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SISTREN

VOL. 14 NO. 1 1992

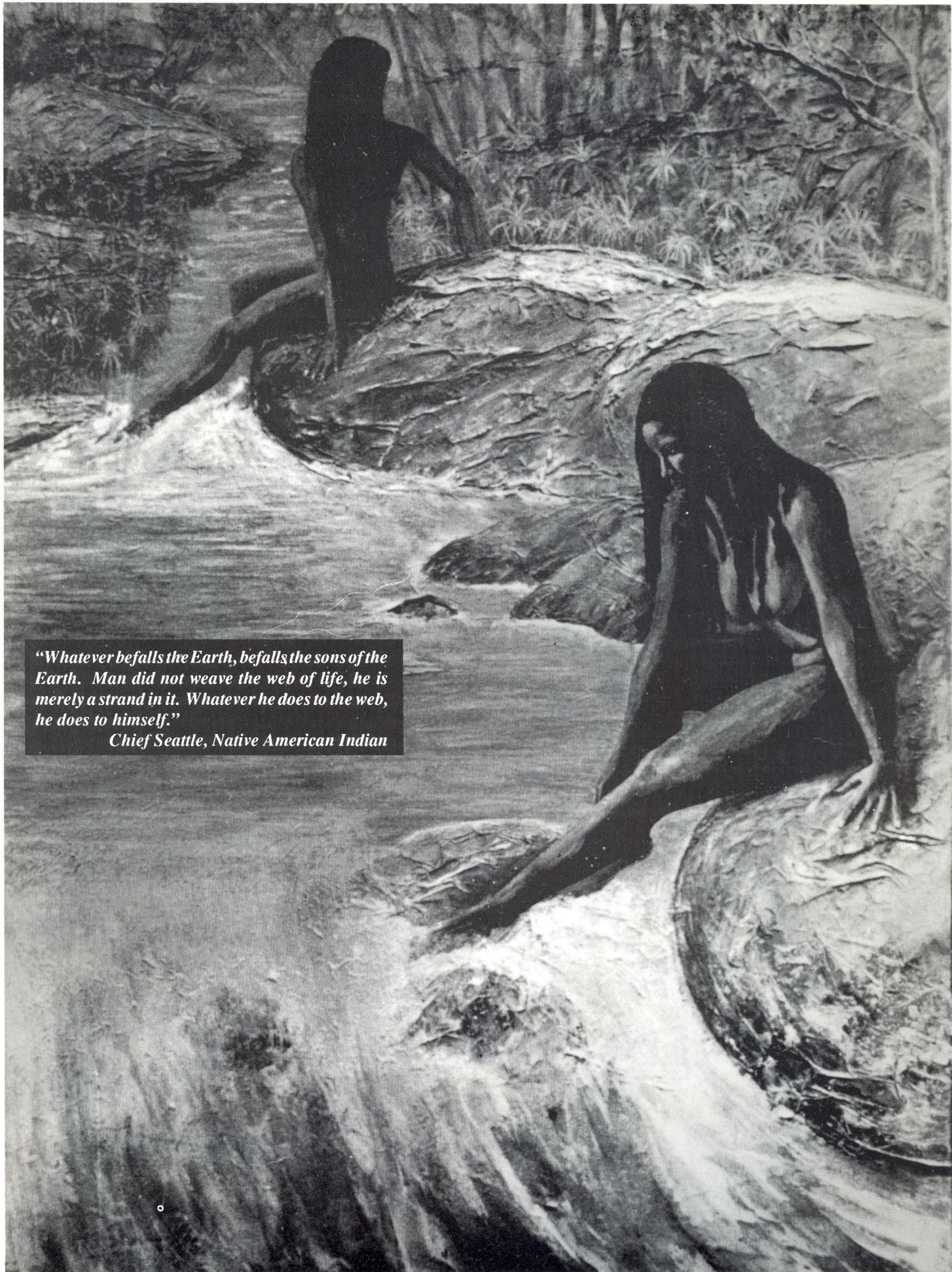
PRICE J\$20.00

*WOMEN & THE ENVIRONMENT
RECYCLING -- A WAY OF LIFE
SISTREN CELEBRATES 15 YEARS
FOOD SHORTAGE CAUSES BIRTH DEFECTS*



HO
~~HO~~

Mbala



“Whatever befalls the Earth, befalls the sons of the Earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”
Chief Seattle, Native American Indian

PICTURES FROM SISTERS CELEBRATION '92

IN TRIBUTE

*It was an impact, from the Impact Programme
When thirteen grass roots women
Through their experience of the struggles and frustration
Came up with a great intention.*

*It was Drama in Education,
Yes it was Drama in Education.
Drama in Education is their tool
With this them nuh play nuh fool
But use it to unplug the pollution
And plug in the solution.*

*Issues of women are their game
Which they'll highlight in the burning flame
Combing through the thorns and thistles
Searching for the brighter bristles.*

*To show grass roots women
How to deal with their plight and omen
Which abhor and ruin their mentality
Thus bringing forth insecurity.*

*Sista, Sistren, you big and yuh broad
Though sometimes you find it hard
But remember your aims and objectives
And rise to higher subjectives.*

Sister Lillian



HORTENSE ELLIS



JUDY MOWATT



D WISDOM



ADINA EDWARDS



MUTABARUKA

SISTREN OUT DEH!

Hilary Nicholson and Lana Finikin conducted a 2-day **Gender in the Caribbean** workshop with students from the region pursuing the Social Work course at the **Social Welfare Training Centre, UWI**. We glimpsed some familiar faces (this was great!) as we had met some of the now-students in different places when we visited the wider Caribbean in '89.

Marion of **Sistren Research** was taken up as the part-time coordinator of the secretariat for the **All Island Women's Conference**.

Hilary represented **Sistren** at a meeting of **Women's Communication Networks** in Barbados, Feb 10 - 13, brought together by **DAWN**.

Lana spoke to overseas students on **Women and Feminism** at the **Social Welfare Training Centre**.

"MOVING ON", **Sistren's** latest video, is available for purchase (or rental).

Sistren's Theatre Team will tour Germany between May 19 and June 29.

Lana Finikin, **Sistren's** Co-ordinator returned from **South Africa** on Friday, May 15.

Marion Bernard, **Sistren Research** and Pauline 'Afolashade' Crawford were in Guyana between Feb 7 and 15 to evaluate the work of 'Red Thread'. **Red Thread** is a women's group set up with the assistance of **Sistren**.

Sistren's Annie Blake and Lana Finikin ran a workshop on 'Gender Roles & Youth' for **Inner City Youth** on **March 7**. The workshop was put on in conjunction with **BWA** and the **Kingston Restoration Company**.

Joy Erskine is the lead drummer for 'Death and the King's Horsemen' a play to be staged by the **Cultural Arts Centre** of the **University of the West Indies**.

Sistren's workshop team has been conducting workshops in schools and communities across the island.

MEETING PLACE

There was a constant flurry of activity in the **Sistren Research** office which was the Secretariat for the **Planning Committee** for the **All Island Conference** (April 10 - 12, 1992). Workshops and planning sessions were held regularly in the library, the rehearsal room - all over **Sistren**, from January to April.

International Theatre Institute local reps met at **Sistren** to plan the **Theatre Awards Ceremony for International Theatre Day**, March 24 at **CAC, UWI**.

PASSING THROUGH

Saskia Wieringa PhD, convenor of the **Women & Development Programme**, Institute of Social Studies, the Hague;

Carol Lawes, ex-**Groundwork Theatre Co.**, now **Caricom Cultural Officer** in Guyana.

Joan French, **Sistren** member currently at the **CPDC** in Barbados.

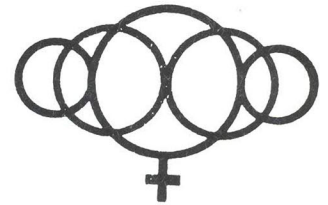
Honor Ford-Smith, here briefly at Christmas!

Claudia van Braunmuhl from Germany; also Brigitte from Austria, Jutta, Judy, AAnju and Elke from Germany to plan for **Sistren** visit to Germany later this year.

Nicky Garlick from UK, and **St. Helen's Youth Service**, near Liverpool, was here to work with **Teens in Action**, link with **Sistren** and other women's groups.

SPECIAL THANKS

To Ambassador at large **Mr. Frank Pringle** and **Sonia Witter**...thanks too to **Madeline Stewart** and the people at **Jamaica Vacations Limited** and **Jamaica Tourist Board** who made it possible for **Sistren's** Editor **Zadie Neufville** to attend the **World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet - Nov 8-12** in Miami.



SISTREN

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Sistren is produced four times a year by the **Sistren Theatre Collective** as part of its on-going 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-generating project. Contact: 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica, West Indies. Tel: (809) 92-92457/92-96171).

INSIDE COVER

Mixed Media Painting - **WATER NYMPHS** by Andy Jefferson

ACQUAINTED



Lauron Williams

SISTREN PROFILE

Yes, there is a single MALE Sistren! Holding that privileged position is one Lauron Williams, known to members and friends as Michael, Mikey, Lammy, Jello, Boops and, as he says, "Nuff more name me cyaan explain!" He's a steady Cancer man who was born at the Victoria Jubilee Hospital in 1958, the eldest son in a family of five girls and three boys.

The one Michael (his most common name out there) is Sistren's driver, messenger, gofer and sympathetic brother. He joined the team in April 1985, having been a mini-bus driver ("I want it known, I wasn't rough with my passengers or other road users", he laughs), and a car mechanic. His

skills have served the organisation well over the years, driving Sistren members safely across thousands of miles and maintaining the vehicles in his charge beyond the call of duty.

"When I join Sistren, I hardly knew Jamaica outside of Kingston. My first country run was to Westmoreland, and even though Sistren did give me one map, me laas two times before me reach the right place! Since then, me cover the whole island and me know it like the back a me hand!"

Michael also came to Sistren with a deep
cont'd on pg. 22

PERSONAL NOTES

CONGRATULATIONS: To friend of Sistren- Pauline Melville (Guyana), on winning the 1991 Commonwealth Prize for 'Best First Book' for her collection of short stories "Shape Shifter" (Women's Press and Picador), described as a "skillful entrance into different worlds... humour, male violence, joy, despair, intrigue and love".

JAMI WINNER: To Marcia Griffiths on the receipt of her Jamis - keep the faith sister, good work is rewarded everytime.

PRIZE WINNER: Congrats are also in order for Velma Pollard, who, late last year won the prestigious "Casa de las Americas" English Literature Prize.

APPOINTMENT: To Jamaican Norma Wade on being appointed to the Bermudian Supreme Court. The lady became the first female to be appointed to the Supreme Court in that country.

To Dr. Lucille Mair on her appointment as ambassador.

NANNY AWARDS: The Hon Portia Simpson, Enid Bennett, Edith Nelson, Muriel Johnson, Judy Mowatt and Adina Edwards who were presented with National Nanny Awards, in tribute to the Rt. Excellent, Grandy Nanny - National Heroine, on March 7.

NEW NAME: Pauline Crawford formally took on her new name:- Afolashade, meaning "my wealth is my crown" on Feb. 3, 1992, the anniversary of her birth.

BIRTH: Congratulations to Soniah Fenton of Groundwork Theatre and Michael on the birth of son O'dane Michael Jelani.

CONDOLENCES: To the family of Hazel Byfield who was a spark of inspiration and motivation for women of all ages and affiliations.



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"Him come and him carry me inna him car and we go eat and laugh and chat..."
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LESSONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Early two years ago, Professor Cliff Lashley, a facilitator at a training course on Responsible Reporting and Environmental Issues at CARIMAC, spoke to a group of journalists including myself - his topic: 'Protecting the West Indian Environment - a native point of view.'

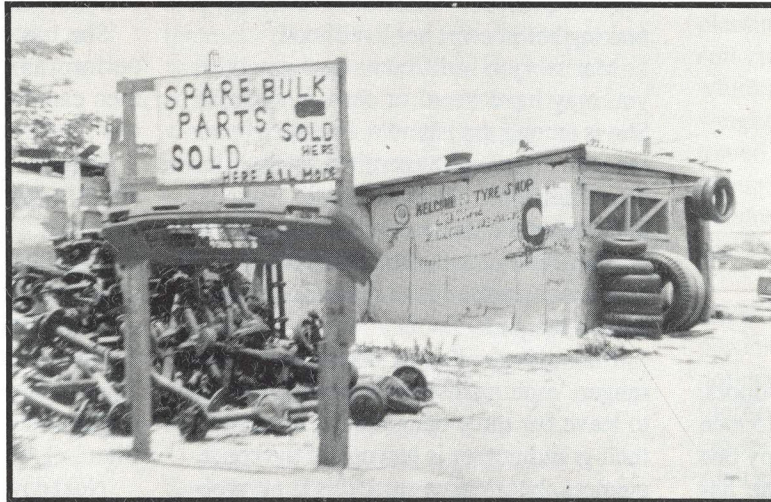
He asked a number of questions but two really got to me. Although I had been involved in environmental reporting for nearly four years prior to this course, I had to think.

The two questions were: - 'Are we limiting our protection to only the natural environment? How do we square the limitations on environmental protection with our clamorous desire - not to mention need for development?'

Have you really thought about this? If you have, then you will realise that protection of the natural environment alone, is not the answer. You see, our culture is so closely linked to the preservation of our trees, using manure instead of chemical fertilizer, the recycling of so many of the things we use on a day to day basis.

One example, is the use of cloth (bird's-eye) for baby diapers and as sanitary wear, rather than the disposable towels we now use. (My grandmother says the bird's eye were much better to use, and were a young girl's first experience in washing white clothes). And I could go on and on.

Do we still plant our children's navel strings with a seed, so there is a tree on the spot when the child grows up? Then there are the negative aspects of the old ways. For instance, burning the trees and shrubs to clear the land; the pit latrines that pol-



Spare parts salvaged from the dump on sale at Riverton City

lute the water table contaminating the water supplies and spreading disease.

That aside, what about development? Are we willing to go without the frills it provides for the sake of preserving the environment? We don't have to, if development is approached/managed in a way to preserve our natural heritage.

Building concrete houses, sewage plants, installing electricity shouldn't have to be at the expense of the environment. Building hotels and condominiums on the beach, should not threaten or destroy the reefs and the mangrove systems.

This brings to mind the view (among the 'moneyed-few') that the poor are the major contributors to environmental degradation: because they cut a few trees to plant their crops, burn coal; or because they cut the mangrove to build their fish pots and for fuel. But how destructive are these activities when compared to the dumping of the mangrove to build hotels, houses; the clearing of huge areas of forest to plant coffee and other crops, or just keeping it bare for long periods.

If you look at it, the poor have, for years

recycled not only their own refuse, but that of the well off few. And believe it or not, this is contributing a great deal to the preservation of the environment.

Those women who live off the dumps - scavenging among the garbage, sorting and taking what can be used. Those who buy, beg or collect glass or plastic bottles couldn't do without them. The woman or man who collects your empty baby formula cans. The men and boys who demolish old and abandoned buildings to get the steel and grills to sell. Those who collect scrap iron.

The woman who uses the plastic cooking oil container over and over again because she cannot afford a whole bottle, or makes a patch work sheet from old clothes because she cannot afford a new one - Environmental protection because of necessity.

Perhaps we should take a leaf out of the book of the poorer people in the society. The unfortunate thing however, is that when they can do better, they usually copy the ways of those who can afford more material things in life; over consuming and causing more problems.

Poor women bear most of the burden and they are most affected by environmental degradation, and so they are the ones who stand to gain the most from proper environmental practices. Being poor, however, should not force us into conservation and environmental protection. We should make the effort consciously, not because we can't do better.

Enjoy your magazine,

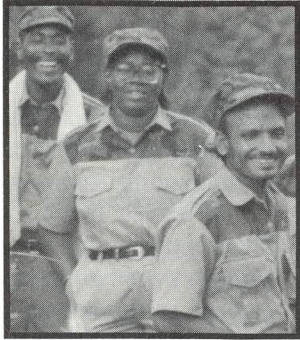
Your Editor.



MY SMALL CORNER

MARVA SMITH:-

"I like to know I'm making history"



Marva with colleagues

Seven weeks of sleeping out-of-doors, she is the only woman among up to 15 men (10 of whom are park rangers) at any one time, and never complaining. She has climbed some of the roughest and steepest trails in the Blue Mountains and has lived through the rigorous survival training required of the newly recruited park rangers.

Many of her colleagues never thought she would make it. But for Marva Smith, mother of three, working out-of-doors for the preservation of the environment is what

she wants to do. In other words, she is making her interest her livelihood.

Marva's job is different from any other you may have heard or seen in Jamaica. She is among the island's first set of park rangers. They were recruited by the Blue Mountain/John Crow Mountain National Park and will enforce regulations concerning the preservation of the environment and teach conservation in communities in and around the park.

Marva is thrilled at becoming a park ranger, 'making history' she says. Having to leave her three daughters at home with their grandmother is just one of the consequences, but, Marva says, this is no problem. Prior to becoming a wild life ranger, she worked for a time in the Bahamas, and that, she believes, prepared the girls somewhat for this job which will keep her in the hills most of the time.

Why did the former Supervisor at the Jamaica Council for the Handicapped, and Data Entry Operator choose this job?

"I am a lover of nature and the forest has a lot to offer. I believe I can offer a whole lot in protecting the environment by doing this job," she says.

She has no doubts about being able to perform as well as the guys. "Anything the men can do, I can do too. I'm somebody too," Marva states.

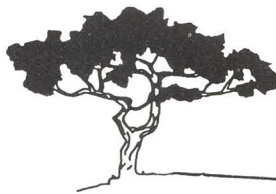
Despite having a major operation just about a year ago, which in the early stages gave her problems, she was able to go through the routines. When Sistren caught up with Marva at Portland Gap, about 1:00 a.m. one morning, she had tackled 'Jacob's Ladder' famous as the toughest part of the 7½ miles trek to the Blue Mountain Peak, and the trail to the Portland Gap Camp Site.

Next day, along with her colleagues, she will attempt a search and rescue mission in the the dense forest, then hike to the peak.

As the only woman among so many men what is her feeling?

"I don't see myself as the 'rose between the thorns' as they (the men) like to put it. I am a ranger. That's it, and they don't treat me any different."

LYNETTE HEADAD



Lynette Headad mothered 15 children, 16, if you count the one she lost. Twelve of the 15 she had on her own... that is, without the help of a midwife or nurse. She delivered herself.

And as she bore her children, she buried their navel strings with a seed. So as they grew, each child had their very own tree. Auntie Lynette, as she is called believes in this old age tradition. After all, as a rural woman she is confident of her awareness of the value of trees.

Auntie Lynette works as manager of the Whitfield Hall Lodge, at the foot of the Blue Mountains. Her job puts her into contact with visitors from all over the world,

and in this role she feels she is helping to preserve the Blue Mountain Region. Nature Tourism is one reason for the rising tourism in the area, and Auntie Lynette, with her ready smile and helpful nature tries to assist the visitors in every way she can, arranging for guides and vehicles to get them in and out of the area.

Lynette has been at the Lodge for the past 24 years, and in between having children, farming and caring for the lodge, she has been teaching family planning and distributing contraceptives to the young people of the community.

Having had her first child days before

her 16th birthday Lynette, at 44 sees the need for such a service in Hagley Gap, Penlyne Castle, Epping Farm and surrounding areas. She was rather unfortunate she says, having had several mishaps with oral contraceptives. However, she believes that especially with the present economic crisis, young girls should think about delaying pregnancy until they are able to afford children.

Auntie Lynette missed her calling, it may seem, because 'she had so many children, too fast'. But she has no regrets. She is playing her part by educating the younger generation about family planning thus, giving them a chance to improve their lives.

ESSENTIAL TO GOOD HEALTH

Water affects us all and is even more essential than food. In all aspects of life, for drinking, cooking, washing, bathing; for agricultural and industrial purposes, water is a most important commodity

Many communities have too little, or have to go far distances to get a little of this precious liquid. Sometimes it's not there; or there is leakage in the system wasting as much as 50 per cent of it. Rivers are sometimes dry or often dirty through misuse. It can be contaminated by animals, by washing, by sewage from nearby pit latrines, by pesticides and fertilisers used on farms or other chemicals from industry.

Even the underground water supplies have become contaminated. Recently, the National Water Commission (NWC) discontinued the pumping of several wells as a result of pollution. Sometimes if too much fresh water is pumped out, salty water seeps in.

You may ask why there is a water shortage. Jamaica used to be well forested, especially the hill-tops. When it rained, the water soaked into the top soil which acted somewhat like a sponge, holding the water and releasing it slowly into

streams and rivers over a long period. This water would then run into the dams then into our pipes. Still more water would seep through the rocks down to the aquifers (water stored naturally among rock layers below the land surface) from which it could be tapped by wells and distributed by pumping to treatment plants and into our homes.

However, over the years, people's activities have retarded this natural process. One reason could well be that there are twice as many people living now, than 40 years ago. Each year some people die and some go abroad, but far more than that number are born and remain here.

Forests that used to protect the hill-tops have mostly been cut down to provide a livelihood and space for the additional people. More land is taken into cultivation, more trees are cut for wood, for charcoal and wood-fuel and to make way for coffee or vegetables. Even the Forestry Department cuts down forest trees to plant pine trees, and make way for roads. These actions cause fires and more damage to the trees and soil.

Big business interests now prioritise the cultivation of crops like coffee which earn foreign exchange and this pushes small vegetable farmers further and further up the mountains.



Forests that used to protect the hilltops have mostly been cut down.
(Section of the Blue Mountain)

And all this impacts on the quality of water which reaches our homes. Once the trees with their network of roots and foliage cover are gone, the soil is loosened and when the rain comes it is washed away. The soil muddies the water in the streams and rivers, and is deposited in dams, as well as finding its way out to sea where it smothers the reefs. Of course the topsoil is lost and the land is no longer good for planting. This also causes flooding, as the soil can no longer absorb the rain water which runs off, and the land slips under the weight and continuous assault of unaccustomed amounts of water. In addition, not enough water reaches the aquifer, causing a reduction in the amount of water in the rivers and streams.

River water may contain fertilisers and pesticides from farms. It may also become polluted by sewage from pit latrines or inefficient disposal systems. These could cause the spread of dangerous diseases such as typhoid and cholera.

In general, the disposal of harmful substances should not be done by washing them away into rivers or gullies as this doesn't get rid of them, it just moves them somewhere else.

For example: - A farmer who has been spraying insecticide on his crops, washes out his spray cans and buckets. If he pours the water into a ditch or stream, it will find its way to the river, kill janga and fish and then continue out to sea where it will do even more damage. What he should do is tip the contaminated water into a hole in the ground, away from the river. Here it can be absorbed, filtered and the harmful substances destroyed.

It is much safer to dispose of any small amount of contaminant in earth rather than water. Paint residue from washing paintbrushes, oil from engines, even sewage can be disposed of in a pit where it can be absorbed and worked on by soil organisms.

Water is too valuable don't take it for granted and let it go to waste.

Information provided by: Dr Margaret Hodges
Slip Pen Rd. Comprehensive Clinic

A WAY OF LIFE

by Candace and Zadie Neufville

Riverton City is a community situated about six miles outside Kingston on the fringe of the industrial district. About five miles from the settlement is one of two city dumps, a source of livelihood for many in the community as well as outsiders.

On the Spanish Town Road, the community is marked by a pile-up of car doors, bumpers, old air-conditioning units among other things. A 'For Sale' sign stands in front of the items.

Closer inspection reveals that there are doors for virtually all types of cars, carburetors, axles and transmission lines. "Everyt'ing ya so," Sistren was told, "deh pon sale". As one man explains, "a soh wi hussle fi put pat pan fia"!

ROSE buys bottles from the little boys who live in the area, and the men who work on the garbage trucks. She sells "de bakkle to di good, di bad an' di indifferent". She names a major beverage company as well as "some small man as mi customas". She explains that the bottles are reused by the company, to rebottle their product. A man who sells milk, she says, buys the quart bottles from her.

For Rose who lives with her four children and common-law-husband, collecting and selling bottles is her only means of a livelihood. She has been in her current employment for the last 10 years. Her baby father is un-employed.

CYNTHIA also operates from the dump. She has been living in Riverton City since 1966, but has been confined to a wheelchair since 1987. Her son, she explains, is a dealer in scrap iron.



Looking for useful items

"Ah nuh everybaddy waan tief, so yuh haffi try somet'ing," she says.

She says the dump draws people from as far as May Pen, Old Harbour and even Kingston. "Tomarra mawning yuh si de people dem come from off de bus tidy nice and guh dung yuh get tings," Cynthia told Sistren.

GEORGE lives in an adjoining community. He makes bags for a living, but looks

to the dump for affordable material. George salvages the canvas ends which he uses to build knapsacks, and collects the buckles and tags from discarded bags to "mek dem look nice". He also collects the zippers from discarded suitcases.

People also collect zinc and board from the dump to build houses and fences. Other items, including rubber, plastic, copper, iron and material used to make aluminum



Car fenders and car doors of all description for sale at Riverton

pots, are the main items salvaged from the dumps, George explains.

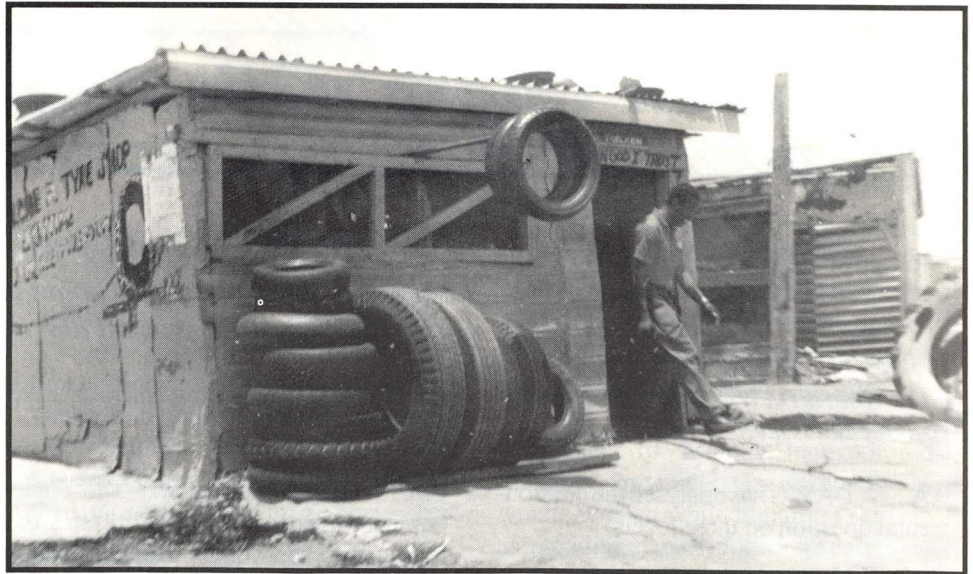
PICO depends on the dump to feed his four pigs. Andrew, like Pico, are both in their twenties, and have lived in Riverton City all their lives. They were quick to point out that no one took anything from the dump to eat.

According to Andrew, they do not wear the clothes they take from the dump. These he says are sold, and the money used to buy clothes and food. Both Pico and Andrew say that on any given day, there are more outsiders at the dump, than people from Riverton.

Andrew points to a number of barrels, pieces of aluminium and card board, one 100 lbs gas cylinder which he explains, "neva quite reach di dump, but hijack pan di way dung deh". He points to a tractor tyre nearby, insisting that the tyre "still have use".

"Is maybe a money man who dash it weh, but a likkle man soon come buy it."

The men explain that even though meat may be taken from the dump, it is only used to feed dogs and pigs. They say that everything that can be recycled is taken out and sold. Old bed springs are taken and sold to small mattress manufacturers - usually a



Tyre sale

one-man operation. The springs are then used to construct brand new mattresses which go for as little as "one-tent' a de cos' of dem wha sell in a de large store dem".

One man felt that those who dumped items that can be recycled, "know seh people ah use dem, wedda food or clawt. If dem neva know den dem 'ouldn' trow kersene ile pan it or cut cut it up".

And whether you believe it or not, there is

a huge market for these items. Just pass by any dump on any day of the week, or visit sections of West Street, Marcus Garvey Drive, or Spanish Town Road.

A recycling effort on your part may disrupt the livelihood of many, so perhaps you should think about cleaning up the things you throw out - and sorting your garbage.

This could go a far way in helping those who make a living from the dumps. ♻️

QUIZ

What do you Know?



3. Burning plastics is

- (a) an efficient and safe way of getting rid of it
- (b) o.k. when done in an incinerator
- (c) not safe because it releases toxic gases.

7. The Debt and Environmental Crises are

- (a) caused primarily by over-population
- (b) unrelated crises which need separate solutions and strategies
- (c) related to world economic policies which stress consumption and material productivity

1. "Biodegradable" means:

- (a) biology taught in grades 6-9
- (b) a substance which decomposes (rots) by natural means
- (c) degrading to the environment

4. North America represents about 5% of the world's population and yet produces

- (a) 5% of all the toxic waste in the world
- (b) 10% of the world's toxic waste
- (c) half of the toxic waste in the world

8. Biogas is a gas produced by fermenting animal dung and crop residues. It is:

- (a) harmful to human beings
- (b) useful as a low-cost fuel or fertilizer
- (c) poisonous gas used by the military

2. Do cars pollute, even without lead?

Cars produce:

- i a small amount of Carbon Monoxide and Carbon Dioxide
- ii 67% Carbon Monoxide
- iii 50% Nitrogen and acid rain
- iv 15% Carbon Dioxide

5. While travelling to the country, you throw a little garbage out the car windows. Which is more harmful to the environment?

- (a) empty plastic sky-juice bag
- (b) banana and orange skin
- (c) empty drink cartons

9. Sources of energy which cause minimal pollution are:

- (i) nuclear energy
- (ii) solar power
- (iii) tidal power
- (iv) biogas
- (v) fuelwood

(a) i & iii only

(b) iv & ii only

(c) ii, iii, iv

6. Approximately how much land in cities is taken up by cars (including roads & car parks)

- (a) 10%
- (b) 50%
- (c) 331/2%

(a) b & d only

(b) f & c only

(c) bcde

(d) all of the above

SEE ANSWERS ON PAGE 22

Sistren Chats with Peggy Antrobus

Sistren magazine caught up with Peggy Antrobus during her visit to the island recently. We spoke to her about DAWN's approach to the issue of environmental degradation.

S.M.: *What is DAWN's analysis of the environmental issue?*

P.A.: DAWN has analysed the environmental question on three levels.

The official discussions about the environment are about global processes and global changes; about the products of industry such as motor cars, refrigerators and raw materials that go into industry. On another level it has to do with industrialisation: The massive clearing of forests which leads directly to desertification and erosion which lead to, and affect precipitation (rain fall) rates and concomitant (accompanying) global changes.

A lot of discussions ignore the causes of those changes but go on to the story of population and over-population, poverty in other words. They say that the poor is destroying the forest, the rivers. Clearly it is not the poor; the poor do not bulldoze forests, they only pick up the twigs, (which has been also said of women).

It is precisely this bulldozing of forests which creates poverty, in a sense, and creates population pressure: When you take most of the fertile land to build dams and hydro-electric power plants and other things to further industrialisation, you push people to the edge of existence. Poverty and over-population are the consequence of the same economic model that is destroying the ozone layer.

Industrialisation pushes people to marginal lands and creates population pressure. It does not pay attention to socio-economic development for the majority of people. There is a correlation between women's access to education [opportunities] and their fertility rate.

S.M.: *What is the relationship (between*

fertility rates and socio-economic development?)

P.A.: If government wants to control population and to reduce fertility rates, then it has to provide women with the means of survival and the means of improving their family situation, among other things...If they (women) have no opportunities in life, they are going to have large numbers of children.

There is a line of argument that is being created between the population control people and the environmentalists, that comes close to saying that people are the problem. Now they have not said which people are the problem but they imply it is poor people. But it is in fact rich people who are the problem, because industrialisation meets the needs of the people who are affluent. This is part of the whole capitalist consumerist materialistic ideology. Industries are creating the cars, the refrigerators, not for the poor, but for the rich, who are making more demands for these things; partly too because the mark up for these items is increasing.

S.M.: *How do you explain DAWN's role in all of this?*

P.A.: When you go to the micro level, which you don't approach from the point of view of global change, but from that of poor women, this is where DAWN comes in. We are primarily concerned with the issues of livelihood and health. Livelihood with access to land, the quality of the land, food, water. These are our major preoccupations.

S.M.: *It is said that government policies are often to be blamed for some of the destruction. What do you say to this?*

P.A.: The policy of structural adjustment places a lot of pressure on govern-

ments to earn more foreign exchange and therefore, the over exploitation of land is part of the whole problem. I understand that the Jamaican government made enormous concessions of land to the Japanese to grow coffee. A lot of that land is hillside land, next to the watershed areas. It therefore affects water supply, which has a direct impact on peoples' health. Then there is erosion of the hillside, which ultimately leads to deforestation which affects people's lives directly and global change.

The argument that Jamaica is so small and therefore that it can't have a great impact on the globe, is not valid. What is happening here, is an illustration of what is happening elsewhere and when taken together has a cumulative effect. In other words, these macro-economic policies affect peoples' health and livelihood.

S.M.: *But is there any truth in the idea that the South cares more about development, more about money, than the environment?*

P.A.: ...the truth of the matter is that there are people of the South who care about their environment. It is not true that it is the South that is destroying it. It is northern technology in the South that is destroying the environment. At the same time there are large numbers of people in the South who are concerned about the quality of life, but there are also people who are struggling for survival, who are concerned about the environment because when they bulldoze the land and push people, the people suffer.

There are sectors in the society that are concerned about the environment. These are never reflected in the discussion at the international level. At this level, only the government's position is being presented and this is very much influenced by the

World Bank and by Northern capital. To talk about the South destroying the environment is to pretend that these governments have any autonomy, as if they are acting in the interest of their people.

They are acting in the interest of North based capital and similarly, the people from the North are also more influenced by North based capital than by any environmental concerns. In other words, they're only going to have protection to the extent that it does not erode their profits.

S.M.: *With all of this in mind; - the 'so-called' development formula - What is the effect of urbanisation on the environment?*

P.A.: Urbanisation such as Port-of-Spain and Kingston, is caused by the distribution of income, the push and pull factors: The push from the rural areas because there is nothing to do there; and the pull, which is the industrialisation in urban areas that attracts people. This has to do with the kind of development, if you put certain infrastructure in the rural areas you eliminate the push factor.

S.M.: *Is this happening because the Caribbean is looking more to tourism?*

P.A.: Tourism is really an environmental hazard. People are coming to the Caribbean because of the natural beauty of the land, but if too many people come we will lose that. We have already lost it. All the reefs in Barbados and the Bahamas are destroyed.

S.M.: *What became of the plan to make the last bit of wetland in Barbados a golf course?*

P.A.: The people resisted it.

S.M.: *On the question of subsistence, how can DAWN sensitise grass-roots people, especially women, to the problem of degradation when these people depend on the land for their day to day survival?*

P.A.: You cannot expect the poor, when they are pushed to marginal lands to be concerned about a tree. Nobody is going to protect a tree if their child is dying. Our only answer is to put people on proper land; make sure that people have access to fertile land.

*Peggy Antrobus is Co-ordinator of DAWN
Interview was conducted by Candace*

Hope For Vulnerable Young Women

by Dwight Bellanfante

The pleasant looking, modestly dressed young woman, appeared at first glance to be just another typical young woman. But Lorna, (not her real name), has already been exposed to more trauma than most women would see in their lifetime.

Lorna has been a ward of the Government for most of her life. "I was given up by my mother because she could not manage...I was six months old", she explained. "Seeing as how my father had left her when he learned she was pregnant, she had it very hard to raise me, (her third child) on a helper's salary."

So Lorna was put in a children's home.

At the home she went through the various rites of passage associated with childhood, however, her childhood experiences were far from typical.

"I had no privacy at the home, I could not even bathe in private," she explained, "very often the wardens treated us badly. I was beaten frequently for the slightest thing. One time a certain warder beat me with a hose for taking some crackers from the kitchen."

Lorna's experience of coming of age in a state institution is replicated several times over by other girls. Their crisis deepens when they reach the age of 18 and the Government decides that they are adults and should go out on their own.

Most are not equipped to face life having received few educational opportunities or skill training, and often end up repeating the cycle of early pregnancy and male dependency which their mothers faced.

It is such vulnerable young women who are too old to be wards of the Govern-

ment, yet are ill prepared to manage on their own, who are the special focus of a hostel and skills training centre opened late last year at 7 Denhurst Avenue, off the Hagley Park Road in Kingston.

A project of Woman Incorporated (Woman Inc.), the Centre houses 14 young women while imparting skills in computing, typewriting, dress designing and sewing for one year periods.

Described as an experiment in "low supervision living" by Mrs. Inez Morrison, vice president of the Crisis Centre, the facility is guided by a house mother and secretary/manager.

Funding for the venture came from the Soroptomist International of Europe Union of Norway following representations from Woman Inc.

The pleasant looking hostel is really a house transformed to accommodate the young women, 18 years and older. They run their own lives while sharpening domestic skills in cooking and washing.

There were no disturbing conditions such as excessive noise at the hostel which blends into the lower middle class community, and the surroundings were neatly kept. Each girl is responsible for keeping her room clean and orderly. These are normal girls who enjoy listening to music and other youthful interests. Some attend high school and are preparing for CXC examinations.

Mrs. Morrison said the aim was really to provide a source of transition for the girls before they face the outside world.

She noted that the initiative by Woman Inc. was just the first step, adding that she looked forward to the day when no unwanted child should leave the care of Government until he or she was fully equipped to manage in the society.



Sistren Pel

by Beverley Hanson

It is difficult to say when, or in what year, Sistren became an organization because Sistren started out as a Theatre Group. However, things changed, time passed and the work grew, so out of recognition from our audience, well-wishers and friends and the need for more issues to be addressed, Sistren became what it is today. We can safely say, however, that the organisation began between 1980 - 1982.

At the beginning we had 12 women as actresses and one Artistic Director. This was the group that did the first skit at the Jamaica House Garden Theatre in May 1977 called "Downpression Get a Blow". This skit was performed in celebration of "Workers' Week" leading up to Labour Day 1977.

That first skit and our first two major plays raised issues concerning family life and problems at the workplace, and spoke of the suffering of its members. These were presented mainly to working class women who, could identify with the issues and who could afford to attend the plays, at the relatively cheap prices of \$2.00 per ticket.

During this time some of the women in the group felt they should organise some sort of management structure. We identified the skills we had, and other experiences that could help us establish a managing body. Honor Ford-Smith had directing skills being tutor at the Jamaica School of Drama; Lana Finikin and Bev Hanson were secretary and treasurer for the two community groups they were involved in, so we started to plan. We could have a President, a Secretary, Treasurer, Director, Fundraiser....

One very important factor was money. How can we become a Theatre Group or organization without money? We saw where we could try to identify the funds for the day-to-day running of the organisation. Members were working part-time and meeting at



REBECCA KNOWLES: *Don-man - Druggist - Raphael demands that Joy Erskine school girl, distribute his drug at her school. The skit focussed on the problems faced by young people hooked on drugs, as well as those being influenced by pushers. The topic, "Is it drug abuse or youth abuse?"*

the Drama School in the evenings. We had our families to take care of, therefore we offered ourselves a bus fare subsistence. Because Honor travelled abroad regularly she started making contacts, and began telling people about Sistren's work. Funding agencies were recommended to the Collective and we were asked to submit proposals of the organisation and its projects, and the amount of money needed.

...And we grew, ... we had performances, workshops, by 1981 we had participated in Carifesta in Barbados. As the work grew, administration, public relations and heavy fund raising came into being. We had a difficult time finding a name for the group of women. So we sat in a brainstorming session and came up with the name Sistren because we were all working class women with a common need and aim, and that was

to improve our conditions and the conditions of other women. For us the name 'Sistren' meant sisters.

We were joined soon after by Hilary Nicholson and Joan French who acted as Resource Personnel. So far five of our original members have migrated, but they all keep in touch with us. We have not been able to recruit women to become members of the Theatre side of the Company, but we do employ actresses when necessary. We have also managed to employ persons from time to time in the administrative area, to free up the actresses for performances and to conduct workshops.

Years ago a group called Friends of Sistren was formed. Members of the group also acted as resource personnel and would assist in whatever way possible. Unfortunately, however, the group is no longer active.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of Sistren is to use drama as a tool, to look at issues affecting women and children in a negative way, role play the problems and try to find possible solutions to the problems whether on a long or short term basis.

Other objectives included making the group self-sufficient, and assisting its members to become more rounded and efficient persons.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ORGANIZATION

The Collective so far has achieved very little recognition from successive governments in the country, even support from them has been very limited.

We have however achieved recognition from several governments, groups and organizations from numerous countries across the world. From Africa to Asia we have visited and worked with many, and their support has been tremendous. Our major awards are Jamaica Gold Medal-

brates Tria 15



Psycho, played by (Beverley Hanson), Warrior, (Beverley Elliot) and the other women in the yard confront the thug (Annie Blake), who claims to be a rent collector and comes to collect money on behalf of the owner of the premises.



Jamaica Festival Commission 1978; National Theatre Critics Award - 1981; Thomas Figueroa Award - 1982; International awards include OAS Commission of Women- 1978, and Caribuste Award - 1982.

From time to time the Collective participates in projects, working with major local and overseas groups and organisations. Two examples are the Caribbean Popular Theatre Exchange (CPTe) workshop held at the Jamaica School of Drama, September to October 1985, and the Ritual and the Contemporary Theatre Workshop held at the Creative Arts Centre, September 1991.

Some of our involvement with other groups not only include theatre work but also development, campaigning around certain issues: for example, the portrayal of women's image through the media, and others.

TEXTILE DEPARTMENT

The Textile department came about because collective members felt Sistren could do its own costumes for the Nana Yah production. It was not an easy task but we did some simple drawings creating our own designs for screen printing. We began printing the designs as samples, like what was happening, and later we began printing cushion covers. As for the costumes for the

play, they were done by Beti Campbell who, at the time, was our design tutor.

We all attended classes for a while, and then found that one of our members, Cerene Stephenson, was doing exceptionally well. As time went by Cerene became the Manager of the Textile Department, and went on to do wall hangings, T-shirts, cushions, bags, dresses, fabric, cards etc. Cerene became more and more experienced, and as we moved into a team structure, the Textile Team was established. The team did well in its efforts to raise money for the collective. The products were sold at fairs, sales and distributed through small outlets.

BUSS OUT:

The women enjoy themselves at the wedding reception. A story being told to them by 'Warrior' played by Beverley Elliot, (extreme left), during their pass-time period in jail.



Like any other income-generating project 'Textiles' has had its ups and downs. We learnt that it is extremely difficult for a small business such as this to survive in a country like ours. But we tried our best. You are invited to visit the Textile Department here at Sistren, to purchase gift items, personal or household items. Feel free to call Vyris Gordon-Hewitt on 929-2457, 929-6171.

THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

Our Research Department aims to become a resource centre for Caribbean women. Established a few years ago, the centre is in the capable hands of Marion Bernard. Here books, pamphlets, magazines, audio cassettes, and video cassettes on Sistren's work, and the work and struggles of women around the world are available.

From time to time we invite persons to use the centre. We are extending the invitation to you our readers, to feel free to drop in and see us. Sistren's publications are available for rental or purchase. If you want to come in to view our work, or listen to our audio cassettes this can be arranged. Marion can be contacted at 968-0895.

The past 15 years have been hard, but we have come a long way. And despite the problems we can be proud of our organisation.

Beverley Hanson is assistant co-ordinator of Sistren and a founding member.



A WOMAN'S FIGHT TO SAVE



Icilda Dufus and other farmers at a meeting of the LAC.

Linked by a single unpaved, winding hair-raising strip of road, the Hagley Gap, Penlyne Castle, Epping Farm and surrounding communities work together for a common goal - the improvement of their communities.

All located in rural St. Andrew and St. Thomas, the communities which fall inside the buffer zone of Blue Mountain/John Crow Mountain National Park, all share the same one inch pipe, schools as well as the few jobs available on the coffee plantations in the area.

But the livelihood of many in the area, is threatened by the National Park which was established as a major effort to save the ecology of the Blue Mountain area.

Those who for many years farm in the park reserve, burn coal or cut logs for sale as lumber, are faced with a problem. There are very few, if any coal burners or loggers on this side of the Blue Mountains, however fires caused by farmers are a big problem here. Every week, several acres of forest are destroyed because a fire, lit to clear the land, got out of control. The destruction is alarming because often, mature mahogany trees

and other eighty to one hundred year-old trees go up in smoke, leaving the hill-sides bare and brown, open to the elements, and vulnerable to landslides.

Those who farm on the reserve must be relocated, but there is not enough land... or most of the land is owned by large land owners who are still buying small holdings in the area to add to their own.

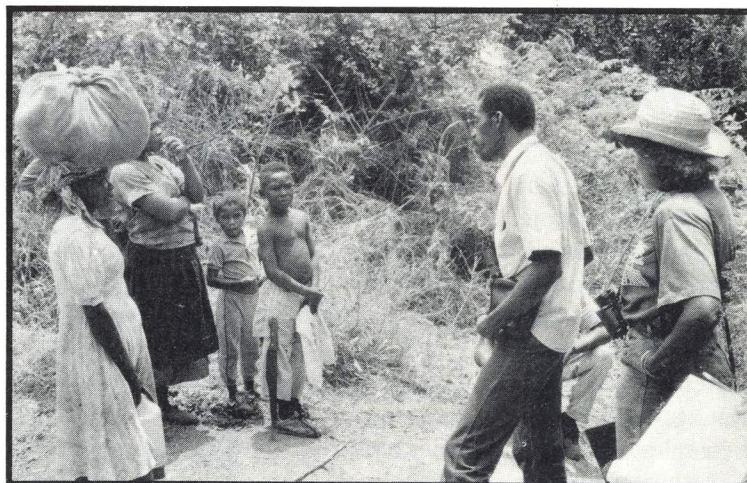
This is where 43 year-old Icilda Duffus, herself a small farmer, comes in. She is a member of the Local Advisory Committee (LAC) of the Blue Mountain Na-

tional Park Project, and sits on their land committee. Icilda and her colleagues are working to identify idle land and to find out whether owners are willing to rent or lease the land to small farmers.

Already the committee has identified several sections of land, Icilda says, noting that only one owner has so far expressed his willingness to lease 30 acres to the small farmers. However with the large number of farmers currently without land, this is hardly enough.

Icilda, who cultivates three and a half acres in addition to working on coffee plantations, says most of the people in the district of Hagley Gap, Penlyne Castle, Epping Farm and surrounding areas do one or both, or, especially in the case of the younger residents, are idle. For them, the coming of the park changes their lives in more ways than one. Though it means that many of their parents will have to leave the reserves, there are opportunities for them.

With the promise of an increase in the number of tourist in the area, baby sitting teams, craft and refreshment stands, tour guides and even a tour company have been formed.



Park Manager Robert Kerr speaking to some women who farm on the forest reserve.

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS



Brown, bare section of Blue Mountains. There are no trees left here.

But to a farming community, land is important and Icilda feels that small farmers are not treated fairly. She says that even those with land have had to move because of a lack of water.

"The lack of water is pushing farmers into the hills. If they had water they wouldn't have to go into the forest," she points out.

Currently, the LAC is working with Mr. Ronald Thwaites, talkshow host and local farmer, to get water from large holdings farmers. But with a one inch pipe serving the communities it is difficult - even the domestic water supply is not adequate.

Icilda sees where the practises of many farmers have affected the availability of water - even rainfall. "We used to have more regular rainfall in this area, but it is now very dry and thirsty."

This lack of water makes life harder, she feels, and the farmers go further into the forest making life even harder and water scarcer. But Icilda feels this is not "good enough, as people are aware of what is happening. They know that without the trees the land breaks away", she says.


"If we could try our best to see if we can find other alternatives than destroy the forest. If you know something is going to hurt you then you do better," she argues.

Icilda has been active in the community for a long time. Born in the Epping Farm Area, she went to school there and was later trained as a dressmaker and copy typist. Prior to working with the LAC,

she worked with the Blue Mountains Human Development Project for four years. She got involved in the LAC, she says, because she saw that their projects were for the benefit of the communities.

Life is hard in this mountainous area. There is no transportation, and hardly any employment here. There is also a high level of teenage pregnancy. This has been the force behind Icilda's drive to succeed in her project. "If I didn't have my farm I would have to survive but I would have to live below the standard... I'm used to nice food, nice clothes..." she states.

And so she continues to seek land for her co-workers and neighbours. She has written letters to former Prime Minister Michael Manley and the Ministry of Agriculture.

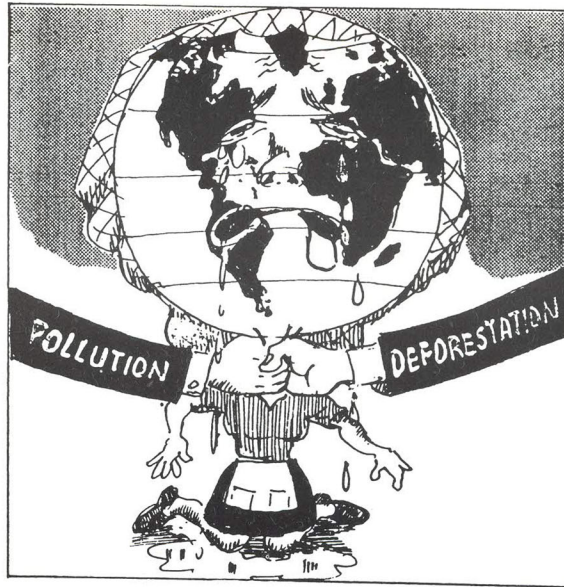
Icilda is not a politician but she has strong beliefs, that each and everyone of us - God's creations - deserves a chance at life. And this is her way of giving others a chance at life. 

APOLOGY

Sistren would like to apologise for the non appearance of credit for articles which appeared in our last publication of Sistren Vol 13 #2 & 3

- Pauline 'Afolashade' Crawford wrote the amusing article "My Reign as Miss Jamaica"
- Graphics for the articles - "Rape - the aftermath and beyond" and "Why fathers abuse their daughters" were taken from Sistren's booklet, "No! to Sexual Violence"
- Other graphics came from International Women's Tribune Centre
- While information for the article on Analee Davis came from Alison Thompson thanks also to Gillian Scott for her brilliant rewrite.
- Women's Resource and Outreach Centre was established in 1983 and not 1973.

Mother Earth Needs Our Help



Look and listen to see who is crying
Wait and watch to see who is sighing
Stop and look to know who is acting
Can't we all feel, it's our mother earth!

As her green veil of forest we cut
Can't we feel her tears flowing
As we witness floods drowning us
Can't we feel the wound she gets
From bombs, radiation, chemicals we use
Can't we feel the pain she receives
As her own children fight and fall!
Can't we feel the disease she gets
From the chemical weapons we use
Can't we feel the anger that rages
From her fierce shake!

How can she destroy her own blood
For she after all is mother of all
How can she forget those whom she fostered
Though her children forget their mother earth
Ignore our mother's pleading call
To save her and her children
To respect her and her call!
Rise on the children of earth
To crusade against the chemical wars
To protest against deforestation
And fight to protect your mother earth
For mother earth needs our help.

Maya Bhattachan

• From: *CWD Networker*, May - August, 1990

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The Degradation of the Society

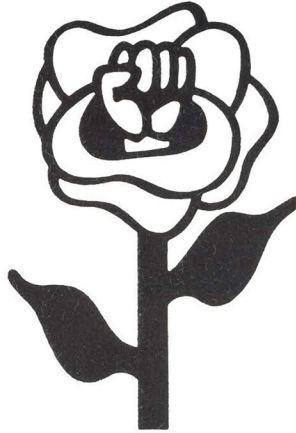
Together, we can make it. Women from various organizations, groups, churches and communities have become rooted and self-centered, in their efforts to cope with the constant menace of the rising cost of living and the polluted environment of theft, rape, gun shots/murder, unemployment, bad housing conditions, politics and drugs, and a lack of education.

This economic and environmental barrier has contributed tremendously to many loud cries, many tales of woe, which have become the daily bread of most of our women.

Where are our leaders? Aren't they concerned? Are they girding their loins to tear apart this unjust and unworthy situation that has cramped and paralysed the entire society taking its toll on especially our women. Haven't they human feelings?

In any circumstance, our first leaders are our parents. They should be so motivated in endeavouring to see that their children are brought up properly and given the guidance and education they need. Being such a parent, means that attitudes should be consistent so that children are moulded into a pattern that, hopefully, will gear them for a brighter future. However, this is not possible as many have gotten the privilege but have faltered on the way.

Being a teacher, a minister, a politician, a member of the police force/the army, or a prominent person in the community, you are looked upon as an influential member of the society; and should be a role model. Unfortunately, and regrettably some of these same people are the backbone and nurturers of crime.



The Media on a whole, should be more conscious and professional in delivering certain reports, as they tend to have a 'jubilee', rather than being objective in

their statements and reports on certain elements in the society.

In light of all the problems and the current economic hardships, we as consumers, must help ourselves by looking out for the best prices. We must learn, organise and demand our rights. We must insist that government put in place a system which will ensure that consumers are fairly treated. It is important that we are one step ahead.

Remember, we can all help in our own small way. It is a cause for you and me.

THE RUNNINGS

Environment and Economics: interlocks

- ↓ When IMF/World Bank and other international lending agencies charge developing nations high interest rates for aid and development funds, then
- ↓ ↑ Developing nations have to increase production of marketable goods to earn foreign exchange for debt and interest payments, so
- ↓ ↑ We over-cultivate, turn Blue Mountains into coffee estates, clear more and more land, causing deforestation and erosion, which brings
- ↓ ↑ Floods, drought, loss of farm land, displacement of rural people to cities, less farm land for local food
- ↓ ↑ Higher rates of unemployment, hunger, sickness, epidemics (cholera, gastroenteritis) as
- ↓ ↑ Funds are diverted from education/health/ agriculture/social services, to debt payments, which
- ↓ ↑ Erode people's livelihoods, create more uneducated and poor people who
- ↓ ↑ Scramble around desperately trying to make a living and maybe damage one's immediate environment in so doing; mining over-mined land, sand out of rivers; polluting our waterways with cheaply and badly designed industrial technology and even, maybe, in some countries...
- ↓ ↑ Buying toxic waste from rich countries who pay us to dump their poisons in our soil.

contributed by Hilary Nicholson

CALLS FOR EQUALITY

by Vivienne Green-Evans

Over 1800 women from across the globe have united in an appeal to world leaders to immediately change their attitudes which tend to place capital gain before the well-being of humans and the environment.

The participants of the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet met in Miami, Florida recently, to formulate an action agenda to look into ways of enabling a healthier planet.

In a ten page agenda, the women blamed a lack of political and individual will among world leaders for the senseless exploitation of the earth and the continued decline of the standards of living of many.

"We equate lack of political and individual will among world leaders, the great majority of whom are men, with a lack of basic morality and spiritual values and an absence of responsibility towards future generations."

The current development model of countries, they add, are "based on 'economic growth' and heavy investments in weapons".

"Unbridled consumerism of the industrialized nations leads to unjust exploitation of the human and natural resources of poor nations, which results in coopting governments and the political process for the benefit of the few," they said.

The Women's Congress is encouraging people everywhere to use political and economic means to make the recommendations a reality.

The action agenda called for women to be given full and equal participation as men in government, "no more than 60 per cent or no less than 40 per cent of the either sex", so that both can take equal and effective

part in public policy analyses, decision-making, implementation, administration and funding at international national and community levels.

Concerning debt and trade, the congress spoke about the negative impact the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank structural adjustment policies were having on the poor, especially women, and are demanding "immediate official debt forgiveness".

"Ashamed by the flow of capital from poor nations to the banking systems of rich nations," they have promised to work for the cancellation of commercial debt via mechanisms equivalent to corporate bankruptcy law and have threatened to stop doing business with banks which refuse to re-schedule the debt repayments of nations of the south.

*In many communities
the family nutrition is
dependent on women's
ability to produce . . .*

The Congress said it would be working for the adoption of an International Code of Environmental conduct for businesses and industries, for governments, United Nations (UN) agencies and for non-governmental organizations, which will include regulations on biotechnical genetic engineering.

"We will organize monitoring systems that will hold institutions and states accountable for their actions, products and policies," they state.

On the issue of land rights, they point to the gross inequities in land tenure and ownership as a primary cause of social injustice throughout the world.

"(We) recognize that in many communities the family's nutrition is dependent on

women's ability to produce and market domestic food products and that because women and children are a majority of the estimated one billion people in the world who go hungry every day, women's access to food, land tenure and ownership must be regarded as a basic human right."

The group also called for the immediate and direct regulation of research and development in biotechnology to cut down on the deterioration of habitats and eco-systems, and recommended that all countries offer environmental education in schools and informal learning settings, so that people will live in harmony with all living things.

In urging a reduction of military spending by 50 per cent, they are insisting on the dismantling and destruction of all nuclear weapons. The women also asked for a stop to nuclear testing and space activities, which threaten the ozone layer or release carbon dioxide.

As a basic guide for their efforts to enhance environmental quality from now into the 21st Century, a list of the recommendations has been sent to the United Nations.

Among these recommendations are that governments increase their contribution to and support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which assists governments in their assessment of environmental quality or damage. This budget, they said, should triple the current \$40 million.

The women are also calling for an increase in contributions to UNIFEM, the only multi-lateral fund which provides development resources to women in low income countries so that funding reaches \$150 million annually by the year 2000.



Rockstone A River Bottom Nuh Know Sun Hot

I t did kind a lonely which part me and Mama did live. It come in like seh we live inna a desert by we-self. House never deh nearby. Yuh haffi walk far. Mama and me mussy live like when yuh have big yard and di people dem dead out and lef two lickle people inna di yard. Di yard lonely. When she gone a church and me come from school, a would a me alone stay deh. When me see pickney a pass, me wi find sinting fi give dem, fi play wid dem lickle bit and talk to dem lickle bit.

Me used to inna di yard a siddung pon one chair a di window. Me never used to do notten more dan look tru di glass, and di day run off. One day me see one guy a pass inna one car. Him stop and me and him start talk. Him ask who and me live deh and weh me faada deh and weh me madda deh. Den him say, 'Bwoy, from me pass and me see yuh me really love yuh. Yuh have any bwoyfriend?' Me did have one lickle bwoyfriend name Malton Edwards, but to how Mama grow me is like she never waan me fi chat to him. Di woman mek me couldn't did talk to him none at all. so me say, 'No'. 'Which school yuh go?' Me tell him. 'Yuh a go school Monday?' Me say, 'yes'. 'All right. Me wi see yuh anodder time. Me wi come back come look fi yuh.'

Me did like him one sort a way when him say him love me.

One Monday lunchtime, him come a school. All dem time deh me did shy. Me never did too waan talk to bwoy. So me tell him seh school over two-thirty and me haffi wait till four o'clock inna di evening before di bus come. Me have a long waiting fi stand up pon di white road and so him can come den.

Him come and him carry me inna him car and we go eat lunch and laugh and chat. Me no tek bus dat deh evening. Him carry me home inna him car and him drop me near to di gate.

Me madda ask me, 'di bus come already'?



Me say, 'Yes, Mama'.

Afterward, me madda did really hear di bus blow and she ask me, 'How di bus a blow if it pass'?

'It could a bruck down and it just a move off.' And me nice her up.

Di next day, him come back. Him carry me fi lunch and him wait fi me and we drive come home again. Him drop me near a me yard and me walk go up. She say 'Yuh come home good. Yuh a come home early a evening time'.

'Yes Mama. Me a come home early tru me know seh a yuh one deh yah.'

Him was bigger smaddy dan me. Him was

working selling tings. Me was round sixteen and him was round twenty-odd. When me come home inna night, it come in like me head a go blow off me body di way how me feel nice. Me just cyaan wait fi day light. Woo! Me cyaan sleep. Me a pray fi day light fi me see him. Me a say, 'yes'. Me find one bwoyfriend. Me find one bwoyfriend now'.

Di next day, him come again. And den him come and him come and him come and him come and everyday him come.

After one time now, him say to me 'yuh ever have sex yet'? Me say 'no man. Yuh mad! Me madda wi beat me if she know'. 'Den yuh madda no haffi know.'

cont'd on pg. 22

'She wi know cause me wi expect baby.' Me know seh people must have sex fi have baby, but me never know in terms a how. Me never start fi have me period yet and me never know notten bout me body.

'No man,' him say. 'Me won't mek yuh have no baby.'

'Me madda always say, anytime she find out seh me pregnant she a go run me out.' Me a tell him weh me madda say bout man and we laugh and we laugh. Him park him car and we siddung. A di first time me taste how beer taste.

One day, him bring one bathsuit fi me and him say, 'Yuh know weh me carry dis fah? Me carry it fi me and yuh go a beach when school over'. Lawd, me feel nice seh me a go a beach down a Port Maria! Me glad when school over and we go down a di beach and me put on me bathsuit. Nobody like me now. Me get way! Yeah! Man a no notten!

Him say me must tell me madda di evening seh me nah go come home di next evening. Me a go stop a Hampstead. Me tell her. She say, 'How yuh so hot fi go stop a Hampstead'?"

'A no notten, but me just feel fi stop down deh tru me never stop down deh dis long time. Dem may say me used to down deh and me no come back.' Di evening, me no go a not a Hampstead at all. We deh a Port Maria whole evening a drive up and down pon di white road. Inna di night now, we go a one guest house.

Lawd! Him gimme one nightie out a di someting him use to a sell. Him say me must sleep inna dat. When him a park di car, me go upstairs fi go a bed. Me put on a di nightie and go siddung a di bed foot. Him come and stretch out pon di bed and say, 'Yuh nah come lay down?'

'No man. Me no feel fi lay down,' me say. 'Yuh know, me feel funny fi a go sleep wid man and me never do dat yet.'

'Just get used to me, man. Yuh no know seh yuh a me lickle girlfriend? Look how long me and yuh a talk. A time fi we go to bed now.'

Me go and lay down. Me cotch out a di bed foot and him hug me up. 'Come up man. Yuh fraid a me?' him say.

'Me no fraid a yuh.' Me lay down deh and we a talk. Him tell me bout him parents and him bredda. Him say if in case me get pregnant him wi married to me. Me a tell him seh me madda nah go accept dat 'cause yuh hair no pretty and yuh no brown'.

Me madda always a emphasise pon di blackness a me faada and a say, 'di colour a yuh skin a di colour a yuh mind'. She feel seh all black man handle woman bad.

'Wah! she will like me man,' him say. 'Yuh tan deh tink me madda a go like yuh! She a go feel a way because she a go say how she spend her money and me let her down.' Him a talk. And den we go to bed.

Profile *cont'd from pg. 5*

respect for womankind. Despite the fact that his mother died when he was just 12 years old.

"My father (who died in 1990) was a progressive man. Him did respect my mother and him bring up the family to respect woman in general."

For Michael, the Sistren experience has been a broadening one that has taught him "nuff bout woman and culture and people politics". Beyond learning a 'whole heap' about the society and the country, Michael is quick to point to the emotional value of being part of the island's growing development community.

"Is good people I see everyday in the offices and the communities. Don't care how much yuh feel down in the morning, by the time yuh mek two, three delivery, and yuh talk to two, three people, any little problem on yuh mind gawn!"

When asked if he has anything negative to say, Michael jumps to his feet and laughs out loud and long.

"Bwoy, me can tell yuh seh, is hard wuk! Sistren well active an' is just one driver - me. When the schedule really heavy, like during island tours, is seven days a week. I may reach town two, three o'clock Sunday morning an' by Sunday afternoon, me gawn again! If me did married, me couldn't live this life at all. In the early days, me girlfriend and me get into fuss about it; she see the long hours and she seh me mus have a whole heap a woman. But I tek a little time and tell her everything I was doing, and she get to understand is wuk me a wuk!"

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ANSWERS TO QUIZ

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | b | 6 | c |
| 2 | c | 7 | c |
| 3 | c | 8 | b |
| 4 | c | 9 | c |
| 5 | a | | |

LIFE IN THE TENEMENT

by Afolashade

Initiation

Myote Gardens, Kingston 13, is a community generally described as a 'ghetto'.

In brief moments of nostalgia, I see flashes of what life was like when I lived there. I often feel that living five years anywhere, especially in Myote Gardens, and having to leave is like a bereavement - the loss of a good friend. Still, one must go forward.

Nonetheless, in retrospect I must paraphrase someone to say Myote Gardens was not a 'ghetto', but a "distinguished black community".

"The Pearl of the city", that's what the place was once called. With its canopy of lush evergreen trees, mango, breadfruit, ackee, june plum and banana plants among others, each competing for its fair share of beautiful sunshine. Its elegance was grand and could compete with the likes of our present suburbs. Each house was spaciouly built. Some stretching from one street to the next.

Each one with its own bit of architectural grandeur. The flower gardens were alive with patches of bachelor's buttons, 10 O'clock, gladiolies . . . they formed a striking contrast with the general whiteness and pastel shades of the houses.

A few roses stood out as blooming testimonies to the opulence of some.

These were some of the things that gave permanent beauty to Myote Gardens. The houses were occupied by civil-servants, professionals, business people and ministers of religion.

During the same period when Myote Gardens was flourishing, there was a heavy migration from the city.

England, Canada, America and Panama were inviting people to 'come-up'. Many working class people went to find prosperity from the gold paved streets of these countries.



One such person was Mrs Eulalee Reid. She migrated to England at the age of twenty five, worked as a domestic servant for eight years, earned herself a certificate in Practical Nursing after going to night school, worked as Nurse's Aide for five years, returned to Jamaica and bought the premises at 35 Crimson Street, Myote Gardens. More and more working class people bought premises and moved into Myote Gardens, much to the annoyance of the middle class citizens. They moved out.

But there were some things they couldn't take with them. Thus, the fruit trees, gardens, manicured lawns and shaved crotoned edges were left behind.

Mrs. Eulalee Reid (Miss Eula as she was affectionately called) wasn't just the owner of #35 Crimson Street. She was the **Landlady**.

She bought the premises with one house, which had two big bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom and a kitchen. The kitchen was later expanded to include a dining area. A back porch with a wash room was also added. She built another house, which was rented deliberately as single rooms. It had seven rooms in all, and a verandah. Another building at the back of the house, housed a bathroom, a toilet and a big kitchen.

Miss Eula and Aunt Elsie, (the lady I grew up with) were friends. They were members of Mt. Faith Healing Tabernacle where both of them were Armour Bearers.

Their friendship continued when Miss Eula went away, via letters and postcards. Whenever Aunt Elsie opened an envelope and said "thank yuh Jesus! Good frien' certainly betta dan pocket money. Mi can buy mi bread", I knew Miss Eula sent money.

When I decided to live on my own, Aunt Elsie checked Miss Eula about a room for me.

"Mi caan stop yuh from tek up di worl', but mi noh waan yuh fi goh live any an' any weh," she said. "Yuh leaving out a mi house a lady, an' mi waan yuh fi kip up yu head," she further admonished.

The evening I went to see Miss Eula, she was sitting on the verandah in a large wicker chair, reading her Bible.

As soon as I knocked the gate, three dogs came from around the back, as if they were summoned, barking menacingly.

"Yes ma'am," she said sternly.

cont'd on pg. 24

LIFE IN THE TENEMENT

cont'd from page 23

"Good evening Miss Eula," I said with hesitation. "Miss Elsie sen' mi to yuh.... bout di room ma'am."

"Wait! Patsy is you? What a way yu get fat!!"

The dogs were still barking. She got up and stood at the entrance of the verandah.

Miss Eula was wearing a floral, pleated skirt and a long sleeved pink blouse. Her head was tied with a red head-tie and she had on blue bed slippers. She was tall, big-bossomed, thick framed and very dark skinned.

"Guh roun' guh roun'!" She commanded. "Rover! Come Frisky! Oonu guh roun'! Guh roun'!" She further commanded pointing her index finger. They obeyed.

"Open di gate an' come een. Dem nah trouble yuh." I joined her on the verandah. "Si dung nuh," she pointed to a hassock. "Hard times gree wid yuh though, yu fat like cut-puss." I smiled in approval.

"Weh yu a duh fi yusef now?"

"Mi working at a restaurant down town ma'am."

She asked me a few more questions (some were quite impertinent) and my replies seemed to have met her approval.

"Excuse mi a minute, mek a guh fi di key."

Her wide hips, jerked as she walked. When she came back with the key, I followed her around to the back of the premises to see the room. The dogs started to bark again, and she calmed them.

Two men sat under the big mango tree smoking, while the strains of Bob Marley's "Don't worry about a thing", came from a big tape recorder.

"But look from when di likkle gal gone a shop though eeh. Beaten noh have a use to her," a slim bodied, skinny woman muttered as she filled a pot with water from the standpipe which stood prominently in the centre of the yard.

Miss Eula went up three steps that led to the door of 'the likkle back room'. She opened it and we went in.

A foul smell pervaded the room.

"Like how yuh jus' a start life, dis wi suit yuh." Miss Eula said as I looked around.

An electric cord with a socket extended from the ceiling, the pale blue paint from the wall was stripping and the previous occupants had decorated parts of it with articles and photographs from newspapers and magazines (to add some scenic beauty I suppose).

I sensed a feeling of freedom and control over my life as I opened the small window. I would be living on my own, making my own decisions.

No more Aunt Elsie to say 'do this... do that'. I would be free of her austerity. My initiation to womanhood.

As I stared on the window, Miss Eula's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"Twenty dollars a month fi di room, five dollars fi light and five dollars fi water."

"That a'right," I agreed.

I moved in the following day, which was a Wednesday and by the Saturday morning I was involved in my my first quarrel.

'Afolashade' formerly Pauline Crawford is a founding member of Sistren Theatre Collective.

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SRI LANKA :

***Women's village banks
a big success***

Banks patterned after the Grameen Bank, or bank for the poor in Bangladesh, the Janasakthi ('strength of the people') banks are reportedly a success.

The banks were set up as an alternative to state and commercial banks whose credit rates were beyond the reach of the poor people and the money lenders.

At four months old in February 1991, the 20 banks had a total capital of US\$20,611 (824,451 rupees) and had given loans totaling US\$8,375 (335,600 rupees). With the poverty of the village, a DEPTHNEWS Women's Feature reported that it was astonishing that the women were able to raise such capital with their savings, by buying a 10-rupee share every week for 50 weeks.



THAILAND:

***Women farmers get
recognition and support***

The majority of Thailand's female workforce of 6.5 million are engaged in agriculture and after years of struggling in areas such as food processing, animal husbandry, inland fisheries and marketing of produce, the authorities are beginning to help Thai women realise a future in agriculture.

A team from the Thailand Development Research Institute, Women in Development is funding ways to enhance women's productivity and ensure their access to development resources. The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has also set up an internal group with members from key departments of the Ministry to work out and integrate women farmers into the Ministry's plans.



Women and Europe 1993

A seminar on 'Women and Europe in 1993' was held in Rome on 22-24 November under the Italian Presidency of the Community. Organised jointly by Italy's Equal Opportunities Commission and the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit, the seminar, which was attended by Women Ministers from the twelve member states, heads of the equal opportunities commissions, labour and management experts, focussed on the European Community's Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities.

They stressed the necessity for improvement in the representation of women on the labour market, if they were to take full part in achieving the Europe of 1993.



Maternity leave

The European Commission is asking in a

draft directive that, in light of the single-market of 1992, the right to a 14-week maternity leave with full pay, or the equivalent, be extended to women in the 12 member community.

So far only three countries, Germany, Greece and Luxembourg, offer this degree of protection to women and only five, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal guarantee maternity leave with full pay. Elsewhere, women receive between 70 and 90% of their wages and in the case of Belgium 100 per cent of their salaries for only four weeks.



NOW - A new initiative

NOW, a new community initiative to promote equal opportunities for women in the area of employment and vocational training, was launched in Brussels on January 31 and February 1.

The programme will promote the setting up of small enterprises and cooperatives by women, and provide support for advisory and training activities and access to employment. Aid for child care facilities, support structures for the development of transnational networks and partnerships, as well as technical assistance, will also be provided.



BRAZIL:

***Supreme court outlaws
'honour' killing of wives***

Brazil's Supreme Court has ruled that a man can no longer kill his wife and win acquittal on the ground of 'legitimate defense of honour'.

The ruling ends a 10-year battle. Although never a part of the legal code of Brazil, the 'defence of honour' strategy has been used by lawyers to win in thousands of cases of men on trial for murdering their wives. According to a study in Sao Paulo State for the period 1980 - 81, 722 men claimed defense of their honour, as justification for killing women accused of adultery.

Few women in skilled trades in USA

Only two percent of all employed women were in skilled trades occupation in the United States in 1988. This was about the same as five years earlier.

And 28 years after the Equal Pay Act was passed by Congress, there is still no guarantee that women are paid the same as men doing the same or similar work.



Asian women's rights

The recently established Asian Women's Human Rights Council (AWHRC) focuses on the abuse, exploitation and violence suffered by Asian women. The Council documents effective initiatives taken by women's groups in response to human rights violations.

Based in Manila, Philippines, AWHRC organises workshops, conducts information campaigns and is building up a network linking human rights organizations both in and outside Asia.

*Asian Women's Human Rights Council,
PO Box 190, 1099 Manila, Philippines*

Taken from GROUP MEDIA JOURNAL



NGOs discuss poverty, environment

A first meeting of the NGOs and associations from the Arab states and South of the Sahara was held in Tunis, on the theme "Environment and Poverty: What are the perspectives?" A second was held in Abidjan, and other meetings are scheduled to take place in Antananarivo, Ho Chi Minh-Ville and Saint Domingue. The partici-

pants strongly emphasised the importance of highlighting the effects of non-development and poverty, before discussing the negative effects of development on the environment.

In this connection, the Abidjan seminar concluded that "peasants and inhabitants of shanty-towns should be given the opportunity to convey directly, without an intermediary, the anxieties caused by poverty and the deterioration of their environments, their efforts to overcome these problems, as well as their hopes and dreams".

Taken from IRED Forum



GILBERT BABIES:

Shortage of Fresh Food Causes Increase in Birth-Defects

An increase in the number of babies born with defects of the central nervous system in the months following the passage of Hurricane Gilbert has been attributed to inadequate nutrition.

A study carried out at the Tropical Metabolism Research Unit (TMRU) at the University of the West Indies, Mona, confirmed that the failure of mothers to consume adequate fresh foods and vegetables, during the aftermath of the hurricane in 1988 resulted in an increase in live birth defects.

It was found that in the 11-18 months after the hurricane, there was a higher than usual number of babies born with "neural tube defects" (NTDS). This means that there were defects in the formation of the brain and spinal cord.

According to Marilyn Watson-Duff, who

did the study, this means that it is possible for a baby to be born with a part of its head or spinal cord missing, or be born dead. The condition is known as hydrocephalus. If born alive, and only slightly affected, the child could develop a big head. Repeated surgery would then be required to drain the water from the brain. And then the child could also be mentally or physically retarded.

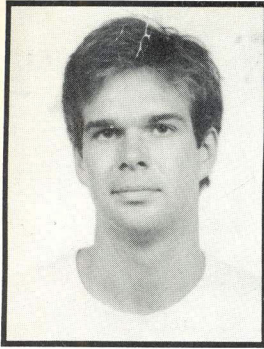
The findings suggested that the defects occurred in very early stages of pregnancy, in the first six weeks, when many women do not know that they are pregnant. At this time, Watson-Duff points out, the embryo is entirely dependent on the foods the mother eats, as the placenta is not yet developed. The consumption of canned and preserved foods as a result of a shortage of fresh foods during the aftermath of the disaster, was the root of the problem.

The occurrence of live-birth NTD is low in Jamaica compared to other countries, she reports, and Hurricane Gilbert was a unique occurrence, which forced unusual environmental and dietary changes. Three of the 17 young women studied, have since given birth to normal babies.


The problem can be avoided in the event of an all-island natural disaster which affects fresh food supplies. Women should try to postpone new pregnancies for 4-6 months after the disaster. If this is not possible, the woman should ask her doctor to prescribe a substitute for fresh foods and vegetable. These suggestions, she feels, should be considered a part of the disaster plan.

NTDs can be prevented through appropriate nutrition, education and family planning, she states.

Candace



CAN I CALL YOU SISTER

 ur contributor, Tim Fishleigh, is an Educational Officer and media specialist at the Social Action Centre in Kingston.

Born in Canada in the mid-sixties, Tim who is also an artist, illustrator, poet and writer, has worked in Haiti, Ecuador, India and his own country Canada, before coming to Jamaica. He has also spent time in Mexico, Peru and Chile and speaks Spanish, French and Haitian Creole in addition to English.

Tim has been in Jamaica since February 1990, and the poem 'Sister' reflects his observations of the Jamaican society.

"I wrote the Sister poem as an expression of some of the tension I have been feeling living in Jamaica. Like most other countries, Jamaica is also a racist and sexist society, but different in its own Jamaican way. As a white male I am part of an over privileged minority here, and like everybody in Jamaica I feel the tension of trying to relate to people across the strong boundaries of race, class and gender.

"At a time when many are trying to close the doors between different groups and build up the barriers. I would like only to open some doors of communication between all of us so that we can work on changing the inequalities of our world, while sharing our different experiences. That poem (Sister) is about dealing openly with boundaries and tension which separate us. It is not enough to simply say we are all people under the skin. We still have to deal with the real barriers between us."

SISTER

Can I call you SISTER?
without stirring the sinister
images of master
squeezing blood out of
frightened black mistress
flattened and squeaking mattress

An embrace from you would be my affirmation
or maybe just the destruction of another sister
for the manumission* from my own confused racism

You I want to touch
but my hands are the same colour as the branding torch
which tore your flesh and separated us from birth

I want to hold you
without fading your blackness
without crushing your struggle
without devouring your power

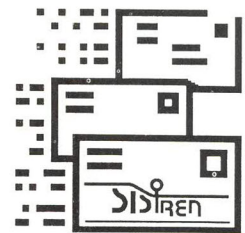
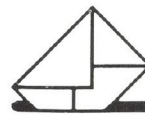
I am a confused hierarchy
a pale white patriarchy
bewildered by my position on this stratified, divided seething
population of colour coded gender fuckry

But can I hold you as one person loving another person
without injecting the poison of living among a million prisoners
supporting my position of power
to ask such seemingly self indulgent questions as can we be
together as partners?

Tim Fishleigh (c) 1992

(* Manumission - To buy ones way out of slavery)

FROM OUR MAIL BAG



Dear Sistren,

Thanks for the Newsmagazine, it is a wonderful issue which deserves waiting for, I would recommend that all men and women who wish to know the truth should read the Magazine.

We at Oil Nut are happy to see the Magazine.

Sexuality should be in all the issues eg. Health, etc., we will continue to support this section by providing the information. We would like to see the Magazine being used in all aspects of our society as consultant pieces, information pieces etc.

We, therefore, ask that you continue your good work and we at Oil Nut fully support Sistren Magazine and eagerly await the next issue.

All the best.

Your Reader
Elean Thomas-Gifford
c/o Oil Nut Co., 7 Leighton Road, Kingston 5

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Ms. Simpson,

We apologise for what happened and would like to reassure you that the style of our magazine is not changing.

Please accept our apologies and rest assured that this will not be repeated.

Your Editor

SISTA ANSA AN GRANNY

A CHAT BOUT DE ENVIRONMENT



GRANNY, GUESS WHA' ONE CAR NUH LICK DUNG ONE COW DUNG DI ROAD. IF YUH EVER SEE HOW DE MAN AN' HIM FREN DEM TEK UP DE COW QUICK AN' THROW INA DE CAR BACK FE GO SLAUGHTER AN' SELL DE MEAT!



YUH MEMBA, NO BUY NO MEAT WEH NO STAMP BY DE GOVAMENT FOR YUH COULDA GET **T.B, WORM, CANCER** OR ANY ODA DISEASE WEH DE COW MIGHT HAVE.



A SAME WAY DEM FIND FISH INA DE SEA WEH HAVE **TUMOR AN' CANCER**, EVEN FISH A POISON PEOPLE



WELL SEE IT DEH, EVEN PEOPLE WHO A TEST DE **NUCLEAR WEAPON** DEM AND EMPTY WASTE FROM DEM FACTORY INA DE SEA A CAUSE DE POLLUTION AN A KILL OFF SOME PEOPLE AN' MEK SOME SICK. DOCTA CAAN EVEN FINE DEM COMPLAIN!



DAT BAD ENOUGH GRANNY, IF SOMETIME PEOPLE SICK AN' DOCTA CAAN FINE DEM COMPLAIN, WHA' WEA GO DO? TINGS GET FROM BAD TO WORSE!

YUH NOTICE HOW WHEN YUH WAKE UP A MORNING TIME HOW DI PLACE FOGGY, ME ME ALWAYS AT'INK A FOG. WELL, ME GET FE UNDERSTAN' SEH A POLLUTED DE AIR GET POLLUTED FROM ALL DE WASTE FROM ALL DE FACTORY DEM

WELL IT BAD ENOUGH, SO ALL WE CAN DO FE CONTROL DIS POLLUTION FROM OUR HUMBLE LIKKLE ABODE IS TO **BURY AN' RECYCLE** WE GARBAGE AN' BE CAREFUL A WHA' WE EAT, AN' STAY HEALTHY!

WE CAN DO DAT, BUT WE CAN ONLY HOPE DAT DE PEOPLE WHO A CAUSED DI **BIGGEST POLLUTION OF DI ENVIRONMENT** WILL CURB DEM WAYS SO DAT PEOPLE AN DI ENVIRONMENT CAN STAY HEALTHY!

