care because they are the mothers of our country. I have no doubt, and I am confident, that our Prime Minister thinks the same way. And I do not perceive that we will have many problems in terms of lobbying for women's issues.

Heather Robinson is an insurance executive agent with Life of Jamaica for almost 6 years. Million Dollar Round Table Awardee. Agent of the Year for the St. Andrew Circle Branch twice. Graduate of the University of the West Indies. Joined PNP Youth Organisation in 1975. National Executive Committee Member. Appointed member of the Senate (Upper House) 1992. She is now the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Youth, Sport and Community Development.

Olivia 'Babsy' Grange



My role in the JLP is that of responding efficiently and effectively to the dynamics which exist in the Party. I recognize that I am an important link in the JLP

and that I have a responsibility to perform and to display special interest in issues affecting women.

I do not wish to be treated different or special because I am a woman. I want to be recognized as a person with the ability to run things and lead like anyone else male or female. I don't believe that someone who is not capable should be put in a position just because of gender. However, all things

being equal as long as I can respond efficiently and effectively to the task or role and I am available, I don't expect to be denied the position. As a woman I think I would bring to that position a sensitivity and certain humane qualities that most times are lacking in men.

Women are at a disadvantage in many ways, essentially they are victims of institutionalized discrimination. The Jamaican Society has taken a long time in giving women credit as achievers in their own right but rather see them in a supportive role. Re-awakening and re-conditioning is needed in relation to how the society see us women, how our men folk see us an even women's attitude towards other women.

I feel that I have to lead by example - as a mother, as business woman, as politician, as my sisters keeper. Further I would initiate and see to the implementation of policies, programmes and projects which will benefit women and children.

It is important to network with various organisations Government and non-government in order to mobilize maximum support in addressing the needs and concerns of women. But one has to go further than that. One has to initiate, update and put on "fast-track" the implementation of policies, programmes and projects covering all aspects affecting the lives of women and their offsprings. We have to address such areas as health & education, unemployment, self employment, sexual and physical abuse and setting up support systems to ensure maximum results.

Olivia 'Babsy' Grange graduate of Ryerson Polytechnic. From as early as 1966 Babsy was a youth leader and community worker in West Kingston. In the past she has been appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Culture and Information, Senator and Minister of State for Information. JLP candidate for Central Kingston in 1989 and 1993. Managing Director of SPECS, Show producer, record producer, booking agent and talent manger. A Roman Catholic she is the mother of one daughter.

Marjorie Taylor



I am reminded that I am among the 10% female who were successful in the recent elections.

That, I believe has somewhat predetermined my role be-

cause you have to see yourself in these circumstances, as a role model in a male dominated parliament.

Personally I know that my closeness to the people I represent and from whom I come uniquely positions me to understand their needs and deprivation. It is my hope that I may be able to influence my colleagues and the system in general to the benefit of the vast numbers of people who expect great things of me.

I think that one of the most influential groups of men in Jamaica is in Parliament. I intend to find those among them who are already sympathetic to the special interests of women and to begin to sensitize them further to the issues.

On the other hand I intend to contact and work with the wives of parliamentarians to get them to support those who have not yet seen the light.

It is obviously not an easy task but I believe that the issue is highly emotive and methods have to be found to get to people's hearts.

Graduate of Camperdown High School and CAST (College of Arts Science & Technology). A Building Surveyor by profession, an accomplished Business woman and farmer. Counsellor from 1979 to '91, Senator 1989 to '91. She has held various Ministerial positions including Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour, Welfare & Sports, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government. She has represented the PNP's Movement at the Decade of Women's Conferences; she is an active environmentalist with special interest in Solid Waste Management. A past President of the Women's Movement. An Anglican, she is the adoptive parent of four.

Lola Ramocan



My major role is to influence positive and progressive decision making relative to the status of women and to the key role that the Party should play in nation

building especially with a focus on programmes for the poor and vulnerable groups such as children, youth and women. I also see my role as one of inspiration. To inspire other women to have the confidence to become leaders in their own right and not just to be supportive of our men and other women. I also have that burning desire to enforce the laws (designed) to make better the lives of our women.

I see lobbying as a continuous process, some times formal but most times informal. Whenever I meet a group or individual who can initiate or articulate issues on behalf of women I never fail to make my appeal for action not just for JLP women but all Jamaican women.

I can bring issues to the forefront singularly but I see a group as having a more immediate and positive effect. Issues can be brought to the meetings of the women and other affiliates, and persons of influence in and outside of the Party. I also believe in the written word. I would commit most things I speak about to writing and have them followed up by formal memos to keep the thought active until action is given.

I do not rule out organised protest although one would want to frown upon this. If you are within a system and something is to be done and you exhaust all the other avenues, why not? It might be necessary to add urgency and balance to a particular action. So like a march or street meeting I really do not rule this out because I feel that when Party officials see their own women making such a move they must see that some urgency must be given to it because if it wasn't their own people would not be turning on them for action.

Lola Ramocan, Managing Director for Stationery & School Supplies. Married,

mother of three. Eighteen years in the teaching profession as a science and mathematics specialist who does local consultancy with the Ministry of Education. Vice President of the National Organisation of Women (the women's arm of the JLP). Chairman for the JLP Constituency Committee - North West Clarendon, politically active since 1979 when she was a student at the University of the West Indies.

Phyllis M. Mitchell



As a female leader in the Peoples National Party, I intend to support my male colleagues in effecting and policies and plans of the party and Government. My

role will be Advisory and Complementary as our Party operates as a unified whole, whilst recognizing the contribution of each individual.

Regarding the interest of women, I will continue to lobby for additional Legal Reform on those already won, such as Sexual Offences Law, Domestic Violence, Sexual Harassment and Equal Opportunity Act.

At the Constituency Level, I will seek to organize Economic projects that will enable women to improve their Social Status. Where necessary younger women will be organized into Skills Training Projects based upon continuous dialogue with Training Agencies such as H.E.A.R.T. and Vocational Training Agencies.

Phyllis Mitchell is the Member of Parliament (PNP) for North East St. Catherine. A college trained teacher with a University Degree in Sociology. She has been principal of a number of schools and a Mathematics and Science Specialist teacher. She is currently a Special Advisor in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. She has been involved in several professional and community activities including the Jamaica Teachers Association (JTA), 4H Club and Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA).

THE VALUE OF AN ANGRY WOMAN

(The Importance of Una Marson)

Our readers requested serialized novels, short stories and exposure of Sistren's research work... below are extracts from Honor's research on Una Marson. Una was the first Jamaican woman to edit a magazine published in Jamaica; in 1930 she published her first collection of poems; in 1932 her first play. As black middle class journalist, editor, playwright and poet she never lost her commitment to airing issues affecting women. Read on...

by Honor Ford-Smith

Sitting before an open box of Una Marson's possessions in the Institute of Jamaica, I spread before me fragments of her life: copies of her play *Pocomania*, naturopath magazines, a letter from her husband refusing her money, articles she submitted to the *Daily Gleaner* with rejection slips, yellowing now, clipped to the top. How much is NOT here I think, as the voice of a woman I tried to interview about her, echoes in my mind.

"I am very wicked. I am very miserable and I prefer to keep the information to myself... I will never share it with anybody. I am getting my revenge... this country killed her. Una died of a broken heart. The society killed her. And if all the people who want to write things about her now had recognized her then..." [Interview with "a friend"]

I feel as if I am peeping through a window at someone (unaware of my presence) who is changing their clothes. The box has a life of its own - it is as if someone has set up a writing improvisation: "From these assembled objects construct a character and a narrative." How can I make sense of the signals and trail of clues offered by the box in relation to my topic **Women's Labour and Struggle 1900-1944**? What kind of knowledge can I construct from the naturopath magazines and the other facts I have of her life? Should I focus on her "work" and what should I consider her "work" to be? Within what body of knowledge should I place it? Literature? Social-Work? History? Journalism? If I place her within one body of knowledge how would I deal with what is left out?

Una Marson (1905-1965) matters to me precisely because the judgement on her literary merit is so mixed. Many of those I



NLJ Photo courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica.

interviewed felt that although she was a good organizer and "helped so many people", her own literary work was "just plain bad"

In spite of the "badness" of the work, the same people assessed it as a kind of benchmark in Jamaican theatre. The play *Pocomania* marked the start of a period in which consciously nationalist perspectives on Jamaican identity were represented on stage.

I am interested in this and other contradictory assessments of Marson's work because of my need as a woman educator and writer to understand the constraints on my work in the region. Why didn't the talent *Pocomania* demonstrated continue to develop afterwards? Why is *Pocomania* the high point of her writing career when she

was only 32 at the time of its production? What prevented her development?

What is most striking to me as I piece together the fragments of the box and the publications, is the contradiction between the fast-paced dynamic achievements of her life until 1945 and the quality of inner life as it is expressed in the poetry and in *Pocomania*. Here are two selves, the one public, socially engaging, courageous, assertive, pioneering, and the other private, depressed, lonely, reaching for a resolution to problems of personal autonomy and intimacy in brittle optimistic lines of poetry. What I hope to do is to understand that gap between those two selves and make some suggestions about what would be needed to close it. So in spite of the differences between she and I (she black, me apparently white; she born 1905 and I 1951), I want to explore the contents of the box as a metaphor for dialogue with another Jamaican woman dramatist about the task that we do, the obstacles that confront us, the terms of social engagement between the cultural worker and the society in which she finds herself.

Inevitably I will blot her life with my ink, I am writing through the lens of a history coloured by the nationalist movements, the neo-colonial era, and the new wave of feminism. I look back toward her work in the 20's and 30's through these events. Precisely because of this I can reconstruct her life in a way which is possible now, but was not possible then.

Since the thirties, women of all different classes, colours and cultures have rewritten the narratives of history. Would the life of a Una Marson be any easier now, any less fragmented, as a result of these things? Would the feminist movement in the region now offer support for someone grappling with the dilemmas she face?

In the next Issue read about UNA's achievement... her life.



AIDS UPDATE



Twenty-five new cases of AIDS have been reported, bringing the number of persons diagnosed with AIDS, between January to November 1992 to 86. The total number of persons with AIDS reported in Jamaica since 1982 is 419. Of this total, 270 are male and 149 are female.

At the end of November 1992, 292 of the persons with AIDS were reported dead - an overall mortality rate of 70%. Eighty-five of the deaths were reported in 1991 and 46 in 1990.

The majority of cases, 230 were residents in Kingston & St. Andrew. St. Catherine had 46 cases, St. James 44, St. Ann 20, St. Mary 13, Manchester 12, Hanover 10, Portland and St. Thomas 9 each, Westmoreland 8, Clarendon 7, Trelawny 6 and two cases were reported from St. Elizabeth. The parish addresses of three cases is unknown.

TABLE I
Distribution of reported AIDS cases by age and sex

Age (yrs)	Male	Female	Total
< 1 year	14	12	26
1 - 4	8	4	12
5 - 9	0	1	1
10 - 19	2	3	5
20 - 29	62	37	99
30 - 39	83	56	139
40 - 49	62	18	80
50 - 59	21	5	26
>=60 year	9	6	15
None Known	9	7	16
Total	270	149	419

TABLE II.
Reported sexual practice of adult cases

	Male	Female	Total
Heterosexual	141	125	266
Homosexual	32	0	32
Bisexual	25	0	25
Not Known	51	6	57
Total	249	131	380

died representing a paediatric AIDS mortality rate of 69%.

Three hundred and eighty adult cases of AIDS have been reported with a male: female ratio of 2:1. Two hundred and sixty-five cases have been reported dead - an adult mortality rate of 70%.

Two hundred and thirty-one (231) of the adult cases were infected locally with the AIDS virus, 79 overseas. The place of infection of 70 persons is Two hundred and sixty-six (226) of the adults are heterosexuals. Thirty-two are male homosexuals and 25 are bisexuals. The sexual practice of 57 cases is unknown.

Among the persons with AIDS, 28 are migrant farmworkers, 24 are prostitutes, nine are Informal Commercial Importers and four are possibly due to blood transfusion which occurred before testing of all donated blood began in 1985. The risk group behaviour of 110 cases has not been determined.

The majority of persons with AIDS - 130 are within the age group 30 - 39 years. Ninety-nine (99) are 20 to 29 years, 80 are 40 - 49 years, 26 are 50 - 59 years and 15 are over 60 years of age.

Five of the persons with AIDS are teenagers in the 10 to 19 age group. The age of 16 cases is unknown.

Thirty-nine (39) cases of paediatric AIDS were reported up to the end of 1992. Twenty-one males and 18 females are children under five years of age who were infected by their mother during pregnancy or childbirth. Twenty-seven of these children have



Many groups and organisations are participating in the campaign to educate the population about AIDS. The use of theatre is becoming a well used forum. Here Smiles abound as the hands of members of Little People and Teen Players Club hold the Actor Boy Award for Best Children's Theatre, at the International Theatre Institute -Jamaica National Awards for Excellence April 27. The club's play "Vibes in a World of Sexuality" took a sensitive and informative look at AIDS. Congratulations Players!

“We need to become more focussed; reconnect with the Jamaican public; strengthen our fund-raising efforts and operate on a more businesslike footing.”

This view represents the outlook which resulted in SISTREN Theatre Collective (STC) recently undertaking an evaluation of its work between 1987 and now.

In an atmosphere of goodwill and a commitment to change the members, well wishers and hired professionals of STC dissected, closely studied, and reconstructed the organisation. At the end of that exercise they recommended that ...

- SISTREN should maintain the artistic, aesthetic and creative character of its work.
- Improve its public image and resources by projecting itself more aggressively among the grassroots, on TV and video and in print.

- Commercially market its drama, publications and textiles locally and overseas.
- Increase the number of print productions which strengthens SISTREN's public presence.

More carefully balance its activities between local and overseas obligations.

IMPROVE INTERNAL OPERATIONS by restructuring its organisation and redefining its mission to make it more accountable.

- ❖ Define the mission aims and objectives of SISTREN as well as each of its Division to set standards which can be evaluated on an ongoing basis.
- ❖ Set up a Management Board and Advisory Committee for each Division. These bodies would set policy and oversee the general operations of the organisation. The divisions were now combined and reduced from seven to three, Theatre and Workshop; Textiles; Research and Publications. A Coordinating Committee to oversee operations and procedures was also to be established.
- ❖ Employ management personnel including a managing director to implement the recommendations of the evaluation; improve avenues for facilitating democratic decision making;

COMMITMENT TO CHANGE IMPROVE AND RECONNECT...

by Shirley Campbell

Acting out the new organisational structure: Sistren's members appropriately dramatising the evaluation workshops



improve the communications network and work towards consensus.

- ❖ Set up new divisions, an improved management structure, the employment of professional and skilled personnel, better management of finances; improve the equipment through an upgrade of technology.
- ❖ Broaden the collective through the involvement of other women's groups in areas of SISTREN's work.
- ❖ Ensure Human Resource Development by implementing an improved orientation programme for new recruits as well as internally mobile members, career counselling, continuous evaluation of personnel and product, training and the placement of personnel in keeping with aptitude, interest and skill, undertake a Management Audit, ensure a fair system of incentives and rewards; award remuneration in keeping with contribution and upgrade the physical facility.
- ❖ It was also recommended that the legal implications of the status of the organisation and the rights of the individual members be investigated and appropriately established.

These recommendations were made after deep soul searching which led STC to conclude that while it had achieved a lot in its 16 years of operation there was room for improvement. The problems identified included the absence of a well defined philosophy which made it difficult to identify what was the organisations real goals and objectives.

It was felt that not enough was being done to market STC's work although it was recognized that it enjoyed a good public profile through its magazine, theatre activities and research work. The themes covered in STC's work are very relevant, wide ranging and highlight social issues such as violence, housing, male/female relations, parenting, feminism and culture.

The area of priority whether local or overseas needed to be defined. Networking with local and overseas groups is very good especially in the beginning but lack followup. The attraction for overseas tours

leaves the local outreach activities without focus and threatens to undermine the local foundation.

The lack of resources within the existing local community has led to an overall outflow of funds. In addition overseas funding is generally more available. This emphasises the need to make a product which is more marketable locally.

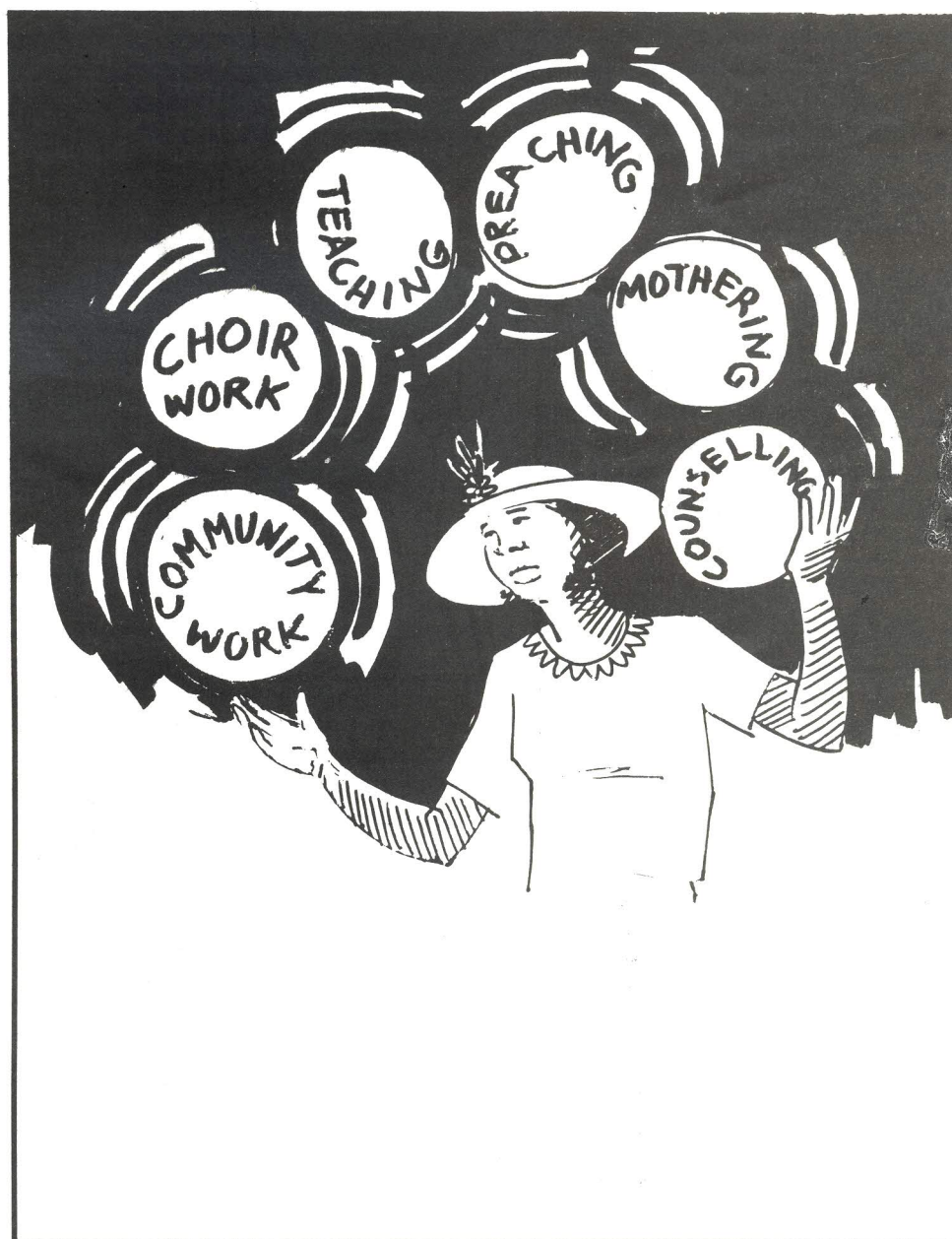
Other areas of weakness were identified as the administrative structure which lacked appropriate decision making mechanisms. These bodies sometimes compete and consequently contradict one another.

The 'Collective' while serving initially to

level the group by placing all skills on an equal footing became less efficient as the organisation developed and areas requiring specialist skills emerged. Compensation was also not in keeping with individual contribution.

The overall consequence of the problems identified served to undermine the effectiveness of Sistren.

OUTCOME a high level of agreement with the findings; an appreciation of the clarity of the presentation made by the evaluator and a commitment by STCs members to improve, grow and move forward to progress.



UNITED IN CHRIST...

United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman

by Lesa Goodall-Cross

“**T**he divisions that keep us one from the other are really man made not God made and we can surmount all these barriers ... and form one united front ...” Words expressed with deep conviction and humility by the Rev. Dr. Adlyn White, Moderator of the United Churches in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. The United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman and the Disciples of Christ in Jamaica were recently united to form a single denomination.

In a recent interview with SISTREN magazine Rev. Dr. White outlined how the churches came together and the benefits derived from the union. She also gives us a glimpse of how she successfully juggles her world as preacher, teacher, wife, mother and community worker and still fulfills her responsibilities to the highest elected position in her Church.

UNION

Explaining the historical basis of the union of the Churches Dr. White says, firstly in 1965 the Congregational and the Presbyterian Churches united to form the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman. The next union came in December 1992, with the joining of the Disciples of Christ in Jamaica.

“The union brought together not strangers but persons who were trained in the same seminary, United Theological College of the West Indies, and we know each other well. It didn't seem like we belonged in different denominations. The union was made easier by their belief in ecumenicalism, ... the feeling that its one Church, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God the father; believing that its the denominational boundaries that have to be removed be-



Rev. Dr. Adlyn White (inset) addressing the large congregation which gathered at Sabina Park in Kingston to participate in the ceremony uniting both denomination.

tween the two. Doctrines and practices are similar; and where problems arise they are solved to the benefit of both churches.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Although four months young, this union, has had significant achievements. It has brought together a real union of minds with excellent human resource. For example the United Church Women's Guild has united with the Disciples of Christ Women's Fellowship to form the United Church Women's Fellowship. In this way they have strengthened the avenues through which the women can deal with their special needs. Other organizations such as the men's fellowships, and young peoples' groups have come together. For many years the United Church had agonized over what to do with the age group between eight and 11 years but the Disciples of Christ had a fellowship for that age group so the children have also been brought together.

The scope of services has expanded, the education pool is now much larger. There are homes for children, a home for the aged

in Mandeville and the Disciples of Christ has brought in many clinics and agricultural programmes. Financial personnel have also been strengthened. “... all this has enabled us to enrich one another with gifts, talents and resources and it is hoped that we can be a witness to the rest of Christianity.”

MODERATOR

And has this union increased the work of the Moderator? Yes as there is now a wider membership to be taken care of. The Moderators work is two-fold. She presides over Synods which approves the plans, programmes, and strategies to be undertaken by the Church. Reports to Synod are submitted by the Central Committee (a national body where all plans for the Church originate and for which Dr. White is President) and the Area Councils. The Councils represent the five geographic areas in which the Church is divided - Cayman, North and South Middlesex, Cornwall and Surrey. All Councils are represented at the Central Committee. Here they air their concerns, ratify decisions, and prepare reports on their activities.

Being responsible for the spiritual guidance of the Church Dr. White preaches, counsels, initiate new ideas to improve the spiritual well being of the members, presides over ordinations, inductions, installations, dedications and represents the Church at ecumenical activities at the national level.

WOMEN IMPORTANT

Like most other denominations women play an important part in the United Churches. The highest level of leadership is not only occupied by a woman but there are women clergy, elders, and others involved in the decision making bodies of the church. "There are absolutely no obstacles to women in the church, they enjoy equal input and output as their male counterparts. Women are able to hold favoured positions not because they are women and their time has come but because they have a valuable contribution to offer", says Rev. Dr. White emphatically.

"As long as any woman has a commitment to her job and she does it well, she is able to enjoy any executive position and she should qualify herself to do her appointed job.", states Dr. White. She feels very strongly about getting where you want to go on your own merit.

What interesting experiences has Dr. White had as a female member of the clergy? She was asked to speak at Ruseas High School. She was to be picked up at the airport by the School's driver. She waited and waited. When she called the school, yes he had come but he was looking for Rev. White the man, not the woman. Driving on Mountain View Avenue in Kingston one day a child shouted "Ministress"! And a beggar on the Half Way Three Rd. stopped her, but when he saw her clerical clothes he ran away.

Moderator White has been married for 24 years. She speaks fondly of her husband, her son Michael and her daughter Claudette. She is a conscientious worker who has, over the years, blended all her jobs well. She works long hours to make sure nothing is neglected. She is an educator, having served as Vice-principal of Churches Teachers College since 1984. She is now preparing for retirement, not to go home and plant antheriums, which she dearly loves but, to continue work with the Min-

GOD AS FEMALE?

Can there be a concept of God as female?

Could the image of a pregnant woman represent godliness?

Why is it that in the Christian teaching God never had a wife and all the disciples were men?

What is the source of female images of godliness in the Hindu religion?

These are some of the thought provoking questions answered by 28 women during a two-week course on Feminist Theory for Activists hosted by CAFRA in Trinidad & Tobago last year.

Participants drew pictures of how they saw God, or their source of energy. Images... of hearts and hands, of health and strength, of birds flying, of freedom and light and open skies, of warmth and unity... un-named shapes, round and curling

shapes, sometimes wild shapes in bright colours - all these images created a collage, covering a huge wall - a dazzling collage which was uplifting.

The liberating and limiting factors of their faith as women, was also explored. Some persons demonstrated through role play. Four women burst into a tug of war, and pushed and pulled one another until they crashed to the floor. They chose to represent traditional religions fighting over a lost soul.

In a skit a "pastor" was created by ceremoniously draping someone in bathrobe and towels. The pastor addressed "his" congregation by chanting nonsense in a deep voice, accompanied by "ritual" unintelligible gestures, and the ringing of a brass bell (it was hilarious). When a woman in the congregation tried to speak, she was symbolically gagged by the "males" and dragged out of the "church". Many participants agreed that the skit illustrated the dominating style of male leadership in the

traditional churches.

In explaining the extent to which they found their religion liberating two practicing Hindu participants sparked new interest. So intense was the response they generated, that 10 participants were

moved to visit a Hindu temple.

Most women agreed that religion should be liberating but noted that the interpretation of religious teachings by society made them limiting to women but that God could be a source of inspiration and energy.



istry of Education coordinating a distance education programme.

She enjoys sewing and renovating old furniture. "Tell me where the antique is and I will find it. I like to make old things new.", she says with a quick smile. Reading is

another of her great loves but regrettable she has not kept up with it too well lately. How does she manage to be superwoman and still remain healthy. A good combination of hard work, relaxation, and love for her family, her job and for God works pretty well in her favour.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH

Women from several religious denominations and spiritual groups were asked to speak on their experience in the church:

by Candace



PENTECOSTALS

Women have the ability to hold the highest positions. This relates to the doctrinal belief that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a visible manifestation of the gift of God. "With this visibility there is no doubt that a person is bestowed with the power of speaking in tongues," a sign which is regarded as the zenith of spirituality. Since a woman can "speak in tongues," then there is nothing to confine her role. Several of the local Pentecostal churches are spearheaded by women. "People can serve and minister for Him in different capacities."

THE ASSEMBLIES OF CHRISTIAN BRETHREN

One of the principles of this gathering is that a woman must keep silent in church. There are a number of other basic things

which women in the Assembly do not do. These include testifying at public meetings, going to the altar to preach and praying in open gatherings.

The female members with whom Sistren spoke say they do not have a problem with the general interpretation of the Scriptures. They regard man, the male gender, as the spiritual head, the final authority over the family, and therefore accountable to God for any decisions made. In the event of a decision with which the wife does not agree, it is felt that God will show displeasure in His own time.

THE BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

This assembly, known locally as the Raja Yoga Centre, uses the symbolism of a bird to describe the society. The wings are the

male and female gender and to suppress one wing signifies the suppression of the entire society.

Founded in India about 60 years ago, the University resulted from the perceived need for women to become spiritual leaders in order to bring balance to family life.

The world needed more character building and social development through instilling values of tolerance, patience, love, mercy, caring, nurturing and selflessness. The teaching stresses that both women and men are naturally endowed with these attributes, but it is perhaps easier for women to give of themselves and so contribute to family upliftment.

This religious society is administered by women, with men playing a supporting role.

AMANDA MARGA SOCIETY

The Amanda Marga is almost 40 years old and is a product of eastern society. It's concept is that women are equal to men, therefore to suppress them is to suppress the entire society. Women can attain the highest office in this society. The writings of the sect advocate that making a few women members of parliament is not true freedom for womanhood. The only way women, as a group, will be emancipated, is through education.

THE BAHAI'S

Bahai's believe that world unification and world peace can only be achieved through the acknowledgement of the oneness of God, the oneness of religion, and the oneness of humankind. In this regard equality of the sexes is considered an important part of the religion. The movement has its roots in Persia (today called Iran), and it was a woman, Tahirih, who initiated its existence through its founder Bah'ulah, who herself was martyred for the revolutionary changes she wanted to bring about in the Moslem world.

The Bahai movement is administered by a group known as the Spiritual Assembly, the sex of whose members is immaterial.



SISTREN PROFILE *cont'd from pg. 3*

that time there was no vacancy. I then became involved in 1982 with the Organization of Women for Progress (OWP). I got the opportunity of doing a course on Feminism at the (WIDE) Women's International Democratic Federation University in Havana Cuba. It was a good experience.

On her return Carmen became more involved in the (OWP). The OWP established the Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC) which by then had a number of changes taking place. At present Carmen is still involved in community work through (WROC).

Popularly known as Polly, mind you short neat and a pleasant person to be with, one would be tempted to call her Polly-lizard-small, active, very flexible, but certainly not to be scared of. Born under the sign of Aries, Polly likes to play volley-ball, listens to good music and is very much a people person. She is from a large family. When Polly wants to gather knowledge of the past and make serious plans for the future she finds pleasure in visiting and talking to her older relatives, dear to her heart, living in Manchester. When she wants to feel younger Aunt Polly takes the kids to visit relatives, coconut park and other places of amusement. Her favorite hobbies are cooking, baking, making natural juices. "One always have fe tun dem han mek fashan". "I sew my own clothes when I have the time, and when I want to unwind I go dancing."

WORKING AT SISTREN

While doing her own part-time business,

Carmen became a typist at Sistren. The experience has widened her knowledge particularly in drama. She has the opportunity once more to study and she has attended several development courses, workshops, and seminars related to her work at home and abroad. Recently she shared some of her own drama skills with us at a presentation at Sistren's office. Ms. Hanson, though she is now Administrative Assistant at Sistren is delighted to know that she is not restricted to any one area of interest and that she has broadened her horizons. Her addresses in it's major plays and workshop pieces. Issues Carmen is familiar with on a personal and community level as she has always tried to assist the women/mothers in her community who face these issues daily. In the two and a half years she has been with Sistren, Carmen has contributed valuable work to the Collective which is appreciated by us. In Carmen's eyes Sistren has made an impact on the lives of women both at home and abroad. The commitment and sacrifice put out by these women to meet the needs of individuals of all age group both male and female local and abroad has made Sistren a well talked about group.

PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

I would like to live to see major achievements resulting from the struggles we are going through now. To live to see my children enjoy fully the fruits of my labour in this struggle. Carmen is still interested in politics and hopes to be involved in alternative politics in the House of Representatives. Aunt Polly believes that "It is not what you are, but what you can become."

Caring
Alert
Resourceful
Other
Ager
N eat

.....
Not What You Are But
What You Can Become
.....

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Because I'm A Woman

By: Tina Talvite

Because I'm a woman
Because I'm a deacon
Because I'm a human
I heard her sobbing to me

They've been married nineteen years
and every Wednesday night
she packed his bags for
that's when he went off to the other one
and when he returned home again
on Saturday
she unpacked his bag.

But one night
she ran out into the forest
and thought that she would die
That Winter she thought
she would die

That winter one night
she shot herself

All her acquaintances
were surprised
she who was so strong
she who was always happy
and outgoing
very active in the community
and the whole big family

She seemed to have gotten over
that thing with her husband
that he left her
She had gotten over it
every one says
and seemed strong and happy like before
seemed to be in fine shape last fall
say people who knew her.

Because I'm a women
Because I'm a deacon
I heard her cry
She said to me once
"I could not talk with
Men priests
They are too far away from my reality
They are not humans"

I know nothing of her last night.

In April women representing AWOJA's member organizations, the general public (women and a few men) responded to Government's proposals to reform the laws on rape and incest. The responses were made following presentations by Supt. Graham Powell of the Police Rape Unit, Judge Mrs. Neil- Irvin: Joyce Hewitt from the Women Crisis Centre, and Attorneys Antoinette Haughton and Margaret MacCauley - AWOJA legal reform committee members.

It was agreed that the Government's proposals are in the main good ones. However disagreements and queries were raised on some areas which are outlined below:

The Proposals relate to reforms in three areas:

- (a) **Rape as it relates to Definition, Husbands Immunity from Prosecution, Immunity of Boys Under 14 from Prosecution, Buggery and Carnal Abuse**
- (b) **Rape evidence and procedure.**
- (c) **Amendment of the Incest (Punishment) Act.**

THE DEFINITION OF RAPE: The current definition limits rape to penetration of the vagina by the penis. Rape is therefore a gender-specific crime; it can only be committed by a male against a female person.

Government's Proposal: To widen the definition of rape to include penetration of vagina, anus or mouth by the penis by other parts of the body and objects in the absence of consent of the person who has been penetrated. Lack of consent should include cases where the victim submitted because of force or threat of force and by fraud as to the identity of the perpetrator or the nature of the act.

AWOJA's Proposal: Lack of consent should also include cases where the victim has been given "controlled and or uncontrolled substances" (drugs etc).

Government's Proposal: At present, and in the proposal the perpetrator (the person raping someone) can claim to have thought or believed that the complainant (person being raped) had consented and the court would consider whether or not there were reasonable grounds for the perpetrator to believe so.

AWOJA's Proposal: The test of whether the victim consented or not should be an objective test - that is, did the person say yes up to the time of penetration.

Government's Proposal: Where there is an agreement between husband and wife or between adults to engage in acts of buggery, this should be decriminalized. But buggery of an individual without consent be considered as rape rather than a separate offence.

AWOJA's Proposal: No disagreement.

HUSBAND'S IMMUNITY FROM PROSECUTION FOR RAPE ON HIS WIFE: Until recently (1991) it was accepted that a husband could not be guilty of raping his wife because marriage meant the wife had given her perpetual consent to sex with her husband which she could not take back unless the couple were separated, divorced, where the wife had taken out an injunction or a restraining order against the husband or for medically specified reasons.

Government's Proposal: The law remains and in addition a husband could also be found guilty of rape if the following circumstances existed - an agreement to separate, where violence or the threat of violence or injury is used, and where there is a risk of infection by sexually transmittable diseases. In all cases the consent of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) should be required for any prosecution.

AWOJA's Proposal: Agreement with the areas of exception but rejection of the requirement of approval of the DPP for prosecution. Instead, it should be possible to start prosecutions without the consent of any public official as is the case with any other person seeking to prosecute someone for rape.

PROPOSALS TO REFORM THE RAPE & INCEST LAWS

by Carol Narcesse

IMMUNITY OF BOYS UNDER 14:

Under the existing law a boy under 14 cannot be convicted of rape regardless of the kind of evidence against him. Though he can be convicted of indecent assault he cannot be convicted of any offence involving sexual intercourse or sodomy.

Government & AWOJA: It is proposed, and AWOJA agrees, that this law be abolished.

CARNAL ABUSE: Carnal abuse applies to sexual intercourse with children under the age of 16 years whether or not the child consents to the intercourse. Sexual intercourse with a child under age 12 has a maximum penalty, on conviction, of life imprisonment (felony charge). Sexual intercourse with children above age 12 but under 16 is a misdemeanor with a maximum penalty of imprisonment for not more than seven (7) years. In the case where the accused man is 23 years old or under and says that he has reasonable cause to believe that the girl was over 16 his argument can be considered a valid defence if he is a first offender.

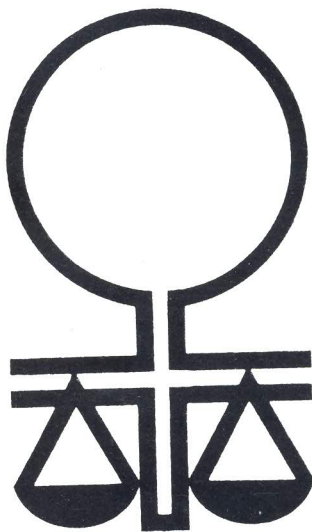
Government's Proposal: The carnal abuse felony be applied to any girl under 14 rather than under 12 years of age. Also that carnal abuse misdemeanor should apply to girls 14 or above but under 16 rather than to girls age 12 and under age 16.

AWOJA's Proposal: The proposals are unsatisfactory. The various age groups should be replaced by one age of consent of 18 years. A second proposal (if the first is not accepted) is that Carnal Abuse should relate to any girl under the age of 16 and Carnal Abuse Misdemeanour should relate to any girl above age 16 but under 18.

In the case of minors as victims and as perpetrators of sexual abuse the state must provide:

- (1) A Psychological Evaluation
- (2) Expert evidence by the psychologist at the trial
- (3) Assistance by a psychologist during the giving of evidence of a very young child or a witness who is mentally retarded.

RAPE EVIDENCE AND PROCEDURE: This section looks at (a) Sexual History Evidence (b) The Corroboration



(confirmation) Requirement (in rape cases) (c) Anonymity of the complainant. At present a complainant's previous sexual history can be brought into evidence to establish bad character.

Government's Proposal: It is proposed that such evidence must relate to previous relations with the accused and that any other sexual history can only be entered after the Judge's approval has been sought and obtained where such evidence establishes that the complainant or accused had a disease not present in the other or that the allegation by the complainant was made when she realised she was pregnant or had a disease.

AWOJA's Proposal: No disagreement

CORROBORATION: Presently, at the trial for a sexual offense such as rape or indecent assault the judge must warn the jury that it is unsafe to convict the accused on the uncorroborated evidence of the complainant although they may act on the evidence if they are satisfied that it is truthful.

Government's Proposal: (a) on charges of rape and other sexual offenses no corroboration be required for conviction and the judge shall not instruct the jury that it is unsafe to convict in the absence of corroboration. (b) That corroboration continues to be required in the case of unsworn evidence of a child.

AWOJA's Proposal: No disagreement with these proposals except that the expert

evidence of a psychologist during the evidence of a young child be required.

ANONYMITY OF THE COMPLAINANT: There is no law in Jamaica which provides for the protection of the identity of the complainant in a rape case. It is proposed that such a law be passed to prohibit identification of the complainant in the press or electronic media but that such a restriction could be lifted in special circumstances, for example, where necessary to encourage witnesses to come forward, or if for some reason in the public interest. However, it is recommended that there be no such ban against the identification of the accused person unless such identification would enable identification of the victim for example in cases of incest or rape within marriage.

AWOJA's Proposal: Agrees in the main with these proposals except questioning whether or not an accused person's name ought to be published before conviction because of the social implications accompanying a charge of sexual offenses and the assumption of innocence until guilt is proven.

AMENDMENT OF THE INCEST (PUNISHMENT) ACT: Under the existing Act the incest offence is either (a) Carnal knowledge by any male person of a female person who is his grand-daughter, daughter, sister, half sister, or mother whether or not the female person consented (b) any female person aged 16 or over giving permission to her grand-father, father, brother, half-brother or son to have carnal knowledge of her.

The offence is a misdemeanour punishable by imprisonment with hard labour for not more than five (5) years if the female is 12 years or over or where the female is under 12 by imprisonment with hard labour for not more than 10 years.

Government's Proposal: Make incest an offence committed by (a) Any person over 16 who has sexual intercourse with someone who is his or her grand-daughter, grandson, daughter, son, sister, half-brother, brother, half-brother, mother, father, or step-parents or guardian whether or not the person consented. (b) Any person 16 or over who consents or permits sexual intercourse

cont'd on pg 39

Sisiren

CAN I CALL YOU SISTER?

“Can you call me sister? No. I’m a man, you can’t call me sister but you can call me brother, you can call me sister in the conceptual sense but not verbally. He laughed.

“You can call me sister in the sense that Blacka is someone who empathize with the struggles of the sisters. I can identify with the origins of Sistren, the goals, historical, and socio-economic background of the group. I say this as a drama school graduate who was socialized in the understanding of drama as a social tool for development. Therefore I can be considered one of the few men privileged to be called an “Honourary Sistren”.

I would hasten to say that I’m not denying my maleness, my masculinity I wouldn’t want to make a remark to cuss man, because I’m a man and being a man is a good thing. I don’t have to be an apologist for male as a way of qualifying to be an ally to Sistren.

As part of a team researching information on female views about the contribution of the Caribbean male to the family showed me a number of things. This study was done by the Caribbean Child Development Unit, UWI.

Q The credit of the research gives thanks to the women’s movement, the U.N. Decade of Women and a number of other groups and individuals for the numerous research data and studies on women. However in contrast, there is very little on men all there is are functions. Men are careless, irresponsible, Jamaican men ‘wutless’, those



Groundwork Theatre Company's Artistic Director, Owen "Blacka" Ellis receives Actor Boy Award for the promotion of Popular Theatre at the International Theatre Institute National Awards for Excellence in Theatre Arts, from Jean Small of the Creative Arts Centre U.W.I. In this article Blacka talks about the issues between men and women.

gut reaction assumptions have not been researched or tested scientifically.

Q That the myth of the irresponsible male is exactly that, a myth. There are a lot of humble men in Jamaica, lots of good men.

Q Fathers Inco-operated grew out of the research project and is now an active group of fathers who look at parenting issues. Every now and then they conduct a “Father for a Day” exercise in children’s homes and

so on. They organised the first “Men Only” conference. They meet and have some of the most interesting discussions such as the ‘conscious man versus the mama man’. You’ll find that the same group of men Sistren would call conscious men, other men call them mama man...’ some man because him don’t box down him woman is considered ‘Mama Man’.

One of my criticism of the women’s movement in Jamaica is related to their expression of the “good man, bad man syndrome. This seems to highlight the ways in which men contribute to the oppression of women, to me the focus is too much on that. I think the women’s movement should spend sometime in acknowledging and celebrating the fact that there are a few good men, validate them and let them do some work with the women to bring about change.

“Sistren tends to alienate men in some aspect of their work. For example The Sistren women always play male roles in their productions, why can’t a man play the part? The characters that are created for men are very often the villian, the negative, the bad man. I’m glad to see that the character “Junior” in this new play “Kulchafushan” is not necessarily a badman. “In most of the other shows the men are the villian, maybe that is how it really is generally, but I don’t think one necessarily needs to perpetuate something by celebrating it. It’s the same way to me some songs celebrate infidelity “Stealing Love On The Side”, “Part Time Lover”. To me these songs contribute to the trend of how humans relate. If you recognise that there are good men, then you contribute to a trend that men would want to be a part of. I’m not sure to what extent Sistren work with men in their workshop setting but I think more can be done.

“How do I see this happening one example is through the “Teens - In - Action” Group. This group was created in response to a rape incident in the Seaview Gardens community, through the initiative of a Sistren member. I have spoken to members of the group who would say to me “We don’t want any men in the group.” The group is supposed to be organizing itself around the issue of “Sexual violence”, why doesn’t the group include young men? The group

.....
 “. . .To me men and women are connected in a very tangible, spiritual physical and emotional way, every man was born of a woman, and every woman of another woman, and all because of the interaction between a man and woman.”

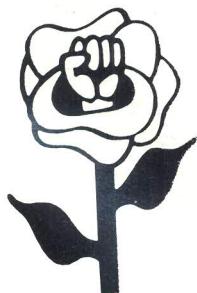
set out to help young girls to deal with the issue. Are we to understand that the issue does not affect young men whether as victims or perpetrators. Do we set out to help respective victims, or do we set out to help the potential perpetrators so that they might in fact change. The 'Teens - In - Action' group is a good vehicle to build young men into an understanding of Gender Issues.

"A lot of seminars and conferences, put on by the women's movement are being done without the presence of men, yet the issues affect both male and female. There is a saying, and I agree that. . . "This is women business, we need to organize and plan the way forward for women. Yes. But doesn't some of the very issues raised affect men as well; whether as individuals, or part of the system?. Why is it we don't work hand-in-hand with weak women, oppressed women, good women and the few good men you can find to help to transform the system instead of alienating society's men. To me men and women are connected in a very tangible, spiritual physical and emotional way, every man was born of a woman, and every woman of another woman, and all because of the interaction between a man and woman."

I'd like to re-visit the question "Can I Call You Sister?"

You can call me anything you want to call me, because what you call me doesn't make me what I am. We have been called worthless for years, but there are still a lot of good men such as Mbala, Lammy, the brothers of Fathers Inco-operated and many others who inspite of being called names have never made us any less than what we are.

So therefore I would say "Can you call me Sister? " No, but work with me as Sister to a Brother to let both of us advance an understanding that can help to change the fact that life is unfair to the Sisters.



YOU CAN'T JUST BE BORN SO!

*Hilary Nicholson asks men and women in the street
What Does Religion Mean in Your Life?*

ALWAYS THERE FOR YOU

It helps me to live day-to-day. There is the Saviour - He always listens. I can pray to Him for help with my problems, He is always there for you. You can turn to the Bible for advice - The Bible is essential in a woman's life, as we go through trials and tribulations. When an individual cannot analyse their problems, there is someone who can: the Creator.

Josie, 19, Actress

HELPS IN EVERY WAY

When you accept the Lord, the Lord helps in every way. You can't just be born so! The Lord is with you - without (the Lord) I could never leave my yard in the morning. I could never have the spirit, the courage, to face what is out there - even to face the bus when you come out in the morning.

Miss Inez, 76, Cook

HE GUIDES ME

Religion is important in my life, I pray on a daily basis. He guides me, He is someone to consult when you have problems. Religion has always played a major part in women's lives from back when women did not go out to work as independently as today; the church was a place for meeting and socialising.

Women have to be concerned with raising children, with moral values. Religion is more a psychological, emotional matter for women; men are more practical.

Student Teacher, 21

IS A REFUGE

Religion impacts on my life - it's based on tradition, one has been steeped in it as part of growing up. When distress comes on, you want to draw on something that's greater than your own inner strength. When you want to give thanks, your religion comes in there. Religion is a refuge to some. Religion means the same to men as it does to women although women may go to church more than men - men will quicker go to rum shop.

Quality Control Officer, 30's.

LIKE A SYSTEM

I don't believe in religion. Religion is more like a system - like capitalism - for organizing people. I don't worship any God. When people worship they start to want to make others worship their way, and join their "system". Spirituality does play a role in my life, I believe spirit was created long, long before the mind started to organize things.

Russell, 20, Student & Actor

BRINGS US TOGETHER

(I was driving in a taxi, when the voice of a woman came over the taxi's radio system reading a prayer . . . I asked the driver what religion meant in his life:)

Religion is very important in my life, you can't do anything without it. He guides you. Everyday, after the busy time, we share a prayer, it brings us together, it binds us - we are like His family. Religion means a lot to man, just like for women.

Taxidriver, 30s.

CUBA IN THE 1990'S

REALITIES & CHALLENGES

by Linette Vassel

This message inspired in me a renewed respect for Comrade Fidel Castro and the whole Cuban people as, for me, it reflected their ability to strive and to inspire us to become our best selves. For when it comes right down to it, that common destiny we share, to live together on this planet is the most basic and essential aspect of what it means to be a human being. As such the Cuban people are perfectly right, we have a responsibility to each other in the same way we have a responsibility to ourselves to become our best selves.

They have made sacrifices, often with their lives, towards the process of liberation in Southern Africa. Here in Jamaica we have also benefitted from Cuban assistance. Now, in their time of need, our sense of caring and "remembering kindness", should challenge us to give assistance to the Cuban people.

Of significance for me also is that Cuba represents an example of alternative ways of organizing our communities. It shows how a people can take responsibility for their development and utilize the resources that they have as the basis of their advancement. I am not speaking of pursuing any splendid isolation; that is impossible in today's world. I'm speaking of how to rely more on ourselves; of being creative in tapping the experiences of our own people to address the challenges. Essentially this is the vision that many NGOs in Jamaica are trying to fashion but are doing so in an environment which does not sufficiently recognize that policy can come from the bottom up.

And I'm not saying Cuba is perfect, like in other countries many decisions still come from the top, especially. However the involvement of the community and popular organisations in decision-making and implementation is a fundamental principle of their political process.

It is against this background that the Women's Conference discussed the extent of the difficulties the Cuban people are facing and the means by which to make adjustments in this "the special period". The conditions caused by the USA's embargo since 1962 have worsened and has led the United Nations to support Cuba's resolution calling for an end to the USA blockade. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent loss of support which Cuba received from her has worsened the situation. And the recent blizzard which hit the US has led to the destruction of medical facilities as well as production capacities in Cuba. Increased food shortage and reports of the onset of blindness in the population are some of the immediate results of this natural disaster.

How are the Cuban people coping? The people's creativity in response to the hardships is boundless. The people's traditional consumption patterns have had to change dramatically. In the energy sector more efficient methods and new sources have had to be explored. For example Cuba has oil which is heavy and costly to refine, but explorations with foreign investors are now planned.

There is a dramatic growth in the applica-

Painted on the wall of the venue of the 1993 Conference of the Federation of Cuban Women, is the message:

"If the revolution had many beautiful flowers, the flower of human solidarity, the capacity to sacrifice oneself for others - for others in your country and even outside - is the most beautiful flower of all".

tion of science and technology to the solution of pressing problems. More by-products are being developed from sugar cane the main crop; new fertilizers from local materials; reforms in the pharmaceutical industry and medical technology; use of indigenous material and fibers to make shampoos, soaps, shoes, toys etc.

Expansion of biotechnology for human and plant health, increase in food production and tourism.

I saw the numerous bicycles, everywhere people towing others to work, to school. I spoke at length to a professional woman who with her husband and two children goes to her family home only on weekends. During the week they live with her mother because transport is too uncertain for them to commute everyday.

Can Jamaicans assist? It is possible for Jamaicans to practically assist the Cuban people at the individual and governmental levels. The Women's Resource & Outreach Centre (WROC) and SISTREN not only attended the Conference to give moral support but used their donations to purchase milk solids, sanitary and other personal items, detergents and soaps. The people are also in great need of vitamins, flour, oils and other basic necessities. Donations can be made to the Cuba Appeal Fund 1993 at any branch of the Workers Savings and Loan Bank and or to the Cuban Embassy at 9 Trafalgar Rd. Kingston 5, Telephone: 9780931-3 and the Cuba-Jamaica Friendship Committee Telephone: 968-4409. The Cuba-Jamaica Friendship

Committee has had some response to its appeals from individuals and businesses .

While the donation of cash or kind to the Cuban people is good it is also very important that the USA be pressured into lifting the embargo. The hardships which this act of war has brought onto the people is horrendous. Under the blockade the USA government not only refuses to trade with Cuba, but will not trade with other countries in products that use materials from Cuba. Cuba cannot use US \$ in its trading and this makes transactions that more cumbersome; ships that trade with Cuba are penalized from participation in US trading. The effects of these and similar measures are that Cuban exports have become less competitive because of high shipping and warehousing cost. There are delays caused by the long distances over which goods must travel on alternate routes thus affecting the level of production and scheduling.

For example when there is an epidemic and emergency drug supplies are needed, there is the difficulty of finding speedy and effective suppliers. And of course there is the critical question of the levels of earnings which can be generated and saved for expansion of production capacity and research which is being lost to making alternative arrangements to deal with the hardships resulting from the embargo.

Despite the difficulties in Cuba the resilience of the people is demonstrated in their efforts to maintain the basic social programmes , 98.8 per cent of the 6 - 14 year olds are in school. This is much more than we can say for our "development" under structural adjustment. In addition not one day care centre, one clinic, hospital or school has been closed. It was also heartening to see that the power failure which plunged the hall into darkness at the opening session of the Conference was spontaneously greeted by the women with singing, clapping and slogans of solidarity and support for the Cuban people. At the same time the consciousness of the need to be careful made me extra cautious with conserving every drop of water, every unit of electricity for the duration of my stay in Cuba.



They brought down the house. The Ebony Dancers from Montego Bay performing at Sister's Celebration Concert at Girl Guides Headquarters on International Women's Day, March 8

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day March 8 1993 was celebrated with a series of activities, spanning March 4 to 25. Below are listed the Calendar of Events.

March 04: Post Conference on **The Environment & Development - Seminar**, Courtleigh Hotel.

March 06: **Politics & Discipline". A Public Forum** sponsored by Jamaica Women's Political Caucus, Girl Guides Headquarters, Kingston.

March 08: **Launch of Booklet "Women and Their Legal Rights"**. Bureau of Women's Affairs.

Sisters Celebration Concert, "Salute to Black her Story" Girl Guides Headquarters,

March 16: **Jamaica Film Festival "Women in the Media"**, Panel Discussion, by ACIJ, USIS Auditorium, Mutual Life Building, Kingston.

March 25: **Film Screening and Video Discussion**, Women's Media Watch.

SISTREN TOUR GERMANY

Sistren's theatre performances hit the German stage last May after several attempts by interested Germans to have the group visit their country.

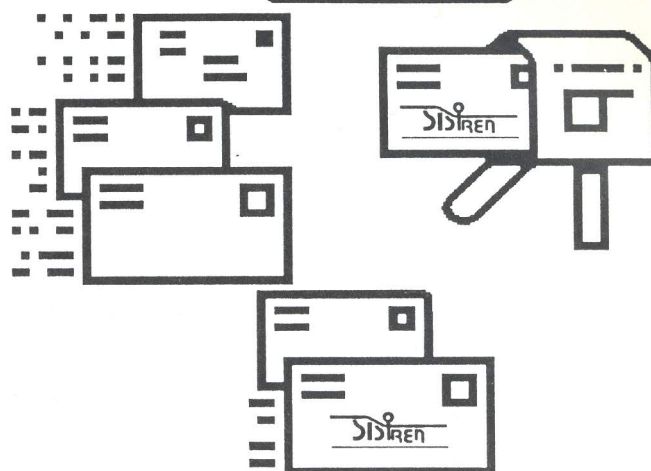
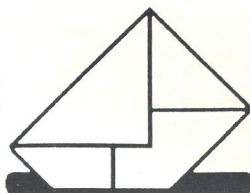
The eight member female theatre team and two male musicians travelled through the German towns of Berlin, Kassel, Hamburg, Hildersheim, Bremen and Recklinghausen. They delighted audiences with several performances of *Buss-Out*, *Lionheart Gal* and the workshop pieces on Domestic Violence.

The audience described it variously as an "overwhelming experience of intensity and creativity", "contacts across cultures and borders", "sisterhood and advice".



Sistren's Theatre Team ready to depart for Germany

FROM OUR MAILBAG



WE PUT OUR MONEY WHERE OUR MOUTH IS

Dear Editor:

I enclose a cheque as subscription to Sistren magazine when it reappears! I think it is a very useful magazine - I pass my copy on to the Women's Centre in the village.

*Ann Edwards
Walkerswood, St. Ann*

Dear Editor:

Please add the Americas Desk to you subscription list for Sistren Magazine. The subscription should be sent to CUSO, Americas Desk

*Thelma Foster
Americas Desk*

Dear Editor:

Enclosed please find Barclays Bank International Money Order covering subscription fee for the year 1993.

*Howard A. Fergus (Dr.)
Resident Tutor
University of the West Indies,
School of Continuing Studies*

Dear Editor:

We would like to complete our collection of the Sistren publication. . . we would like to acquire the current issue(s) 1993, and all issues available for the year 1992 except No. 1.

*Sonia M. Merubia
Serials Records and Acquisitions
Librarian
University of Texas at Austin*

to the new format and so does my friend.

I enclose my renewal dues.

I am particularly interested in the Research Papers mentioned and would appreciate a list with prices so that I may order some copies

May Ann

SUGGESTIONS

Dear Editor

A few suggestions for new format. Enclosed is a copy of an advertising layout. It shows various sizes as well as forms of advertising.

Also enclosed is a subscription renewal form. Sistren could adapt one or two ideas from it. This newsletter only accepts advertising if it includes something in support of their cause. Sistren could ask their advertiser for support of women's issues in the same way.

Dear Editor

I think the covers of your magazines are beautiful and express a remarkable talent. As a fund raising effort I think you should sell prints of these covers. You can also make postcards of them and sell them in stores all over the country.

I am sure the 'tourist' towns would prove very lucrative.

*SAC
Kingston*

Dear Editor:

We would like to renew our subscription for 1993.

*Information Resource Manager
CARICOM, Guyana*

Dear Editor:

I sent a subscription of Sistren magazine in 1992 but have not yet received any copies. Please inform me of the outcome of this magazine as I heard there were difficulties in publication. Please note my new address.

In my last letter I enclosed two poems for consideration and would like to know if you are interested in more articles on women. I am a painter, sculptor and writer and would be interested in contributing to Sistren.

*Joanna Nissen
Kingston*

Dear Editor:

I am glad to get the letter explaining the absence of the magazine. I gave my subscription to a friend last year and she never received anything so I assumed there had been publication problems. I look forward



SISTREN

REFORM THE RAPE *cont'd from pg. 32*

with himself or herself by any relative as listed above.

That sexual intercourse be defined as:

- (a) penetration by the penis of the vagina, anus, or mouth
- (b) penetration by any bodily part of a person, of the vagina, anus or mouth
- (c) penetration by objects manipulated by the accused except for bona fide medical purposes.

That incest offenses be categorized as felonies not as misdemeanors and therefore be punishable by maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

AWOJA's Proposal: AWOJA supports these proposals and adds that the Act should explicitly include niece, nephew, aunt and uncle.

AWOJA has sent its responses to the Ministry of Legal Affairs and anticipates that these will be reflected in the final drafts and the eventual laws.

AWOJA has been encouraged to put forward its proposals by the fact that Prime Minister Patterson recently agreed to send proposals to reform specific laws to AWOJA for discussion and their input into the final drafts. He also identified legal reform as a priority of his government when he addressed AWOJA's Annual General Meeting (AGM). His commitment was fulfilled when in March AWOJA received through the Bureau of Women's Affairs proposals for the reform of the laws relating to rape and incest.

AWOJA's mandate to place a high priority on agitating for the reform of laws affecting women and for women to have a say in these reforms was given at the AGM in November 1992. This same call had been made earlier by the All Island Women's Conference in March 1992.

The Association will continue its work on legal reform and will be addressing such issues as a Domestic Violence Bill, and a Sexual Harassment Bill among others. We encourage all women to take an interest in these issues and to support AWOJA in its efforts to gain the legal provisions that can strengthen women's efforts to receive just treatment in this society.

Carol Narcisse is the Administrator of AWOJA.



Complacent - To be un-concerned
Inconsiderate - One who does not care
Reluctant - Unwilling



Too many times we are complacent, inconsiderate and reluctant, to act.

Too many times we observe and think we cannot make a difference.

Too many times we say we care, "But what can I do?"

TOO MANY TIMES THE TABLES TURN
AND WE ARE THE ONES WHO NEED HELP.

ACT NOW!

Contributions can be made at any branch of the National Commercial Bank

Organised by the
**Haitian Action
Support Team (HASTE)**
in Conjunction with the
Caribbean Council
of Churches

KULCHAFUSHAN NOW PLAYING

June 5	Spring Hill, Portland
June 12	Gimmibit, Clarendon
June 26	Seaforth High School, St. Thomas
June 27	Bluefields, Westmoreland



SISTA ANSA AN' GRANNY



GRANNY, YUH GO A CHURCH LAST NIGHT?



YES ME LOVE ME EVEN GET CONVERTED!



YUH NOTICE HOW MISS MATTY SMALL DAUGHTER WAS IN THE **SPIRIT** AND HOW HER CLOTHES WAS OVER HER HEAD AND THE WHOLE A HER UNDERWEAR WAS EXPOSED LIKE THE PEOPLE DEM WEH A JUMP **CARNIVAL**!



IS THE **SPIRIT** INTO HER. SHE NOT CONSCIOUS OF WHAT HAPPENING TO HER.



TALKING THIS AND THAT, ME HEAR SAY BECAUSE MISS JANE'S DAUGHTER 'GET **PREGNANT** AND LIVE IN HER HOUSE WITHOUT MARRIAGE SHE HAFI GO A BACK BENCH BECAUSE IT'S AGAINST THE CHURCH RULES!



YUH SEE IF SHE WAS **COUNSELLING** THE CHILD IN A **RIGHTEOUS** WAY THAT WOULDN'T HAPPEN



A SAME WAY PASTOR GET SISTER VIE'S DAUGHTER AND DEACON GET BREDDA ROY'S WIFE **PREGNANT**. DEM STILL A COME A CHURCH AND HIDE IT AND THE WOMAN DEM HAFI STAY HOME FOR DEM DISOWN DEM.



DON'T SAY THOSE THINGS. PASTOR AND DEACON ARE RESPECTABLE PEOPLE AND WOULD NEVER BRING DUNG THE NAME OF THE CHURCH



ANYWAY **GOD** IS WATCHING ALLOF US AND WHEN HIM COME WE ALL WILL HAVE TO ANSWER HIM FOR THE **WRONG** WE DO **EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW, EVERY TONGUE CONFESS!**

