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CARFRA NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION.





CAFRA News is the quarterly newsletter and primary networking tool of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA).

Its main purposes are to:

- Inform members and other interested persons about the activities and programmes of the association;
- Provide a forum for discussion and debate on key issues of concern to women in the region;
- Promote the sharing of experiences and foster links among individual feminists, activists and women's organisations;
- Assist in breaking down language barriers in the region;
- Stimulate women's creative expression; and
- Contribute to the development of the women's movement regionally and internationally.

We welcome letters, articles, poems, reviews, opinions and artwork for editorial evaluation and selection. The newsletter committee has a final right to edit content and to reject material not appropriate for publication, e.g. that does not further the aims and objectives of CAFRA and promote a spirit of sisterhood; or that is racist, sexist or "maternalist." Individual authors and reviewers are solely responsible for views and opinions expressed in published articles.

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EDITORIAL

CAFRA continued in a state of flux during 1992, with changes both at the level of staffing and at the level of committee membership. Founding members Rhoda Reddock and Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen left the Caribbean for short sojourns abroad and Rowena Kalloo, former **CAFRA News** Editor, left the employ of **CAFRA**.

This issue of **CAFRA News** thus represents an experiment with the use of a Consultant Editor working closely with the Newsletter Committee. This experiment will continue over the next two issues and we will appreciate receiving comments from you.

This issue, covering the period October to December 1992, is dedicated to the memory of Audre Lorde who died in November. (See p 4-9)

Also covered in the publication is a report on the CAFRA/WAND Summer University in Feminist Theory as well as feedback from one of the participants. (p 2-3)

Other features include a report on the Black Women's Conference in the Dominican Republic (p 11), a report on **CAFRA's** strategic planning exercise (p 24) and the findings of the **CAFRA News** Readers Survey (p 24). Although there was a very low response-rate to the survey, **CAFRA** will attempt to address, in future issues, the suggestions that were made.

We also want, in future issues, to feature other views in this editorial column and so would welcome your participation.

In sisterhood,
Gemma Tang Nain,
Coordinator (Ag.)

• LETTER TO EDITOR •



CAFRA NEWS



Firstly, I just wish to say congratulations on a terrific publication, chock-full of information. I refer to the Jan/Mar 1992 Vol 6 No 1 issue. It is the first time I read **CAFRA News**.

I felt my head growing with the loads of information I was imbibing. The environment focus was particularly helpful as nothing of substance has filtered down to us as yet (citizens) although we were well represented at the forum by Prime Minister and NGO representatives. The media section was also very helpful because of my organization's particular concern. As for the news on conferences, etc. - even though much of it was dated - I was still happy for it. I just felt more powerful as a woman and as a member of a feminist organization to know that I am part of a mighty rushing flood - so much seemed to be happening.

I was a participant at the Santo Domingo Black Women's (Network) Conference, July 19 - 26, and hope that we can send something to you on it as soon as we consolidate our report.

Thanks for this publication. I have committed myself to seeing that more members read it. Already one other has said she will as soon as I'm finished.

Patricia Donald.
Kingston, Jamaica.

FEMINIST THEORY UNIVERSITY



Summer University In Feminist Theory

An unusual group of 'university' students from 13 countries of the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean met in Trinidad in August 1992. These 28 women, who represented several community organisations, came together for a Summer University in Feminist Theory for Grassroots Women Activists, organised by **CAFRA** and **WAND**.

While other Feminist Theory courses had been held in the past, this one, targetted at grassroots women, was the first one of its kind to be held in the Caribbean. It brought together women actively involved in issues affecting women at the community level but who have not had the opportunity to reflect on the theoretical bases of their actions.

The summer programme was held from August 30 - September 11, 1992, at Pax Guest House, Mt St Benedict, and was coordinated by Marion Bernard and Hilary Nicholson of Sistren Research, Jamaica. It sought to introduce participants to a feminist as well as a gender perspective on day-to-day experiences and social issues which have been areas of concern to feminism and to the Caribbean women's movement. The key to the whole programme was methodology - taking participants' life experiences as the starting point for reflection and analysis.

To facilitate the eight teaching modules used over the two weeks, course facilitators relied heavily on popular education techniques as well as some formal lectures. Popular education techniques used included games and simulation exercises, role play, personal stories, drawing, small-group work, large group discussion, presentations by resource persons, videos

and other visual aids (charts, diagrams, flashcards).

Through participatory field research, participants were given opportunities to observe real-life situations with a "feminist lens" and document women's daily experience as valid research material, applying concepts learned during the modules.

enjoyed the challenge to secretiveness and went to great lengths to care for their "chocolate" in creative ways. The system helped to create an atmosphere of caring and allowed persons of varying backgrounds to be integrated into the wider group easily.

The majority of participants took readily to the process groups which



• Eager participants at **CAFRA's** Summer University met for the formal opening on Sunday, August 30, at Pax Guest House, Mt St Benedict, Trinidad. •

Generally, the course was well received by each participant and for some it was a completely new experience. Those who felt an initial insecurity because of their low literacy levels, soon began to relax when other forms of presentation and response, free from written exercises, were introduced. One very positive outcome was that more grassroots women have been introduced to **CAFRA** as an approachable organisation that is relevant to their lives, and not just for professionals.

The partnering system (secret friends or "CHOCOLATES") worked very well. It was the most effective technique, resource persons said. It involved the random selection of a partner who would be "nurtured and pampered" by that participant for one week without the other person knowing who was being so kind to her. Participants

allowed for daily planning and decision-making about meals, rooms, materials, social activities, health care, time-tabling, daily energisers and evaluations.

The module on the family heightened existing awareness of societal pressures to conform to ideals which did not reflect a given reality and led to further discussion of patriarchy. The module on sexuality took off from the premise that there was need for freedom of choice in relation to sexual expression, freedom from control by others and self acceptance. Although time did not permit a fuller exploration of the topic, concerns about woman as property, and of control, were further explored through the debate on "Is there rape in marriage?"

Cont'd on page 9...

Ife Says Thank You

In a letter to CAFRA, dated November 18, 1992, Cecilia Babb of Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), pointed out that Kathy Ife Harris, more popularly known as Ife, returned from the summer university "with a confidence she lacked in the five years that I have known her - the confidence to put pen to paper."

Babb added that as a result of the summer programme, Ife has stopped thinking of herself as "uneducated" and has started on a new direction. Ife has realised it's not too late to pick up the "severed threads of her education and weave a new cloth."

She has expressed her gratitude to CAFRA and WAND for the "personal upliftment" received from the summer university:

"As a grassroots woman with little high school education, I use these formats for gaining needed education and growth."



• Ife dramatizes some of the horrors participants encountered to get to Trinidad for the Summer University. •

"This particular workshop took its participants through a wide range of subjects that affect women - spirituality, feminism, family, sexuality, women and work, religion, rape in marriage and the global economy."

"The coordinators and resource persons were flexible and inspiring and made the workshop an infinity of information especially when they realised that some participants were not understanding the modules. One of the most important things that came over to me is that as a woman you have to take responsibility for your life and know what is going on around you."

"To all of you, I say thank you. You have taken me forward."

IFE'S POEM

As an indication of her gratitude and her newly-found freedom with the pen, Ife has written a poem on the Summer University.

Poem

The workshop was held at Pax
And it was a wealth of information and facts
The issues we covered were wide in range
And made the statement that you had a lot to gain
The women were great
In all shades and shapes
Some were big
Some were small
Some were short
A lot was tall
Most were open-minded

The workshop was for women without high education
A mixture of high and low
Different background situations
Each one helped the other
So that every women
Understood a lot better

The methodology of popular theatre was used
To show us in many forms how women are abused
How the structure of women's subordination
Can lead us into desperation

We all came on a mission
We gave our best to the sessions
We learned how to think
About the reality of the link
That bind us together as women.

WOMEN'S BATTLE WITH CANCER



Remembering Audre Lorde

One of **CAFRA's** oldest members has died. Audre Lorde, black lesbian poet and feminist activist died at her home in St Croix, on Tuesday, November 17, 1992, following a 14-year battle with cancer. Born in New York city of West Indian parents, Audre attended **CAFRA's** first general meeting in Barbados in November 1988 and in May 1989, she conducted a poetry workshop as part of a two-week creative writing seminar, organised by **CAFRA** and held in Trinidad and Tobago.

Audre found the first community for her voice in the late 1960s with the New Black Poets whose mission was "to liberate the Black soul from Western tutelage." Refusing to be silenced by the conflicts between black men and black women, Audre wrote woman-centered poems of motherhood and childhood. Among her volumes of poetry are **The Black Unicorn, Our Dead Behind Us and Undersong: Chosen Poems Old and New**. Her prose works include **The Cancer Journals, Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, Sister Outsider** and **A Burst of Light**.

Audre wrote poetry for over 40 years and actively published for more than 25 years. She has been described as "a relentless exponent of the Black lesbian aes-

thetic."

In an interview in **CAFRA News** (vol 2, no 4, December 1988) Audre looked at her feminism this way:

...when I call myself a black feminist I am saying that I recognize that my powers as well as my oppressions come from my blackness and my womaness and that both of these are inseparable and immutable parts of who I am ... I say this because black feminism is not white feminism in a black face. It is a genuine movement that comes out of the lives of black women, wherever we are - women of the African Diaspora - and as such must be identified in terms of particular problems wherever

we are.

In October 1990, over 1,000 women from 23 countries, gathered in Boston for the **I Am Your Sister Conference**, to celebrate Audre Lorde and her work, to use her work as the point of reflection, dialogue and collective organising.

Audre's passing has left all those who knew her or have drawn inspiration from her work with a deep sense of loss of a sister who lived her life in the best way she knew, and in so doing, enriched the lives of all who passed her way. While we mourn her death, we celebrate her life and take solace in her words ... "once we recognize the existence of our death, without embracing it, there is really nothing they can do us again."



• Audre Lorde at "I Am Your Sister" conference, October 1990. •

When I Dare To Be Powerful

Audre Lorde developed breast cancer in 1980 and had a mastectomy. In 1984, the cancer metastasized to her liver. In 1987, when it was discovered that it had spread to her ovaries and tubes, she had a hysterectomy. In all these years, she has used only a few doses of chemotherapy, relying mainly on immuno-supportive therapy—specifically, on Iscador and Vysorel, both derivatives of mistletoe and used, so far, only by a few therapists. Audre's therapist lives in Germany.

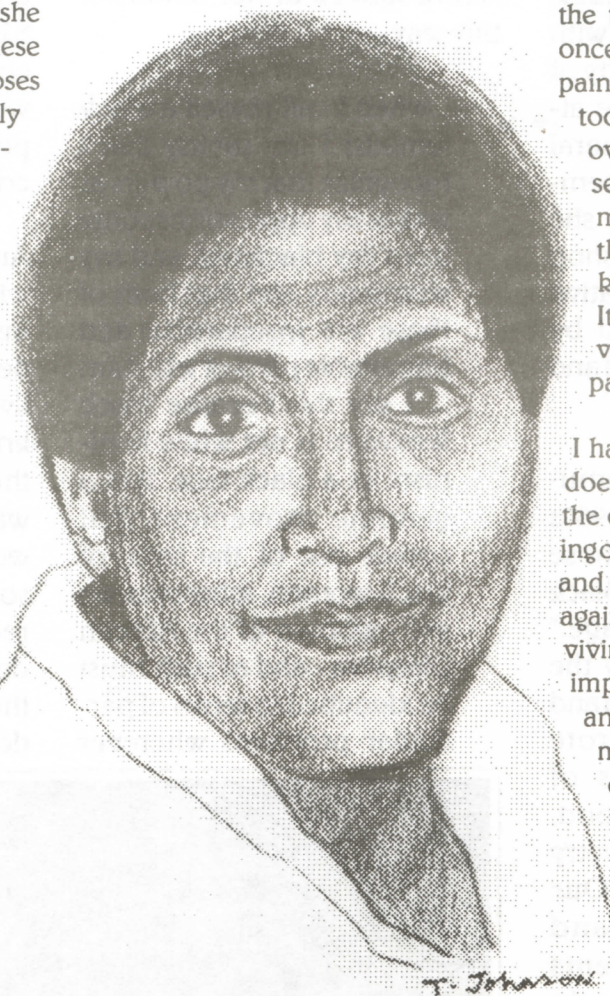
Reprinted below, is an excerpt from *The Cancer Journals* as carried in *Women's Health Journal*, 3/92 (Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network)

I am learning to live beyond fear by living through it, and in the process learning to turn fury at my own limitations into some more creative energy. I realize that if I wait until I am no longer afraid to act, write, speak, be, I'll be sending messages on a Ouija board, cryptic complaints from the

other side. When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less important whether or not I am unafraid.

As women we were raised to fear. If I cannot banish fear completely, I can learn to count with it less. For

then fear becomes not a tyrant against which I waste my energy fighting, but a companion, not particularly desirable, yet one whose



• Audre Lorde at "I Am Your Sister" conference, October 1990. •

knowledge can be useful.

I write so much here about fear because in shaping this introduction to *The Cancer Journals*, I found fear laid across my hands like a steel bar. When I tried to reexamine the 18 months since my mastectomy, some of what I touched was molten de-

spair and waves of mourning - for my lost breast, for time, for the luxury of false power. Not only were these emotions difficult and painful to re-live, but they were entwined with the terror that if I opened myself once again to scrutiny, to feeling the pain of loss, of despair, of victories too minor in my eyes to rejoice over, then I might also open myself again to disease. I had to remind myself that I had lived through it all, already. I had known the pain, and survived it. It only remained for me to give it voice, to share it for use, that the pain not be wasted.

I have found that battling despair does not mean closing my eyes to the enormity of the tasks of effecting change, nor ignoring the strength and barbarity of the forces aligned against us. It means teaching, surviving and fighting with the most important resource I have, myself, and taking joy in that battle. It means, for me, recognizing the enemy outside and the enemy within, and knowing that my work is part of a continuum of women's work, of reclaiming this earth and our power, and knowing that this work did not begin with my birth nor will it end with my death. And it means

knowing that within this continuum, my life and my love and my work has particular power and meaning relative to others.

It means trout fishing on the Missisquoi river at dawn and tasting the green silence, and knowing that this beauty, too, is mine forever.

Eulogy For Audre Lorde by Gloria Joseph



The voice of the poet, Audre Lorde, cannot be silenced. The work of the poet, Gamba Adisa, will never be forgotten. For Audre Lorde has imprinted the lives of all who know her work. She entered this world 58 years ago in New York City, the third and youngest daughter of West Indian parents. After years of consistent work she emerged as one of America's leading Black female poets, and Poet laureate of New York State in 1991.

Audre Lorde, later named Gamba Adisa, was blessed with a poetic genius. When you read her work, when you hear her delivery you know that her talents cannot be imitated, because of the unique, inimitable manner in which she reaches out and touches the heart and very soul of her listeners. She should not be considered as a role model—but a touchstone! You can no more model after Audre Lorde than you could from Malcolm X or W.E.B. Du Bois or Zora Neal Hurston. These giants had genius qualities that defied imitation. What you can do is listen to and learn from the words and deeds of these specially gifted ones. Audre Lorde, a writer whose mastery of the usage of language at times seemed magical, was truly one of the gifted ones.

Gamba Adisa's creative vision was colossal. For example while others would see a grey rock—Audre would see and describe, "a multi-coloured aggregate of limestone, slate, agate and marble from the Paleolithic stage, i.e. from icebergs off the Bering Strait, with mossy green lichens with delicate rosy hued pimples—and oh, look! There are two small insects on it—and they're MATING!"

Audre Lorde would often introduce herself as a Black, feminist, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet. However accurate these words may be, we know that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and so being Audre Lorde cannot be defined by a list of words. Her 17 volumes of poetry, prose and biomythography reflect her dislike and objections to oppressions of all kinds and in particular racial and sexual prejudices and practices.

During the last seven years of her life Gamba Adisa retired to St. Croix. Naturally she continued her writing and political activism. However, it was here that this travelling cultural worker—her inter-continental travels throughout Europe, North America, the Caribbean, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii, brought her in

contact with indigenous peoples and the opportunity to further appreciate differences—this recipient of many honours and awards including five honorary doctoral degrees—this influential and inspiring professor and activist, it was the small island of St. Croix that afforded her the time and space to live graciously, extending her warmth and generosity touching the hearts and very souls of so many. She embraced and appreciated equally the youngsters at Children's Space, and the productivity of the Starving Artists.

And now, it is our time to rejoice in appreciation of this Marvelous Woman of Distinction. So Gamba Adisa, with pride and passion stroll down the cloud laden boulevard of the Glory Road—arm in arm with Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, Queen Mary of Fire Burn, Sojourner Truth and Du Bois—and know that you have done your work with the sensuousness and dignity of a marvelous woman of distinction, a woman of our times—a woman for all times.

GLORIA JOSEPH,
CAFRA'S

*National Representative in St. Croix,
friend and companion of
the late Audre Lorde.*

HERE'S ROSEMARY

Andaiye, is a Guyanese consultant with the Women and Development Unit (WAND) who was diagnosed with cancer of the lymphatic system (non-Hodgkins lymphoma) in March 1989, and was treated with chemotherapy for one year. Her cancer has been in remission since March 1990. Andaiye is a close friend of the former Audre Lorde. Responding to news of Audre's passing, Andaiye has written this moving literary piece, entitled:

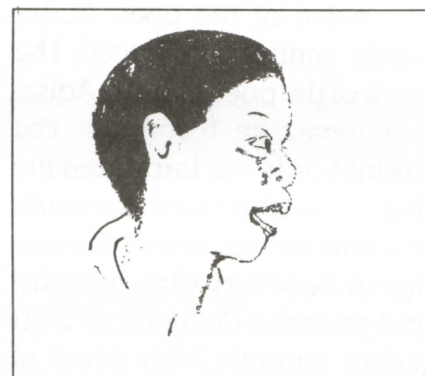
HERE'S ROSEMARY, FOR REMEMBRANCE (FOR AUDRE LORDE)

I met Audre Lorde towards the end of 1988 at a CAFRA meeting. I was chairing (they called it facilitating) a session. CAFRA members were being, as usual - and why not? - disorderly. I was in my best headteacher mode. Audre came in late. I recognised her face from the back of books but I had to make a point; she was late. I asked her to identify herself. She said, looking a little surprised, (she was not humble), "Audre Lorde." I led the acknowledgement by thumping the table. She acknowledged the recognition with a slight raising of the eyebrow, a ducking of the head.

A short time after I was asked if I could be interviewed along with Audre. I agreed. It took some time to get the interview together. When I was free, I heard she was tired. When she wasn't, I was busy. I wasn't trying to be difficult. I hadn't read the cancer books; I did not know she had cancer. Eventually we did the interview at a table (I think; my memory is bad) in a room full of people and smoke. I think, too, I was smoking myself. As I said, I didn't know she had cancer. And I didn't know I had cancer.

Somewhere in the next six months I learned she had cancer. Somewhere in the next six months - on Interna-

tional Women's Day, 1989 - I learned I had cancer. I remember only fragments of what happened over the next few days. I remember being at my father's house and people coming in, the women breaking the silence of awkwardness by asking me what I needed washed or ironed or bought for hospital; the men, not socialised into housework, having nothing to use to break the silence. I remember my friend, Jocelyn Dow, taking me to see a play that was on in celebration of IWD: **"For Coloured Girls who Have considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is not Enuf."** I remember going to the home of another friend, Alice Thomas, where I cried and Alice said "done, done, never mind, the diagnosis probably wrong." Mother words. I remember yet another friend, Nesha Haniff, saying angrily that we all know that Guyana's medical services had fallen apart so why were we so stupid as to believe they could read any slides? I remember my father sitting with Jocelyn making arrangements for me to go to Canada for the diagnosis to be checked even as he denied the possibility it might be right. I remember him calling my mother who was in England, and who did what she does best - pretended she was coping well; how was her daughter? I remember my brother, Abbyssinian, calling to say that he



would leave his job in New York (as he did) and come to wherever I would be, to be my nurse (as he was). I know I spoke during those few days, too, to other women who became major supports; women here, and Selma, Wilmette - Red Thread and Wages for Housework. Valerie. WAND and CAFRA: the thing I call not yet a women's movement called in.

I did not remember when I wrote Audre. But I did. And I remember that she answered, immediately, and sent me a copy of **A Burst of Light** with the inscription, **"Sister Survivor - May these words be a bridge over that place where there are no words - or where they are so difficult as to sound like a scream ..."**

And so began my friendship with Audre Lorde, around the sharing of the fear of living with, perhaps dying from cancer. She wrote often, mostly on cards. She'd said, "I need your words too." I couldn't write too many. So I called, often. And she called too.

West Indians are a people who, for good or evil, express the serious as joke. So across all my weekly or monthly phone calls with Audre in the four years, here's what I remember, most sharply:

Cont'd on page 7...

Women Writers On The Move



At the conclusion of the Third International Caribbean Women Writers Conference held in Curacao in July this year (1992), participants agreed to promote children's literature in indigenous language "to validate the culture, self-concept and identity of our young."

The conference was conducted in Dutch, English and Spanish and had as its theme "The Caribbean and the Female Vision in the 21st century." Participants were drawn from the entire region as well as from South America, USA, Canada, Europe and the United Kingdom.

It sought to provide a forum for Caribbean women writers and critics to meet and discuss the tasks ahead for the 21st century and gather material to continue the promotion of female literature. The people of the Nether-

lands Antilles were also privileged, during the conference, to learn about the work and lives of Caribbean Women Writers and female oral transmitters from other neighbouring islands.

Recognizing the need to write not what the outside world has done to us, "but what we have done to ourselves," the conference called on Caribbean women writers to study further how they could express the theme of oppression and the struggle to resist this oppression.

Writers, publishers and editors were challenged to rewrite the history of literature to include contributions of Caribbean women writers and publish new editions of old publications by Caribbean women. Writers have been urged to seek ways to give voice to the oppressed women in their soci-

eties by recording their stories and creating an environment in which they are able to educate themselves.

Decision makers need to be made aware of the importance of mothers and grandmothers as role models and educators of the children who will be the men and women to shape the 21st century. As such, mothers and grandmothers must be encouraged to teach sons and daughters the values of a non-sexist, non-racist and egalitarian society.

The conference saw five hectic days of debate, controversy and unresolved issues. There were also presentations and discussions, book displays, cultural presentations and sight seeing tours. Sybil Seaforth, Coordinator of CAFRA's Women's Creative Expression Project, attended the conference.

...cont'd from 11

BLACK WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

At one stage, the Brazilian women walked out as they felt democracy had been violated based on a vote on a particular issue taken the day before.

She said the situation got so bad that 25 women from 11 English-speaking Caribbean countries, feeling ignored and isolated, decided to go ahead and form their own network - Sulwe - which means 'Rising Star' in the Kenyan Luo language. They presented a report on Conditions of and Issues Related to African Women in the

English-speaking Caribbean. The report noted that although Black women shared common problems, because of the multifaceted nature of the concerns, it was not always clear that the views of the majority were represented.

Despite these difficulties, the week-long encounter was an extraordinary rapprochement of cultures, talents and experience: much of which had been insufficiently tapped. One sister from Brazil presented a doll-making workshop which had as its major motif, the reclamation of ancestral greatness through the conscious, tangible, sus-

tained efforts of resistance. The impetus for the encuentro which proved to be a major consciousness raising exercise came out of an earlier meeting of 32 Black women from the Latin American and Caribbean regions who met in San Bernardo, Argentina, two years ago at the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Conference. For four days, the women discussed their organisational experiences and the political, cultural and ideological project underlying the Quincentennial celebration, with its racial and ethnic repercussions. Those discussions fuelled the staging of the Encuentro.

HERE'S ROSEMARY

MY TREATMENT

I was well into my treatment. I had developed a reputation as a person who was dealing with cancer and chemotherapy. And I was brave. I knew from reading that the drugs I was using I would lose my hair. I arranged to shave it all off when it began to fall. I was determined that I would be in control. Every time I went for chemo I vomited my guts out, then vomiting over, called for soup with pigtail which my Aunt Elsenie or my mother made. I watched people watching me with pity - hair gone, cheeks deformed by steroids - and managed to laugh. My friend Karen de Souza, a photographer, would come from Guyana to visit me and climb up high to take pictures of the sun shining on my head and my cheeks so, she said, I could later see where I had been and acknowledge the journey. I genuinely found that funny. At least she assumed there would be a later.

I was brave until the day I was told I had to lose several teeth which, given the teeth I had been losing since childhood, meant that I had to get a plate.

A plate. Teeth in a cup, at night. Worse than cancer, a metaphor for old age. I went back to the home where I was staying, at my friend Elsie Yong, entered my bedroom, closed the door, climbed into my bed, went into the fetal position, and lay.

Somewhere within this - the same day? next day? - Audre called.

"Hi girlfriend," she said.

"Hi," I muttered, the first time I had ever felt, or sounded, not glad to hear her voice.

She chatted, then eventually asked what was wrong. Eventually I said,

"I have to be out teeth and get a plate and sleep in the night like old people." h. Whining.

THE TEETH

I heard a noise like a person who hadn't managed to get her hand over the phone before she giggled. Then Audre said,

"I lost my two front teeth. Which teeth are you losing?"

"The remaining ones on the right side," I answered.

"Oh, that's bad," she said. "But not as bad as front teeth."

I sucked the teeth I had left.

"Listen," she said. "You know how I'm supposed to be so brave? Well, when I lost my two front teeth I felt worse than when I lost my breast. I mean, you don't have to show your breast or use it every minute, but your teeth!

I giggled. Then I said, "But this is it. This is the end. This is teeth in a cup, in the night. The end of ..."

"No," she interrupted. "Here's what I do. In the night, I go into the bathroom and close the door, firmly. I take out my two front teeth. I brush the teeth in my mouth, then the teeth in my hand. Then I put the teeth in my hand in my mouth. I go to bed. Now, if you have expectations (and girlfriend, you and I might seem to have different expectations but they're really the same expectations), you wait till the expectations are met, or if none are forthcoming you raise some ..." I giggled.

"Stop interrupting," she went on. "After your expectations are met (she/he approaching, you approaching), you wait for the right moment (she/he asleep) and you take out your teeth (if you think you must) and place them strategically under the pillow..." I giggled.

"Girlfriend, you put them so you can get at them quickly if any further expectations come up. And if they don't, in the morning you get up, take them quickly from under the pillow, go to the bathroom, close the door firmly, brush the teeth in your mouth then the teeth in your hand, put the teeth in your hand in your mouth, and you're ready to meet any further expectations..."

"OK, ok, ok," I giggled. "Ok."

Ok. It occurred to me then, it occurs to me now, that the story had just been made up out of whole cloth. But what does that matter?

CHEMOTHERAPY

A few times, Audre called me because she needed to find company, in the place she was in. When the alternative therapy that had helped her stay alive for so long wasn't shrinking her liver tumour any more, or even keeping it the same size, and the question was whether to finally take chemotherapy even though she was tired of carrying her life every day in her hands: "Girlfriend," she enquired. "Tell me about methotrexate." I answered; she hummed; she asked "You think I should take that, you who've felt it?" I tried a balancing act: I wanted her to take anything that might keep her alive; I wanted to support her in her determination not to switch gears from a form of therapy that was about strengthening the immune system to one that could destroy it; I wanted her to take poison if poison would keep her alive. We spoke when, after she had taken the chemo, her locks fell out and she asked, "Do you understand thin with bloat?" - because she had lost weight while parts of her body

Cont'd on page 9...

HERE'S ROSEMARY



had grown fat. She called when for love of those for whose love of hers she was considering more chemo although her heart and her body and her mind said no. And all she asked of me, at those moments, was that as a person in a place similar to hers (though never the same) I would listen to her weigh options I had weighed and tell her the truth of what I had discovered so she could use that in her weighing of the options.

SISTER SURVIVORS

A person in a similar place. For we were never, Audre and I, "sister survivors," surviving in the same place. No one else I came to know who had cancer had travelled such a road, from breast cancer to liver cancer to ovarian cancer. From mastectomy to hysterectomy. From a person who started, like the rest of us, with little knowledge of cancer and its treatment to a person fully informed about the disease and the options for its treatment; from a person just living to a person having to take decisions every day about what to do or not to do just to live, who found the courage to choose a road with no one ahead to guide her - no person who had chosen that road and walked it for so long through such pitfalls and reached the place she wanted to be.

Audre told me, as she told countless others, that I should write - a diary entry each day, poems. I didn't. When Gloria said she had died I thought (I didn't know what else to think) I would write her a poem. I couldn't. I wrote, "I want you in this world." Nothing else. What I meant was that although I believe she will always be in this world in her children, her partner, her blood and non-blood sisters, all her life's work, I wanted her in this world - at the other end of a phone or postcard, talking about the loss of teeth and hair, about bloating bellies and cheeks, about Bush and the Gulf war, about where she was going/had been to see an eclipse of the sun, about why something I had written was ok but not good enough because I had chickened out on homophobia, about why she would forgive me that (for a while) in the face of CNN images of Rodney King, Ethiopia, Brazilian street children, the thing they call "black on black violence," with its origins in white on black violence, in New York, DC, the townships of South Africa. About living with and dying from cancer. About loving me, and I, her.

For I loved her, this woman who came so late to my life but whose death leaves a void in the centre of my life.

Audre, here's a rosemary. For remembrance.

SITA PARSAN (1945-1992)

In May 1989, Sita Parsan, a Surinamese poet, came to Trinidad and Tobago to improve her writing skills and share experiences with other women writers. Asked by **CAFRA NEWS**, "How do you find time to write?"

She replied: "I have plenty of time, because at the moment I'm a housewife. But the stupid thing is that when you have plenty of time you cannot schedule it. Plenty of time is wasted. I notice I have to be more disciplined." (CN: vol. 3, No 2, June 1989).

Little did she know that time was running out. By December, she was diagnosed with cervical cancer and started radiotherapy. In 1991, we received a Christmas card from her which said, "I just finished my cure for cancer. In January (1992) I will know the result."

We were saddened to learn of her death in Suriname, in December 1992. We will miss her letters which always contained words of encouragement for **CAFRA** and her poems which expressed a passionate concern for her beloved country. As she wrote: "My poems are couriers. They give impulses and courage to lift up Suriname from the downward position into which we pushed her."

Our condolences go to her husband and family.

...cont'd from page 2 **SUMMER UNIVERSITY IN FEMINIST THEORY**

Participants were also exposed to modules on feminism: historical and theoretical context/Caribbean context; spirituality and religion; women and work and the economy; organizations/communication styles; and building a Caribbean community. By the end of the two weeks and based on the overwhelming success of the programme, the organisers had to consider a number of options that would determine where the university would go from here. Should the university be held annually? What kind of follow-up can be done? Should we work with one group of participants over a three-year period and then have an evaluation to determine how to proceed? Is it the intention to build the university into a Caribbean School of Feminism?

LETTER FROM CANCER SURVIVOR

Ms Shireen Mc Ken, of Picton Court, Newtown, Port of Spain, a cancer survivor, has written to CAFRA with some very timely tips for other cancer survivors.

“I have done some homework on a programme of cancer survivorship where patients see themselves as survivors and not victims. Support group programmes in peer counselling are needed and do not exist at the National Radiotherapy Centre which also treats patients from other Caribbean islands...The area of positive visualisation is a strong tool in recovery and encouraging feelings of wellbeing. There is healing in the meditation of the mountains, the philosophy of the seas...

The areas of occupational therapy can be used to creatively occupy the survivor instead of dwelling on their miserable situation. The arts are used to ventilate thoughts, feelings and emotion...Poems and writings are original legacy in expression of experience. Dance is the only art wherein we ourselves are the stuff of which it is made and the graceful act of dance is used to reduce buildup of fluids in the arm after a mastectomy...

Drama can be a powerful area of expression... It is quite therapeutic ... to put on some lipstick, get dressed and go to a performance...

The support of other patients is invaluable as they meet on the level of the heart not academic...

Humour in the darkest of times is emergence from grief. It is that ability to access absurdity in adversity. It is very good medicine and the beginning of recovery...

Music has been used to calm, soothe, meditate, summon soldiers to battle...

So many stories from adversity to success. The feeling of accomplishment and achievement is an empowering tool in the helplessness people feel from a diagnosis of cancer...

I find women quite versatile and adaptable ... Women are the epitome of resourcefulness and it is this energy that needs to be channelled constructively in times of illness... Indulging in hobbies, craft and karate and yoga classes renew and empower the disabled...

”

Cancer has touched so many lives and cancer survivorship is a movement by cancer survivors for cancer survivors as the power comes when we say to each other "Yes I understand and know how you feel." The Caribbean has much hope and gifts and I am comforted in realizing this.

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOP REPORTS



Black Women's Conference

It was the first time the region had seen such a coming together of Caribbean women. They aimed to make a definitive statement of identity affirmation by attempting to reinforce a network of black women around the region.

The occasion was the staging of the First Latin American and Caribbean Black Women's Conference in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from July 19-25. Over 300 women from some 32 countries of the region participated in the Encuentro.

'Encuentro' was adopted by the group because of the actual

meaning and its phonetic overtones which are more profound than the English versions of 'conference' or 'meeting.'

The opening night was a gala event. Crowds of welcoming Dominicans came out in defiance of the rain to the open air fiesta held in Las Ruinas de San Francisco. Women danced freely and enjoyed the spectacle featuring the electrifying Xiomara Fortuna, popularly dubbed the Tracy Chapman of the Caribbean.

Xiomara's music is a "resume of the influencing sounds of African origin in the music and life of the

ghettoes of the Caribbean: today called Etni Jazz."

So much for the opening night. The conference itself did not always measure up to one's expectations. The language barrier proved formidable.

There were not enough English/Spanish translators to meet the needs of almost 300 Latin American and Caribbean women. One of the main translators, Julieta Alfonso, a Cuban, could not secure a visa. Another Cuban translator had a similar problem. Also, the mechanics of simultaneously translating long presentations proved to be a very difficult task for the four or five translators who had to carry the brunt of the translating.

Paula Thomas of CAFRA Trinidad said participants often had their questions wrongly interpreted or missed responses given. Paula feels the conference was too large and suffered from poor organisation. People were not sure what were the issues.

Yet, a greater irony existed. According to Paula, several of the Latin American women had difficulty accepting their blackness and felt it was a non-issue. These were people who came to the Dominican Republic to attend the First Latin American and Caribbean Black Women's Conference organised by the Movimiento por la Identidad de la Mujer Negra.

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• **ALL SMILES.** It must have been a happy moment for the Caribbean women pictured here who attended the First Latin American and Caribbean Black Women's Conference in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

(left to right): Delia Cuffy, Dominica; Pat Fraser, St Vincent; Paula Thomas, Trinidad; Ethel Desmond (partly hidden), St Lucia; Ife Harris, Barbados; and Earlene Home, St Vincent. •

Economic Education Workshop

Popular theatre has again proved itself to be very effective in reaching people. A roomful of adults at Hotel Cervantes, Dominican Republic, getting ready for a game of 'tug of war.' Only this time they will be looking at the negative impact of current economic policies on the Caribbean.

On one side of the rope is "the outflow" and on the other "the inflow." As the pulling and straining intensifies, the economist steps forward to examine the "balance sheet." This was exactly the scene during a five-day Regional Economic Education Workshop on structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) which was held in Santo Domingo, from September 21 - 25, 1992.

The workshop heard presentations from several noted Caribbean economists. Professor Norman Girvan spoke on the structure of Caribbean economies. He later teamed up with Judy Wedderburn to speak on Jamaica-conditionality and the nature of adjustment. Taimoon Stewart did a case study on the Trinidad and Tobago condition. There were also case studies on Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Grenada and Haiti. Peggy Antrobus spoke on gender analysis of SAPs and pointed

out that contrary to earlier studies on adjustment programmes which concluded that women were not considered, new analysis proposes that these programmes now factor in the gender component.

Professor Michael Witter provided participants with alternatives to present SAPs, in the areas of production and consumption:

PRODUCTION

FOOD - Caribbean peoples can produce their own food (vegetable and kitchen gardens) for their own needs and export.



SHELTER - since our most successful builders have been the church and there is a chronic housing need, the church can interface with financial institu-

tions to mobilize labour and finance for public housing.

EXOTICA - the trade in exotica (craft items, spices, other). Marketing should be very easy as informal commercial traders (higglers, street vendors) are plentiful and highly skilled at their trade.

CULTURE - the international market is very receptive to Caribbean culture (steelband, reggae, soca). Create an environment which allows our cultural ex-



ponents to repatriate their wealth.

CONSUMPTION

NATURAL RESOURCES - more efficient use of natural resources like natural gas and solar energy.

SAVINGS - encourage people to save using popular institutions like credit unions, sou sou and 'partner'.

ORGANISATION - household and small business as well as cooperatives can be developed.

The Regional Economic Education Workshop was first proposed by a member of the Association of Caribbean Econo-

mists (ACE) and later hosted by the Caribbean (NGOs) Policy Development Centre (CPDC) in collaboration with ACE. The workshop aimed to increase participants' skills in economic analysis and to improve the quality of economic policy advocacy. Participants were chosen on the basis of their involvement in existing projects/programmes where an understanding of economics is central.

At the end of the workshop participants voted overwhelmingly in favour of a statement on alternatives to the current economic policies being implemented in the region. Joan French, Coordinator of CPDC, noted that the Caribbean's coping strategies through the formulation of alternative economic policies have only just begun.

NGO CENTRE ON STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The Development Gap and the Third World Network recently established a new organisation called NGO CASA in Washington, D.C. The aim is to help build a world-wide movement against structural adjustment policies.

With the circulation of more information on how people in other countries are affected, it is hoped that popular organisations and other groups would be able to launch a more comprehensive attack on such policies.

The centre will serve as a resource for NGOs and popular organisations by drawing together and distributing to active members material on the impact of structural adjustment policies, particularly the effect on people's lives.

South Letter 13 (Spring 1992): 8

Caribbean Women and Economic Realities



Caribbean women have come one step closer in their struggle for survival and development with the establishment of a collective of researchers committed to analysis of the social and economic reality of the region and its impact on women.

The collective had its genesis in March 1991 with a series of meetings and colloquiums on Women in the Caribbean. During those meetings, the collective started work on the impact of the dominant economic strategies and socio-political crises on Latin Caribbean women. Work began with female researchers of the Centro de Estudios, Recursos y Servicios a la Mujer (CERES - Center of Research, Resources and Services for Women) of the Social Science Research Center and the Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico; the Women's Studies Committee of the Humacao Regional College, UPR; and the Sacred Heart University.

By 1992, the collective had broadened its scope to embrace women in community struggles from the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. In April 1992, a Women and Development seminar was held in Puerto Rico which was attended by Gemma Tang Nain of the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD), Trinidad, and Angela Hernandez of CE-Mujer in the Dominican Republic.

That meeting proved that women, though from different countries of the region, were being subjected to the same policies. Some of these policies included population control of the 1950s; light manufacturing and free trade zones as the basis of economic strategies. There was also the impact of recession and economic instability throughout the 1980s.

As economic conditions worsened women have remained jobless and in the lowest paying positions, intensifying their work in the domestic sphere, the informal economy and in precarious industries which reproduce the sweatshops of previous economic periods.

Women have not remained passive in regard to this reality.



According to Gemma Tang Nain, now Coordinator of **CAFRA**, "the marginalisation of women in terms of mainstream economic activity has produced responses at various levels, ranging from the personal to institution building. Collectively, women have built on the tradition of organising in their own interests."

Here, reference was made to several women's organisations - Sistren's Theater Collective, Jamaica (1977); Red Thread Women's Collective in Guyana; Women's Forum of Barbados (1988) and regional organisations such as the Caribbean Women's Association (CARIWA); **CAFRA**, conceived in Puerto Rico; as well as projects in CNIRD.

Included in the April 1992 meeting were persons of feminist orientation who were concerned with consciousness raising, mobilisation among women and economic development projects. A similar concern has been expressed among the Spanish-speaking Caribbean with organisations such as CE-Mujer, coordinated by Angela Hernandez from the Dominican Republic.

Hernandez stressed the need for an integral conceptualization of development with women themselves as main protagonists of their lives. This type of development will naturally include aspects of production, health and ecology, communal and social relations as well as economic concerns. At present, CE-Mujer is attempting to offer such a program. The organisation works with more than 40 groups in different rural and urban communities.

The Puerto Rican experience revealed that a number of women from various groups have been working in consciousness raising and economic development in different communities throughout the island. Some were oriented to agricultural, food and arts, and crafts production; others education and vocational training.

The exchange provided an invaluable opportunity for the identification of common interests and the beginning of a collective agenda for research and action among women in community struggle. The group reaffirmed its Caribbean identity in spite of linguistic and socio-political differences. It recognised the importance of continued efforts to transcend the fragmentation imposed by linguistic barriers and political restrictions.

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST VIOLENCE TO WOMEN



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

This year, activities to commemorate November 25, International Day Against Violence to Women, were fairly low-key in comparison to previous years.

The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs hosted "Woman - Root of the Universe," which comprised a dramatic performance, tea, fashion show and a craft display. The show was a repeat of one held in August during the Caribbean Festival of the Arts (CARIFESTA) in Trinidad and Tobago.

Women Working for Social Progress organised its annual candlelight vigil in downtown Port of Spain, ending in a public forum on violence, at the Public Library. Speakers included **CAFRA** Coordinator, Gemma Tang Nain; Senator Diana Mahabir, Chairperson of the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Psychiatrist Dr Gerard Hutchinson; and Dr Eric Drue, Educational Psychologist. The forum was chaired by Roberta Clarke, **CAFRA's** Women and the Law Project Coordinator.

The **CAFRA** Secretariat issued a press release which challenged men and men's organisation's to speak out and take action against their "brothers" who perpetrate crimes of violence against women.

ST VINCENT

AND THE GRENADINES

The Caribbean People's Development Agency (CARIPEDA), in a media release, criticized the dominant psychological explanations of vio-

"women, especially those who are more disadvantaged and marginalized, to be provided with genuine opportunities that will ensure meaningful participation in any decision which affects them as well as educational, economic and political empowerment."

The organisation urged women to "seize all strategic opportunities for leadership and to be in a position to represent themselves."

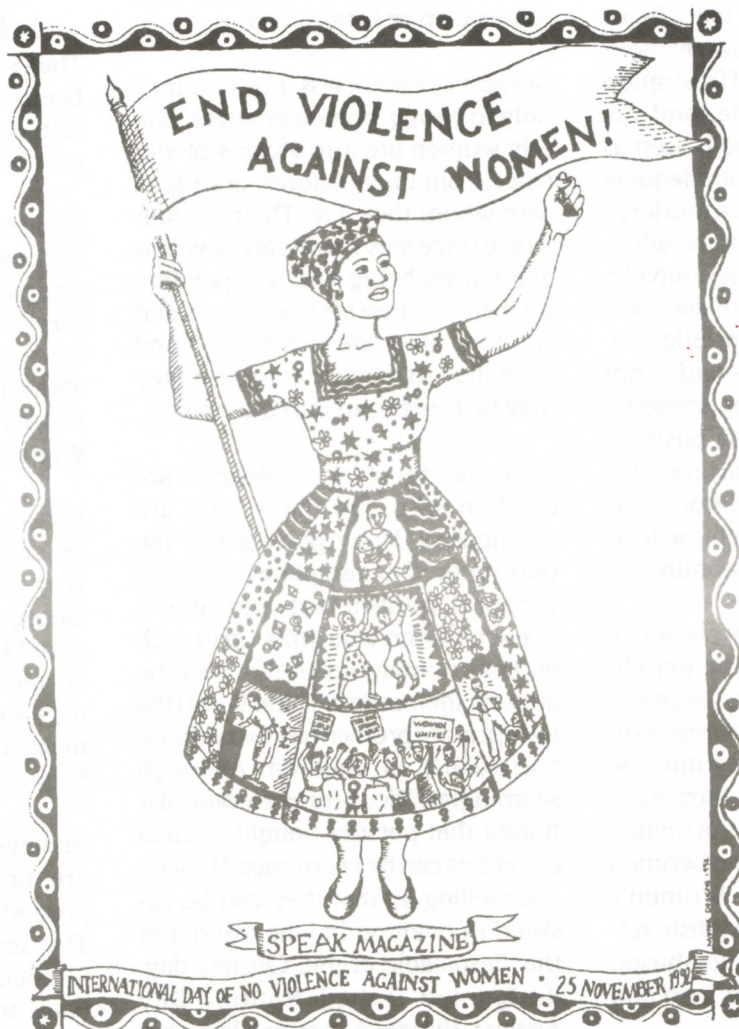
CARIPEDA is a network of local development agencies in the the English-speaking Caribbean.

GUYANA

The following statement to the media was written by Desiree Bernard, Guyanese judge and former member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The spectre of domestic or family violence has loomed large within recent times in every country of the world. It

has become the problem of the 90s and affects women in larger measure than men. The physically abused family member is invariably the wife (lawful or common law) of a drunken or domineering husband. This is not to say that men are not victims of violence by women but the incidence is low compared with that of women.



lence against women as being clearly inadequate, arguing that a fuller explanation is to be found in the male-dominated social system.

In the release which was issued to commemorate International Day Against Violence to Women, CARIPEDA pointed to the need for

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International Day Against Violence To Women



Several factors contribute to family violence: inadequate family income; history of drunkenness or drug use by the abuser; and cramped living conditions, to name a few. Invariably the acts of violence against the wife or woman in a common law relationship are committed out of frustration or disgust with one's life, and the woman is the person who is seen as being responsible for the inadequate wages, poor accommodation and large number of children. She is the whipping post, literally and figuratively. However, this is only true in the lower echelons of society. Domestic violence has no boundaries and is not confined to one social or domestic stratum. The well-heeled business executive with no financial problems and cramped living conditions is as likely to physically abuse his wife as the poor down-and-out labourer.

Whatever the cause, this canker in our society must be resolutely eradicated. Women need to be sensitised to their plight and encouraged to take action to stop it. They must be educated to realise that they have choices and their plight is not unique but is shared by thousands of women throughout the world. Women's organisations should establish refuges and hotlines where abused women can go or call for help and advice.

A comprehensive programme on the evils of physical violence should be undertaken in our schools so that it can be impressed on our youths that there are other ways of resolving conflicts apart from reacting violently against someone who is perceived to be a wrongdoer. Children must be taught respect for their elders and boys respect for girls. Girls too must

be taught to respect themselves and demand respect from boys. Our entire value system needs to be changed and the perceived old-fashioned values of honesty, integrity and self-esteem re-introduced.

Domestic violence is not confined only to young women or wives. Elderly women are also victims of violence from their children or in-laws with whom they live. Their plight is worse since they invariably have few alternatives being wholly dependent on their children for sustenance and comfort. They are defenceless and were they to rebel or complain they may be turned out into the streets.

Other victims of family violence are children who like the elderly are defenceless. Many parents feel the only method of discipline is to inflict corporal punishment and abuse. These children who grow up in such an environment invariably become abusers themselves. There is also the ever present problem of sexual abuse particularly of children. Although seemingly difficult (to overcome) it is hoped that persons caught in such situations can be encouraged to seek counselling so that they can be assisted in overcoming the trauma of this despicable crime. On this day, designated United Nations Day Against Violence Against Women, everyone ought to pause and reflect on the problem of violence as a whole, not only against women but against all humankind. Efforts are being made at international level to focus attention on this problem. It is time that we cease to be physically confrontational and become instruments of peace in an ever-changing world moving inexorably towards a new century.

CAFRA GUYANA IN THE NEWS:

A STAND AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Guyana Chapter of **CAFRA** has been very much in the news over the last six months with respect to a number of issues affecting women.

One such issue is the whole question of domestic violence. To this end, the Chapter launched its counselling service for victims of domestic violence, on December 7, 1992 - just about two weeks after the International Day Against Violence Against Women.

Face-to-face sessions are conducted by trained social workers at the Guyana Nurses Association Hall, Georgetown. Janice Jackson, National Representative for **CAFRA** in Guyana, says the group is now looking for permanent quarters to house their counselling services, with the help of the Ministry of Labour.

However, the counselling sessions are not isolated from the wider programme of the Guyana Chapter. The sessions are part of a larger Women's Rights Campaign that dates back to March 1992 when three members of the Chapter attended a **CAFRA** workshop in Trinidad on Legal Education.

From there, emerged a plan of action for a Women's Rights Campaign to deal with issues such as domestic violence, property rights, child maintenance and custody, child abuse and sexual harassment. In July/August, two preliminary meetings

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CARE FOR GUYANESE ELDERLY

The elderly people of Guyana can look forward to some happy times once again. Only this time the service will be provided not by relatives but a group of trained aides.

Called Home Support Service for the Elderly, the programme will be implemented by **CAFRA** beginning with about 60 pensioners in the Lodge, Wortmanville and Werk-en-Rust districts of Georgetown.

Ms Greta Lammy, Administrator of the Archer Home and a member of **CAFRA**, says the programme will concentrate on elderly males and females who do not have relatives and friends close enough to give them some assistance when they need it.

"We will offer the services of a trained aide who can do light chores around the house, or some shopping for the pensioner. They can also pre-

pare meals, help them tidy up or just be a companion for three hours each week."

Ms Danuta Radzik, a member of the Red Thread Collective and the Guyana Chapter of **CAFRA**, sees the project gaining wide acceptance by elderly persons and their families since trained aides will be monitoring the welfare of the aged on a regular basis.

With the increasing pressure on younger people, more and more of the aged will be left on their own with not very reliable arrangements to support them. The Home Support project will offer a service that is "efficient, reliable and adequate," Radzik says.

CAFRA hopes that those who use the service will pay what they can afford while private sector agencies and individuals will be encouraged to make grants and pledges for the running of the programme. **CAFRA** members also hope the programme will discourage relatives from placing the elderly in institutions when they cannot cope with their needs.

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CAFRA GUYANA IN THE NEWS: A STAND AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

were held with representatives of 30 organisations. By September, a preparatory workshop for the launching of the campaign was held. Thirty persons from 20 organisations attended. The campaign now has four elements:

EDUCATION- public education lectures and sensitization workshops for police, teachers, religious leaders and community leaders;

SERVICE- counselling and training of trainers to reach out to the community;

LEGAL REFORM- at this time there is no Bill on domestic violence. Work has started on the piecing together of what exists;

RESEARCH- participatory research on

domestic violence. The community members themselves are collecting the data so that results can be popular-oriented.

As far as **CAFRA** is concerned, says Jackson, domestic violence is a crime and people ought to know there are ways and means of dealing with it.

"You don't keep it within you. There are people to share it with."

Already, Red Thread- a grassroots NGO in Guyana, has recorded a radio serial on domestic violence that will run for two weeks and will be aired on national broadcast media.

Much emphasis is also being placed on education. On November 25, three one-day workshops funded by UNICEF were con-

ducted to sensitize community leaders to the impact of domestic violence. Police officers have been trained in the handling of cases of domestic violence and the nature of records to be kept on reports made. **CAFRA** has also suggested that selected police stations with some degree of privacy should be provided for victims.

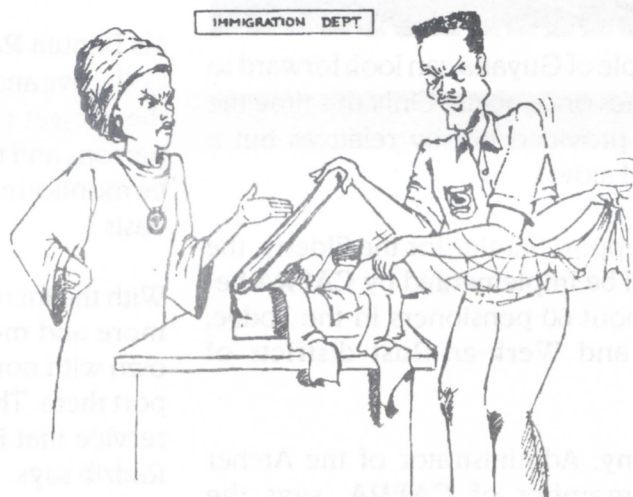
Jackson is of the view that the causes of domestic violence are multi-faceted. It is often related to alcoholism and low standards of living. Some men cannot deal with women who are trying to "improve themselves." Still, some women feel it's a way of life. Well **CAFRA** has come to change all of that. Women are now ready to talk. Previously, it was seldom, if at all, ever mentioned.

Immigration Harasses Rastafarian

The **CAFRA** local branch office has strongly condemned the recent embarrassment and humiliation caused to Jamaican-born Imani Tafari Ama on her entry to Dominica for a special meeting of the Eastern Caribbean Popular Theatre Organisation (ECPTO).

In addition to the protracted detention by immigration officials, Imani and those who came to receive her at the airport experienced the most degrading humiliation and inconvenience.

Imani, a **CAFRA** member, who administers **CAFRA's** Women and the Law project in Antigua, has been involved in the women's movement for a number of years. She has been in the frontline promoting the rights of women and is well known for her work among Caribbean women.



CAFRA views this as an act of violation of her rights to travel freely and furthermore it contradicts the West Indian Commission's recommendation on regional unity which states that "loosening up immigration regulations/barriers will help promote re-

gional link-up and a spirit of unity among OECS countries."

CAFRA therefore calls on government to stop this act of disunity and aggression against this minority group and our sister in particular.

The Dominica embarrassment is not the first incident of this nature that Imani has had to deal with.

On June 13, 1992, Imani was taken into custody by Barbadian police and searched for narcotics, on arrival at Grantley Adams International Airport, to promote the First Black Women's Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean.

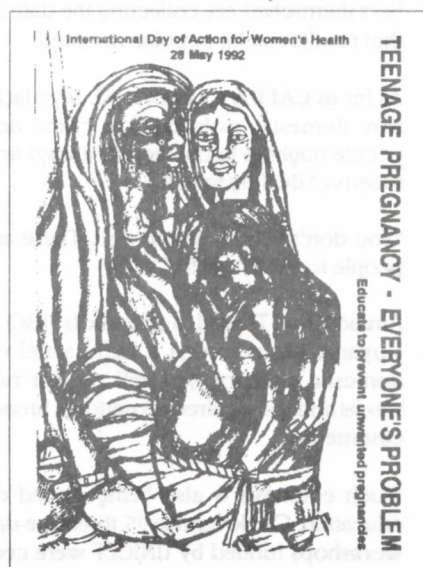
FOCUS ON ST LUCIAN YOUTHS

In St Lucia today, as it is in the other Caribbean islands, teenagers leave school at a very crucial period in their life and enter the labour market. At around the same time, most of them have their first sexual experience and soon after embark on a visiting union.

In addition, many of them leave their parents' homes and establish their own with their children and, hopefully, a cohabiting partner during their early '20s.

These findings were revealed in a study produced by the National Population Unit of St Lucia, in collaboration with the ECLAC/CELADE Demography Unit, Port of Spain. The study sought to review the interrelated aspects of the problems of St Lucia's teenagers in a changing soci-

ety and provide the basis for the development of strategies designed to tackle the problems of St Lucian youth in a more effective way.



According to the report, St Lucia today is not the same as yesteryear. The problems teenagers face are by no means new. But the context in which teenagers find themselves today is dramatically different from what it was two generations ago, in the late 1940s to early 1950s. Life and the initiation of youth into adulthood now take place in a very different setting.

The future of today's teenagers appears bleak, although they are in many respects far better off than their parents in terms of levels of education, living conditions, access to information and leisure.

The number of teenagers in St Lucia has doubled. Primary school education is almost universal; young people are better educated than their parents and less inclined to work in the agricultural sector. This has accelerated the drift away

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Cuban Women Against US Agression

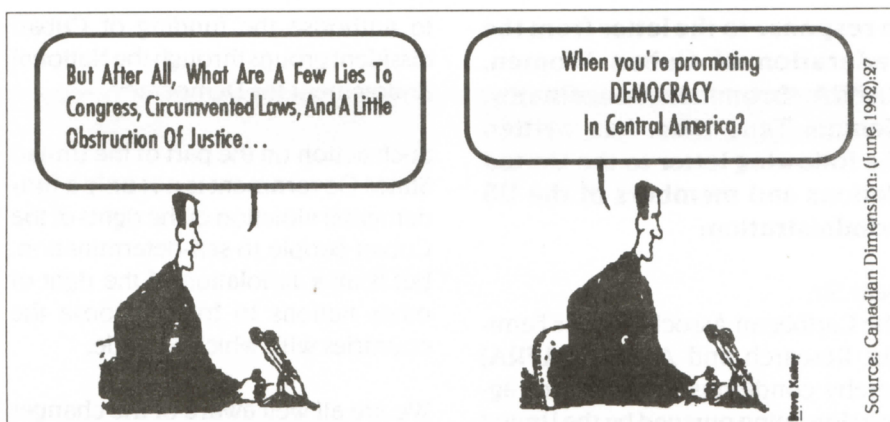
Cuban women have decided to take a definite stand against US aggression. In a letter, dated September 29, 1992, the Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women) has criticized the US for its continued policy of aggression toward Cubans.

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Since 1961, the United States, as part of its aggressive policy against Cuba, had imposed and now strengthens an economic, commercial and financial blockade against the people of Cuba. Today, the US Congress has made significant motions dealing with US/Cuba relations. Rep. Robert Torricelli (D-NJ), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, introduced a law known as the "Cuban Democracy Act" (CDA). The Act would, in summary:

- Ban trade with Cuba by foreign subsidiaries of US companies (a restatement of the "Mack Amendment").
- Confiscate any ship that docks at a US port within six months after docking in Cuba.
- Reduce US aid to any nation that imports Cuban sugar by the same dollar amount as the value of the sugar imported.
- Authorise the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to begin funding Cuban "dissident" groups.
- Direct the President to pressure countries that trade with Cuba (USSR, Great Britain, Canada, France, Mexico, Japan, etc.) to halt their trade with the island.

The objective of the United States Government is to ruin our economy,



Source: Canadian Dimension: (June 1992):87

deny vital resources for development and stop our people from exerting their right to self-determination, independence, and sovereignty with the intention to newly submit it to the dominion and dependency of the powerful interests to which the US Administration responds to, and isolate us from the rest of the world.

US BLOCKADE

This blockade has affected all the Cuban people who with enormous efforts and sacrifice, work and strive for the development of the nation; it has affected particularly the lives of women and children. They have not hesitated to even strike the most sensitive by including in the blockade indispensable medications to save human lives.

The blockade is the most crude expression of violence against the daily life of Cuban families, which implies the violation of substantial human rights. The US Government has exerted its domain beyond its own territory. The measure of the blockade, which is not only unfair and unjust but also illegal, violating all international norms, has expanded beyond US borders. It has prohibited imports to the United States of any product

elaborated with any Cuban component, no matter where they come from; it has forbidden the entry to US ports of vessels from any country that has transported goods to Cuba, and as an additional punishment, it forbids the selling of agricultural goods to the countries within the Food for Peace Program. Goods produced by US subsidiary enterprises in third countries are forbidden to negotiate with Cuba. All Cuban bank accounts and national stocks within the US have been frozen, and dollar transactions with the Cuban Government or its representatives have been prohibited.

Having all this in mind, we, women of Cuba represented by the Federation of Cuban Women, like you, our sisters and brothers, who struggle daily to live in a better world, in a truly just and dignified society, DEPLORE and DENOUNCE this barbarous and arbitrary policy against the people of Cuba.

We welcome and call upon all justice and peace loving people and organisations of the world, but specially those of the United States, to support us in this humanitarian cause. And plead for your solidarity ...

(Excerpts from the letter)

CAFRA Condemns US Policy of Agression

In response to the letter from the Federation of Cuban Women, CAFRA, through its Coordinator, Gemma Tang Nain, has written the following letter to the United Nations and members of the US Administration:

Dear Sir,
The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) hereby condemns the policy of aggression being pursued by the United States against Cuba.

This policy, which has been in existence since 1961, has recently been intensified through the introduction of a law known as the "Cuba Democracy Act." In effect, the law goes beyond prohibiting trade between the USA and Cuba and seeks to penalise a third country which engages in trading relations with Cuba. It also seeks

to authorise the funding of Cuban dissident groups through the National Endowment for Democracy.

Such action on the part of the United States Government is not only a fundamental violation of the rights of the Cuban people to self-determination, but is also a violation of the right of other nations to freely choose the countries with which to trade.

We are all well aware of the changes that have taken place in the past five years in the former socialist countries but in each case it was the people in those countries who demanded such change through popular protest and revolt. We feel confident, then, that should the Cuban people require change they, too, will demand such change through popular means.

To deny the Cuban people their right to seek change - if and when they

want it - is to treat them with the utmost contempt. **CAFRA**, therefore, strongly condemns the US Government for displaying such contempt for the people of Cuba.

Finally, **CAFRA** is expressing through this letter, its solidarity with the Cuban people as they struggle against such violations of their rights as human beings and as citizens of Cuba. We especially empathise with the women of Cuba who, given their crucial role in productive and reproductive activities, have been particularly affected by these acts of aggression on the part of the United States.

We therefore join our Cuban sisters, as represented by the Federation of Cuban Women, in deploring and denouncing the United States' policy of aggression against Cuba and call for an immediate end to such policy and its consequent practices.

...cont'd from 19

FOCUS ON ST. LUCIAN YOUTHS

from this sector. Added to this is the increased exposure to local and foreign media and the consequent influences.

Despite this, many still aspire to higher levels of education only to realise how limited the opportunities are because of the scarcity of secondary school places. Interestingly, rates of secondary school enrolment are much higher for girls than for boys especially between ages 13 and 16. And efforts to increase secondary and vocational school enrolment to better prepare young people for the job market are still hampered by the rapid growth of the school age population and lack of adequate funds. It is not surprising therefore that the two major interrelated problems confront-

ing young St Lucians are education and employment. These are also closely related to teenage pregnancy. Young boys and girls enter the labour market prematurely, without the appropriate training, to fill the few jobs available. Employment expectations are high but jobs are scarce. The result is that growing numbers of ill-prepared school leavers face massive unemployment at home.

The 1988 Contraceptive Prevalence Survey in St Lucia pointed out that among females aged 15 - 19, 37 percent felt things in St Lucia were getting worse. An equivalent number felt their job opportunities were shrinking and that their



chances for achieving their goals in life were "not so good" or just plain "bad."

Contrary to popular belief, the survey proved that very few girls deliberately choose to become pregnant, either to affirm their womanhood or to retain their lover. The reality is that, unfortunately, teenage pregnancy still comes as "an undesirable outcome of love."

Because unwanted pregnancies still continue to occur among teenage girls, the survey felt the generalisation of sex education at school, starting from an early age, was urgently needed.

To continue to accept high, unplanned rates of teenage pregnancy would be to compromise the future of young St Lucian girls and lock them into a culture of poverty.

Women And The Law

"I should have known all of this before."

"Now I feel like going to study law."

These are some of the comments of persons participating in the Legal Education Lecture Series now ongoing in the project countries of Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and Trinidad since September 1992.

The programme is intended for individuals and organisations who work with women with legal problems such as halfway houses, rape crisis centres and trade unions. The intention is to equip these individuals with the skills to assist women who come to them as frontline agencies. The programme includes lectures and discussion on the Constitution; Family Law; Labour Law; Criminal Law; Property Rights and Elements of Contract and Tort. Lectures have generally been delivered by Attorneys-at-law but on occasion social workers have also given guest lectures.

"I feel like I am in a different world."

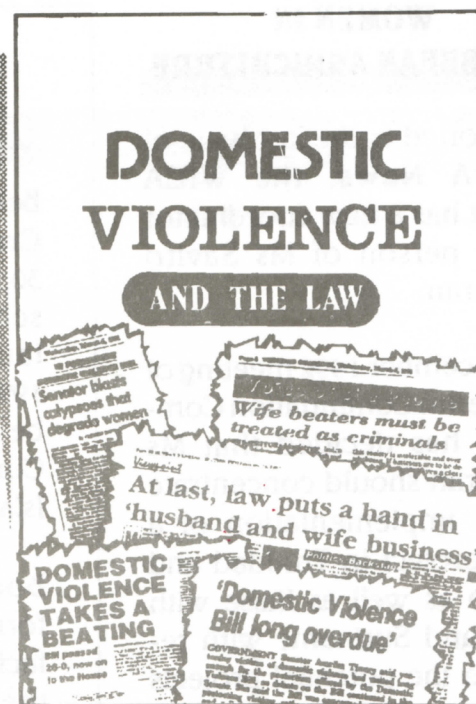
Because the intention of the programme is to demystify the law, court visits have also been included in the programme. In Trinidad, for example, the participants were able to visit the Magistrate's Court and witness the hearing of drug-related offences. Most of the participants had never been inside of a court house and they felt overwhelmed at witnessing the parade before the courts of many young men whose lives seem already ruined for lack of social and economic opportunity. Some were also dismayed at the small size of maintenance orders given to children.

DOMINICA

In Dominica, the programme was launched in October for women's groups on the island. Project Officer, Martha Joseph, said CAFRA had recognised that women were being oppressed and that there was an urgent need to work towards correcting the problem. Joseph said the job will never be done until Dominican women became aware of their rights and until the necessary changes took place.

Declaring the course open, Acting Minister of Community Development, Senator Johnson Boston, said Dominican women had been equal partners in development and the government was now addressing their problems. He urged the project participants to share what they learned throughout their communities.

These programmes are scheduled to be completed in January 1993. However, given the enthusiastic response, there are already plans to continue the programme on an annual basis in some of the five countries.



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

As part of the Women and the Law Project, a pamphlet has now been produced in Trinidad and Tobago on the Domestic Violence Act. Similar pamphlets are in the process of production in the other territories.

ST. LUCIA

In St Lucia, where the project is being spearheaded by a Steering Committee comprised of such agencies as the Women's Desk and the Women's Action Council, a number of needs have been identified:

- the need for a closed court hearing in sexual offences
- labour laws with the right to maternity leave

and findings:

- the law did not make it compulsory for a woman to change her surname after marriage.
- a woman could only place the name of the father of a child born out-of-wedlock, on the birth certificate within one year of the birth.

Cont'd on page 23...

WOMEN IN

CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURE

As reported in the last issue of **CAFRA News**, the WICA project has a new coordinator in the person of Ms Savitri Ramsaran.

The December 1992 meeting of the Interim Continuation Committee has decided that Ms Ramsaran should concentrate on the implementation of a WICA project in Trinidad and Tobago as well as liaise with Belize and Suriname with respect to the potential projects there.

The **CAFRA** Coordinator will assume responsibility for whatever WICA follow up is to take place in Dominica and St Vincent.

...cont'd from page 22

WOMEN AND THE LAW

CAFRA through the Law project has also supported the Women's rights Campaign launched by the Guyana chapter of **CAFRA**. At a one-day preparatory planning workshop held on September 19, the participants discussed definitions of domestic violence (the focus of the campaign) and examined strategies for action at the individual, organisational and collective levels.

Woman's Creative Expression

Belize held its launching of **Creation Fire** on October 30, 1992 and Suriname is scheduled to hold its launching in February, 1993. Launchings are still to be held in the Bahamas, Curacao and the US Virgin Islands.

Bookmarks and order forms have been printed to facilitate further publicity of the anthology. **Creation Fire** is a **CAFRA** Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry.



LESBIAN ANTHOLOGY

New Victoria Publishers seeks submission from lesbians for an international anthology of short stories and essays. Manuscripts will be accepted on the full range of lesbian experience including life, sex, social constructs, disability, survival, celebration, erotica, etc. Persons interested in submitting their work should send in manuscripts of 3,500 words or less, written in English, Spanish, French or Portuguese.

The first edition will be published in English. Manuscripts can be published anonymously and confidentiality will be respected.

Send your submissions to:

NEW VICTORIA PUBLISHERS
BOX 27, NORWICH
VERMONT 05055, USA

BY MARCH 31, 1993

CAFRA NEWS SURVEY



Survey

Although only 29 persons out of a total of 582 on CAFRA's mailing list responded to the news readers' survey, overall the newsletter scored very high marks. Four persons gave an overall grade of 10 out of 10. The lowest mark was six from three respondents and 21 persons gave the newsletter between seven to nine.

The newsletter did very well in terms of relevance and interest. All readers with the exception of two found the language easy to understand and the layout and graphics enhancing. The most popular sections of the newsletter were the current affairs features and opinions/view on the Caribbean Women's Movement.

CAFRA NEWS was not simply read and pushed aside. Readers shared the information with others; kept it for

reference; used it for research purposes; and, in some cases, reprinted relevant features in their newsletters. Nearly all respondents to the survey suggested a number of relevant groups who could be added to the mailing list.

Several readers suggested specific types of articles they wished to see featured and asked for more in-depth analysis of others.

One reader called for a deeper exploration of race and class since she felt Caribbean feminism was Afro-centric. "We should be exploring a theory that was far more multi-racial/cultural. One that informs our praxis." With

Cont'd on page 26...

The image shows a printed survey form titled "CAFRA News Readers' Survey". It contains various sections with checkboxes and rating scales for respondents to provide feedback on the newsletter's content, layout, and relevance.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: CAFRA TOWARDS THE YEAR 2000

In keeping with a recommendation of the External Evaluators, CAFRA held a Strategic Planning Workshop in July 1992 to formulate a vision for CAFRA towards the year 2000 and, more specifically, to determine priorities over the next three-year period.

Elements of the Vision Included: setting and influencing policy, resulting in the empowerment of women; institutional strengthening involving financial self sustainability and expansion of human resources; increasing political power for women; and a deepening of the regional integration process. The key priorities emerging out of this exercise and subsequent meetings of CAFRA's decision making bodies are:

- development of a CAFRA Policy Document on gender and societal transformation;

- establishment of a fund-raising committee;
- development of a public relations strategy;

MISSION STATEMENT

CAFRA is a regional organization of feminists which recognizes the exploitation and oppression of women and works actively to change it. It seeks to channel the collective power of women for individual and societal transformation, thus creating a climate in which social justice can be realized.

- investigation of the need for CAFRA to develop a skills bank;
- the carrying out of a Language Training Exchange programme;

- the conduct of research on "Women and Politics."

A mission statement was also proposed and we would appreciate feedback from the CAFRA membership on the same.

Finally, in terms of programme emphasis, 1993 will see CAFRA phasing out Women and the Law and Women's Creative Expression as active projects though these areas will remain as part of CAFRA's overall programme. We plan to introduce the following new programme areas over the next three year period.

- Health, Sexuality and Reproductive Rights (including Prostitution and International Migration);
- The Impact of the Debt Crisis and Structural Adjustment on Women;
- Gender Consciousness and Gender Relations among Young People (ages 12-25).

ON THE

Bookshelf



Beecher, Jeanne, ed. **WOMEN, RELIGION AND SEXUALITY: studies on the impact of religious teachings on women.** Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.

Looks at the attitude to women in general and female sexuality in particular in the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish and Christian traditions, and in the concepts and practices of the Akan in Ghana.

Davies, Carol B and Elaine S Fido, eds. **OUT OF THE KUMBLA: Caribbean women and literature.** Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990. A collection of essays examining Caribbean women writers within a given tradition (e.g. Puerto Rican, Francophone, African-Caribbean, oral literature); specific themes in the works of a number of writers; and a particular author's body of work. Includes an interview with Cuban poet Nancy Morejon and a selected bibliography of criticism of related works.

French, Joan, comp. **CHALLENGES IN CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT: interventions of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) at the CARICOM Regional Economic Conference.** Bridgetown: Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), 1992. Looks in detail at the working document prepared for the conference (held in Trinidad and Tobago, February 1991); contributions on regional cooperation, production issues, human resource development and scientific technology, trade issues, finance and development, social infrastructure issues, sustainable development and the role of the public, private and NGO sectors. Available at the CPDC, PO Box 616, Bridgetown, Barbados, \$US10.

Global Fund for Women. **ENDING**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: a resource guide. Menlo Park, CA: Global Fund for Women, 1992.

General information about violence against women and recommendations for practical action. Also provides listing of organisations working on the issue as well as bibliographic references for interested students.

Hatcher, Robert A, et al. **CONTRACEPTIVE TECHNOLOGY 1990-1992.** 15th rev. ed. New York: Irvington, 1990.

Reference guide with timely, thorough and practical information about reproductive health, contraceptive methods, pregnancy and family planning.

King, Cynthia. "Contributions of Third World women to a feminist vision of development." Unpublished MA thesis, Ottawa: Carleton University, 1992. Outlines the historical development of gender and development theory and traces the growth of feminism in the South. Shows how Third World women have combined development theory and feminist theory to form a Southern feminist vision of development. That vision has been applied to a variety of development issues of which three are examined as examples of the contributions which Third World feminists have made to the international development dialogue. They are: structural adjustment; the new international division of labour; and violence against women.

Mahabir, Kumar. **EAST INDIAN WOMEN OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: an annotated bibliography with photographs and ephemera.** San Juan, Trinidad: Chakra Publishing House, 1992.

Lists 218 references on Indian women in Trinidad and Tobago from books,

journals, theses, conference papers and newspaper articles (the latter being the major source used).

Miller, Errol. **MEN AT RISK** Kingston: Jamaica Publishing House, 1991.

Examines gender changes in American, Soviet and Caribbean society and argues that male marginalisation and women's liberation are two outcomes of patriarchy. The origin of patriarchy is traced to antiquity. Patriarchy is defined as the sexual division of power early humans used to survive in insecure and adverse circumstances. The work considers the consequences of continuing with patriarchy and calls for its replacement by "personarchy" which asserts the equality of all as the basis of social organisation.

Montecino, Sonia and Regina Rodriguez, eds. **ESPEJOS Y TRAVESIAS: antropología y mujer en los 90.** Santiago: Isis International, 1992. (Ediciones de las Mujeres, no 16)

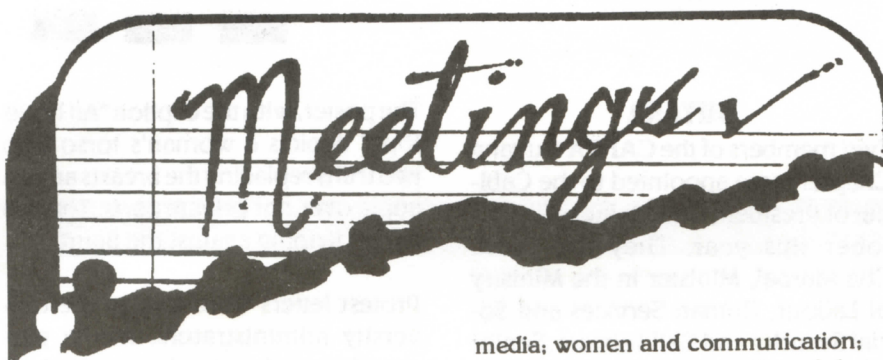
Senior, Olive. **WORKING MIRACLES: women's lives in the English-speaking Caribbean.** London: James Currey, 1991.

Examines issues affecting the Caribbean woman - socialization and education; domestic and family life; sources of livelihood and interactions with men and the wider society - using findings of the Women in Caribbean Research Project conducted in the English-speaking Caribbean from 1979-1982.

***** * JUST PUBLISHED * *****

CAFRA. **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE LAW.** St Augustine: CAFRA, 1992. Booklet produced by the Trinidad and

Cont'd on page 26...



FEBRUARY 22-26:

5th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women San Jose, Costa Rica.

Held every three years, the IICW aims to bring together scholars and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines and areas of expertise, to share insights, experiences and research and to explore issues of importance to women throughout the world. The theme of the 5th Congress is "Search, Participation, Change." It suggests the search for new alternatives as well as the importance of full participation at all levels in order to move towards a better society. Contact: Mirta Gonzalez-Suarez, PRIEG, Universidad de Costa Rica. Tel (506) 34-1495; Fax: (506) 53-4601

UNIFEM is sponsoring two panels entitled "Black Women's Identity" and "Black Women's Experiences from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean" at the IICW. These panels will continue and widen the debates begun at the First Meeting of Latin American and Caribbean Black Women, held in Santo Domingo from July 19 - 25, 1992. For more information, contact: Sandra Martin, Latin America & Caribbean Section, UNIFEM. Tel (212) 906-6400; Fax (212) 906-6705

FEBRUARY 23- 26

Latin American Meeting: Women and Communications, Havana, Cuba. Themes to be discussed include: women communication professionals; the image of women in the media; women's perception of their presence in the

media; women and communication; development and perspective of the work of women in cinema, television and video. For additional information, contact: Editorial Pablo de la Torriente, Apdo. Postal 6646, La Habana, Cuba. Tel 32-7581-83. Telex 051-2297

MARCH 3 - 8

Cuban Women in the 90s: Realities and Challenges; a Solidarity Meeting, Havana, Cuba.

The meeting will examine the reality of the Cuban woman and her struggle for equality, the impact of the economic embargo and express solidarity with Cuban women. Other activities planned include video and craft exhibitions and cultural meetings. For more information, contact: the Federation of Cuban Women, Fax (537) 939010, or the CAFRA office.

CAFRA's Third General Meeting will be held in 1993. More details in the next issue of CAFRA News.

1995 SEPTEMBER 4-15

World/UN Women's Conference, China.

As with all preceding world women's conferences (Mexico City, 1975; Copenhagen, 1980; Nairobi, 1985), there will actually be two conferences: the official UN delegate conference to which governments will send delegations and an open forum for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) where everyone is welcome. Governments are urged to hold national preparatory meetings in late 1993 or early 1994. UN regional conferences will be held during 1994 and parallel NGO forums are encouraged.

...cont'd from page 24

SURVEY

reference to 'class,' the reader suggested the re-opening of the discussion on class, particularly in the light of new political alignments internationally.

Improvements suggested in terms of themes or articles included:

- reports on ongoing research concerning women in the Caribbean
- short stories about women's lives (autobiographies)
- an issue dedicated to youth
- sexuality
- what others in the diaspora are doing
- women and politics

...cont'd from page 25

ON THE BOOKSELF

Tobago component of the Women and the Law Project.

The following publications are available from: Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, P.O.Box 77, 2340 AB Oegstgeest, The Netherlands. Fax 31- 71- 175391

Guidelines for the assessment of activities related to family planning.

Written for project officers in the field of development cooperation, the publication offers minimal guidelines for the assessment of birth control activities based on the principle of self-determination for women. Available in Dutch, English, French and Spanish. Price US\$6

Reading the word and the world: literacy and education from a gender perspective.

Guidelines for the implementation of literacy programmes for women from an empowering perspective. Price US\$15 (English version) US\$10 (French and Spanish)

NEWS

CAFRA

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL OFFENCES LEGISLATION

Dominica's Sexual Offences Act was recently amended. The maximum penalty for sexual assault of a girl under 14 years of age is life imprisonment, whether the girl consents or not; for sexual assault or attempted sexual assault of mentally disabled females, which does not amount to rape, it is seven years; and for attempted sexual assault of a girl under the age of 14, it is seven years.

BARBADOS

In Barbados, victims of domestic violence now have recourse by law, with the passage of the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act, earlier this year. The Act provides legal protection for members of households where an adult is abusive. Offenders may be restrained from contacting the family members they abuse while still having to provide financial support to them.

GUYANA

Two members of the CAFRA Guyana Chapter were appointed to the Cabinet of President Cheddi Jagan, in October this year. They are Indra Chandarpal, Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security and Gail Telxiera, Senior Minister in the Ministry of Health.

Indra Chandarpal attended the launching of CAFRA in 1985 and served as the first CAFRA National Representative for Guyana. Both women have long been active in the Guyanese women's movement through their involvement in the Women's Progressive Organisation.

We wish them every success as they strive to make Guyana a more equitable society in terms of race, culture, gender and class differences.

JAMAICA

Women's Media Watch mounted a campaign in June against a particularly vulgar poster used to promote a dance at the Students Union, Mona Campus, University of the West Indies.

The poster, with the caption "All Fruits Ripe" depicts a woman's torso with two fruits replacing the breasts and an apple over her private parts. There is a man leaning against the figure.

Protest letters were sent to the University administrators, media personalities and women's organisations and drew a favourable response from the Jamaican public.



CREATION FIRE

The CAFRA anthology was recently reviewed by Glynne Griffith in the *Bulletin of Eastern Caribbean Affairs* (Vol. 17.3, July-September, 1992).

The writer concludes that "though it may seem that this review has thrown cold water on some aspects of *Creation Fire*, the work powerfully succeeds."

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

RETURN THIS FORM TO US TODAY TO BE SURE OF YOUR COPY OF CAFRA NEWS

CARIBBEAN: Individual: 30 units of local currency • Organisation: 35 Units of local currency
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Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

We are a network of individual researchers and activists and women's organisations who define feminist politics as a matter of both consciousness and action. We are committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of oppression in the society, and are working actively for change.

Membership spans the Dutch, English, French and Spanish-speaking countries of the region as well as the diaspora. It is open to women living in the Caribbean and Caribbean women living abroad who support CAFRA's general aims and objectives.

A brochure outlining the aims and objectives of the association is available on request.

Structure of the Association

The decision-making bodies of CAFRA are:

- (i) The General Meeting of the membership of the association;
- (ii) The Regional Committee of elected national representatives and members;
- (iii) The Continuation Committee, a sub-committee of the Regional Committee; and
- (iv) The Secretariat, comprising programme and administrative staff headed by the Coordinator.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE

Individuals: 25 units in currency of residence

Organisations: 35 units in currency of residence

(Payable by cheque, money order or cash in currency of residence or US\$)

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