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• Muriel Eccles... farmer, shopkeeper

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

SISTREN OUT DEH!

KULCHFUSHAN: After a successful tour of six rural communities and 10 performances in **Portland, St. Thomas, St. Mary, Clarendon, Hanover** and **St. Andrew** during the months of **May and July**, **KULCHAFUSHAN**, the latest dramatic production of **Sistren Theatre Collective** had its commercial run in **Kingston**. The **Kingston** run had five performances at the **Jamaica School of Drama, August 19-22** and **20** at the **Barn Theatre, September 1-26, 1993**. During the period approximately **6,500** persons saw the performances. The play examines the age old problem of the generation gap and also explored the struggles of a young **D.J. couple** striving for a decent living in modern-day **Jamaica**. The couple was the two new faces on stage, **Dawnette Hinds (Josie)** and **Maxine Osbourne (Junior)**.

SACRED THEATRE: **Beverley Hanson** and **Afolashade** participated in the "Sacred Theatre Workshop" held at the **Social Welfare Training Centre, UWI, Mona** during **October**. The workshop examined a "different kind" of theatre - techniques which examine the individual internal experiences and related them to different types of spiritual beings. **Mother Earth** and the **Dream Mother** were two of the more

popular goddesses with which personal experiences identified. The workshop was conducted by **Peggy Rubin** of **Oregon**. **Oregon** - is the home of the old **Oregon Shakespeare Festival** which is **30** years old. The workshop was sponsored and conducted by "The Company Ltd."

CANADA WORKSHOPS: Members of **Sistren**, **Afolashade**, **Rebecca Knowles** and **Myrtle Thompson-Rose** recently conducted a total of **20** workshops in **Canada**. They visited **Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto, Stephenville, and St. John's**. The workshop topics included "Violence Against Women", "The Impact of Economic Restructuring on Women", "Popular Education Techniques" and the "Impact of the IMF/World Bank Policies on Countries."

U.S. VISIT: **Beverley Hanson, Myrtle Thompson-Rose, Lana Finikin, Joy Erskine, and Lillian Foster** participated in the **Oxfam America** sponsored "WORLD FEST". The Festival was held in **Boston, Massachusetts** in **July**. During the tour a new version of "Domestic Violence" was presented at the **University of New York**. The team also performed "Lionheart Gal" readings at **Roxbury Community College** in **Boston**, **World Fest at Boston Commons**, **Scottish Rite Temple** and the **Ronald McNair School** in **California**.

Our annual **Schoolers Summer Workshop** was held between **August 16-27**. The workshop dubbed "Rhyme and Reason" started off with a bang. **Mrs. Beverley Manley** addressed participants and their

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



Sistren performing to an attentive audience at the Oxfam America sponsored "WORLD FEST". The Festival was held in Boston, Massachusetts in July.

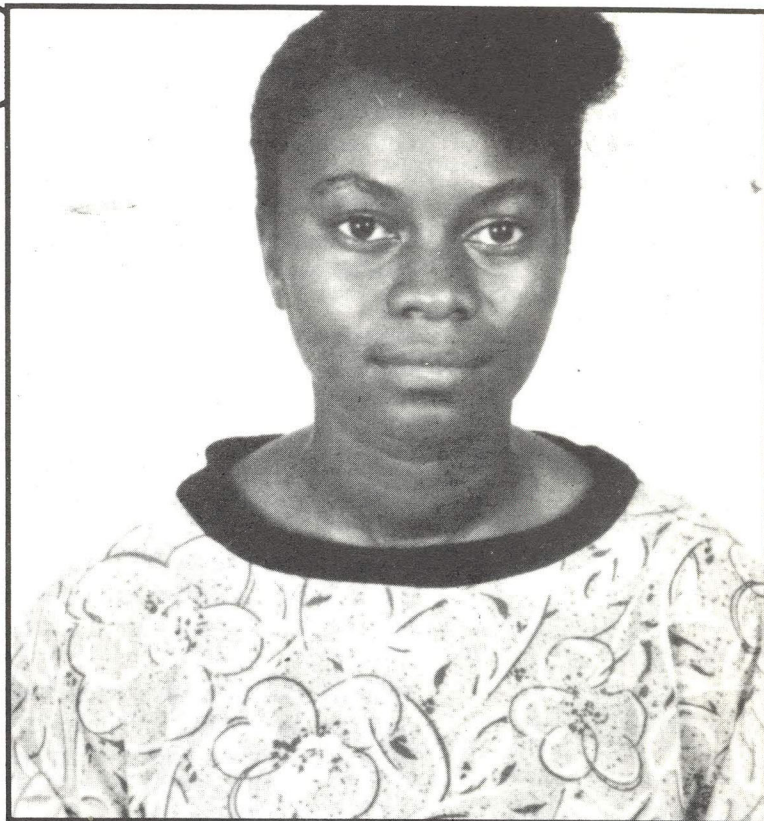
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SISTREN PROFILE

Introducing - **Georgia Gillespie**, alias 'GG'. Certainly not the Governor General, but who knows with Georgia's working and studying so hard, she might become Jamaica's first female Governor General. Ride on "GG". Ms. Gillespie, born in Kingston, is from a family of four. She came to Sistren two years ago on work experience from the Stony Hill Heart Academy and performed so well she now works full-time in the finance department.

The opportunity of doing practical work at Sistren has broadened Georgia's knowledge. She is continuously increasing her awareness of grassroots and gender issues and improving her ability to recognize and identify the different needs of women including the importance of their independence. Her knowledge has been enhanced by her participation in a number of Sistren workshops and other major productions.

Georgia Gillespie



FUN THINGS

When she is not working "GG" enjoys being with family, friends and relatives, particularly her church family. Georgia is a firm believer in the powers of the Almighty and attends the United Pentecostal Church on Wildman Street.

Georgia likes to read and a wide range of books and novels, particularly mystery stories are her constant companion. She is very adventurous, hikes and loves to go on excursions. Of course there are moments when she cherishes her own company.

Auntie "Gi Gi" as she is fondly called by her nephew usually takes him to Hope Gardens, birthday parties, church functions and any other get-together for kids. Whenever Andre sees his Auntie "Gi Gi" he is always in need of something - sweets, ice-cream, food, or a take out.

"GG", her mother and sister live like the I-Threes, that's how close they are. She adores her mom who is her inspiration. Mom shares in their world, the world of young people. Expressing appreciation of her mother, Georgia says "Not many parents or guardians try to become close friends with their children, listen to them and communicate with them on all levels."

For the future, Georgia sees herself as remaining productive and involved in a process to improve herself. Ride on "GG", keep moving, there is a place for you in the universe and you will always be in the hearts of many. One Love.

PERSONAL NOTES

Congratulations to **Lillian Foster** and **Nehemiah Marshall** on their recent marriage. We wish them years of happiness.

Although early we understand congratulations are also in order for the upcoming marriages of talk show hostess **Antonnette Haughton** as well as **Honor Ford-Smith**.



FEATURES

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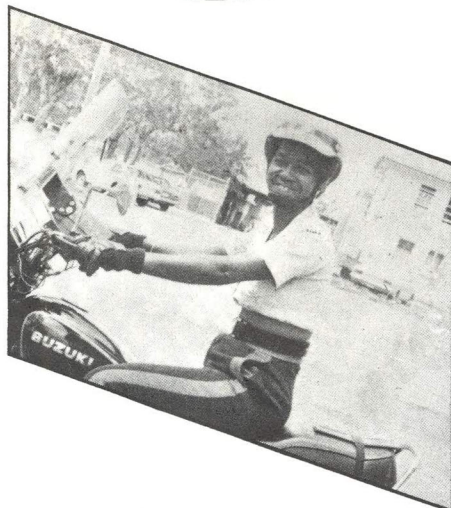
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CREATIVE SOLUTIONS RATHER THAN DESPAIR



This issue of SISTREN magazine looks at the role women play in sustaining the Jamaican economy and the strategies they have adopted to ensure survival in a continuously changing market place.

Articles seek to examine the economic prospects and the coping skills which women will require for the future. They focus on traditional Jamaican women who have been forced to defend the economic well being of their families as they perform the multiple roles of mother, wife, worker and community helper.

As technical, administrative managers, insurance sales executives, communications specialists, higglers, side walk vendors, Informal Commercial Importers (ICI's), nurses, teachers, dancers or retirees our women have again and again beaten the odds. Past Issues of the magazine have highlighted many such success stories.

These stories often defy reality, and in this Issue we share a few of them, the farmer-shopkeeper, Muriel Eccles who succeeded in her struggle against the multinational corporation ALCOA; the retiree, Inez Morrison who has simply moved to a different stage of her life; the computer technologist, Linette Givans who meets each challenge head on; dancers, Sheila Barnett and L'Antoinette Stynes who are inspired to create even though there are no guarantees as to where the next dollar will come from.

These women provide inspiration for those who are faced with making similar critical choices. Choices which are made more difficult because of spiralling inflation; a deregulated market and increased competition for scarce foreign exchange. The deteriorating social services such as health and education and the frustration caused by poor infrastructure further increase the social pressures under which our women

have to operate. However, these stories suggest creative solutions rather than despair. These women have an approach which says "I will take charge of my own life and create my own solutions."

In their response lies a message for the Caribbean region. The answer to the region's problems cannot be to promote a free market ideology which destroys the well being of its people by eroding social programmes such as health and education. These issues are explored in articles on NAFTA in an interview with Dr. Blossom O'Meally Nelson, Managing Director of the National Development Foundation of Jamaica (NDFJ).

The answer lies in imaginative and creative leaders committed to a regional solution to the Caribbean's problem, (English as well as non-English speaking). The need for product diversification; seeking alternative marketing networks; encouraging amalgamations and joint ventures to improve technology, reduce inefficient production and invest in high skill training are all areas which need attention.

We need individuals and institutions to define and inspire a new value system, encourage and lead the nations to action - our women featured in this Issue provide some inspiring examples.

Our regular features **Can I Call you Sister**, **From Our Mail Bag**, **Sister Ansa** and **Granny** are also included.

Hope that you enjoy reading as you see yourself reflected in this 'mirror'. Keep your letters and contributions coming and do forgive us for the long delay. It is **hoped** that with a new year will come new commitments and possibilities.

Have a very merry, merry Christmas and a Happy new year.

*Dr. Blossom O'Meally
Nelson speaks with
Sistren's Shirley
Campbell*

CREATIVE ENERGY

Dr. Blossom O'Meally Nelson, Managing Director of the National Development Foundation of Jamaica (NDFJ) encourages women to get their act together and prepare for the 21st Century.



UNLEASH YOUR CREATIVE ENERGY

Women need to unleash their creative energy and have their heads in the right place. This is the advice Dr. Blossom O'Meally Nelson, Managing Director of the National Development Foundation (NDF) gives to women who she says need to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing international market place - increased globalization.

Globalization, says Dr. Nelson, is one of the new buzzwords, it is used to convey the concept of the global village. It really means the heightened integration and interaction among countries in terms of trade and travel. Telecommunication networks and air travel have created a greater mix of people and ideas and more importantly a greater mix of capital. What is interesting, she smiles, is that the whole global thrust has some inherent contradictions.

Dr. Nelson recently expressed these views while speaking with Sistren on her concept of globalization and its impact on the national economy, especially women. She also addressed the challenges posed by NAFTA - North American free Trade Agreement which reduces trade barriers between the US, Canada and Mexico.

The NDF, which Dr. Nelson heads, provides low interest financing for small and medium sized businesses and women are beneficiaries of over 40 per cent of all loans.

INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS

Expanding on the subject of the inherent contradictions accompanying globalization she noted, for example, the setting up of trading blocks in an era when communication and technology are facilitating more transfer of culture, ideas, money, people and skills. The trading blocks therefore hinder the free movement of technology.

That is what NAFTA, the EEC, Andian - (South American) and Asian groupings do.

What does it all mean? I personally feel that initially NAFTA will create economic dislocations. Some feel the agreement is positive and instead of griping we need to negotiate with the Mexicans to establish linkages and also lobby for the entire Western hemisphere to form a trading group. A move which is felt by some to be inevitable.

However, there are two primary areas where we will lose ground to Mexico, the garment industry and off-shore data processing. Unfortunately these are the areas which create employment mainly for our women.

Women must acquire both manual and intellectual skills - understand entrepreneurship and become global in their approach.

Lets look at the whole scenario. One of the reasons we are not more a part of the whole globalization process is our own inefficiency. Our inability to articulate an industrial policy that is clear and transparent and understandable; our inability to have monetary and fiscal systems that make sense to investors. This is partly as a result of the current restructuring and deregulation programmes under which the economy now operates.

COPING MECHANISMS

"Coping mechanisms? Globalization is

something we have been doing for a long time. Our higglers, the majority of whom are women have penetrated markets that other people have difficulty accessing. When they went to Panama, Curacao, St. Maarten, Haiti, Toronto and New York in the '70's and set up linkages by trading skellion, that is globalizaion. They did it with their own nerve, initiative and risk taking. They created a reverse flow of capital into this country. Of course they developed coping behaviours to go with it. They decided to bully everybody, comb their hair and sit in first class.

"Also the export of local foods to trade houses in New York and Toronto, where main purchasers are from West Indian communities is now a lucrative business. But nobody hears about this. Only when somebody is killed or shot do you hear about it. That again is globalization.

"I really think that Jamaica will never make any big dent in mass markets, globally, except for reggae music. However through our women's creative ability we can produce high quality products for niche markets of the world. For example embroidery - the tablecloth, fine linens, monogram designs. Our female dress designers have no match in the world in the way they handle fabric. More of our women, as models, should be on the ramps in Paris.

ENORMOUS POTENTIAL

"In addition, they can compete internationally whether in spices, herbs or cosmetics. Look at Jennifer Samuda, she has an international network of distributors for her products. She has been able to do this by dint of hard work, creative energy and having her head in the right place. The same thing is possible with our jewellery and belts.

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The United States Congress has approved the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) Bill after a historic and controversial debate. The Bill was approved with the support of the Republicans while opposition came from representatives of labour and the majority of Democrats.

The position of labour is that more American low skilled jobs will be lost to Mexico as US companies move there to take advantage of low cost production. This they argue will outweigh any benefits from increased demand by Mexicans for American consumer goods.

The Bill provides for quotas, licences and restrictions on foreign ownership and investment to be eliminated between Mexico, Canada and the US by the year 2008. Some tariffs will be eliminated immediately and others will be phased out over a period of between five, 10 and 15 years. NAFTA also addresses the protection of intellectual property through copy right laws and sets up rules for the settlement of disputes.

Consisting of approximately 360 million consumers and a total output of US\$6 trillion NAFTA is intended to create the largest free-trade area in the world and represents the US's challenge to the EEC.

What of NAFTA's impact on the Caribbean?

In the short run Mexican goods with their duty free, quota free access to the US market will compete directly with CARICOM

exports and have an advantage over those which are limited by quotas.

In addition the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) which guarantees the region duty free access of certain goods to the US market excludes goods such as apparel, footwear and leather for which Mexico can take immediate advantage.

US firms are also expected to capitalize on economies of scale (low unit costs resulting from mass production) and the size of the Mexican market and divert to Mexico any capital investment initially destined for the Caribbean. Also the rules of origin, which require that value added be of a particular percentage to ensure duty free entry into the American and Mexican market, has automatically eliminated certain regional exports which have a significant import content.

What then is the basis for optimism?

Those who are focussing on the good side of NAFTA argue that negotiations can be made with Mexico for Caribbean Islands to benefit from linking into various production processes; negotiations with the US need to ensure that benefits now enjoyed under the CBI are guaranteed for a set period thus giving time for regional economies to make the necessary adjustments; countries which are currently undertaking deregulation and structural adjustment are well poised for take off as they provide fertile ground for investors; reductions in the Common External Tariff with the ob-

REGIONAL UNITY TO COUNTER NAFTA'S IMPACT



Dominican farmers prepare bananas for export. Dominicans rely on bananas for 70 percent of all export earnings and some may be completely wiped out when the EEC begins to buy cheaper bananas from Latin America. Dominican bananas are more expensive because farms are small (average of two acres) and there is little mechanization. Bananafarmers, who are mostly women are encouraged to reduce their dependence on banana exports by growing other crops and rare livestock for home consumption. Organisations such as the Small Projects Assistance Team (SPAT) trains farmers, encourages the growing of new crops and helps to seek alternative markets for farmers. (Report Back 1992-1993, Christian Aid).

jective of achieving a rate structure of 5-20 per cent by January 1988 would favourably place the Caribbean to become a part of NAFTA.

Is the region really poised for takeoff?

Although governments have adopted the free market ideology, liberalized the foreign exchange market, opened their economies to more imports thus intensifying the demand for foreign exchange; undertaken structural adjustment and the lowering of tariffs as a swap for debt relief and designated the private sector as the engine of growth, are the Caribbean economies ready for takeoff?

The answer is that the region has not changed fundamentally. It continues to have a low propensity to attract foreign investment;

development needs to be an internally directed process leading to nationally, controlled, autonomous economies.

the debt burden remains crippling as devaluation wipes out the benefit of debt conversion and rescheduling; structural adjustment has resulted in the erosion of social programmes such as health and education as well as the death of marginal producers especially in garments and shoe manufacturing; and the inequalities among the social strata have intensified. The sense of community is being undermined and replaced by the ideology of rank individualism.

In addition there is no clear industrial policy,

poor infrastructure, high unemployment and a low level of technical skills. Against this background NAFTA will simply reinforce the regions low propensity to attract capital investments. Hence, it can be expected that in the immediate future Jamaica, for example, will loose ground to Mexico particularly in the areas of garments and shipping as well as data entry processes.

The issue is what has to be done to ensure the region's survival in the shrinking global market place? The transnational culture in

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by Patrick Smikle

MURIEL ECCLES...

The indomitable will of a peasant woman

When I arrived at her home on the morning of Sunday, November 14, Muriel Eccles was about to leave for the nearby 'Assemblies of the First Born' where she worships.

She had not expected me. There is no telephone in Drummond Castle, one of several villages in North Clarendon.

I had made the one and a half hour trip from

Kingston on faith. It's a trip I had made on faith several times since 1976 when I first met with this remarkable woman.

How has this 63 year old farmer, higgler



Muriel Eccles gives an arm of support to husband, Mass Roy.

and shopkeeper, who has lived nearly all her life in the isolated community of Mocho, commanded so much attention.

What brought Muriel Eccles to the nation's

attention was the struggle she waged against the giant bauxite/alumina transnational ALCOA from 1974 until she obtained an out-of-court settlement in 1989.

She and her husband Roy, like other small farmers in Mocho, sold their bauxite-rich land to ALCOA. As part of the deal she was given a small-holding in Rhymesbury. However, within six months it was discovered that Rhymesbury was water-logged and unsuitable for farming.

ALCOA leased her a small-holding at Drummond Castle near mined-out land. She asked that the Drummond Castle property be exchanged for the land at Rhymesbury. The Company refused. She refused to move. And ALCOA took her to court.

"I was the first person who decide to fight the company. And I was critised by a lot of people who say they don't know why I try to fight ALCOA because they don't see how I can fight a multi-national company and I don't have money. But I had my rights."

That was in 1974. Fifteen years, several court appearances, five changes of attorneys and numerous confrontations (with the company's representatives) later, ALCOA settled out of court. The Eccles family took formal possession of the Drummond Castle holding. And the community looked on in awe.

The stamina, determination, creativity and sheer courage which Muriel Eccles brought to the struggle against ALCOA, forcing the giant transnational to back down, are the same qualities she brought to the struggle for her family's survival.

Muriel and Mass Roy's eight children all received high school education, two of them went to university. They have also raised a grand-daughter, Keisha, now in sixth form at Glenmuir High School. While Muriel speaks with pride about all her children, there is a particular glow when she talks about Earl and Sharon. A chemistry honours graduate of the University of the West Indies, Earl, now lives in Canada with his family, is employed to Esso Oil Company and is studying law. Sharon teaches at Lennon Secondary School in Mocho.

Muriel feels her early life trained her for the hardships which she endured and conquer.

Although she was bright, a combination of economic hardship and lack of encouragement, forced her to drop out of school. In 1956 she moved to Vere where she washed clothes for a living. After a year and a half she moved back to Mocho. By then she had met and married Mass Roy and Lance and Earl had been born.

Life was hard.

She remembers saving for months to buy a pair of shoes. The only thing that I could really afford was a pair of slippers. And I wore that pair of slippers for about six months before I could buy a pair of shoes. I had to make the sacrifice for the children."

She supplemented the little income from farming by selling some of their produce in the Alley Market in Vere. She went to market on a Thursday and remained there until Saturday spending two nights on a bed made of banana trash.

When illness forced her to give up the weekly trek to the market, she opened a shop. That didn't last. She explains that for a shop to survive in a rural village, there has to be liquor and gambling. She didn't consider that wholesome for her family, especially since the shop was so close to her house. She closed it.

The income she lost from closing the shop she made up by selling fruits and sweets outside the school gate. She also saved the family money by sewing. "Over the years when my children were growing up I never pay to mek dem clothes."

How has she managed to do all this while serving her community in myriad ways?

Muriel Eccles has been secretary of the Mocho Branch of the Jamaica Agricultural Society (for 12 years), the Mocho Citrus Growers Association, the Mocho Community Council (1977-81) and the School Community Programme for Education (SCOPE). She is currently the secretary of the Mocho Primary School's Parent Teachers Association although she doesn't



"Grandma I adore you", says grand-daughter Keisha who is a sixth former at Glenmuir High School.



Muriel Eccles

have a school age child. She has also served on the Executive of the Mocho Coffee Cooperative.

"... confined to the home with my children I wouldn't be achieving anything. I have to reach out to other people... to make the time. You have to make a lot of sacrifice."

She thinks people don't do enough to help themselves.

Hard work is the name of the game. You cannot sit on the fence and just depend on government to provide employment. When we try to get parents to assist in doing anything at the school you have a problem. They say government must do it. This has always been the case. People sit and wait on government."

Stamina, determination, creativity and courage are the qualities Muriel Eccles brings to the struggle for her family's survival.

She is particularly critical of the young people in her community who she says could be better off if they are willing to do agricultural work "... there is a resistance to that. They don't want to dirty their hands. Life could have been better with many of them but they are lazy."

I asked her to reflect on her life and what things she would do differently if she had to live it over.

Migration? "When these children were small I could have gone abroad. But I made a pledge that I would never leave my children give anybody to keep"

What about migration? "I would never live in Kingston. I don't believe in living among pure concrete buildings. I would never exchange farming for anything else in the world. No matter how difficult it is. I just love farming. I love to see things grow. When you have your trees around you the environment is much more healthy."

What about her own education? She would have furthered her education. She would like to have studied political science.

What else would she have done differently. "One of the first things I would consider is family planning. I would never have so many children If I had my life to live over."

Patrick Smikle is the Senior Account Executive at Communication Services Ltd. and a freelance journalist.

LINETTE GIVANS...

refused to give up on her dream

by Patrick Smikle

Phenomenal, is how the four year growth of the Institute of Computer Technology (ICT) and the entrepreneurial ability of Managing Director, Linette Givans were recently described in a citation from the Kingston branch of the National Development Foundation (NDF).

The occasion was the Branch's 1992 annual awards ceremony where presentations are made to the most outstanding clients in the categories, agriculture, manufacturing and service.

The ICT topped the service category for outstanding performance and an exemplary payment record. In fact Mrs. Givans interrupted our interview to sign the cheque for the final payment of her NDF loan.

The story of the ITC is the story of a woman determined to realise her dream and to make a living doing it. The story of a woman resisting the temptation to settle for less than she wanted and doing it all with out fanfare.

It is the story of a little girl (one of 13 children) from Crooked River in Clarendon, whose dream was to be a teacher. The teachers she encountered at James Hill Primary in the Parish of her birth, the Mary Morris Knibb Preparatory in Kingston and Queens High School in St. Andrew inspired her burning desire.

But marriage and motherhood, just one year out of high school, delayed her tertiary education and Linette Givans found herself working at the Government's Survey department for six years.

By the time she entered the University of the West Indies (UWI) to read for a Bachelor of Science degree, she had the responsibility of running a home and raising three boys; Chris, Michael and David.

It was at the UWI that she discovered computer technology. Unlike many students she loved mathematics and this assisted her in grasping computing. Her first job after graduation was in the Central Data Processing Unit of the Ministry of Finance. The job had no challenge and the salary did not compensate for the shortcomings. Also Linette wanted to teach.

She therefore ended up at her *alma mater* where for a brief period she taught mathematics. However, Queen's High School was not as she remembered and had experienced. Students were not as orderly and appreciative, teachers were not as dedicated.

And so she moved on to the newly established Computer Centre at the College of Arts Science and Technology (CAST). This was closer to what she was looking for but not exactly what she wanted. She had a wonderful rapport with the students and still proudly shows off a going away card they designed for her on the computer at the end of a three year stint.

From CAST she headed for the Education Centre to train people in computer technology at NCR. This was even closer to the dream, but again disappointment.



"It is best that you do it this way" Managing Director, Linette Givans of the Institute for Computer Technology (ICT) seem to say to her students.

NCR decided the Centre was not making enough money and laid off the staff.

By this time she was toying with the idea of running her own computer school. Her husband and sons were very supportive of the idea.

At NCR she had met and developed, a close friendship with Marcia Constable who worked in the marketing department.

Herself and Marcia talked about starting a business. The two were the perfect foil for each other. Linette was a teacher, Marcia a live-wire sales representative. Linette was careful and conservative, Marcia bold and bubbly. Linette designed the courses and Marcia did the promotional work.

They started with the personal computers they both owned. They then managed to raise J\$18,000 each which Marcia used to buy two re-conditioned computers in the USA.

... armed with her dream, her education, her dedication, her capacity for hard work, her rapport with students and the encouragement from her family she set out to take the ICT to new heights.

At the time Marcia's husband operated a small computer systems development company. This proved to be a major advantage. Their first course in January 1989 was run under the name of his company and their first clients were companies for which he had worked.

The Institute of Computer Technology was thus born at a time when Jamaica was becoming more and more computer conscious. New schools were springing up all over the place. Established secondary and tertiary institutions were introducing computer departments. To stay alive the ICT

had to grow. When space became available in the building they occupied, Linette and Marcia rented it. On Marcia's suggestion they obtained a loan from the NDF which they used to set up a 386 network of six terminals to teach the Xenix system.

Then came a hitch. Marcia's family migrated in 1991. She offered to sell Linette her share of the business then valued at J\$500,000. Neither Linette nor her husband had that kind of money. She tried the bank. The manager was a satisfied past student. The bank asked for collateral. Her father

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ANNIVERSARY OF WCC

by Alice Rogers and Mia Thompson

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Women's Construction Collective (WCC). And plans are in the 'construction line' for the organisation to become self-contained - a complete unit offering the services of engineers, contractors, architects and construction workers.

In order to achieve this goal, Carmen Griffith, Financial Manager and an original member of the WCC, says the Collective needs to build on its achievements and solidarity.

The formation of the group was inspired by Ruth McLeod, then a human resource development consultant with the Incorporated Masterbuilders Association of Jamaica, and who participated in a government sponsored study on the availability of 'manpower' and discovered a lack of entry level positions for women in construction. Other factors encouraging the formation of this group were a boom in the building construction industry, some contractors expressed a willingness to employ female labour, and the high female unemployment rate in sections of Kingston.

WCC was therefore established in 1983 as an experimental project by the Jamaica Working Group - a group of planners, researchers and community development specialists. Its aim was to train and place young women at the trade level in the building industry.

The Working Group felt that this project offered a way to strengthen the linkages between training and job placement for women as well as offer an opportunity to

document the role of women within a non-traditional skill area.

The project began with the formation of a collective which tailored, the training programme to the specific needs of young unemployed and low income women. The programme not only provided women with skills, it taught them the realities of the workplace including coping in a male dominated world.

The first 10 women selected for the programme were unemployed and came from Western Kingston. Their age range was 17 to 25 years. They were put through an intensive training programme at the Vocational Training Development Institute (VTDI) and the Construction Resource and Development Centre (CRDC), were placed in jobs and monitored over a 15 week period.

Since then an additional 590 women from lower to middle socioeconomic backgrounds have been trained for jobs in masonry, carpentry, and repair and maintenance. These women hail from various parishes across the Island.

Initially the women and the Collective were not taken seriously; but because of their persistence and dedication they have gained much deserved respect. In fact contractors are now eager to hire women because they are consistently reliable and hard-working.

After training with the WCC some women have become more socially mobile and have pursued several careers in construction. One member is currently obtaining advanced training at the VTDI to become an instructor for the WCC. A training committee is also investigating training for

members in costing, management and accounting.

The WCC is a non-profit organisation and is run on a day-to-day basis by an administrator, Millicent Powell-Reid, who is one of the first batch of 10 women trained by the WCC. Policy decisions are made by an elected Management Committee.

Looking to the future the WCC, for the next decade, hopes to become a self-contained organisation, marketing the services of engineers, contractors, architects and construction workers. They are also hoping to secure their own premises where training will be done using their own women who have been given advanced training at the VTDI.

The WCC has undertaken a number of successful training programmes including the training of women in Montserrat, training women in building a CIDA funded school in Polly Ground, Clarendon, building a community centre in Fellowship in Portland, a Netherlands government funded project.

In addition the WCC provides training, a skills bank and referral service, placement of members in jobs, problem solving on the job, and a support group of women who meet once a month to discuss common goals, problems and solutions for its members.

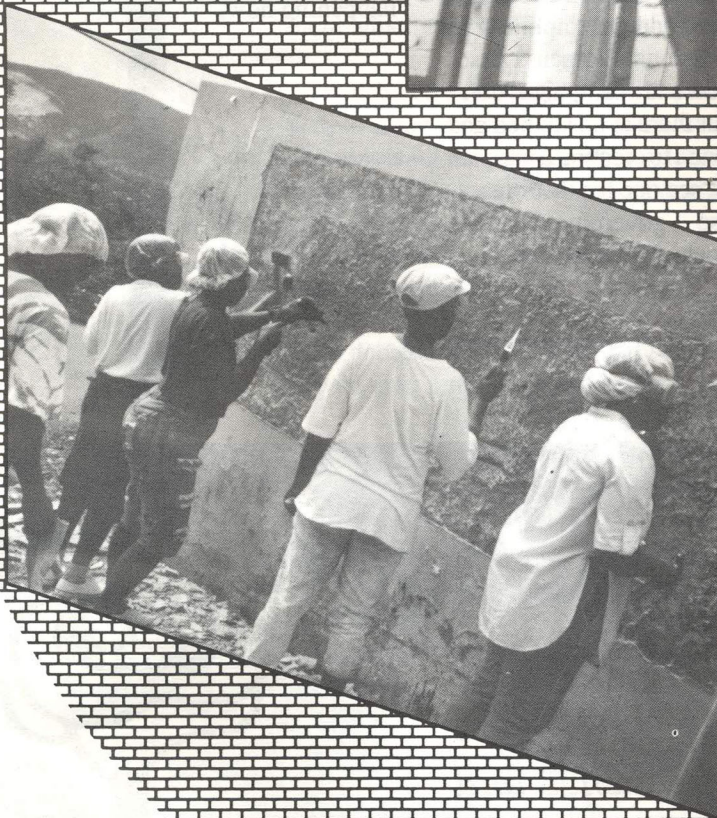
The women trained by the WCC continue to excel in the construction field. Particularly outstanding are their performances in glass tile laying, masonry and carpentry.

The WCC has been a pioneering force in positively affecting women's lives in Jamaica. As they move into their next dec-

ade, they have many obstacles to overcome and countless opportunities to seize. They have proven their potential, all that's left to do is for them to utilize it.

The WCC is funded mainly through a grant from CEBEMO, a Dutch funding agency but plans are afoot to provide services which will make the WCC self-sustaining.

Women of the WCC display their skills at masonry and carpentry.



"There is enormous potential for our women but one problem is the absence of appropriate skills. Not many persons can do something with their hands anymore. We need to teach these skills where they are absent and hone them where they already exist. Women must acquire both manual and intellectual skills - understand entrepreneurship and become global in their approach.

"Jamaica has other saleable skills - promotion, dancing, singing, writing. We need to look at their economic potential, understand it and take responsibility for our own economic well being.

"I have great admiration for our higglers who have developed coping skills to create for themselves a role in the system. Even their mode of dress can be positive. This year for example grunge was the rage; so why not make dancehall into something Parisian. In Paris you can wear one jewelled glove to work and it is O.K. In Jamaica because it is a Black woman wearing it, she is ridiculous. We need to perceive it differently and capitalize on that type of fashion and turn it into a positive.

BE CONSISTENT

"In my experience, Dr. Nelson continued, there is a distinct difference in behaviour between working class and middle class women in terms of entrepreneurship and coping capabilities. Working class women have had to get on with it because they know their family will not eat if they do not. If business is hanging on a string they will take on the multiple roles. They are prepared to dirty their hands and be consistent. They are also more cooperative when given business advice.

Referring to the role the NDF is playing in financing the development of businesses owned by women, Dr. Nelson noted, "Over 40 per cent of the clients are women. They can get resources and credit if they are smart enough. What I find is that for many women their primary goal is man. They may have a business which has tremendous potential and it is crying out for financing but if "Joe" does'nt say, yes, then she can-

not focus on the business and make rational decisions.

"In this regard women have to get their focus and priority right. If the priority is to have a man and children then they must know that the business will suffer. But some are beginning to see the light. What we need more than economic independence is emotional independence so that there is a sense of self- accompanied by the knowledge that it is possible to love without dependence and agony.

Responding to the question of how to achieve a national consensus to deal with the challenges, Dr. Nelson said.

NATIONAL EFFORT NEEDED

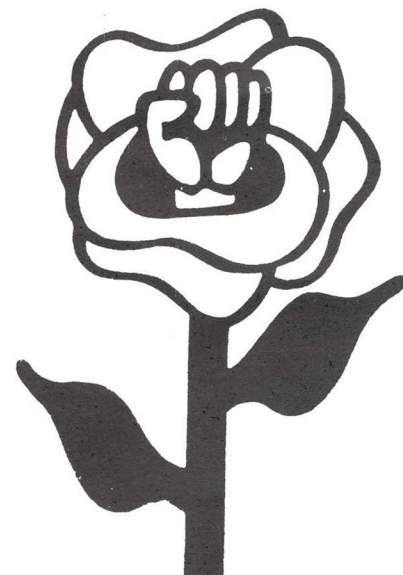
"What is the national ethos. The Prime Minister has expressed concern about corruption, crime, greed and indiscipline. The Business and Professional Women's Association of St. Andrew had a campaign "don't dis discipline." But there is no studied and coordinated approach to creating a national image and I do not see one for the foreseeable future because - government has not defined its role and the private sector is just rolling.

What we need more than economic independence is emotional independence. So that there is such a sense of self- accompanied by the knowledge that it is possible to love without dependence and agony.

"A consortium of the private sector, government and the NGO community should

come together to define this national image. I would like to see the government initiate it, especially since the churches have now taken a back seat. That consortium would ensure that this national ethos be passed on through our music, cultural events, schools curriculum etc. It has to be planned like a public relations programme. There is now a planned approach to the environment and attitudes are changing towards it. Why not to developing a new ethic. It can be done, but nobody can conceptualize it and mobilize a national effort starting in the schools.

"At the regional level, "It cannot be the type of common market where Dominica sells me candles and I sell Dominica candles. CARICOM has to be used to develop a critical mass for production capability in which there is specialization and not the duplication of efforts in each territory as is happening now.



NGOS MUST MAKE **RADICAL CHANGES** WHERE NECESSARY

The impact of NGOs operating in Jamaica and the challenges they face by developments in the global arena were the focus of the Conference, "Revisiting Development" which was recently sponsored by the Association of Development Agency (ADA) and held at the Welfare Training Centre on the UWI Campus.

Non-governmental and community development organisations, over three days, examined the social and economic sustainability of their work and concluded that there was a need to study the relevance of their work and structures on an on-going basis and make radical changes where necessary.

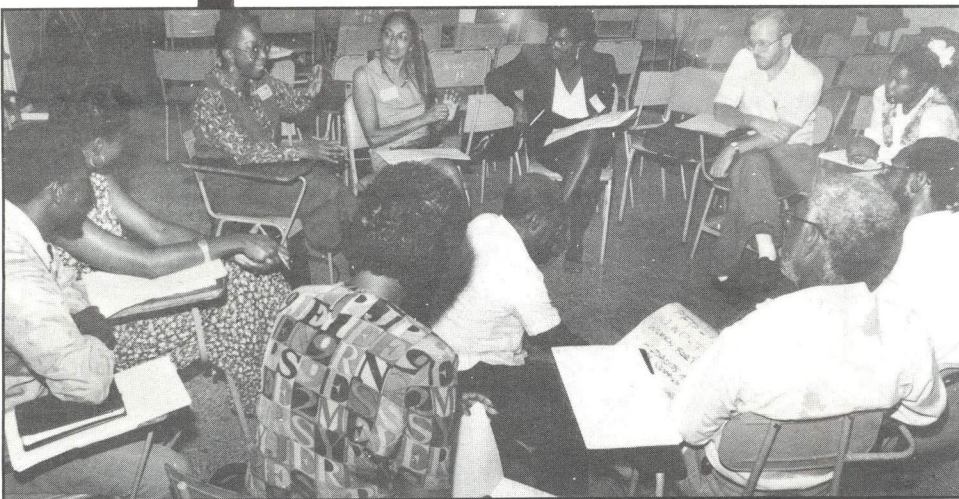
An average of 95 persons representing more than 30 development NGOs and community groups, academics and other interested persons attended daily. They reflected on what ideals inspired individuals to make a commitment to struggle for justice and how the values and expectations of new persons coming into the development community were radically different and reflected changes influenced by the global economy.

Veteran development workers presented case studies illustrating different approaches to development which they had used over the past 10 to 15 years.

They debated definitions of development and concluded that whatever form it took they must keep people at the centre of the process. In defining development, participants said, signposts for plans and assessing progress must be established and allowances made for variations resulting from the complex and contentious goal of development.

In order to reduce the organisations dependence on overseas funding, the need to develop a capital base was also discussed.

Also debated was the point that NGOs needed to be willing to accept the possibility that they had served their purpose or had become irrelevant and may need to be disbanded or amalgamated.



Intense workshop discussion at ADA's three day "Revisiting Development" Conference held recently at the University of the West Indies. Over 95 persons attended daily and shared their experiences and approaches to development.

Participants concluded that they needed to take account of developments in the global and national arena; that they needed to know how to make use of the new technologies being developed especially in communications and seek to influence the policy making process in the interest of the communities they serve.

Also for the future it is important that ADA continues to promote the process of review and analysis and encourage action on findings. This is particularly important as the failure to collect base line data and do on-going evaluation had weakened the sustainability of their work in the past.

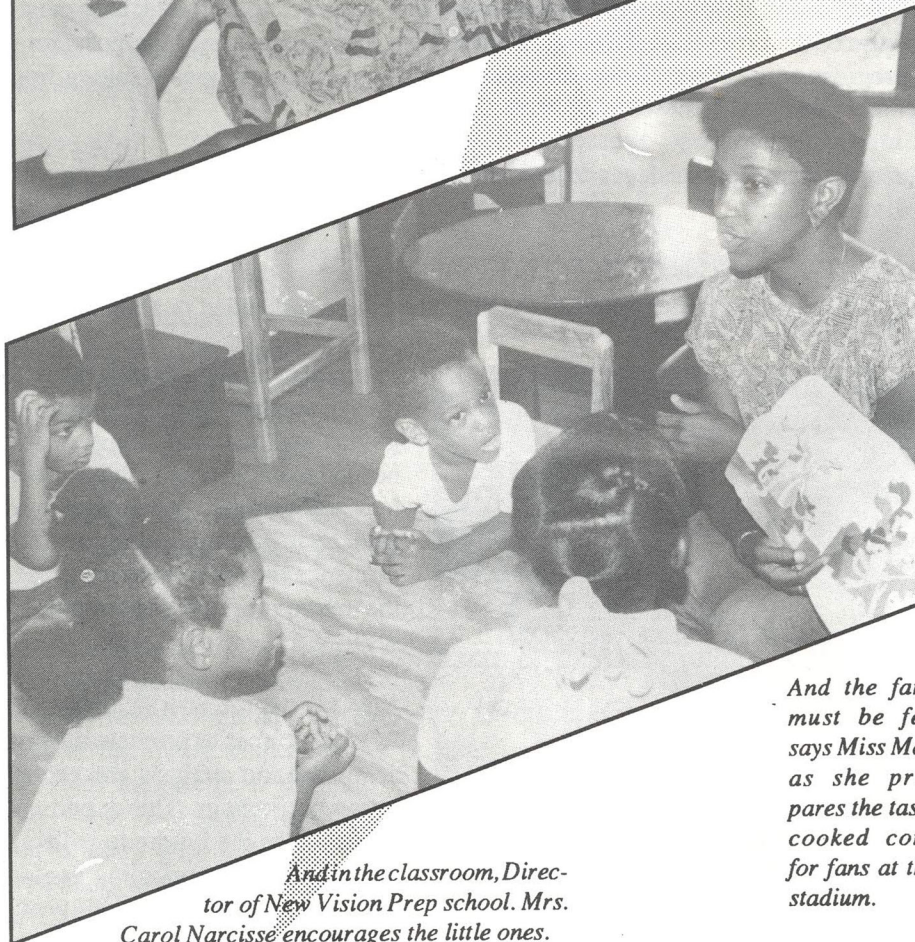
WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

At the Parnell Charles Arcade Shirley Knight attends to a customer. She is representative of thousands of our women who have made the world a small place travelling to Miami, Haiti, Panama, Venezuela, Curacao, Puerto Rico etc. to make purchases for resale. Many children have been educated from these proceeds, many houses have been built and cars bought through the hours and hours of hard work and travelling, sleepless nights and the hassles of clearing customs.



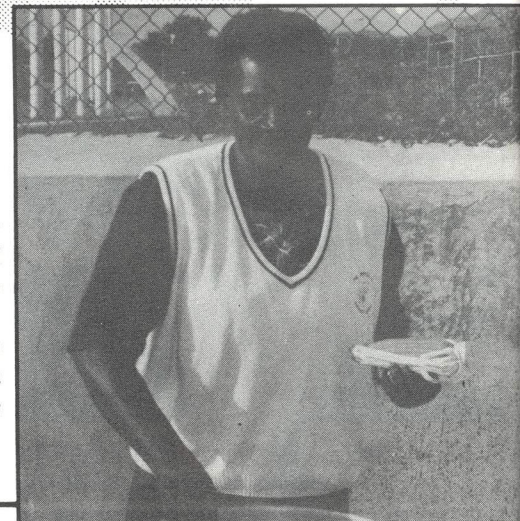
From all walks of life Jamaican women are struggling to make a living whether as Informal Commercial Importers (ICIs), sidewalk vendors, freezone workers, nurses, doctors, police women, business executives, educators or small business women. Meet some of them below.

Mrs. Gloria Knight, President of Mutual Life Insurance Co. Mrs. Knight has given exemplary service both as head of the Urban Development Corporation in years past and now as head of one of the largest financial conglomerates in the country.

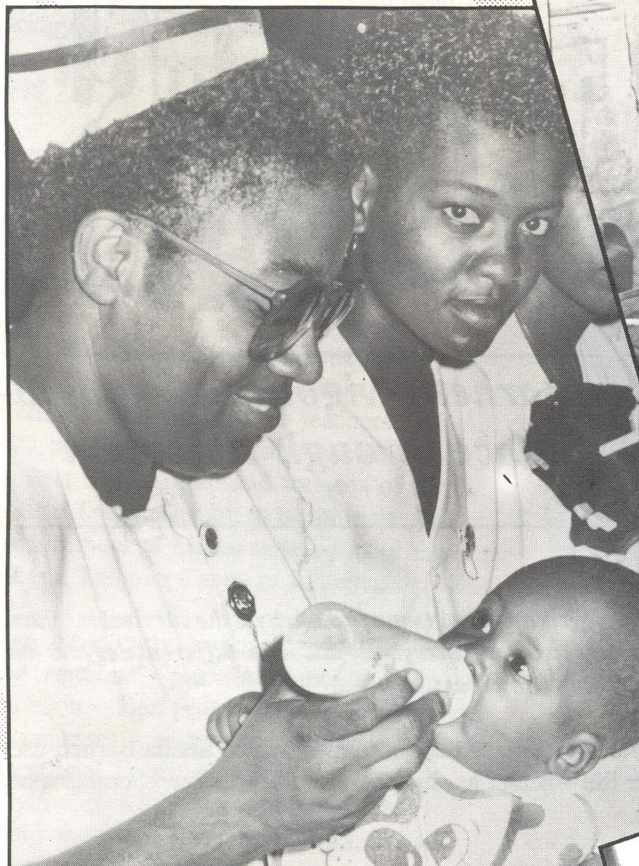


And in the classroom, Director of New Vision Prep school. Mrs. Carol Narcisse encourages the little ones.

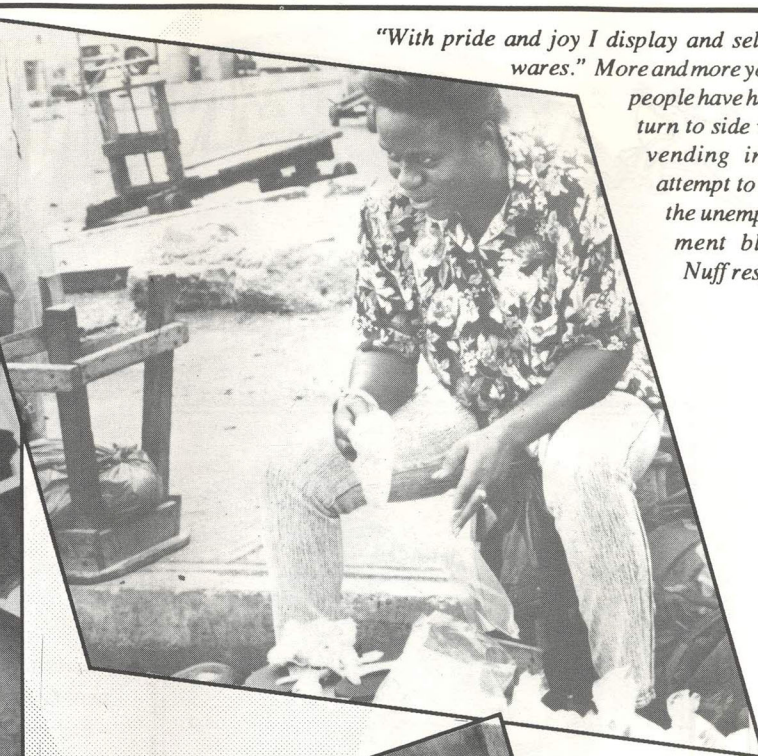
And the fans must be fed says Miss Mae as she prepares the tasty cooked corn for fans at the stadium.



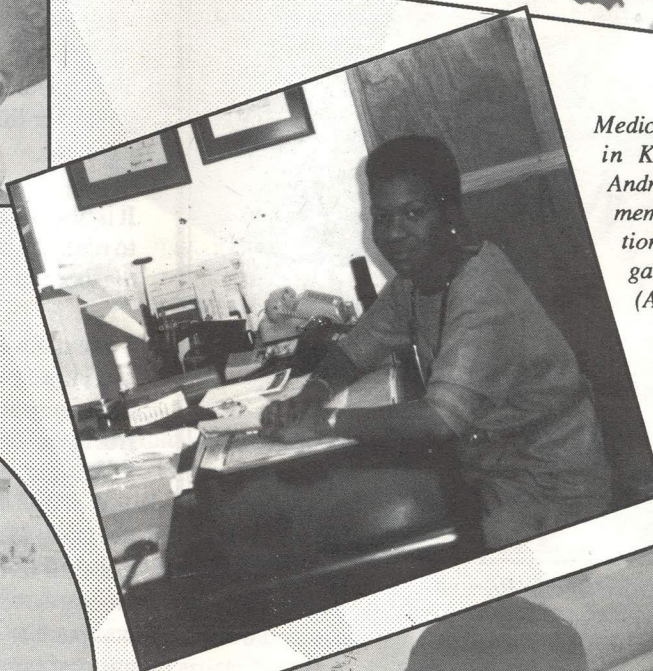
"With pride and joy I display and sell my wares." More and more young people have had to turn to side walk vending in an attempt to beat the unemployment blues. Nuff respek!



Tender loving care is being given by this nurse as she cuddles and feeds the future generation.



Medical Officer of Health in Kingston and St. Andrew and an active member of the Association of Women's Organisation of Jamaica (AWOJA)



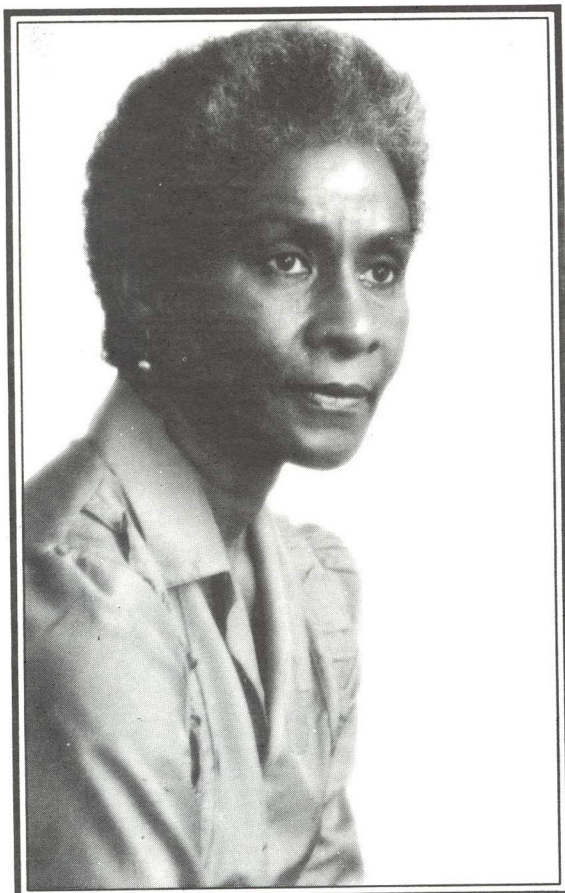
Many came to love and appreciate her words of wisdom advising on precautions to take in traffic on the morning radio show. Neat! Inspector Ionie Ramsey.



Small business woman Olive Harriott, Managing Director of Novelty Manufacturing Company gives the smile which has enabled her to come a long way.



WOMEN IN THE ARTS



A reflective Sheila Barnett.

Sheila Barnett - vigorously pursuing dance through education

"...dance as art is an urge in man; creativity is the survival mechanism that God's given us and everybody has it - to different degrees maybe - but everybody can create."

This quote summarizes the philosophy which Sheila Barnett uses to guide her life whether as student, principal dancer, choreographer or educator.

It is also what has inspired her in realizing one of her dreams of helping to research and document the history of dance in Jamaica and the black diaspora as well as educating children.

To find out more about the evolution of dance as an art form in Jamaica and its prognosis for survival in the shifting tides of the world economy, *Sistren* spoke with two leaders in the field: Sheila, dance educator and freelance consultant, and L'Antoinette Stines, Artistic Director of L'Acadco.

Reflecting on the evolution of dance Sheila said, "Nowadays Jamaicans can turn to the entertainment page of the newspaper and select from among several 'seasons of dance' put on by any of three or four companies. It's a privilege we take for granted, but it was not so long ago that Jamaica had no tradition of teaching its own dance culture; not until the pioneering work of the late Ivy Baxter in the 1950s.

Today, dance schools have blossomed all over the country, aided by the Jamaica Festival which showcases the talents of school children in particular and a written history of the dance is in the process of being formulated."

As a past student of Ivy Baxter's, a former principal dancer and choreographer with the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC), and her primary involvement in education, Sheila is uniquely placed to be a part of this process of recording and teaching the history of dance.

Early on in her career, she recognized the lack of development in this aspect of Jamaica's culture and recalls a time when it caused her deep embarrassment. She studied physical education at Chelsea College in England and dance was a part of the programme. The first year students

were asked to put on an entertainment package for the rest of the College and "I was asked to do a Jamaican dance. I couldn't do it!"

"I was studying British folk dance and its history and I thought, 'Well where is mine? So I made up my mind that when I came back I would have answers when people asked me about our culture.'"

So in 1967, she founded the Contemporary Dance Centre (CDC) with Barbara Requa, offering studio classes for teachers. In 1970, the CDC merged with students from the Bert Rose Studio and trainees of the national Dance Theatre to become the Jamaica School of Dance now a part of the Cultural Training Centre of Jamaica.

Since those early beginnings, Sheila has been vigorously pursuing dance through education. Her professional experience encompasses a wide cross section of the educational field, and such a myriad of activities both at home and abroad that it would be impossible to list them all. One of her recent and, probably, most ambitious projects has been the formation of **Dancescape**, a non-profit organisation which she spearheads. **Dancescape** intends to research, document and educate the public in the history of dance in Jamaica, as well as in the Black diaspora. **Dancescape** was formed last year and launched in November.

"Dancescape intends to research, document and educate the public in the history of dance in Jamaica, as well as, in the Black diaspora."

"I have always had this desire to write what I have learned from my own experience. I knew I couldn't undertake it alone so I looked for people who had skills that I thought were necessary. I asked Alison Symes, a journalist and a dancer with The Company; Monica Campbell of Move-



Sheila Barnett in her "The world is a beautiful place" style.

ments - she is a communicator and had a similar desire; Cheryl Ryman, a research fellow and Maria Smith- coordinator of dance in the Jamaica Festival at JCDC (Jamaica Cultural Development Commission), she handles people at the grass-roots and meets the teachers; and then there is me, dance educator and artiste."

Sheila travels frequently to other Caribbean islands, lecturing, attending conferences, adjudicating and teaching. I wondered whether she had found similarities that link us in terms of dance.

"Yes, definitely. We all originate from the same places and with the same influences."

SIS: A lot of lip service is being paid to a "Unified Caribbean", that we should have regional representation in various areas. Is there any thought or any scope for a Caribbean dance troupe to represent the whole Caribbean?

SB: Well... L'Antoinette Stines in a way has done that here; she has drawn from America, Guyana, Barbados and St. Martin, so that's a start. But it's difficult to pull people together who are so far distanced from each other. It would be very costly.

SIS: Speaking of cost, do you find the present economic climate affecting the support given to dance?

SB: Some people are having to cut back their support, but I haven't heard any great complaints of strain this year. I sense that certain people realise the importance of the human element so evidently the sponsors are people who are really interested in human development.

Another project which she finds tremendously exciting is her involvement as physical education consultant to the Ministry of Education on the curriculum for The Rose Project.

"It 's a new curriculum for secondary level education, both private and public schools. They must now all teach the same thing in Grades 7 - 9. Later on grades 10 and 11 will be added. It has cultural aspects... It allows for creativity and the teaching of all those skills that are transferable to making a living. The schools have been asked to get community contacts and utilize them to link careers with the subjects and skills of the curriculum. These should be taught to the students from grades 9 through 11, so that they know that any skill they have can lead to a career. Wherever possible each subject will re-enforce other learning.

"...dance as art is an urge in man; creativity is the survival mechanism that God's given us and everybody has it - to different degrees maybe, but everybody can create.

"I had to write my own rationale for the programme and I went to the human body and man's spirit. I said that dance as art is an urge in man; creativity is the survival mechanism that God's given us and everybody has it - to different degrees maybe, but everybody can create.

What has given her the most satisfaction in her career? "The response from those I teach - when you can see that you have connected... I had a class with a group of 10 teachers - . I took in a ball and some other items and said 'do this' and 'do that'. And then I said, here's some music - do it with that'. And then they understood what was happening - that's the key!"



Contemplating the next move - L'Antoinette Stines

Different and Original - L'Antoinette Stines

The two words that best sum up L'Antoinette Stines, Artistic Director of L'Acadco, are 'different' and 'original'. The stereotypical mental image most people associate with dancers is of taut, well honed, muscular bodies, with a somewhat regally erect carriage and, perhaps, a slightly aesthetic look about the face derived from years of rigid discipline and equally rigorous exercise. Not so, L'Antoinette. She is plump, rounded and comfortable looking. There are no sharp edges; the only visible concession to the rigours of her career being muscular calves.

Likewise, her work with L'Acadco has a fresh, original appeal and even her outlook on life is somewhat apart from the norm. No down-in-the-mouth, pessimism for her; she manages to combine realism and prac-

ticality with a positive attitude. Witness her response to the question of how she sees the downward trend in the world economy affecting the support given to dance.

"I think we're very lucky because we've never had the great national endowment for the arts, nor the great sponsorships from various corporations which start a foundation to support the arts. That doesn't exist. But, that makes us very lucky, because what has happened in Europe and America is that these major endowments have had to cut funds **drastically!** And when the cuts happened, a lot of dance companies **died** - they died immediate deaths.

"We now, we have to 'tek every mickle mek a mickle' in that we have to go to one

firm and ask, 'Can you give us \$5,000 for some shoes? and another, 'Can you give us \$20,000 for some costumes?' and in the end you go to 50 firms and you get a budget to work with. It's a harder way, but we've worked out how to do it. And I think, although we still struggle - we struggle, you know! - our struggle is of a different kind. In the future it is going to pay off for us because if the economy doesn't get better - which I don't expect it to - there is not going to be any endowment for the arts, and the American and European systems will have to learn from us.

Already, some dancers from overseas have been asking L'Antoinette about that very thing. "They come here to learn from us, to see how we raise funds; because we do it; we do it differently, but we do it!"

Even on the question of rehearsal space, she considers Jamaican dance companies luckier than most. "We have beautiful spaces here - better than I have seen anywhere else. NDTC for example, has its own studio... it is rare for a national dance company to have its own studio, and I am really happy for them." She gives one example of a very well known and respected Black dance company in New York, the Urban Bush Women. "I was in New York as a consultant to their Nyabingi ballet. To rehearse with them I had to go to 10 different studios in 10 rehearsals! They had nowhere to rehearse. In that we are fortunate. Our school system is very sensitive to the arts (L'Acadco rents rehearsal and storage space from Priory) and there is an interconnection of the development of the arts as a result of the Jamaica Festival.

L'Acadco is an acronym for 'The L'Antoinette Caribbean-American Dance Company', founded in Miami around 1978. "I thought of it one morning when I was taking a shower... I kind of did it backwards, you know. Most people start a school and then a company. One morning I told my husband, and he laughed... he asked, 'Why, a dance company?' and I said, "We need a company in Miami that unites the tri-ethnic community... there is no company with Black, White and Hispanic, and Miami needs a company like that. " And I did it. I started a company with Black, White and Hispanic in Liberty City, in the ghetto."

Did it start out as L'Acadco? "No it started as Caribbean Dance Company. A dancer by the name of Terry Jackson - he was my first male lead dancer - named it L'Acadco. Then I decided to come home to Jamaica because I didn't see why I was doing something for America when I could do it here. I came home in '82 and this is a new L'Acadco." But she doesn't consider it a purely Jamaican company.

The struggle we in dance have now, in the end we will be happy we had it because we will know how to work without depending on the government.

"I relate to the Caribbean as a whole, primarily because it is very important that my Company represents the Caribbean. We have choreographers and dancers from all over the region - Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad, St. Martin... we've gone into the next 10 years of the Company and the aim is the representation of the Caribbean."

Like the lead singer in a group, people tend to think of L'Antoinette in the same breath as L'Acadco. She, naturally, sees it differently. "I don't think of me as L'Acadco - when the curtain opens, there are 16 dancers on stage." Yes - that's fine, but who runs things? "I do a lot of it. I find that people understand me... I know how to sell my Company best and I know what I want. But I don't like doing it, I must tell you the truth... I look forward to the day when I don't have to do it.

"I have a Management Support Committee (MSC). It's the hardest working MSC I have ever experienced. L'Acadco's Committee comprises Fay Kemp (Chairperson), Winston Gooden, Sonia Davidson, Beverly Periera, Hudith Ramanand, Andrea Wray, Lenford Salmon (Finance), Carlene Braham (Secretary), Carlisle Hudson and, of course, L'Antoinette. These people work on all

aspects of the Company except the artistry. The artistry is mine. I decide who's going to choreograph, what goes on stage, because I have a crazy spiritual sense that ends up working. But it's a team. Celia Jones, who has been with me for 10 years and started out as a dancer, is now Assistant Artistic Director. I really don't want that, if something happens to me, there's nobody there to do it."

What happened to the dance company she started in Miami - did it die when she left? "No, some of them came to Jamaica with me, and others continued in Miami, but with companies of their own. There are Jamaican girls who have danced with me here, who have left and given birth to other companies internationally which I feel very good about. I feel very, very honoured... that those things have happened. It's like having grandchildren - children and grandchildren."

L'Antoinette's style is different, alright. Different and very refreshing.



Different and original indeed is the stance displayed here by L'Antoinette.

**We continue excerpts
from Honor Ford-
Smith's research on
Una Marson, Black
middle class journalist,
editor, playwright and
poet**

Una Marson achieved an enormous amount both personally and professionally between 1900 and 1944. Born in Santa Cruz, St. Elizabeth, one of three sisters, daughter of Solomon I. Marson, a Black baptist minister, and his wife Ada, nee Mullings. One of the few Black scholarship winners at the time she attended Hampton High school, which had a majority of white students. As a young girl, Marson carried the heavy importance and responsibility of her singular achievement. While she was there both her parents died and she had to go to work.

She moved to Kingston and worked as a secretary. She began visiting Edelweiss Park (the centre of Marcus Garvey's activities) and participated in elocution contests.

In May 1928 she became the first Jamaican woman to edit a magazine published in Jamaica, the *Cosmopolitan*, the official organ of the Jamaica Stenographers' Association. Black stenographers were beginning to organise themselves within the anti-colonial struggle to win the right to work in establishments dominated by white clerical staff. Marson's work in the magazine created an opening within which young voices, both male and female, could be heard.

In 1930 Marson published her first collection of poetry, *Tropical Reveries*. In 1931, *Cosmopolitan* folded due to the financial constraints of the depression. In 1932 her first play *At What A Price*, was produced at the Ward Theatre in Kingston. It tells the tale of a young woman from the country

UNA'S ACHIEVEMENT *Her Life*



who comes to the city, is seduced by a travelling sales man and returns home dejected.

FIGHTING RACISM

Later that year Marson went to England where she worked as secretary to the League of Coloured People, which aimed at fighting racism and supporting black struggle around the world. For the League she co-edited *The Keys*, a literary publication. During this first stay in London her play *London Calling* was produced. Through her connection with the League, she became secretary to Haile Selassie and accompanied him to the League of Nations to plead the cause of Ethiopia in 1936.

In 1936 she returned home abruptly and resumed her work as a journalist. She remained committed to promoting concerns affecting women and published a series of articles on women and work. It is through these accounts that we get a sense of the kinds of work open to women and the part they played in the 1938 uprising. She also remained active in organizing artists and writers. In 1937 she founded the **Readers and Writers Club** and the **Kingston Dramatic Club** to mobilize young black artists and writers.

Also in 1937 she published *The Moth and the Stars*, probably her most innovative work. It is here that she begins to break with the dominant influence of the **Jamaica Poetry League** under a leadership which emphasized universal values and the debunking of experiments in creole and poetry of potest [Cobhan, 1982]. Marson breaks with the tradition by reintroducing the creole voice into the poetry, by experimenting with blues forms borrowed from the southern United States of America and by writing from the point of view of a Black middle class woman.

POCOMANIA

In 1937 she also remounted *London Calling*. The following year came the significant and pioneering *Pocomania*, her most important work as a playwright. The importance of *Pocomania*, lies in part, in that it presented a play which was not farce in Patwa. It also publicly dramatized a con-

flict facing many middle-class Black women. In this sense it represented a rupture with a dramatic scene dominated by an upper-class view of Black working-class culture. Later that year she left with Amy Bailey for England to raise money for the Save the Children Fund which she helped found that year.

In England Marson was one of a few Jamaicans to testify before the Moyne Commission before it began work in the Caribbean. She recommended that there be some legitimizing of common law unions and that a tax be levied on bachelors in order to provide money for the care of children neglected by their fathers. She also called for attention to the racism operating among the social service clubs of the upper-class and suggested that Black women needed openings within which they could organise themselves and not be objects of White women's organizing [Moyne Commission transcript, 1939].

Marson remained in England throughout the war, becoming compere for the programme **Calling the West Indies**. She used it to develop a supportive and critical atmosphere within which Caribbean cultural expression could grow. Over 200 authors first gained exposure through **Caribbean Voices**, the literary segment of **Calling the West Indies**. In fact the programme created a space for the airing of this work across the region as well as a forum for Caribbean writers to hear and discuss their own work.

TOWARDS THE STARS

In 1945, after the publication of *Toward the Stars*, a compilation of earlier poems, she suffered a serious illness and returned home. After this she never regained the vigour of her early years. There were long periods of silence in her writing followed by bursts of activity. One such effort was the founding of the **Pioneer Press**. **The Pioneer** aimed to provide booklets at low prices (6d-2/-) in the areas of Caribbean poetry for young people, autobiography, biography, children's stories, natural history and nation building. **Pioneer Press** published approximately 25 books before it closed.

Una Marson died in St. Joseph's hospital in

Kingston in 1965. Sylvia Wynter a younger Jamaican woman writer wrote the above poem sketching the sadness and courage of her life.

Without care for critics
Nor recondite music
She sang the blues of a Jamaican lady

Brad in a parsonage
Careful of her manners, yet poet,
She told of an ancient ache
Of love and loss and sang
The blues of a Jamaican lady

Once in a mad spring
She wrote of the heart's ambush
In exiled Garvey's Europe.
"Old and cold, feeding on its dead."
Yet glimpsed a glory
And searched and finding none
Distilled in phases
Love as elusive as its sun.

Had she not wept enough
She asked, to satisfy the years.
In the stillness, memory
Darts like golden fish
In the translucence of yesterdays
Under the sea. Now she has done.

We put her decently under the earth:
Playwright, distinguished
social worker, journalist
And poet, I insist, poetess
If you wish, above all, poet,
She sang the blues of a Jamaican Lady.

[Sylvia Wynter, *Daily Gleaner* May 9, 1965]

Next: Her Inner Life in her Writing

CAN I CALL YOU SISTER



By M'Bala who chose to express himself in poetry

WHICH SISTA?

so mi sey to im
 hey mi bredda
 nuh badda treat di sista so
 im sey
 which sista?
 di only sista im know
 is im madda dawta
 an any adda ooman
 is just a
 ting beef pussy
 only fit fi
 fool fuck
 an figet
 an den im sey
 black man
 mus move forward
 an likkle afta dat
 im sey
 black people haffi unite
 an den im mumble
 a chapta an a verse from
 di bible
 an bax dung di sista again

But most men will (proudly) say, "I don't beat up my wife!, or "I'm not a rapist." But. But that is not enough. It's not enough if, when we get angry our ultimate insult is telling another man that he's like a woman's genitals. It's not enough, if we still dance to D.J. lyrics that degrade women and glorify violence against them. Not enough if we allow ourselves to be "entertained" by movies which try to generate "excitement" by spicing up their plots with images of women being stalked, raped, mutilated, murdered. If we still believe that "Girls, (you) can't do what the guys do, and still be a lady".

*mek wi mek some
 correction to dis ya pikcha*

*mek wi mek some
 correction to dis ya pikcha*

Correction



grab a pencil
get out yu paintbrush
mek wi
interface wid di computa
jump inna di dikshanary
turn to di letta O
look up di word ooman
access de propa program

an mek wi
mek some correction
to dis ya pikcha

there's millions a ooman
who nuh fraid a nuh rat
who stronga dan
de weaka sex

mek wi put dat
inna di pikcha

mek wi paint in di millions
who a nuh pretty dunce
who smarta dan
di dumb blonde

mek wi put dat
inna di pikcha

paint een di millions a ooman
who stronga dan strong
who mek family survive
afta man long gaan

mek we put dat
inna di pikcha

put een di millions a ooman
who know dem own mine
who fah yes mean yes
who fah no mean no everytime

mek wi put dat
inna di pikcha

put een di millions a ooman
who nuh one caan buy
who naah fall fi nuh ring
or diaman or lie

mek wi put dat
inna di pikcha

put een di millions a ooman
who naah tek nuh more lick
who refuse fi tun
anybody beatin stick

mek wi put dat
inna di pikcha

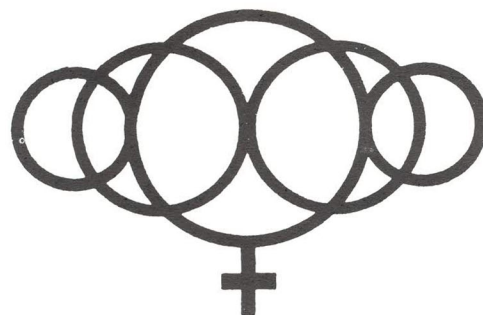
mek wi
print it
fax it
bounce it aafa sattalite
beam it
sen it
everyweh
an mek wi
mek nuff correction
to di pikcha
a ooman
inna wi hed

CORRECTIONS

Of course, we can say that we don't stereotype women (or men); and that's still not enough. Not enough, unless we at least **speak out** about the inequalities that still separate us; unless we recognize the sexist tendencies that still linger in our own minds. Until we make the effort to really start **looking**.

in di mirror again
di image shiffin
a likkle
di voice a chorus
he/she lookin back
at me

And when we realize that there are more similarities between men and women than there are differences, then maybe it won't even matter if we call each other sister, brother, friend...



BEHIND THE IMAGES

WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH LAUNCHES NEW VIDEO...

BEHIND THE IMAGES, Women's Media Watch's new video was launched on November 25, to mark the Day Against Violence Against Women. The event was attended by nearly 100 women and men.

The short, fast-paced video drama illustrates the media's influence on self-images, attitudes and values of women, men and youth and how these are linked to violent behaviour.

Family conflict suddenly explodes between Marcia, the central character, her husband Howard and Winsome, his stepdaughter. Their expectations of one another, influenced by television, radio, magazines and advertising simply don't match reality.

Marcia is paralysed by her isolation, low self-esteem and lack of awareness of her rights. Surprisingly, the very media that subverts her self-confidence also sparks her determination to deal with the crisis and face a major change in her life.

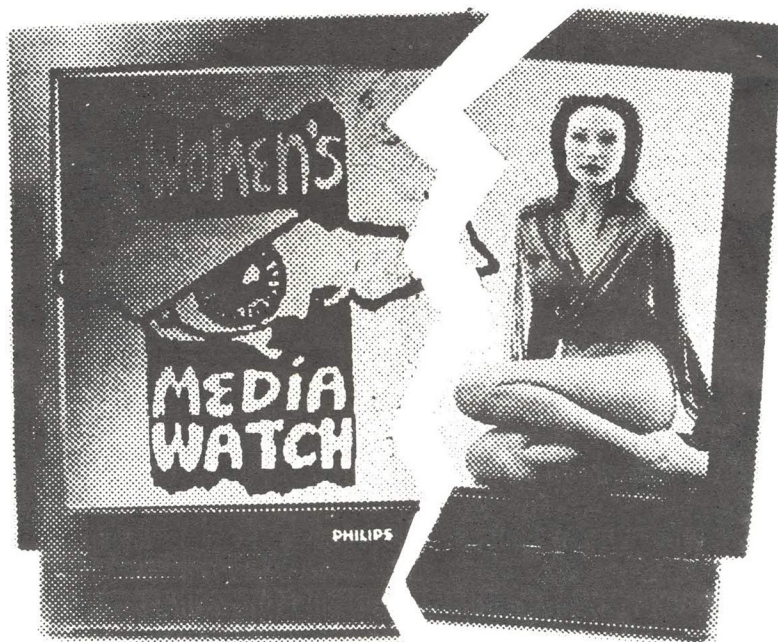
Lawyer Antoinette Haughton, guest speaker at the launch urged the audience to demand a Domestic Violence Bill, with a reminder that several other Caribbean territories have passed such a bill. Such legal reform is essential if

we are to combat society's lack of concern and "hands off" attitude towards sexual, especially domestic violence.

A male member of the audience pointed out that the media shows aggressive and insensitive men as the most successful and labels sensitive men as "soft". Members of Women's Media Watch also urged everyone to challenge the managers and producers in the media to be responsible, and for media audiences to demand media im-

ages that would reinforce positive relationships at the personal and societal level.

Behind the Images raises many issues, and perhaps more questions than answers. It was effective in stimulating discussion, and furthering an understanding of the many causes of violence. Women's Media Watch hopes it will be used as a visual aid at workshops to encourage people to work out their own strategies for taking action.





A 24 member National Preparatory Commission has been appointed to develop and coordinate Jamaica's submission to the 1995 United Nations sponsored Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing, China. The Commission which was appointed by Minister of Women's Affairs Hon. Portia Simpson is headed by Professor Elsa Leo-Rhynie and Dr. Barbara Bailey of the Gender and Development Studies programme at the University of the West Indies.

The Conference is a follow-up to assess the progress made by women in member countries since the 1985 meeting in Nairobi, Kenya at the end of the Decade for Women. The Nairobi Conference adopted certain strategies (Forward Looking Strategies, (FLS)) to be implemented which would improve the status of women nationally and internationally by the year 2000. Jamaica which endorsed the FLS has since 1985 implemented recommendations on health, education, legal reform and employment through the Bureau of Women's Affairs via an interministerial committee and non-governmental organisations.

The Commission has therefore set up eight sub-committees focussing on the issues of Health Population and the Environment; Education and Training; Economic Empowerment; Family Life and Shelter; Legal Reform; Young Women; Women with Special Needs and Women and Political Processes. In addition a Research sub-committee works with the others to collect, analyse and compile data on the status of women in relation to these issues.

Critical issues which have also to be addressed are the impact of structural adjustment policies on women and poor households; environmental degradation and sustainability requirements; democracy and the participation of women in the political process; the changing structure and functions of the family and violence against women.

To involve as wide a cross section of women as possible in the process of assessing the implementation of the Nairobi recommendations as well as gather data five working conferences to discuss these issues are being held. Two are scheduled for Kingston and St. Andrew

and one each in Montego Bay, Mandeville and Port Antonio and are set for completion by mid-January 1994.

Funding to support these activities have been received from the British Development Agency and the Canadian International Development Agency. The Jamaican Government is yet to identify funding for this project in the budget.

At the Beijing Conference reports will be presented by participating governments on the gains made and obstacles faced by women since the 1985 Nairobi Conference.

TOWARDS BEIJING...

The Fourth World Conference of Women





HEALTH UPDATE

SAY NO TO NORPLANT!

by CAS

Doris was having trouble remembering to take the pill everyday and furthermore her husband complained that it was making her tired and 'uncooperative'. So she visited the family planning clinic today and the nurse suggested that she use the "NORPLANT SYSTEM" instead — the contraceptive which will protect you for five years.

"Five years! That means my husband will not know I am using protection. That means I will not have to remember to take a pill every day. That means I will not have to get an injection every three months. Sounds good!

But wait a minute! If it is so good why didn't I hear of it before and why are Mary and Sally not using it? After all, they know more about these things than me... I better check it out before I say yes.

Check it out! The Norplant System consist of six thin, flexible capsules, each containing 36 mg of a synthetic hormone, progestin levonorgestrel. They are placed just under the skin under your upper arm during a minor operation and is the latest family planning method available in Jamaica.

You are not hospitalized for this operation and a local anesthetic is used to numb a small area of the upper arm, after which a small cut (incision), less than 1/8 of an inch long is made. The process takes about 10 to 15 minutes. The cut is covered with a small bandage.

When the anesthetic wears off, the area may hurt for a day or two. Some bruising and swelling may also occur for a few days after the operation.

The capsules must be removed at the end of five years. You can have them removed earlier. Just as for insertion, a local anesthetic is applied, a 1/8-inch incision is made and all the capsules are removed. The process again usually takes from 15 to 20 minutes but may take longer. A second visit may even be necessary if things go wrong.

Once the capsules are removed, you are no longer protected, the effect ceases quickly and you can become pregnant in a time period similar to that of women not on the system.

Still sounds good, eh? **Well hear this!!!**

Norplant may cause you to have:

- Bleeding longer than normal during the first months of use
- Bleeding or spot between periods
- No bleeding for several months even up to or more than a year
- Headaches
- Nervousness
- Dizziness
- Inflammation of the skin
- Acne
- weight gain
- breast tenderness and/or discharge
- excessive body or facial hair growth

- infection pain or itching at the implant area
- ovarian cysts
- muscle and belly pain
- vaginal discharge

Don't use NORPLANT if you are pregnant or have cancerous or non-cancerous liver tumors or suffer from blood clots in the legs, lungs or eyes.

Don't use NORPLANT if you or your family have fibrocystic breast disease, diabetes, elevated cholesterol or high blood pressure. (In Jamaica it is estimated that 12 percent of the population has diabetes and 30 percent have high blood pressure.)

It is also less effective in heavier women.

If you miss a period you might not be pregnant you must do a pregnancy test immediately. If you are pregnant the capsules must be removed as no one knows for sure the effect NORPLANT might have on your baby.

If you use NORPLANT there is an increased possibility of ectopic pregnancies (pregnancy outside the uterus).

You may also suffer:

Sharp chest pain, coughing of blood, shortness of breath; pain in the calf; sudden severe headache or vomiting, dizziness or fainting, blurred or complete loss of vision or speech, weakness or numbness in an arm or leg.

You may have problems sleeping, suffer weakness, fatigue, or change in mood; jaundice of the skin or eyes plus a fever, loss of appetite, pus or bleeding where the implants are located or on some occasion there may even be an expulsion of the capsules.

Norplant should not be used until six weeks after the birth of a baby who is being breastfed.

With all these warnings, precautions and possible unfavourable outcomes why is NORPLANT being used in Jamaica or any other developing country for that matter? It is clear that some safety issues are not yet resolved and serious problems may arise in the use of the contraceptive.



responsible for their condition, no connection is made but treatment with pain-killers and anti-depressants may occur which further increases the chemical intake and expenses on their lives. The psychological impact of illness may be overwhelming especially when its cause is not understood.

The article further states that abnormal bleeding may lead some users to think they are pregnant and encourage them to seek illegal abortion - further endangering their health. Prolonged bleeding may also affect husband and wife relations; there may also be cultural problems for those women who are excluded from worship or other activities while bleeding is

taking place.

Are conditions in Jamaica safe for the use of NORPLANT?

Norplant providers need to be well trained, supervised and monitored. What level of training has taken place in Jamaica? Who has been responsible for this training? When was the training done and over what period was it done?

Norplant clearly requires a high standard of health care if it is to be administered safely and especially for rural women. Family planning services have been adversely affected by the severe shortage of nurses, some health centres have been closed and due to staff shortage drop-outs are not being followed up.

Also, what consideration is being given to the problems which the side effects such as dizziness, nervousness and headaches can have on the user and working women in particular? As pointed out in an article by *Women and Pharmaceutical Bulletin*, Norplant: A Critical Review users often go to other health care providers when these complications arise. Often they may be unaware that the use of NORPLANT is

Most importantly some family planning workers have been known to resist requests made for removal of the implants. Sometimes they are told the problems will simply go away with time or that they were informed of the possible side effects during pre-implantation counselling and therefore should hang-in-there.

Against this background the government of Jamaica and the Ministry of Health in particular have a responsibility towards its women. They must answer certain questions.

Is the health care delivery system safe for NORPLANT use in Jamaica? Do we have the medical infrastructure required for safe use?

What tests have been done to determine its suitability to Jamaican women?

Who are the targeted users and why?

What consultations took place with women's groups and organisations, with women in their community health care delivery system? To what extent were they involved

in the decision to introduce NORPLANT into Jamaica?

What training has been given to providers? Who trains, for what period of time is training? What areas are covered?

When a woman says "I want the implants removed immediately", is it done?

What are the effects on the unborn child in case of method failure?

What are the implication if implants disappear?

What are the long term risks of cancer?

There are many unanswered questions about NORPLANT, its adverse reactions and long term effects.

Jamaican women must demand answers to these questions and refuse to be used as guinea pigs for the study and testing of new drugs.

So, Doris say no to your nurse, or doctor and discourage your friend or fellow worker from using NORPLANT. Demand more explanation from your family planning counsellor.

In 1967 the Population Council (PC) a US based international non-profit organisation initiated research on NORPLANT. PC was established in 1952 and does social and health science research relevant to developing countries and conducts bio-medical research to develop and improve contraceptive technology. Norplant system was developed in 1974 and has been produced by Leiras, Finland since 1983.



Inez Morrison

“
*I will keep on doing
the best I can for
as long as I can.*
”

by Trevor Brown

You often see them standing in line at the Pensions Window of the Post Office; you may see the uncouth bus conductor sending the minibus on its way before they get a chance to be seated; many have joined the increasing ranks of homeless persons - abandoned by family and friends; some may be attacked in the middle of the night for what little they are presumed to have; some are regally attired walking to their work of voluntary community service or to worship; many are pottering in their gardens and caring for grandchildren.

There are others who have not missed a beat and are doing what amounts to simply a move to new offices as they work from home offering their years of experience as consultants and volunteers. In whatever capacity they come they represent a largely untapped pool of skills which the nation ignores at its own peril.

We refer to our retirees. Those 60 years and over make up 10 percent of the population and is increasing annually at a rate of one percent. One such person is the strong willed, energised, soft spoken and shy, Inez Morrison who retired in 1986 after

40 years of outstanding service in Government.

Inez Morrison shared her experiences, joys and hopes with **Sistren** in a recent interview.

She has the answer to beating the odds and has continued a successful career after retirement. Be aware that she did not say this. The lady is so unaccustomed to blowing her trumpet that it was hard to get her to discuss the things she cares about; her love for children, her pride and joy at the achievements of her own children; her desire to serve her country until she is no longer able.

*I came to realize that
children are the victims
of the interpersonal con-
flicts within families;
that adults are often
more concerned with their
egos and power than with
the children*

“I spent 40 years with the government service as an administrator, first in the Ministry of Agriculture then to the Pensions Authority for Sugar Workers, between 1961 and 1966.” The Pensions Authority was later upgraded to the National Insurance Scheme where she continued work until 1975 when she was appointed as the first Coordinator to the newly established Family Court. She served in that position until she retired in 1986. It was under her leadership that the second branch of the court was set up in St. James which serves that parish as well as Hanover.

“The most rewarding assignment of my career.” is how Inez describes her stay at the Family Court. “Even though I had worked in the social service field for years the Court gave me the opportunity of working with people at all different levels of the society. For the first time I realized what was really going on with our people and particularly our children.

“I came to realize that children are the victims of the interpersonal conflicts within families; that adults are often more concerned with their egos and power than with the children. The impact of domestic violence, dysfunctional families and the extent to which these problems influence children’s characters are not sufficiently recognized.”, she emphasized.

Mrs. Morrison believes the Family Court is doing a good job and regrets that the initial promise to extend the service islandwide has not been fulfilled. The two branches serving Kingston and St. Andrew, St. James and Hanover are not enough and each parish should have access to the service, she says.

From her stint at the Family Court she came to recognise that her main interest is in the well-being of children and her reward comes simply from working with them. It was therefore not surprising that from the Family Court Inez moved to working as a volunteer at Women Inc.

Women Incorporated is a private non-profit organisation providing assistance to victims of rape, incest and domestic violence. The organisation promotes the welfare of women through maintaining a Crisis Centre and a Shelter.

After their first fund raising trade fair in 1984, Women Inc. opened a Crisis Centre(1985), which Mrs. Morisson administered along with Ms. Leila Whiteman, Assistant Coordinator of the Family Court while Inez worked there. A Shelter was established in 1988 for abused women who need temporary accomodation. They remain there until they are sufficiently in control of their lives and can be integrated back into society.

Mrs. Morrison, along with the other able volunteers with Women Inc. have since 1987 worked at setting up a residential hostel and skill training centre. This project was successfully completed in 1991 and launched in 1992. This Hostel marks a watershed in the growth of Women Inc. It offers a one year residential training programme for young women between the ages of 18-25 years.

"In 1986 I also went to Belize to assist with the setting up of a Family Court there. I travelled back and forth until 1989 when it was officially launched.

She has the answer to beating the odds and has continued a successful career after retirement.

In addition to her volunteer work Mrs. Morrison is doing a consultancy with the Ministry of Youth on a project for children.

What prepared her for this life of service? Born in Erwin, St. James, daughter of a Moravian pastor and a mother who was a trained teacher the children had numerous examples of service with humility. Not surprisingly therefore, of her five siblings four are teachers and the other an accountant.

Inez's schooling was over an extended period. First her mother taught her at home, along with a number of other neighbourhood children until she went to St. Andrew High School. She was placed into the

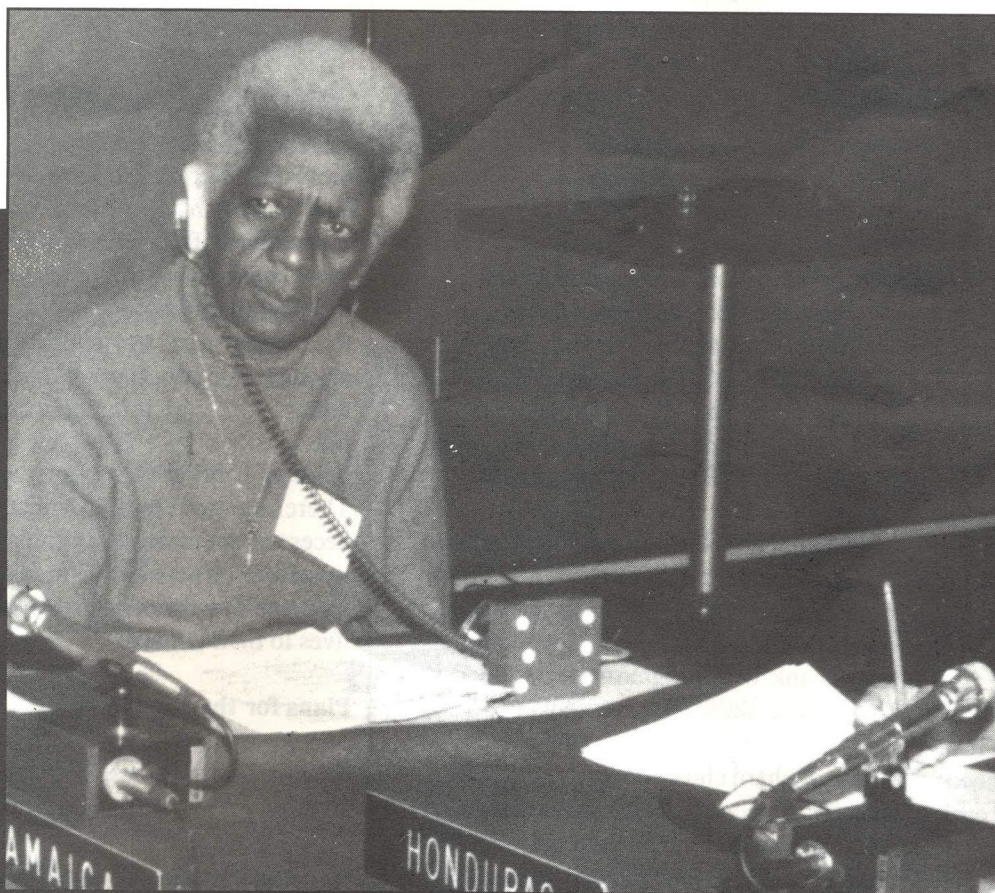
equivalent of what is now the fourth form. After graduation she started her working career at the Ministry of Agriculture.

During her working career she raised her family as well as attended the University of the West Indies (UWI). There she successfully completed the BA (General) degree and later completed a number of courses in research methods.

How did she manage the roles of mother, wife, student and working woman? "Well, you do what you have to do. The time is long past when the roles are mutually exclusive and I had good support from my husband.

"I had a very good husband, a good marriage which lasted for 30 years until his death some time ago. He was dedicated to the children, especially their education. He was an Agronomist with the Ministry of Agriculture where she met him on her first job.

Her three children have had outstanding



Mrs. Inez Morrison active retiree participating in the Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts to consider the preliminary draft of the Inter-American Convention on Women and Violence (second edition) in Washington earlier this year.

which the world operates promotes western ideals of development which may not be culturally appropriate for the region. Emphasis is on specialized high value products rather than primary raw material products. Knowledge and technical skills are highly valued. Consolidation of trading blocks is becoming the norm and financial markets are being deregulated to facilitate high speed international transactions.

This is the context in which the Caribbean must be prepared to operate. The preoccupation with retaining preferential treatment is short sighted. There is no longer any room for favours which must eventually be returned.

Governments of the region cannot lay back and fold their arms but need creative leadership with long term vision not political one up-man-ship. Investment in human capital and high skill training must become a priority.

Emphasis must be placed on non-traditional exports, markets must be diversified and networks developed. Niche markets consolidated, expanded and sustained with high quality products and reliable supplies.

The training of workers and modernization of machines and systems cannot be over-emphasized and lies at the basis of the need to change the concept and the content of education.

Investment in human capital and high skill training must become a priority.

A recent gathering of Caribbean NGOs sponsored by CUSO highlighted the need for creative change in the region. The group emphasized that development needs to be an internally directed process leading to nationally, controlled, autonomous economies. In order to achieve this, significant

changes in lifestyle aimed at promoting development are required they said.

Other recommendations were:-

- * having sensible consumption patterns, eating what we grow with the ultimate aim of attaining self-sufficiency in food; the development of joint ventures where investors are paid by barter; the use of the region's cultural and social strengths such as music and sports as marketing tools.
- * the development of a scientific and engineering skills pool for the region to access;
- * further strengthening of regional integration by language training in country and ongoing collaboration with Cuba and Haiti.
- * these measures should not be pursued in a vacuum but require a socio-political strategy which counterbalances global forces with popular awareness building and political mobilization of the mass of the people to participate in policy and decision making.
- * the role of NGOs should be to seek to influence the process positively by accessing, processing and disseminating information; facilitating grassroots participation; advocating special programmes for indigeneous peoples, rural and urban women and children, youth and promote programmes for skills development. The churches, community organisations and the media would be an integral part of the process.

The challenge is to unite the region to build on its attributes and to struggle for fair trade practices, diversify products as well as markets and concentrate on building its skills bank with programmes designed to retain these skills in the region.

These are hard choices because the contradiction between cutting social services such as education and the need to build up that area requires creative management and hard nosed decisions but anyone who is serious about leadership must address these issues.

Inez Morrison

careers. Her son, a Rhodes Scholar who practices law, graduated from the UWI, Norman Manley Law School and Oxford University, one daughter is a lecturer in French at the UWI, Barbados and was the recipient of the Jamaica Scholarship and the other daughter is a famous artist and the winner of the Issah Scholarship. All three children therefore won national scholarships.

One regret Mrs. Morrison has is that her husband, who died while the children were still at university did not see them blossom into successful professionals. But he rests proud, especially for Petrona, the artist who seem to have been influenced by his emphasis on our African heritage. Petrona spent one year in Africa studying art and her paintings show a distinct African influence.

Mrs. Morrison thinks that she is very lucky. Many pensioners have to make a choice between eating and paying the electricity bill, a very hard choice. Often it's mainly the generosity of their offspring which allows them to keep body and soul together.

Government's main financial provision for the near quarter million pensioners is the National Insurance Scheme which pays an average pensioner's fee per week. With the number of pensioners rising government needs to pay more attention to improving facilities and services to meet their needs and create opportunities to assist them in continuing to make a contribution. Also with inflation increasing at a rate in excess of 100 percent per annum pension benefits are being wiped out. Therefore government must take the necessary measures to improve the quality of life of pensioners many of whom gave the most productive years of their lives to their country.

Plans for the future?

Keep on doing the best I can for as long as I can.

The message she has for the nation?

Look after our children.

Linette Givans *cont'd from pg. 15*

gave her the title to his house and laughingly cautioned "Don't allow them to put me on the street in my old age."

Thus Linette became the sole owner of ICT.

There were more problems. The Worthington Terrace building was sold and the consequent move was expensive. But armed with her dream, her education (she had now completed the Diploma in Education at UWI) her dedication, her capacity for hard work, her rapport with students and the encouragement from her family she set out to take the ICT to new heights.

"We are offering training with a personal touch... What is important for our instructors is to like people, to relate to people, to look out for them."

She has been joined in the business by her son Chris who handles the accounts and teaches some courses. Altogether the ICT employs 10 persons including four full-time instructors at its Grenada Crescent office in New Kingston. However there are some courses Linette insists on teaching herself. Additionally, with the rapid devel-

"We are offering training with a personal touch. We try to make it comfortable for people to learn. What is important for our instructors is to like people, to relate to people, to look out for them."

opments in the field, she constantly upgrades and retrain. She also carries the full burden of administration- all adding up to long, hard hours of work.

Somehow she still manages to find time for her family and speaks proudly of Chris, who recently graduated from the UWI and has made her a grandmother. Michael who is studying mechanical engineering at the

UWI, in Trinidad and David who last year obtained his private pilot's license on the way to becoming an airline pilot. And she continues the struggle to build the dream and the ICT is more than holding its own among the growing number of computer training facilities.

And that approach has paid off. We can judge by the impressive list of institutional and individual past students. They include the prestigious law firm Livingston, Alexander, Levy, the bauxite/alumina transnational company, ALCOA, JAMINTEL, the Police High Command (including former Commissioner of Police Roy Thompson), Minister of National Security and Justice, K.D. Knight, the Bank Manager of Mutual Security Bank, Emmy Lewars. She is well on the way to achieving her next goal, that is to have the Institute formally accredited as a tertiary institution.

And after that?

A permanent home for the ICT.

And after that?

Making the ICT the foremost computer training school in the country.

Those who know her well feel sure Linette Givans will do just that.

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FROM OUR MAILBAG

DEAR EDITOR,

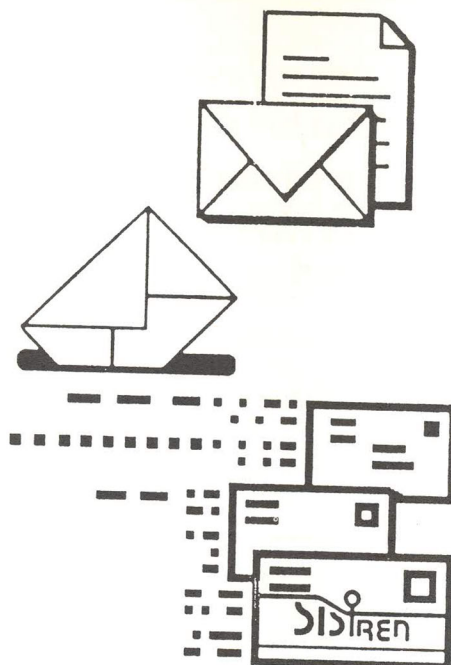
Earlier this year I and thousands of oppressed women of every race, colour and creed attended the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women's (CRIA W) Conference at the Holiday Inn in Toronto to share their sorrows and to find ways of dealing with their common problems.

The Conference covered a wide range of issues including media portrayal of "coloured women", religion and fanaticism, homosexuality, the African diaspora, the West Indian culture and the abuse of women.

The reports outlining the abuse and degradation of some of these women were shocking :

From Kenya: A woman accused of withholding information from the police. When she refused to 'break' she was put in a cell with eight men. She was forced to wear a very short dress and no underwear. As if that was not enough she was compelled to work alongside male prisoners and was given tasks which required her to bend, exposing her vagina. As was intended the male prisoners tried to molest her and she had to fight them off. She was called a harlot, tyrant and male abuser, and she was severely beaten.

When she had a baby the police refused to allow her to breast feed unless she confessed.



From El Salvado: During military uprisings it is mainly the women and children who die. The men run away from the village and the women and children stay behind hoping to be shown mercy by the soldiers, which is often not forthcoming.

The children are first killed before the mother's eyes, then the women are raped, then killed. There are cases in which the women's breasts are torn off then the soldiers invade their vaginas with the tips of their rifles, then they are left at the entrance of the villages to die.

From war torn Asia: They told of harsh treatment by soldiers. Generally the women are degraded, called harlots, especially if they wear perfume. They are sexually assaulted, treated like mere chattels to be used whenever the soldiers fancied.

From other women all over: Battering from husbands and spouses; verbal and physical. Men do this under the

pretence of drunkenness. Some blame it on their 'bad day' at work. Women are seen only as objects of abuse on which to vent their anger and frustrations. In addition some suffer the added indignity of being discriminated against because of the colour of their skin.

I listened to all this and more and was overcome with an undescrivable feeling. It was as if I wanted to share in these women's misery, but afraid that I could not endure it as these strong women had. I wanted to offer some words of comfort, but I could not find the appropriate words. It was painful.

I started thinking about my own sisters in Jamaica., who endure all sorts of abuses - the 'sex or else...' attitude of the bosses; batterings from husbands and spouses; unemployed women asking their men for money; sexual harassment when walking on the street or riding a bus; the degrading lyrics of the dancehall music blaring violent messages about how women should be treated.

We need to increase our efforts to improve the condition of the oppressed Jamaican woman. Afterall the women are the mothers of the earth and have all right to be free.

Meddo Swaby
Participant, "Youth in Community:
Development Education Project
Kingston Y's Men's Club

SISTREN OUT DEH

cont'd from pg. 2

and their parents. Participants were encouraged to speak out and seek solutions to their problems by identifying, understanding, evaluating and working at them. We were blessed with facilitators such as, **Beti Campbell, Paulette Chevannes, Christopher Daley, Errol Lee, Totlyn Oliver, Yvonne Sobers, Imani Tafari** and **Sister Samad**.

Participants included children from downtown Kingston who were sponsored by the **Wesley Church**. These children along with other participants visited the **Musgrave Girls and Elsie Bernard Girls Homes** and the **Faith Children's Home** which hosted some sessions. All together over 150 young men and women from high and primary schools participated. Thanks to all our sponsors, facilitators, participants and parents. We also want to especially thank the workers and girls at the **Musgrave Girls Home** where our closing ceremony was held, and Estate Distributors which provided well-needed refreshments. We look forward to working with you all again next year.

Workshops on "Child Abuse" and "Teenage Pregnancy" were conducted at the **Charlie Smith Comprehensive High School** by **Bev. Hanson** and **Myrtle Thompson-Rose** recently. Over 120 students from grades 7 and 11 participated.

Three hundred students at the **Stony Hill Heart Academy** also benefitted from a workshop on "**Domestic Violence**" which was also conducted by **Bev. Hanson** and **Myrtle Thompson-Rose**.

"**Drama Techniques**" was the other workshop in which the **Spring Hill AllStar Youth Club** participated. The facilitators also presented a session on "**Analysing Children's Games**".

A workshop on **Group Building and Leadership** for the **Bull Bay YWCA**, was recently facilitated by **Sistren** members **Afolashade** and **Becky**. Leadership structure, methods and cooperation in group development were some of the key areas addressed. Some 40 persons including, farmers, shopkeepers and housewives participated.

A third year class at the **Jamaica School of Drama** studying "**Theatre management**" had a discussion with **Sistren's Ms. Lillian Foster**. They examined the historical evolution of **Sistren**. Its development, its leadership and funding; the video cassette "**Moving On**" and a question and answer period closed the session.

Ms. L Foster and **Joy Erskine** recently performed at the **UWI Lunch Hour** concert. The subject was "**Survival**" and 80 students from the **Peer Counselling Unit** participated. Two short pieces based on the experience of single parents and female students relying on male students support were dramatised. A discussion followed in which students shared their experiences and examined the possibilities for change.

In **Montego Bay** a workshop on "**Domestic Violence**" was conducted with 50 students from secondary schools. Students expressed the view that some women are 'licky, licky' and that abuse of the male child was largely responsible for their abusive adult behaviour. The **Sistren** team was flown to Montego Bay courtesy of the organisers.

AT THE MEETING PLACE

Claney Barnette - Educator, co-ordinator and organizer joined us in the Research Department and is going great. She is responsible for up-grading the Department into a Resource Centre for Caribbean people.

Honor Ford-Smith visited and for five days prepared some of **Sistren's** members for the three week long workshops in **Canada**. Sessions focussed on new techniques for designing workshops and approaches to popular education with women. The all day meetings were held at **Sistren's** Kensington Crescent Office.

PASSING THROUGH

Volunteers & Friends: **Lisa Ogilvie** and **Tiatoo Herron** were among the friends who passed through our administrative area this year. The girls did a fine job in helping to put in place some new techniques for administration and office procedures.

Overseas students who participated in Caribbean Laboratory at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona visited us recently. Accompanying them were Co-

ordinator/Head of the **Phillip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts, Jean Small**. The **Caribbean Laboratory** is a part of the **UWI Summer School Programme** and one of their field trips was to visit and talk to **Sistren** members. In **October**, students from the **School for International Training (SIT)** visited **Sistren** and participated in an internal workshop. The historical background to **Sistren's** formation, evolution, growth and work was explained to the students. A similar workshop was done with the group of young people from the **Dominican Republic**.

Deborah A. Thomas, a member of **URBAN BUSH WOMEN** dance group operating out of **New York**, visited and spoke with **Bev. Hanson** about **Sistren** and it's work. **Deborah** is doing her MSc Thesis on "**Women in the Arts in Jamaica**." **Sistren** will benefit from a copy of the thesis once it is completed. **Urban Bush Women** is a group of black female dancers whose works are **African-American-Caribbean** based. **Deborah** is of Jamaican heritage and proudly identifies with her country of origin. She will come again soon.

Kevin Kelly, correspondent of **Business Week, Illinois**, talked with **Miss Todd** about **Sistren**. Two members of **Kevin's** team had worked with **Sistren** two to three years ago.

THANK YOU

To all our friends and family members who assisted and supported us during the rural and Kingston commercial run of our current production **KULCHAFUSHAN**.

A special thanks to our media contacts. To **Mrs. Judith Douglas** - **J. Wray** and **Nephew**; Extra special thanks to **Gerry McDaniel, Delroy McDowell** and **Donna Douglas** at **MAC2 Communications**. We'll do it again **MAC 2**.

We want to acknowledge the presence of those who attended the performances of **KULCHAFUSHAN** - both in rural Jamaica and in Kingston at the **Barn Theatre**. We hope that those who did not see the play will certainly do so in the next run.

Thanks to **Amba Chevannes, Tiatoo Herron** and **Lisa Ogilvie** volunteered as "Ushers" at the Gala Performance of **KULCHAFUSHAN** at the **Barn Theatre** on **September 1, 1993**.

SISTA ANSA AND GRANNY "ECONOMIC CRISIS"

A CHAT BOUT "ECONOMIC CRISIS"

