

WOMAN SPEAK!

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT CARIBBEAN WOMEN
No. 23, April 1988



**MAKING OUR HISTORY
MAKING
CHANGE**

WIC
PER.
HQ
1501
.A47

WOMAN SPEAK!

Editor: Nan Peacocke

WOMAN SPEAK! is published three times each year by the Women and Development Unit (WAND), a division of the Extra Mural Department of the University of the West Indies. Please address all enquiries to:

WOMAN SPEAK!
Women and Development Unit
Extra Mural Dept., UWI
Pinelands, St. Michael
BARBADOS

Unsigned articles appearing in WOMAN SPEAK! may be reprinted without permission. Please credit WOMAN SPEAK! whenever reprinting our material.



No. 23 April 1988

Editorial	3
Making Itwaria's Story	4
Making the Boards for Bravé Dangé	8
History and Self-Identity	11
Making History Take the Stage	12
ECPTO	15
Making Cultural Strengths for Survival	16
Scenes from Sessions	19
The Exhibits	24
Background to the ISS History Project	27
Cartoon	28
Names and Dates	29
Poem	30
Writing	31
The Region	33
Comment	35

COVER

Amy Bailey

At left: One of the 'ancestors' in the "Bamboo Forest" at the history seminar. Made of bamboo upright in cement base. T-shirt celebrating South African women's struggle, photograph of Winnie Mandela 'speaking' the words of Amilcar Cabral (see pages 11 and 24).

There is an inherent irrationality, not to mention inhumanity, in a situation in which nuclear missiles can go from Europe to Moscow in six minutes while the average rural woman must walk several hours a day just to fetch a pail of water for her family.

Lucille Mathurin Mair

EDITORIAL

"In reality, power in its exercise goes much further, passes through much finer channels, and is much more ambiguous, since each individual has at his disposal a certain power, and for that very reason can also act as the vehicle for transmitting a wider power." **Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge**

Once upon a time great men conquered the earth through the submission of once great peoples. That was history, we were taught, and the recording of history was the "official story" of these events.

More recently the power to record history has been claimed by new voices telling us that history is our common wealth and not the province of empires. It can be taken back. These voices come, incredibly, from the silhouettes, the silenced men, women and children whose labour, their testimony tells us, was not their passive response to the directives of evil men, but the active shaping of a landscape, a hope beyond the most brutal reality which they endured and resisted.

In the Caribbean, this historical consciousness can be seen in the faces of the Guyanese working people in the work of Walter Rodney. There in the faces of women who ran to the hills to fight, and those who could not, brought to light through the work of Lucille Mathurin Mair, Hilary Beckles and others. There are voices, contemporary voices claiming that the history of the present has many relationships with what went before and that we learn only from both.

There are the voices of women conceived in the collective artistic unity of *Lionheart Gal* created by Honor Ford Smith and Sistren. There is the voice of Samuel Smith in *To Shoot Hard Labour*, the voice of the sugar worker, Didi, in *Blaze a Fire* and dramatised in *Lights II* by the women of Stage One Theatre Productions.

Why is this overturning of convention? What is the meaning of this new political claim upon history? The transfer of the vehicles of knowledge from colonial mechanisms and social processes to those of the modern Caribbean occurred through the struggles of different groups. It also occurred through the organised actions of men and women competing to establish a base from which they could direct the course of events according to the interests of their class, race and gender. This process, of course, continues.

This issue is a report of the joint WAND/CAFRA regional seminar *Making Our History Making Change*, held in Barbados, October 1987. The joining of hands for this event by two regional women's organisations, WAND (UWI) and the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, is yet another signpost for what Freire regards as the search for a methodology of critical consciousness.

We hope this issue and the seminar it records will go some way to what Marcia Rivera describes as "The need . . . of seeing class as an historical phenomenon, as a relationship, not as a structure or category, and class consciousness as the way in which shared experiences are handled in cultural terms . . .". Michel Foucault writes of the relations which are possible between power and knowledge. "Once knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power. There is an administration of knowledge, a politics of knowledge, relations of power which pass via knowledge." The very concept of knowledge held by a society is one of the methods through which the power relations within that society are legitimised.

The history of the Caribbean has been mediated in a framework which separates the agents of history into the active and the acted upon, those who exercise power and those who are subject to it, the master and the slave, the rapist and the victim, the government and the people. This issue is dedicated to the women of the Caribbean who are engaged in another vision of history and therefore of the future. We hope that the glimpses provided here of Itwaria, of Amy Bailey, of Danuta Radzik, Mikila Wewe and others will interest readers in discovering the wealth of material being produced by women and encourage more of us in the work of its creation and dissemination.

A full report by Ramabai Espinet on the WAND/CAFRA regional seminar *Making Our History Making Change*, is available from the CAFRA Secretariat, P.O. Bag 442, Tunapuna P.O., Trinidad and Tobago.

(WAND thanks Gerhard Frettlöh who caused the bamboo forest to grow, Diane Haylock who was essential in developing the name of the seminar and Bonnie Millington and Agatha Mason of ECPTO for their useful critiques and badly needed assistance.)

P.S. Apology to Readers

Readers will have noticed that we were unable to produce the December issue of *Womanspeak!* The editor apologises for this situation and the persistent lateness of the publication. WAND is in the process of reorganising the production of materials in order to correct the problem.

MAKING ITWARIA'S STORY

Danuta Radzik, Karen de Souza, Red Thread



Karen de Souza

Danuta speaking

I'm going to recount a history out of which a slide presentation was produced. Basically what it's going to explain and demonstrate is how I got involved in doing and choosing this particular topic for the research that I did.

I'll start in 1983. Myself, Karen¹ and organisers of Red Thread are all members of a political organisation in Guyana called WPA². In 1983 we had a women's conference and we decided to do an exhibition on "women and work" and I was one of the persons involved in putting together that exhibition. We wanted to show the situation of a working class housewife, the hours she

spent doing various chores. At that time in 1983, it was a period in which there were a lot of scarce food items, I mean things were very hard to get. So to get milk, to get flour, to get sugar, to get rice, it meant standing up in very long lines. Sometimes people spent twelve hours a day standing up in lines trying to get a very basic thing like rice.

We interviewed a nurse about her working conditions, the additional burden of being a housewife and a nurse. Another category that we chose were garment workers who were working in their houses, doing piece rate work.

1. Karen de Souza, photographer for 'Red Thread' project.

2. Working People's Alliance, opposition political party in Guyana co-founded by Walter Rodney, July 27, 1979.

And it was an extremely oppressive situation with one family I spoke to. They were all very young. Their parents had gone to Canada, emigrated and left them there. Sometimes they would be up all night doing the thing to finish it, because if you didn't finish it in a particular time span, you wouldn't get a commission and the next time they wouldn't give you as much work.

Another thing we focussed on was Amerindian women doing their traditional crafts. So we selected hammock making.

While we were selecting various women to do the exhibition, one category that always came to mind was the sugar worker. I spoke to two sugar workers, one Indo-Guyanese and one Afro-Guyanese sugar worker. In my conversations with them, I realised at the end of it that I did not understand anything. That in fact there was so much. It was so extensive, even in the short conversations that they had with me that I never did it. But the idea always remained in my mind, you know. It was something that I wanted to understand because I realised that I knew nothing really of what goes on in terms of sugar work and sugar workers.

At that first conference that we had about a hundred women came. It was a good conference, but afterwards there was no follow up.

We had discussed this over a period of time, and one of the things we decided was vital to organising women was activities where they could get some economic gain out of it, so we decided on an embroidery project.

We began with a small pilot project which was supposed to be twelve women from each of these communities³, but when we went to the communities and the word spread we had much more than twelve and we decided that there was no way to limit it. The majority were housewives and they all had a real need to earn some money. And that was the base of the embroidery project.

Another aspect was the whole thing of research and I was one of the persons who was interested in doing that aspect of the programme. So what we had was like a division of labour. We have two sisters who more or less manage the whole embroidery thing. How we do it is that we buy cloth, which is ordinary cotton cloth in various colours, we buy threads, in some cases we have given the women embroidery patterns. At the end of that we pay them for whatever they produce.

It has been a real experience for us, because when we started, some of the women were not skilled in terms of the embroidery. Some stitches were better, some were not so good, but after six or eight months it was amazing to see the quality of work that they were producing. They make their own patterns. They may see something in a book, or they'll have a friend who can draw. They'll take that pattern, do it.

Alright, I'll come back to the sugar worker thing in terms of myself. When I was going into third form at school, they said you have to make choices. I was pretty young at that time, and the choice was between two



Karen de Souza, Itwaria

subjects and one was history and I wanted to do both. They said, no no you have to make a choice. So I decided to take the other subject. And so my sense of history was limited to second form. Even when I was in school the history they taught us was British history so there has always been a gap for me in terms of Caribbean history, in terms of Guyanese history. So what I know of history of my own country and of the region I have learned on my own, through speaking and through reading. Because I realised that I did not have a book knowledge of history, I decided that what I would do is learn it from the sugar workers themselves. I would go to the living resources to get my information.

The other thing is that a lot of women are getting very old. Women who had been working in the 1930's, the late 1920's, they were dying and I was worried about it because they were living sources and they would not be there forever. I made a conscious effort to start with older women.

Another thing that influenced me in how I approached the work, you know, I thought about it a lot since I'd never done anything like this before, was that a sister had been somewhere in the Caribbean and she brought back the *Sistren* book, *Lionheart Gal*, and I read it, and I was extremely interested in it because it was written in creole. I realised that if I went to an older sugar worker, what they would be speaking to me is creole, and I saw how it could be used in book form. Though sometimes with creole you have to read slower, it was good, because sometimes you read very fast and if you read slower, you grasp it more because your attention is more focussed.

Then I had to consider well who am I going to go too? Who are these sugar workers? How will I find them? I went to various people and asked them if they had aunts or anybody that they knew who was a sugar worker, who was retired now and if it would be possible for me to come and do an interview with them or at least meet them. So a friend suggested that I meet this one woman Itwaria.

I went up to the house and when I got there Itwaria was there but she was about to go out. But we sat and we spoke for something like three minutes. I had the tape recorder in my bag. I hadn't taken it out yet. She

3. Wismac, Upper Demerara; Meten-Meer-Zorg, West Coast Demerara; Cotton Tree, Berbice; Victoria, East coast Demerara.

just began to talk and I was really moved, amazed, I had been very unsure. It was like going, just throwing yourself into something and I realised that there was no problem to get her to talk, because the way she spoke, the way she related a story was so graphic and exciting.

I went back to Itwaria and we did the first taping. When we started I told her, "Ok. Stop now. I'd like to play back the tape recorder." Because I'm not a technical person, I wanted to know if the volume was right, if the batteries — cause the batteries were a little low, and I didn't know what was happening, how she would sound on it. Turn the volume up or down? So finally I found the volume and she started to hear herself and of course, it was oh! an experience for her. But when we first started this taping, she was speaking very softly, because that's how she speaks. I was telling her to speak up, but she wouldn't speak up. So when I played back the tape and we were both listening to it, I never said anything, but she turned to me and said that she can't hear. And I said, well, you'll speak loud? And she said, yes.

We had to do the transcribing of the tape. The quality was not good and even though I was sitting down in front of her as she was talking, and I was saying, but I understand all of it, by the time I got home and played the tape and I tried to transcribe I realised I was in a

"But there was a clear difference between the younger women and the older. The older women, their sense of story and their language is far more dramatic."

lot of trouble because there were long gaps. When I was close to her, I understood, but when I took it back I lost the thread. So what I decided to do, since she's extremely fluent in recounting her story, I told her I don't think taping is going to work so I'm going to try and write.

So as she told me her story, I wrote it. It took a very long time. Sometimes I'd do it once a week, sometimes I'd do it twice a week. It depended on her time and it also depended on my time.

Now, when I first started, I had the impression that what I wanted to find was a militant sugar worker. Right? But Itwaria in terms of that kind of thing with the upfront militant is not a person like that. But because it's so fascinating it doesn't matter because it's also a reality.

Then there was Haliman.⁴ I know her. She's a very

militant person and my idea was always to interview Haliman. I decided I would not go to her first or second or third. I wanted to know and to understand the sugar worker before I went to her.

Haliman told me that when she was about twenty, she left where she was, which was the same place where Itwaria was from, Diamond and went across the Demarara River to another estate called Brickdam. She and her husband worked there for a while. She recounted this incident that while they were working, the work was very bad and the price that the workers were getting was very low. She was there in the canefield one day and the manager came up to her and she told him that it can't work. It just can't work. Look at the conditions and the price is low. So he must have made an offhand remark or whatever, and she said that what she did was pull him off his horse and beat him!

In Walter Rodney's book⁵, he spoke about a lot of incidents in the sugar plantations where sometimes overseers and managers were frankly quite terrified of going into the back dam because a lot of times they were beaten, and pulled off the mules and so on. I had read it and now I met someone who had actually done this.

There was another incident where some men from the estate came to negotiate about a house. The men all used to speak to her husband. She said she knows her husband how soft he is and that they can always get around him, so she made sure she involved herself in the conversation. So when they began discussing the matter, she put her mouth in. She was saying, No, no. This is what I want. I'm moving until this is done. And the man turned and said, Where she come from? Now I can't really explain what happened, the way she said it, but she told him, I come from some place to work for you and you don't know where I come from. But it's a much more dramatic thing than that. What came to my mind was first of all they were extremely different. He was white. He maybe from England or whatever. She's from India. That their relationships on the plantation were also extremely different. In fact what I think she was saying is that he cannot understand her reality and she's concerned about her reality. She's not concerned about his.

Besides a lot of other things, Rookmin⁶ told me that she grew up in Uitvlugt Sugar Estate. Now she lives in Meten-Meer-Zorg. The sugar workers from Uitvlugt moved and established Meten-Meer-Zorg Village.⁷ Rookmin told me that they had a lot of Barbadian workers at Uitvlugt and that in fact they had the estate logies and part of it was called, the Bajan quarters. I asked her did the Bajan women also work on the estate? She said few of them actually did. What they did was they made foodstuffs and so on. They went around

4. Haliman, long-time activist in the Guyana Agricultural Worker's Union (GAWU). During a labour dispute activity on International Women's Day 1975, Haliman was grabbed by her hair in what seems a gesture symbolic of the tactics which may be employed by male authority over women's protest.

5. *A History of the Guyanese Working People 1881–1905*,

Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1981.

6. Retired sugar worker and the subject of the second of "Her Story" series published by *Red Thread*.

7. Traditionally, sugar worker community on the west coast of the Demerara river, Uitvlugt is the location of a sugar factory.

and sold it and they did a lot of washing. They washed for the sugar workers on Friday they collected the clothes, on Saturdays they'd wash. On Sunday they'd press. And then they'd share out the clothes.

But I want to come back to Itwaria. I might have made the point but I'd like to make it again that as a researcher I had no knowledge to impart. That Itwaria, she in fact taught me everything I know about the sugar industry. In trying to understand it I was also trying to understand the environment, the canefields, the canal system, because when she speaks it has a lot to do with that. So she would be telling me about the beds, the canals, the rows, the drains and all of these. And she would demonstrate them to me. Well, you see the canes are planted here and the bed is here. And she would go through this thing and then she would say, Understand? And I would say, No I don't understand. And she would say, OK, lets go through it.

But it was not until Karen and myself went into the back dam and saw the women — well it's really very simple — but without seeing that — I suppose theoretically I understood, but what it did was deepen the understanding of what she was saying about some of the tasks that they had to do on the sugar estate.

When myself and Karen made this arrangement to go into the back dam we got up late and the transportation we were supposed to go on left. So we decided to walk into the back dam. Now Itwaria had told us that, of course, in her day you had to walk into the back dam. You had to walk out of the back dam, and depending the field you had to work you could be walking seven miles in and to come out you had to walk seven miles out. Well me and Karen we walked five miles. And as you walk in the dam that's been there for centuries, you know, it was quite moving. You really had a sense of history.

"I had to listen, to listen very carefully, so that I wouldn't substitute my English. Because sometimes you get tired, you know, and you say, Oh well, write in this word. But every time I did that, tried to cheat on the word, and I wrote something and I would read it and it sounded ok, when I listened to the tape and knew that my two words or three words were incorrect and then I heard what she was really saying, it made the world of difference, that I could not ever have that drama, that richness of language that was there in her."



Opening day. Danuta Radzik, extreme right.



Jan Phillips, "Woman to Woman" Series card.

MAKING THE BOARDS FOR BRAVÉ DANGÉ

Shahiba Ali, Judy Laird, Rhoda Reddock

Rowena speaking.

I want to talk about how we went about taking all the information that Rhoda had researched and putting it into another form, because everybody is not going to take up Rhoda's book¹ and read it. What we had was the thesis and a whole lot of photographs and newspaper clippings and other documents that Rhoda had collected. We had to take this information and find some way to present it to people in an exhibition.

First we had to decide what was the overall message we wanted to send

There were three things we wanted to say in the exhibition. First, in a particular historical period² women were working outside the home. They have not been "housewives" since then. They were working for very little pay, but they were there and they were working. Secondly, they were aware that in their workplace they were often in a disadvantaged position, that they were working for lower wages than they should have been, in poorer conditions than they should have been. Third, that being aware of their position, they got together and struggled for better conditions. Those three themes were to run throughout the whole display. The title of the exhibition says that.

Choosing a time frame

Having chosen themes, we looked at the resources we had: photographs, documents, etcetera, and tried to see how we could put this onto the boards. The key thing was to divide the information into time periods. Because it's an historical exhibition, right away you think of a time frame. We decided to look at the time of slavery to 1838, then to look at indentureship, then to look at what was happening in the 1930's both in the city and the rural areas, and then at certain important women figures such as Elma Francoise and Audrey Jeffers.

Words are not the only way to convey information

There had to be an interaction between what we wrote and what was available to us in another form. The photographs of the women have a lot of character. We didn't have to put on that picture of the woman from the estate, "Photograph of a Hardworking East Indian Woman". You watch the photograph. You see the lines

in the woman's face, the determination. That photograph speaks of the character of that person. So there was that constant interplay going on.

There was a good point that came out about putting labels to the photographs that we had a little fight about. When you put a label to a photograph or a painting, in a way you are telling people what to look for. While there is nothing wrong with telling people what to look for, they might so focus on that, that something else they might pick up is lost. So if we put the East Indian woman up there and we want to show the oppressed conditions, we might be so concentrating on that, that we label the photograph, "One of the Oppressed East Indian Women". But somebody else looking at it might notice that even in the midst of this oppression, that woman's stature shows she has a fighting spirit. By labelling it you detract from what people would have got out of their own experience. You direct them to the experience they *should* get.

What we wrote

I was trying to deal mainly with the development of the script. What was written was what really determined each board. The important thing in developing the script which would be the framework for the development of the board is, who are you speaking to? Your target audience? What available resources do you have to put on these boards?

We were very aware of two facts and they influenced what we wrote. One, that it was *historical* information that we wanted to display. The other was that all this historical information had a solid, factual core. That's what made it so special. It wasn't a generalisation. You know, "women struggling hard". We had a thousand facts. We didn't even have to say, "Well, women struggling hard", we could have just presented the thousand facts and said, "read that and see what you get". And at the end a lot of people might have said, "You know, women are struggling hard." Right? So we wanted to keep that factual core and to keep that *history* in what was going on.

1. *Women, Labour and Struggle in Twentieth Century Trinidad and Tobago*. Unpublished thesis by Rhoda Reddock.



Karen de Souza

(l-r) Agatha Mason, Mona Harvey, Cleon Athill, Noreen John, Joan French, Mona Barrow, Cynthia Ellis, Erigpena Espejo.

Sensing time

An important thing that came out of it for everybody was that history didn't just take place. "Women rioted in 1937". What are people thinking of? Are they thinking of present day women in their high heel shoes, holding banners, looking very liberated, going down the road in Port of Spain, cars going past and what not? No. That wasn't what Port of Spain was like in 1937 at all. So these women in the street, while they may have had the same intention as women now, were in a different environment. We became aware that you had to bring people the environment of the time to give a sense of history, a sense of time.

When I read Rhoda's information, it was interesting but I had to keep asking her questions like, "In 1903, The Water Riots — How come there were so many women there?" She had to point out that at that time there were more women in Port of Spain than men. Eric Williams called Port of Spain "the city of the gay caballero, the bachelor girl and the merry widow". Just that description tells you what type of character was there and how many *women* there were that he would make a note of it.

It was the facts that gave the boards their impact

We had facts and they were hard to question. When we said that all East Indian women did not come to Trinidad with husbands, many of them came by themselves or with their children, many of them were run-

ways; without even telling people that we just put up a document. On it was the name of a woman, her sister and their children. When we looked at where they came from we realised they had to cross thousands of miles, these two women and these four children, thousands of miles across India to get to Bombay, get on a ship and then make that journey all the way to Trinidad. Now what is encouraging that woman to make that big transition? To leave her culture, take that long journey without a man in a society which we feel says that a man is important all the time, and make a whole new living for herself?

We had to scrutinise each board

We needed to carry through an overriding message on each board. So no matter how many little bits of information we had, that message must pull each board together. Even after we had put the information on the board, we had to go back again and cut more. You have six paragraphs and six photographs and this board ain't going look good! You need three paragraphs and the six photographs. So after we had gone and selected we had to go and reselect.

The important thing in the reselecting was keeping the themes. The theme was labour and struggle. So, of course, it was nice to know that the African women took these medicines for contraceptives, but really and truly, that wasn't as important as that they got together, they organised and they got some rights. So it's nice, it's interesting, people laugh, but shove it out anyway.

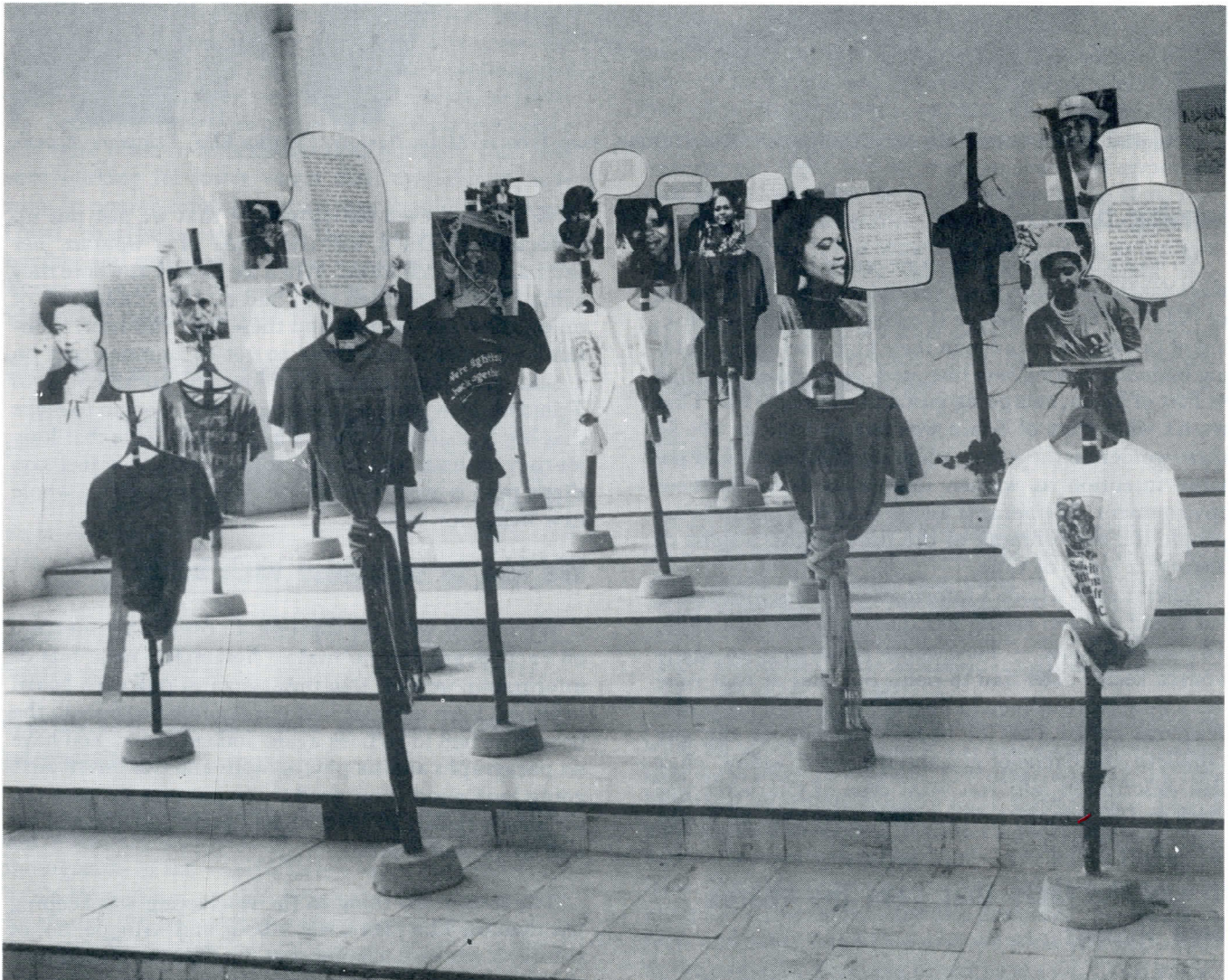


Mikila and Rowena in conversation.

"We tried to organise the photographs and material in such a way that they would be meaningful. The guiding thing was, what was the actual summary for each board? Who was the target audience? Did we foresee children? Did we think of women of all different classes or only working class women? Whoever we were thinking of, their class, their reading level, their age, that determined the sentence structure.

You wanted your words to be simple and interesting, but at the same time you wanted them to speak the truth. Sometimes when you write to speak the truth, it tends to be bland. The people reading say, 'It's the truth, but, O God, it boring'.

The historical information doesn't happen in a vacuum and you must maintain that sense of time and a commitment to presenting truth and fact versus something sensational."



Taking up Rowena's point the display Bamboo Forest of the Ancestors combined photographs, quotations by historical, literary and fictional characters and T-shirts. Some individual examples are reproduced in these pages.

HISTORY AND SELF IDENTITY

Rhoda Reddock

A knowledge of history or an historical approach to knowledge helps us understand our own potential as women and as people. It also allows us to understand the structures and processes in society and the economy through which this human potential we all have has been restricted. It helps us also plan our strategies based on an appreciation of what does work and what does not. We don't have to make the same mistakes of the past.

From a study of history we understand those things which affect people in a positive or a negative way. We begin to understand the people's own experience, people's own build-up of history, of what goes on in the environment, of what is possible, and to have more respect for the experience of older people within our society.

This perspective on history gives us a perspective on change. Many women are trapped in the web of the unchangeable, feeling themselves unable to change their situation and that the situation itself cannot be changed. A sense of history gives us an understanding of the process of change and the possibilities for change.

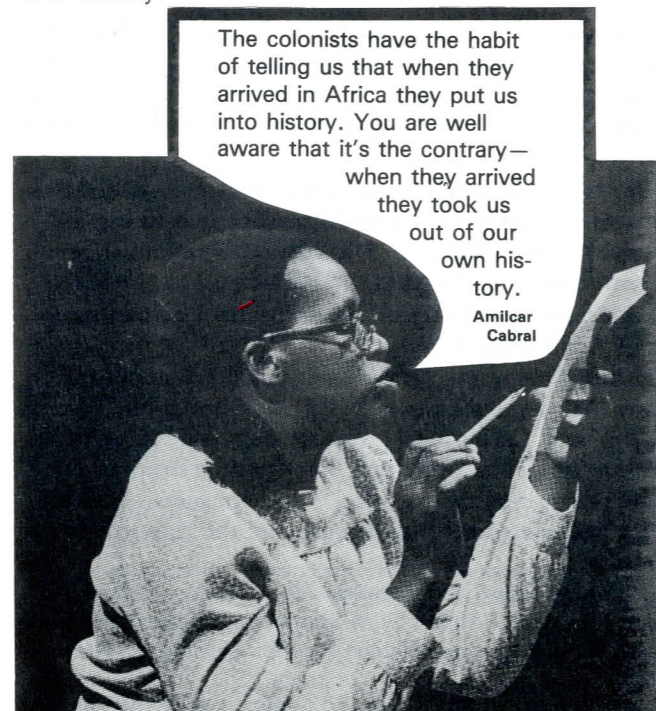
This integration between the lives of human beings and our history is important, and there are many examples from the work which was carried out within the framework of the ISS history project¹ which showed the potential of historical research to affect women's self-perception. One has been in the history of Indian women in Trinidad and Tobago. This particular group has been for years given the impression that their lot, historically, has been one of docile subordination to men. That they came from India with their husbands² and were responsible for carrying on happy family life, maintaining families and their proper place in society. For many Indian women, any attempts to break out of those stereotypes would be met with a definition of their "otherness", their "Indian-ness" which was defined within the context of that certain docility and subordination within the framework of the Indian family.

For me as an Afro-Trinidadian woman, the history of the Indian woman is very important. Indo- and Afro-Trinidadian women have been historically defined in terms of each other. In other words, the Afro-Trinidadian woman was what the Indo-Trinidadian woman was not, and the Indo-Trinidadian woman was what the Afro-Trinidadian woman was not. For me, discovering the history of the Indo-Trinidadian woman was as important as discovering the history of the Afro-Trinidadian woman for an understanding of my own experience as a Trinidadian and a Caribbean woman.

The research confirmed for me that any oppressed group rejects that oppression and struggles against it, although the form of that rejection may not be always visible to others. This is something we have to recognise when we do history of oppressed groups—that their

struggles, their resistance may not always take the same form as resistance from groups that have more power within the society. What I found in the history, however, was very much contradictory to the history Indian women had been given of themselves. For one thing, the majority of Indian women did not come in families; many of them came as independent individuals. Also, the majority came as workers, not as wives or housewives. In the Caribbean many fought important individual struggles as women to maintain autonomy and control over their lives, often to the extent of having to defend their actions in courts of law when laws were passed in Trinidad and Tobago to control the independence of Indian women. I also found that many of these attempts at independence were met with violence, physical violence, often resulting in the death of these women, which showed that the docility and subjection that came after was not because of a natural acceptance of inferiority, but because of the use of violence as a means to constrain their freedom.

For Indian women who have been exposed to this history, this has served to take a great weight off their minds. Women have said to me, "What a relief! I always thought that my women ancestors were just there, hanging around, holding their heads down and this has given me a whole new understanding of their strength." It has also provided Indian women with ammunition to use in their struggles with their men for greater autonomy. It has also opened a whole tradition of struggle within which Indian women today can place themselves, a tradition of ancestors, of foremothers who stood up for their rights and sought their independence within the new society.



The colonists have the habit of telling us that when they arrived in Africa they put us into history. You are well aware that it's the contrary—when they arrived they took us out of our own history.
Amílcar Cabral

Beverley Elliott, Sistren. Photo Jamaica Journal 19/1

1. See "Background to the ISS Project", page 26.

2. See page 9.

MAKING HISTORY TAKE THE STAGE

PAULINE CRAWFORD'S *AMY BAILEY*



The Tea Party: "You know, ladies, I have my own small victory to share with you. You know what I did today? I withdrew all of my personal savings. Ninety pounds. You know what I did with it? I paid down on the future home of the housecraft training centre. No, Eva. I'm not mad! I'm not mad at all. In fact, what better way to dignify women's labour than with a centre where housework is taught as a profession, as a science."

Where Caribbean history books have not recorded the struggles of Satira Earle or Adina Spencer to organise working class women in the early labour movement, research done in Jamaica by Joan French and Honor Ford-Smith¹ has brought back to us the names of many early black feminists.

Among the women of the emerging black middle class Amy Ashwood Garvey,² Mary Morris Knibb,³ Amy Bailey and Catherine McKenzie⁴ come into the light once again. These and other black middle strata women were moving forward black consciousness, winning political rights for black women and the right of black

middle strata women to jobs previously held by European men and women.

Pauline Crawford of the Sistren Theatre Collective has given Joan and Honor's research another dimension with a characterisation of Amy Bailey.

Her presentation at the history seminar came in three "acts". The first was a dramatisation of an address given at the first Jamaica Women's Conference at which she supported the candidacy of Mary Morris Knibb, urged the adoption of compulsory education, and called on women to take the action which would "move women into the halls of decision making in this country". The

1. *Women, Work and Organisation in Jamaica 1900-1944*, Joan French and Honor Ford-Smith, unpublished research study for the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands.

2. Co-founder of the UNIA and organiser of women within the Association.

3. In 1939 she fought an election campaign which stirred the debate on women's rights at all levels of Jamaican society. She succeeded and became the first female member of a parish church.

4. Secretary of the Kingston Branch of the Pan African Association, 1902.

second was a Tea Party held at Amy's home several weeks later. A one-woman piece, other characters are Amy's guests, moving among whom is 'Sally' who serves tea. The third part of the presentation was a question and answer session in which Pauline, still in character, fields questions from the audience who have begun a process of identifying the issues at hand and recognising the dramatic character of Amy as historic yet to the present.

Pauline's work implies the possibility of making change through the making of history. It engenders a sense of the period and the issues of the day. The form she uses brings alive the impact of black middle strata women in modern Caribbean society. The piece brings home forcefully the cruel contradiction between their tireless advocacy of women's emancipation and their advancement of the domestication of working class women.

The drama suggested that if we know our history we would know better who the hell we are as we shared in this dramatic analysis, the limitations of the approach by the women of the 30s were at last being comprehended. That knowledge can illuminate our own struggles in the present.

THE SET **Joan French**

The dynamic Garvey movement, at its height in Jamaica in the late 1920s, would have a profound influence on the people's actions in the coming decade. The definitive point for this and other developments was the rebellion of May 1938, when the masses, the mobs, the rural peasantry and wage workers just took to the streets, took to the highways and byways, took over the place and said, "We ain't taking this colonial thing no more."

For a long time in Jamaica, we thought that this was very much a male-led kind of thing because we had never heard anything about participation of women in these events. We'd seen a few pictures of a few women around but it was like they kinda came along. We didn't see women active in the riots because that had never been put across.

But when we started to look into the history we found in fact that in many areas in Jamaica, especially in the rural areas, it was women who went out, and dragged the men out and said, "Come. You have to come now."

It is from talking to older women that we have been able to collect experiences of what it was like being a woman at that time, and what role women played. This is where the oral history part comes in because our history as women has not been written down.

I had heard a lot about the development of unions and political parties, but until I started this research, I never knew that women had mobilised into organisations like that. In fact, many of us who were active in the 1970s thought we were pioneers. We thought we were doing this thing for the first time.

It's important to have a perspective when you are going to do historical research. You have to know what your commitment is, what you want to find out. There is a way you can get trapped in a particular perspective

AMY BAILEY — The Skit (1939)

Ladies, the time has come for Jamaican women to awaken from their political slumber. Only a few years back, there were no black faces in the banks, nor in the stores, nor in the business places. You could walk down King Street and hardly see the face of one black woman. In fact, I went into Times Store once, and the manager said to me, "We have them, Miss Bailey, we have them, but they're upstairs." So I said to him, "But we want to see them downstairs, Mr. Jurnee. Bring them downstairs! We want to see their faces!" And now we can see the fruits of our struggles. The faces of black women are in the banks and in the business places, and just the other day I saw three cashiers in Times Store.

It's with joy and inspiration that I welcome you here today. I regard such an occasion as a unique opportunity to put before the public the woman's standpoint on the state of the nation.

As well intentioned as some of the men may be, they can hardly be expected to see and experience conditions as we do. We thank them for what they have done in the past, but we must look to ourselves for progress.

The time has come for women to get together and demand improvements which are theirs by right.

In the tragic events of last year's rebellion, we saw revealed for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear that young women and girls played a prominent part. We have seen them as advance guards, flanking the sides and bringing up the rear of the strikers.

The government has reaped the reward of centuries of social blindness. The government could not or would not see that in the right type of agricultural and vocational education lay the salvation for the masses of this country. Let the government in conjunction with the (Kingston and St. Andrew) Corporation, establish a trade school in central Kingston for the purpose of training girls to be waitresses, cooks, laundresses, upholsterers, dry cleaners, dressmakers, milliners, housemaids, candy-makers and cake-makers.

Let us uplift our women and train our women to carry on modern household industries.

Do you know, ladies, what I did today? I withdrew all of my personal savings . . . 90 pounds. You know what I did with it? I paid down on the future home of the Housecraft Training Centre. No, Eva, I'm not mad. I'm not mad at all. In fact, what better way to dignify women's labour than with a centre where housework is taught as a profession? As a science!

and not see something else unless you can have a broad overview, unless you can recognise class as an issue, unless you can recognise race as an issue, unless you can recognise gender as an issue. Then you look at how those things interplay and interact. If you only listen to the rhetoric of what people say they are doing, or what they write down, you are not going to see what actually happened. What happens is more important than what people say they intend to do.

For example, Ms. Bailey is saying very clearly that she intends to uplift the women of the working class. And, Ok, you could debate that a lot of women who today are earning a living around a sewing machine, are probably earning it because of the things Amy Bailey and others like her did. But what about the other side of the issue? Was that the limit of the potential of those women? Was that all they were capable of at that time? No. So there's a contradiction.

The working class women never had a chance to say for themselves what they wanted. Since they never had it within Miss Bailey's organisation, we have to look at what they did, how they acted. They didn't give speeches, but they did things. What were they *doing* that could tell you what it was they wanted? Well, one of the things they did was to be in the forefront of the riots which were about wages and conditions in '38. Another thing they did was to direct their efforts toward organisations like the unions and political parties.

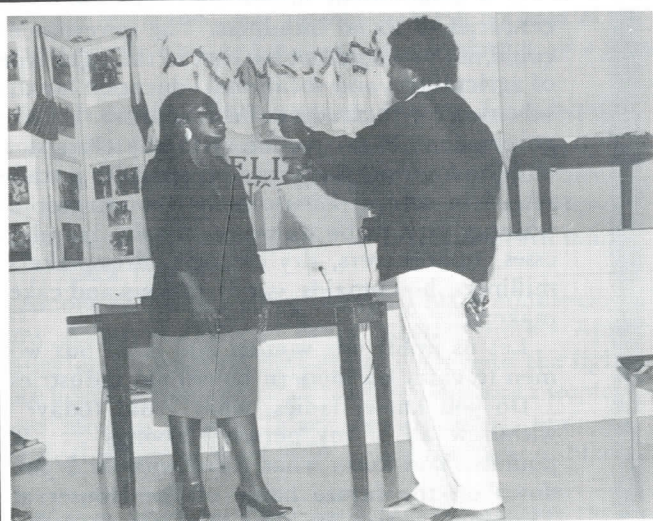
Again, we didn't know this until the research. We've always had the impression that unions are male enclaves, and so they are, at the level of their executive. But some of those unions, in particular one in Jamaica called the TUC, was built on a base that was female. It was the women who would maintain the picket lines. We have an example in the mental hospital strike in Jamaica. The men were the organisers. They would come around and say, "What you need?" But it was the women out

there with the placards keeping things going. There came a point where they didn't know how they were going to survive on the picket line and the women said, "Ok. Take the ring dem and sell dem." And those of them who were married took off their rings and sold them.

Women like Amy Bailey, what did they do? By 1944 they had changed the law which said that a married woman couldn't work in the civil service. Up till that time, if you got married you had to leave the civil service where many of the black middle class women operated. Then, unlike the white social workers who had been there before in the women's social service clubs, the women of the newly emerging middle class insisted that women doing social work should be paid. They should not do voluntary labour. The demand that, "No. We not doing it free anymore. We need money too" was a revolutionary concept. The idea, then, was that women didn't need money and they were the ones who could always go out and do the social work. That generation of women changed things. They made space for themselves within their class. They were able to get into certain professions, to earn a living.

However, this new middle class that was coming up to take over from the colonial authorities, was aware of the same problem the colonial government faced, that these rioting people were a threat to their power. They were interested in bettering conditions, but they did not believe that the masses were able to speak for themselves. They saw themselves as the enlightened, as bringing enlightenment to these poorer classes.

So while the women of the black middle strata had a gender consciousness within their class and a race consciousness within their class, their class consciousness in relation to other women was lacking. They accepted the existence of a class society as 'natural' and 'God-given', and for this reason their work, important as it was, had a contradictory effect.



Pauline Crawford (l.) and Cecily Spencer-Cross in a scene from 'Lights', a Stage One Theatre (Barbados) production. The piece was used in one of the sessions to dramatise the issue of domestic violence.

Cultural Identity

Una Marson's play *Pocomania*, presented in 1938, was a major breakthrough in Jamaican drama. There, in the formal setting of the proscenium arch stage in Kingston, a play, at least half of which was in creole, was being performed. What is more, as is clear from the images presented in the text, the play attempted to deal with the question of the awakening of the cultural identity of Caribbean women and to explore the implications of the repressive colonial environment and the psychology of black women. The play, like the period of history in which it was written, and the life of Marson herself, failed to resolve the difficult questions it raised. Nevertheless, it brought out of obscurity many important issues and images which it addressed for the consideration of the black and brown middle classes. (From *Women, Work and Organisation in Jamaica 1900-1944*)

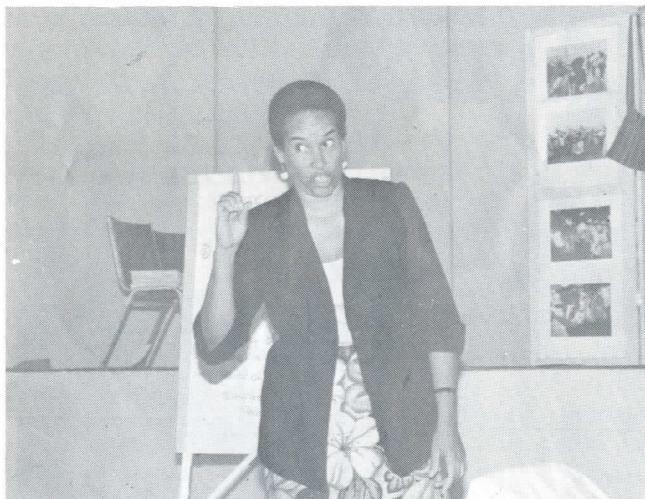
ECPTO

Agatha Mason and Bonnie Millington

The project we are developing is called the Eastern Caribbean Popular Theatre Organisation. Our experience is that when you talk about popular theatre, it sounds like a foreign term, but when you actually do exercises people say, "Oh, we do that, man". Some people you meet will say that they use these forms but never call it popular theatre. What we are trying to get away from is where you put in the occasional role play and call that popular theatre.

We see popular theatre as a distinct skill. You can interrelate it with other skills, but we see it as a developing form that you can use, that you can plan with to participate.

We hope that popular theatre will be acceptable eventually in schools and at all levels, so we're trying to widen the scope to get people involved. We are also in the process of learning as we go along. We are slowly gathering recognition. Now that we have funding we can go full swing into it. We hope now that the programme can be fully launched and we can have a greater impact on the whole region.



Clockwise from top:

1. Bonnie, Pauline and Clarice.
2. Stephanie, Judith and Tina with Agatha running by.
3. Races and embraces.
4. Joan making the point.

MAKING CULTURAL STRENGTHS FOR SURVIVAL

Mikela Wewe, Iyenne Guzman, Erigpena Espejo, Cynthia Ellis
The Belize Rural Women's Association



Karen de Souza

Mikela holding her daughter and Miss Iyenne with part of the Belize Rural Women's organisation display.

Cynthia speaking

The basis for doing this work is that to work with women, to work with people and particularly women, one needs to start with where we are at. In going out to different ethnic groups, I found tremendous value in involving women in an appreciation of whatever it is they could create, whatever was important to them.¹

The purpose of this research that's being done is to see how women view their participation in cultural de-

velopment as agencies and beneficiaries and to see how measures can be taken to improve their situation. That is, how can women themselves identify strengths within their culture by which to advance?

The underlying assumptions for the project were: that there's a preponderance of women in cultural activities. Women are particularly visible in art forms that allow collective support for their expression. They are involved in these activities mainly in a voluntary capacity and where there is the possibility for financial remuneration the picture changes. Ideologically, women are seen as cultural agents, protectors, nurturers and promoters of

1. The BRWA presentations came out of a UNESCO project that Diane Haylock (BOWAND), CAFRA contact person (Belize), and Cynthia Ellis are working on in collaboration with Sistren research.

cultural life, but there exists no complimentary support for this.

We have done a number of attempts at research. I myself am Garifuna and prepared some slide presentations called "Capturing Garifuna Rhythms" and also a pictorial essay on the dugu which is a traditional healing ceremony in which women participate a lot. For the Maya Indians what was obvious was their handicraft, embroidery. Each of these designs created by these women tells a story and these have been handed down through oral tradition from generation to generation. For the Mestizo has come a woman who has been a political activist.² We have Ms Wewe, Ms. Ignacia and Ms Espejo interviewing for this research. They have interviewed over 100 women throughout the country in these three ethnic groups.

I can say that I am not the same person after having done this research at all. It showed me, despite the difference in ethnicity, how many things we as women have in common because there were some common questions that we asked each ethnic group. One was the whole area of childbearing and child rearing. All of us had still retained some of the elements of the traditional healing process, the use of bush medicine, bush herbs. All of us still had certain beliefs in the ancestors, that is the remembrance of the ancestors. All of us still had hangups about our sexuality. Food and embroidery and all this craft was still an area that women of the different ethnic groups were moving to for their identification.

The work is done within a political framework. It's not just a set of stories. It's in the context of a movement. It is not a research project per se by itself. It is part of the work that has been going on for many years. The seeds of it were in a meeting in Puerto Rico in 1980⁴ when we seriously began to discuss "women and development" as it was called and gender issues. I perceived it as a women's movement in the Caribbean and at the end of the meeting, there were a group of us who made a conscious decision that we would work systematically to see what we, with the skills we have, could do to create such a movement in our countries. That was the basis for CAFRA. We had discussions about CAFRA and we had even made the revolutionary point, which I don't think it's at yet, that we will identify with the struggles of women in each country so that if there was something happening in Belize, or Trinidad or Guyana, we would have some mechanism by which we would express our solidarity.

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

Most women we interviewed did not feel that the culture had done much for them. We asked what were some of the things in your culture that you use to make a living and we found, for example in the Garifuna ethnic group, that women were going to the banana plantation, the citrus plantation to work to make a living and they were sort of regretting it. They were saying things had changed. In the earlier days they were able to do things to help themselves in farming and so on to be self sufficient, but now you had to go out to make some money to live on.

Working in the Maya Indian community, there is pressure on women who become part of groups or organisations to be accountable to the whole village. Many of the women who would come to our meetings, when they would go back they would be beaten — definitely. And this was common for every ethnic group. Some of those women had to make a choice. Either they drop out of the group or they know that they will be beaten when they get back. It is something we have had to start to consider as part of the work of the Association. Women have been saying so much. We have tried different strategies of them going to talk to the men but either they beat the women even more or they stop. We really don't know how to deal with this.

You'll find a village of 400 people with five churches! And they will tell the people things like, They no fe dance, They no fe wear their dress and that sort of thing. We went into one particular community to start the work and they tell us they can't sing, they don't know no song! We said, What? They say, No because the church does not allow people to sing.



2. Erigpena Espejo. See page 21.

THE DUGU

Presented by the Belize Rural Women's Association

The role play on the dugu done at the seminar was developed by the La Fuluri Women's group in 1982 and '83. Here it was enacted by Cynthia (playing the troubled woman), Mikilia (playing the concerned relative, nurse, numerous friends and relatives at the dugu), Erigpena (playing the doctor, numerous friends and relatives at the dugu), Miss Iyenne (playing the bouye).

You are being troubled by the spirit of your ancestors. You had a dream. Your grandmother or your aunt came to you and asked would you please have a mass or a *dugu* or a *mali* for them.

First you would go to the doctor, the modern doctor, and usually he would fail you. Then you would go to the *bouye*. Presently the most active *bouye* in Belize is Sarah and she's based in Dangriga. She would talk with you and then try different things. Maybe she would give a bath or say prayers or massage or give you some medicine to drink.

When it is decided that a *dugu* is needed, you must go to all your relatives in the community. Your aunt, your everybody, your generation way back wey you never even think of. It is a very expensive affair. The *bouye* will appoint special people who will do different tasks. You have fishermen and women who will go out into the sea for two days before the ceremony and catch all kinds of seafood because there is this belief that the reason you are troubled is because you are not at peace with the forces of nature, so you need to be cleansed. You have to eat everything that is fresh and that is from the earth, the sea. But you start preparations for a *dugu* from months before in preparing the cassava, because they're going to serve a lot of food.

During the planting and reaping of the food special songs and prayers are said. The same thing with the fishing. Many of these songs talk about woman's struggle because it is women who are planting cassava. It's the women who are reaping. It's the women who are grating. It's the women who are baking. They are doing everything.

By the day when the fisherman are to come back, all the cassava bread and everything would have been prepared. At four o'clock in the morning some people will go and bathe in the sea and wait for the fishermen to come in. Some people will stay in the temple and start the drumming and the dancing and the music.

They have leaves tied around their heads and around their waists. One suggestion is that this goes back to Garifuna guerilla warfare in St. Vincent when you had the struggle with the British and the French. We are not clear about that. After the fishermen have been welcomed in, the *bouye* leads the procession through the streets to the temple.

In the temple the offerings will be made, all the seafood that has come. And only if you have been cleansed can you go into the temple. Women who are

menstruating cannot go into the temple. And it is said that the *bouye* will know and she will ask you to leave until you are finished, until you are clean. And women are not allowed there with pants. You can't dress any old way. You need to wear a skirt and blouse and tie your head.

There is going to be a lot of drinking. There's going to be a lot of dancing. There's going to be a lot of drumming. Miss Iyenne's husband is one of the chief drummers. This is going to last three days and three nights of dancing and eating.

They have taken rum, they have taken a piece of white cloth and while the singing and the drumming is going on, people will be moving the white cloth. We haven't got a good answer as to the significance of this white cloth, but some people say that it has something to do with the communication with the spirits of the ancestors, because much of the philosophy behind this is the tension between good and evil and the evil also within you, or with the forces around you or people with whom you relate.

There are hammocks within the temple so whenever you ready, you down you hammock and you go to sleep. When you tired you sleep or you *dimeyha*. When you feel like you get up. The *ohweyha* is when you become so overwhelmed by the motion of it that you just pass out. And in those moments you are overtaken by the spirit of your ancestors. They can speak through you and many times there's going to be advice to deal with your particular problem and if there are some forces of evil within the circle, if there is not solidarity, that is going to be expressed through this person.

The rhythm of the drums will start. Everybody moves along. You have different kinds of dances within this process. You have the *abeymahani* which is without drumming. The men don't take part in that one at all, just women holding hands, and that just goes on and on for hours. During the process women compose. Depending on how you feel, you know, you can compose where you have answering and calling. You have this whole thing of female support.

The other dance is the *mali*. It is a special healing dance in which the *bouye* is a central figure. Everybody follows her. She goes to the four corners of the temple with the drummers behind. The drummers have the secret and they move in the four corners of the room. Everybody will follow. This is the time that healing will begin.

Everybody who comes to the temple will bring offerings of rum and candles. There is a sacred area to the back of the temple. These offerings are placed in a circle and at different points in time they will pick up and put down the rum. At another point there'll be the actual killing of the pig, or it could be a cow, depending on how much money you have.

Scenes from Sessions



Mikela demonstrating embroidery stories of the Maya.

"The way I see my husband now is far better than before, and he has in mind now that it's better that I go out with other women and share with them ideas to help myself. If you only stay at home there by the kitchen cooking and doing housework, you will get nothing from that. Go out and share ideas. But I think it's only a few men that do that. Most of the men don't want their wives to come out."

"I was sitting here watching Iyenne's presentation about the cassava and the salt-fish and I said to myself, Lord Jesus, what a lot of work! Then I said to myself, What is the psychology involved in dancing while you are doing the work, and singing while you're doing the work? I started to think of my own tensions about work. I get so nervous. I want to thank her because I'm beginning to learn that, as hard as the work is and upsetting — you can find a way to deal with your psychological level by putting some fun into it."



(L. to r.) Norma Shorey Bryan (partly hidden), Jeanette Bell, Clarice Barnes (WAND), Shahiba Ali with camera (Bravé Dangé), and Sheila Stuart (WAND).

Scenes from Sessions



(L. to r.) Cynthia, Iyenne, Mikila and Erigpena in dugu role play.



"The majority of people who take part in this ceremony are women. We have men who are drummers. Women do not drum. Women will cook. This is one of the things we asked in the questionnaire for the UNESCO project. How do women feel about the different roles they have in these cultural activities? Many of them we spoke to did not like the role of cook. It meant having to cook for all the people who come and that is day and night."

"Within the past two years there have been a number of dugus, one after the other. In fact it's constant dugu! The thing is why? Why is there such a need for so many dugus? It's a costly affair but there seems to be a need. We want to suggest as the economic crisis and pressures increase, people have a need for this kind of coming together, solidarity and sort of therapeutic activity. Women in particular have this need. We hear about you can't go anywhere, your husband no want send you. But you will stay at this temple for three days and nights so."



Judith Laird (l.) with Maisie Barker Welch, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs (Barbados). Mrs. Barker Welch is Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, Barbados, and one of the organisers of the St. Joseph Community Action Group.

Scenes from Sessions



Erigena with Jeanette, at right.

"I'm Belizian, a Belizian woman with Mexican blood. My ancestors were from Mexico. They arrived in the north of Belize from Merida, Yucatan during the "Caste War" of 1847.

At the age of 14 I started campaigning. I had to struggle to be something, I mean in politics. I got married at the age of 21. I have three children. The reason I'm in politics, I realise women don't have no say in nothing, not in law or nothing.

My grandmother would be at home doing everyday tortillas. She had to be at that fire. She had to be at the door, watching for when her husband is coming so she can bake her tortillas. No social activities for her? No. That's my grandmother. My mother's mother, and I said to myself, I wonder if I will grow up like that. I don't think I want to grow up like that. Be a slave to my husband? I don't think so."



(L. to r.) Diane Haylock (Slide Tape Presentation, ISS), Agatha Mason (ECPTO), Cleon Athill (Antigua, UWI Extra Mural Women's Studies Group), Stephanie Pile (the Group Presentation).

Scenes from Sessions



Shahiba Ali (*Bravé Dangé*) (l.) and Norma Shorey Bryan (*WAND*).

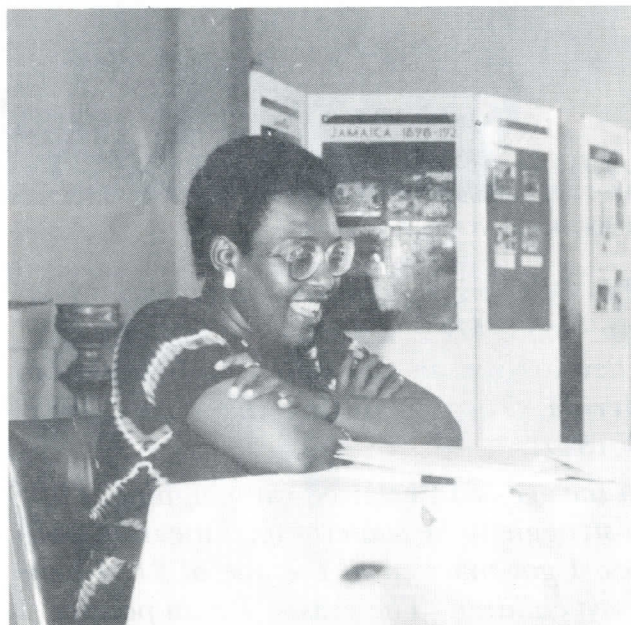
"One of the things they found out when they were doing the history project in St. Vincent was that, in 1935 during popular disturbances related to anticipated price increases in St. Vincent, one woman, Berta Mott, led a group of men and women in the stoning of the courthouse, which was their rebellion against unemployment. She was one of several women (about fifteen) who started the riot. By the time the riot got sorted out and the Governor came and the men joined, it was said the actual rioting was caused by a gang of men and, I'm afraid, some women were drawn into the main of it".



Grace Pilgrim (l.), past president of the National Organisation of Women (Barbados) who now works with the Central Emergency Relief Organisation (CERO), and Noreen John (Small Projects Assistance Team, Dominica.)



Rowena Kalloo and Joan French in role play in session on Investigative Journalism as a research action method.



Rhoda Reddock. Note part of Dutty Tuff exhibit in background.

"A lot of traditions are not that traditional. There is the whole question of how far back and where did this tradition come from? For example, there is one study which shows that the traditional dress of the Andean women was really a Spanish sixteenth century costume which was introduced from Spain during the colonial period but has now become the traditional dress of highland Andean people."

Scenes from Sessions



Hilary Beckles, historian (UWI Department of History and Women and Development Studies Programme, Cave Hill), giving his presentation on women in Barbados during slavery.



Debbie Mosley (WAND) and Venice Morris (St. Joseph Community Action Group).



"I'm on me corner, night after night. Waiting. Yeah. I feel proud of it too. Because wha? Me not doing it fe meself alone. Me doing dis fe me children. Alright."

Pauline Crawford (Sistren) in a session on prostitution facilitated by herself and Cecily Spencer-Cross (Stage One). Seated (l-r) Veronica Duke, Diane Innis (WAND) Ramabai Espinet (CAFRA).

The Exhibits

Ramabai Espinet

(The WAND/CAFRA regional seminar held in Mangrove, St. Philip, Barbados, October 19 to 23, 1987, was jointly co-ordinated by Ramabai Espinet of CAFRA and Nan Peacocke of WAND/UWI.)

In a phrase, *information exchange* was the purpose of this regional seminar of women's studies. Groups and individuals throughout the region are engaged with projects concerning women's history.

One of the objectives of the seminar was to inform participants about the content of research done in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago about women's historical role in social movements and organisations. Some of the information from this research had been reorganised into mounted displays and illustrated through other innovative techniques such as drama.

A second objective was to inform participants about research projects completed or presently underway by way of enhancing awareness and creating links between the makers of these projects. Again, there was already available material resources in the form of slide productions and pamphlets as well as in traditional forms such as embroidery.

Third, the seminar would provide an opportunity for women working with these projects to share methods and experience and further, to create a resource bank of such expertise for advancing the work in this area.

To these ends, the exhibit was conceived as organic to the event and its methodology. The exhibit was seen as extending the theory developed in some of the resource material by means of other forms of communication. It was to disseminate findings and to make visible the need for excellence in design and the power of artistic values in communication.

There were eight exhibits altogether. These were arranged in the Central Hall at the perimeter, leaving room for the formal sessions to be held in the middle. The idea was to create an environment in which the tactile and visual dimension of the exhibit would enhance and extend the discursive group sessions. To this end participants were encouraged to interact directly with the material exhibit, to bring their content into play during discussion and to view both dimensions as an integrated whole. The actual exhibits were as follows:

- (i) *Bamboo Forest of the Ancestors* N. Peacocke and R. Espinet

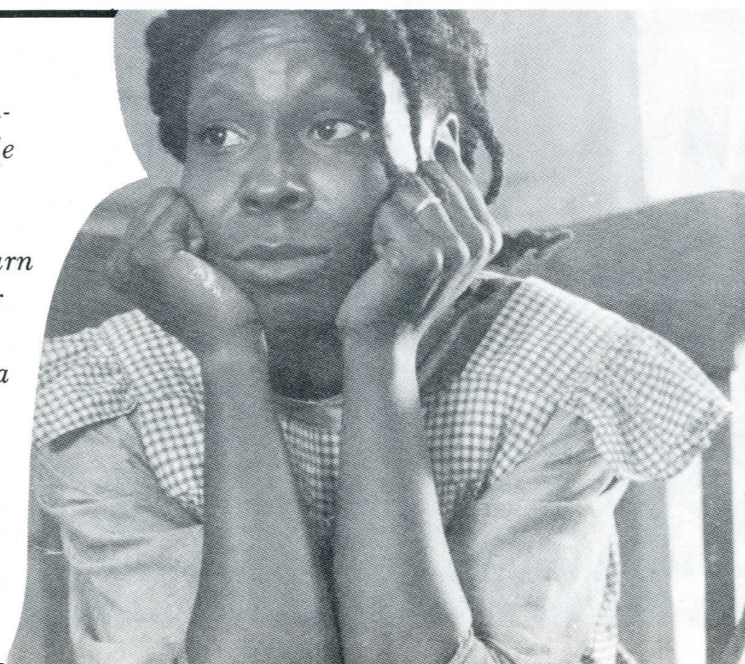
This exhibit used photo blowups of people who had contributed to the advancement of progress in the world, and especially to the advancement of Women's Rights, to form the revolutionary ancestral forest. Each picture was mounted upon a bamboo pole set in a concrete base and talking T-shirts, belts and scarves, completed the rough scarecrow figures. Balloons in an exaggerated cartoon motif erupted from the ancestors' mouths, speaking their own words, that is, words quoted from other sources. Some of the ancestors featured were:

Lorna Goodison	Audre Lourde
Angela Davis	Beverley Elliott
Albert Einstein	Haitian girl child
Dame Nita Barrow	Jamaica Kinkaid
Winnie Mandela	Whoopie Goldberg
Phyllis Allfrey	Rex Nettleford
Karl Marx	

- (ii) *Bravé Dangé* R. Reddock, S. Ali, R. Kalloo, J. Laird

Anytime yuh haffi live inna dem environment, yuh as an individual haffi fi decide how yuh going face di situation. Di way how yuh choose is di way yuh develop. Some get frustrated, some people fail, turn alcoholic, get used by odders, go mad or dead. It get out some people all kind a way. Fi survive yuh haffi pick sense out a nonsense. Dat is di beauty bout it and dat is what really help to mek me be a woman.

("Veteran", by Veteran, Lionheart Gal)



"Celie", The Color Purple

This exhibit was built around the ISS project in Trinidad. The exhibit consisted of large boards set flat upon the wall or mounted on sloping stands, upon which photographs and text were arranged thematically. Artifacts of the period under study, such as cooking and household utensils were also used to create a sense of the life and work of the women of that period.

(iii) *Sexual Offences Act* T. Johnson

This exhibit recounted the passage of the Sexual Offences Bill from preliminary stages of its existence to final approval as the *Sexual Offences Act*. The exhibit was mounted on free-standing forms and consisted of boards which each dealt with a different aspect of the stormy passage of this bill. The sequence of events was chronological and the exhibit utilised photographs, newspaper clippings reproduced straight or with a collage-effect, drawings, cartoons, diagrams and jokes, in order to tell the story.

(iv) *Red Thread* D. Radzig and K. de Souza

This exhibit told its story in photographs and text mounted upon free-standing forms. Photographs of Itwaria in the setting of the Hindu home formed one section of this exhibit. Other photographs were selected from images presented in K. de Souza's slide show: "Eve: A Fractured Mirror", which showed photographs of the dispossessed on the streets of Georgetown.

(v) *The Belize Rural Women's Association* C. Ellis, I. Guzman, E. Espejo, M. Wewe

This exhibit consisted of products of the Association in the form of handicraft of varied sorts, including authentic Mayan embroidered blouses, Mayan calendars, and carvings and necklaces. In addition, there were photographs enacting the *Dugu* ceremony as well as a number of publications produced by the Association together with fact sheets on Belize.

(vi) *Dutty Tough* J. French and H. Ford-Smith

This exhibit captured in text and photographs, newspaper clippings reproduced and other print forms, the research produced by the ISS project in Jamaica. The exhibit was mounted on flat boards attached to free-standing structures. These boards were laminated in order to preserve the quality of the mounted material.

(vii) *Prostitution: A Slide Tape* D. Haylock

This exhibit gave an inside look at prostitution in the red light district of Amsterdam. Out of several interviews with prostitutes, three "composite" stories were pieced together, scripts were written, actresses chosen and music selected. The result was a lively, fast-paced account of the experiences undergone by prostitutes on a day-to-day basis, which included some introspection and expression of feelings of loneliness and unworthiness.

(viii) *Eve: A Fractured Mirror* K. de Souza

This exhibit presented episodes in the lives of dispossessed people who have been forced to live on the streets of Georgetown. Some of the characters' voices were heard, recounting their personal histories.

(ix) *The Issue Is Rage* W. Ifill (Star Productions Trinidad)

This exhibit was a videotape which was acquired from the producer named above. The tape consisted of a series of segments which addressed the issue of rape in a variety of different ways: through interviews, statistics, newspaper reports, popular misconceptions, song, conversations and opinion. Coherence was attained through the medium of one presenter throughout.

Unfortunately, because of technical problems encountered with the available equipment, this videotape was not shown.

One and one make plenty

In a couple of days this room was transformed by the stories released in these exhibits. I want to draw attention to the collective process that took place in their creation. Take the *Bravé Dangé* display over there. It began as Rhoda's individual work uncovering the history of women in Trinidad and Tobago during a certain period. It was taken up by three more women, Shahiba, Rowena and Judy, and put into forms that reach many others.

Move on to the Clause 4 exhibit which has to do with a very recent historical event involving many hundreds of individuals. Yet one person, for the purpose of this exhibit, Tina Johnson, has pulled together from so many sources — newspapers, tape recordings, video — something that conveys the elements contained in the controversy over Clause 4.

There are the stories which have been retold for centuries in the handicraft of Mayan women. We have heard about the ability of the *Dutty Tough* display to galvanise the interest of people in many different communities about the actions of working and middle class women in the '30s in Jamaica.

Joyce Bynoe of WAND along with others are working together on the production of a health kit. The methodology being used for its production is another example of how transforming tasks like that can be for the women involved.

Looking into the stories and experiences recorded here, think also of collective empowerment and the role of the individual in that process.

(Nan speaking)

*And I always thought:
the very simplest words
Must be enough. When I
say what things are like
Everyone's heart must be
torn to shreds.*

*That you'll go down if
you don't stand up for
yourself.*

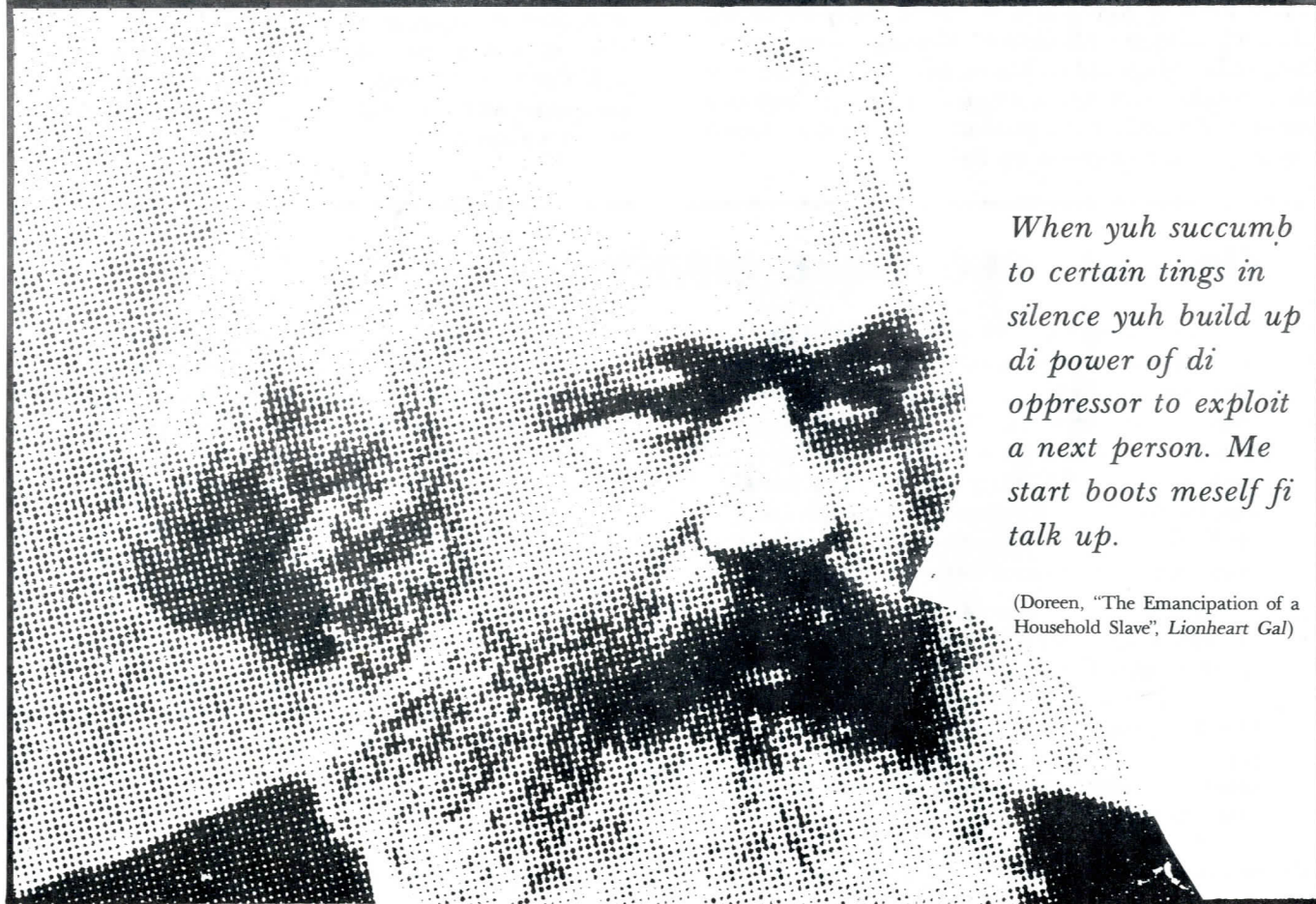
Surely you see that.

Bertolt Brecht, 1956



*When yuh succumb
to certain tings in
silence yuh build up
di power of di
oppressor to exploit
a next person. Me
start boots meself fi
talk up.*

(Doreen, "The Emancipation of a
Household Slave", *Lionheart Gal*)



BACKGROUND TO THE ISS HISTORY PROJECT

One of the objectives of the WAND/CAFRA Regional Seminar, "Making History Making Change" was the dissemination of some of the research about women's participation in social movements and organisations in the Caribbean, part of an international research project which emerged within the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague called **Women's Movements, Organizations and Strategies in an Historical Perspective, with Special Reference to Colonial and Contemporary Societies**. The Caribbean sub-project was administered by WAND/UWI and co-ordinated by Rhoda Reddock. The Caribbean research involved three components: **Women, Work and Organization in Jamaica, 1900 to 1944**, by Joan French and Honor Ford-Smith of Sistren. This led to the formation of Sistren research within Sistren. A second component was **Rose Hall Through the Years—A Study of Change**, which includes an overview of the organisation of women in SVG and a community history of the village of Rose Hall. This research was done by Beryl Carasco (formerly of WAND, now with the Caribbean Conference of Churches) and Wendy Rodney of the Rose Hall community.

The third component of the Caribbean research, **Women, Labour and Struggle in Twentieth Century Trinidad and Tobago, 1898 to 1960**, to a large extent preceded the project and was done by Rhoda for her Ph.D. thesis. Rhoda and others are now in the process of developing methods for disseminating that material. *Bravé Dangé* is the first product of this kind out of Trinidad and Tobago research. "Dutty Tuff", a pictorial history developed from the Jamaica material, has been taken into numerous communities in that island for discussion and comment in keeping with a commitment that central to the research/action process is the right of the community to the knowledge of the people which it reveals.

The Institute of Social Studies is an institute of development studies in the Netherlands which aims at students from third world countries, though there is a minority from eastern and western Europe.

In the first twenty years of the Institute's history, most students were men. Administrators, people from government, would go there to discuss issues related to development in their countries. In the 1970's the Institute opened up to people who had a general interest in the problems of development.

During those years a number of discussions came up. One of these was about the small number of women in the Institute and the issue of women's subordination in general. These were the years leading up to the 1975 International Women's Year Conference. As a result of that some of the women students and staff began to agitate for a programme which would deal with the issue of women's studies. In addition to this, at an international meeting in 1977, women from the third world called on the Institute, because of its unique situation, to provide a forum where women from all over the world could come to develop a programme of women and development studies.

One of the ideas underlying the ISS programme is that women's studies emerged from the women's movement and therefore the link between academic studies of women and activist women struggling at whatever level should be maintained. As a result, many of the students are women activists and women working in women's organisations. Also, one of the criteria for staff is that its teachers themselves should have some experience in the women's movement. The main aim of this programme has been to strengthen women's consciousness and understanding of their position in society and to provide tools for changing that situation.

The course took an historical approach. It was felt that you cannot understand what is happening to women now if you don't know what happened in the past.

However, most of the historical data on women was not the history of the women who were participating in the course. There was data on the history of women in Europe, in North America, but nothing about the history of the women in Africa, India, Belize. What's more, we challenged the view that women in third world countries sat down for centuries, meekly accepting their subordinate position. We needed a history of women as fighters, as strugglers.

As a result the history project was developed. In the Caribbean sub-project there was Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. There was also Indonesia, India, the Sudan, Somalia and Peru.

One of the general aims of the project was that the material produced should be disseminated as widely as possible in as many forms as possible to reach women at all levels of the society. As much as possible, the methods used should be mobile, low cost and communicable.

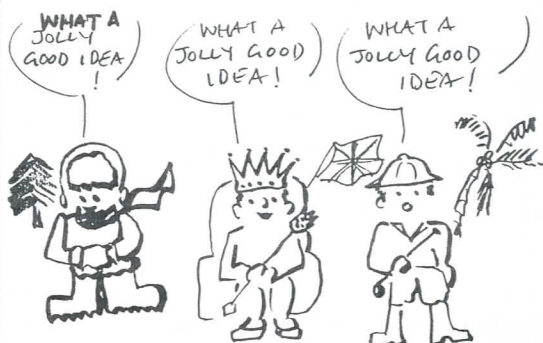
Rhoda Reddock

It is often argued that feminism is a white American or European import introduced into the Caribbean in the 1960's and '70's. In fact, the reality is that the earliest defenders of women's rights were the black nationalists in the late 19th century and early 20th century who came to analyse the women's situation because of the historical changes taking place in the situation of women in their own societies at the time. Among these organisations the 'upliftment of the black woman' and woman's equality were frequently debated.
(From *Women, Work and Organization in Jamaica*)

"ON THE ORIGINS OF THE JAMAICA FEDERATION OF WOMEN".

A BEDTIME STORY FOR THE POST COLONIAL FAMILY

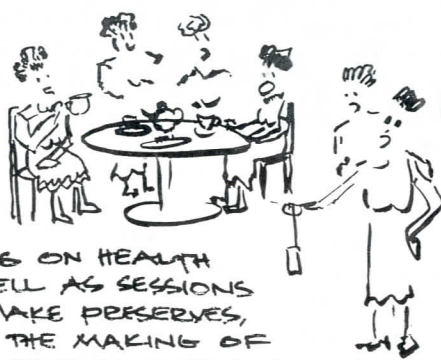
SOMETHING CALLED WOMEN'S INSTITUTES FIRST APPEARED IN CANADA AND WERE INTRODUCED INTO GREAT BRITAIN IN 1915, DURING WORLD WAR ONE.



THE WOMEN OF BRITAIN'S FARMING COMMUNITIES FOUGHT THE WAR THROUGH THESE RURAL BASED INSTITUTES. THEY MANAGED A SORT OF SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE. BY GROWING & PRESERVING FOOD WHEN SUPPLIES FROM OVERSEAS WERE CURTAILED, THEY KEPT THEIR COUNTRY ALIVE.



AT VILLAGE INSTITUTE MEETINGS WOMEN GOT TOGETHER AND HAD A GOOD TIME. THEY DISCUSSED COMMON PROBLEMS AND ALSO WERE GIVEN TALKS ON HEALTH AND CHILDCARE AS WELL AS SESSIONS ON COOKING, HOW TO MAKE PRESERVES, SEWING, KNITTING AND THE MAKING OF CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOR SOLDIERS AT WAR.



DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILS DON'T MAKE LAWS. THEY ONLY ADMINISTER THEM, SO THEY ARE NOT POLITICAL.



LADY ALBENARLE DURING AN INTERVIEW WITH UNA MARSON FOR THE BBC IN 1993.

THE INSTITUTES WERE DEFINED AS NON-POLITICAL, & DREW MEMBERS FROM ALL PARTIES. HOWEVER, THEY DID MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILS, GIVING THE RURAL HOUSEWIVES POINT OF VIEW. THIS THEY DID NOT SEE AS BEING POLITICAL.



THE JAMAICA FEDERATION OF WOMEN WAS SIMILAR TO THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTES. IT'S MOTTO, IT'S FOCUS ON RURAL HOUSEWIVES AND KITCHEN GARDENS, IT'S "NON POLITICAL" CLAIM ALL MIMICRED THEIR BRITISH SISTERS.

THERE WERE SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS EVERYWHERE IN THE CARIBBEAN. IN DOMINICA & GUYANA THEY WERE CALLED THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE. IN MONTSERRAT, THE WELFARE LEAGUE, AND SO ON.

Names and Dates

The few references appearing here provide information about the personalities and ideas of the time and illustrate historical sources of some of the aspects of our present reality. The reader may experience déjà vu, recognising the similarities and differences between situations, attitudes, conflicts and "solutions" then and now. Information from Women, Work and Organisation in Jamaica 1900-1944 Joan French and Honour Ford-Smith unless otherwise stated.

Satira Earle was a working class activist and a President of the St. Andrew Division of the UNIA (Jamaica). After Marcus Garvey left Jamaica in 1935 she was one of those who attempted to form a labour union among his supporters. At the inaugural meeting of the union she showed her frustration with the cautiousness of the middle class male leadership in the movement when she said, "Wake up men. If you are afraid to carry on, I will organise a committee of women and launch out against capitalists in this island and leave you drowsy men behind." (Post, 1978)

Adina Spencer was another activist in the struggles of 1938, when with Edna Manley she aided the strikers in the uprising, establishing a soup kitchen for strikers at the Kingston docks. Her *nom de plume* was "Woman of the Masses", and she was a frequent contributor to *Plain Talk*, a Garveyite paper. The statement quoted here has a familiar ring though it was made more than 50 years ago.

"We the women of the masses have been suffering day and night with poverty and actual wants, due chiefly to lack of employment and conditions brought about through the depression confronting Jamaica as well as other parts of the world. There is no work for us to do or other economic opportunities enabling us to rise to a higher standard of life, thus uplifting our womanhood." (Plain Talk, August 24, 1935)

Edith Clarke, Jamaican anthropologist and author of *My Mother Who Fathered Me*, defined the family as a means of transmitting culture from one generation to the next. She believed in community self-help projects as intrinsic to the women's solution.

Elma François was born in St. Vincent and moved to Trinidad where she became an activist in the early part of this century. She is one of the three women to be made national heroes of Trinidad and Tobago and the first and only working class woman to be acknowledged in this way.

(Info. from presentation by Rhoda Reddock)

Audrey Jeffers was a pioneer of social work professionals in Trinidad and Tobago (see *Woman Speak!* No. 21). She testified before the Moyne Commission in Trinidad. Amy Bailey and Una Marson went to England in 1938 to raise money for the Jamaica Save the Chil-

dren Fund which they helped found with the assistance of the *Jamaica Standard*, a liberal newspaper. While there they also testified before the Commission. Mary Morris Knibb (see page 12) also testified in Jamaica. These women knew what they wanted and said so. They were from different parts of the region but they held common views on the women's "solution". They recognised that, as Amy Bailey would say in an interview many years later, "the fullness of time had come" for middle strata women to press their demands for reform. They all recommended improved social services. The Trinidad Coterie of Social Workers asked for women to be allowed membership in the Legislative Council, improved status for women workers, the appointment of women to boards, the civil service, the police force. They asked for rigid enforcement of child maintenance ordinances. Both the Women's Liberal Club (Jamaica) and the Coterie insisted that racial discrimination against black professional women and clerical women be stopped.

The West India Royal Commission of Inquiry (The Moyne Commission). Established in 1938 was the first initiative of the British Government in response to the riots. The Commission's task was to investigate the causes of the disturbances throughout the Caribbean in the late 30's and to make recommendations. The recommendations addressed three major concerns for the transition of the modern Caribbean. They were: social welfare; a policy for the creation of 'responsible' trade unions and land settlement. The Moyne Report reflects a clear recognition of the value of women's work through its conscious policy toward women. Basic to a solution of the social problems in Jamaica were policies concerning the status accorded to women, the lack of nuclear families and the absence of a well defined programme of social welfare. The Moyne Report promotes an ideology of gender which evolved with the social shape of the industrial revolution. A 'proper family' would be headed by a male breadwinner who would be accompanied by a non-earning housewife and dependents. On her shoulders would fall the responsibility of reproducing her man's labour power and of the whole society by the bearing and rearing of children and the care of the sick and of old people. Dame Rachel Crowdy and Dr. Mary Blacklock were the two women who sat on the Moyne Commission. They both sympathised with the ideas of state support for social welfare which is why they were appointed to the board.

The ideas of economist John Maynard Keynes gained acceptance in England as a consequence of the depression of the 1930's. Keynes said that government regulation of capitalism could ease the slumps of the free market economy by ensuring employment and alleviating social ills. The impact of these ideas upon the Moyne Commission is implicit in the Report. Reddock (1984) and Johnson (1977) have argued that the Moyne Commission was the method used by the Colonial Office to

achieve a shift in colonial policy. Through the Report the C.O. hoped to win approval for the overt involvement of the state in colonial welfare and extend the concept of development to encompass social, educational, medical and agricultural schemes as well as economic development.

The First Jamaica Women's Conference, February 22-23, 1939, was held by the Women's Liberal Club (which disbanded in 1944, its members becoming members of the Executive Committee of the Jamaica Federation of Women). The conference was a gathering of middle strata women to discuss women's position in society and the family. The deliberations culminated in a series of resolutions which were presented to the Governor by a delegation of women. A report in the *Gleaner* highlighted the discussion on the issue of female unemployment: "Objection was strongly taken to the isolation of women's duties in the home consequent on the Industrial Revolution and the denial of any participation by her in the conduct of affairs that concerned her and her offspring." (*Gleaner* Feb. 24, 1939). Ironically, the conference went on to recommend measures that would further institutionalise women's isolation in the home. A call was made for the establishment of vocational training schools to teach handicrafts, horticulture and domestic science.

TWO WEEK SUMMER PROGRAMME IN MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean Women's Studies Institute (KEGME) is organising its second "Women's Studies Summer Programme" to be held in Spetses, Greece, July 1-15, 1988. The theme is "Education Towards the Year 2000: Traditional vs Feminist Pedagogy in the Mediterranean."

The Institute has also resumed publication of the *KEGME Review on Mediterranean Women* which will appear in May and November. Those interested can contact: Dr. Yota Papageore, KEGME, Mediterranean Women's Studies Institute, 192/B Leoforos Alexandras, GR 11521, Athens Greece.

10 YEARS AND ON

On August 1 WAND will be ten years old. Throughout 1988 we will be highlighting the work of WAND and other women's organisations through a number of events.

Our plans include:

- a region-wide radio series
- a symposium to be held in Barbados in November
- a special anniversary issue of *Woman Speak!*

SISTREN TEXTILES: CARIBBEAN GODDESSES SERIES

*YEMAYA — Universal Mother,
Goddess of Intelligence
and the Rational*

YEMAYA is the Universal mother of Santería and Shango. She is originally from the Yoruba tradition. She wears petticoats with six trimmings which represent the birth of humanity and the Gods. She is Queen of the sea and the salt waters (a universal symbol of fertility and creation). She protects the children in her skirts. She is the Goddess of intelligence and the rational. Sometimes she is tempestuous and brave and at other times calm and sensual. Her colour is sea-blue with a little white (symbolising the waves). Her emblem is the half-moon. Here she is presented as a street-seller — a woman who defends the rights of children, enabling them to play, learn and grow under her protection.

Available at **Sistren**, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica.

I kept on trying to weave this net,
to darn this hole
to mend this restlessness,
feverishly thankful for my blessedness.
The threads were thin where they'd been strong.
I was tired, so much eagerness had gone.
Loins that had throbbed in pleasure
and ached in pain
proudly expelling the fruits of your seed
lay dormant, waiting again.
Waiting again for its time, for its hour.
After sickness and tests,
after sleep and rests,
after tiredness.

I kept on trying to sing this tune,
to remember its words,
to hear the melody.
The lyrics had changed,
no, my dress was torn —
and another drummer stood naked in the door.

Audrey Roberts

FINDING UNA MARSON

The information and the inspiration for this article came from Rhonda Cobham's introduction to **Watchers and Seekers: Creative Writing by Black Women in Britain**, Rhonda Cobham and Merle Collins, eds. (The Women's Press, 1987, 34 Great Sutton Street), and from research by Honor Ford-Smith and Joan French for **Women, Work and Organization in Jamaica, 1900-1944**.

When she was sixty, in 1965, her life was quietly laid to rest. But her passion still moves in the record of her interesting and difficult life and in the honesty of her writing.

She was a brave artist, looking inside herself at the contradictions she found there for a creative edge. With this tool she searched for the elements of experience which being black and being woman brought uniquely to the anti-colonial struggle of the twentieth century.

During her life she worked for the organisation of women in Jamaica and internationally. She was free of the patronising concern reflected in the attitude of many black and white liberal feminists of the time toward working class women.

Una Marson was convinced of the importance of cultural traditions and cultural organisations. Out of her work in Jamaica and Britain evolved her political consciousness as a black nationalist and feminist.

And how rich and varied her working life was to be! She was editor of *Cosmopolitan*, the official organ of the Jamaica Stenographer's Association and the first

women's publication in Jamaica. She co-edited *The Keys*, the literary publication of the League of Coloured People in Britain. Producer of the BBC's "Calling the West Indies", she provided exposure for over 200 Caribbean authors in the programme segment "Caribbean Voices".

She was personal secretary to Haile Selassie, then in exile in Britain, when he went to the League of Nations to plead the cause of Ethiopia in 1935.

Carrying the heightened sense of racial identity gained through her experiences in England, her commitment to the concept of a cultural organisation came into focus in Jamaica again in 1936 when she founded the Readers and Writers Club and the Kingston Dramatic Club.

Her play *Pocomania* came out in 1938 (see page 14). In a conflict between the forces of "established European Christian male-led religions" and those of the "African-based female religions", *Pocomania* dramatises the Caribbean cultural conflict which has existed since slavery. What Marson also brings before us here is the issue of women's autonomy as it emerges against cultural forms which spring from the power relations of class, race and sex.

In both her literary and journalistic writing, Una Marson was on a courageous journey. Made vulnerable by her rejection of many of the social values of her class, she was often plagued by feelings of hopelessness and bouts of depression. But she came bearing many gifts and they are for us.



LUCY GONZALES PARSONS (1852-1942) American free speech and labor leader. Born in Texas, her mixed origins of Black, Mexican and Native American attuned her to struggles of racial minorities and foreigners in the U.S. She was a leading figure in the national working class movement, and in the campaign to release her husband, Albert, and seven other Haymarket martyrs, following the Haymarket "Riots" in Chicago, 1886. Although four were hung, including Albert, she continued working for the defense of other political prisoners through the International Labor Defense (ILD). She linked other political trials to Haymarket, which was seen as the first precedent for political conspiracy trials. Parsons was a founding member of the Industrial Workers of the World, and one of the original women members of the Knights of Labor. For 70 years, she was a familiar sight in the labor movement, writing, pamphleteering, demonstrating and organizing. When she died, the FBI confiscated her large literary and political library and never released it. She is most remembered as a champion of the hungry, jobless, foreign-born, women, and ethnic and racial minorities.

©1985 Helaine Victoria Press, Inc. A nonprofit educational organization. Research updated by Jocelyn H. Cohen. Photo: Chicago Historical Society.

Third International Feminist Book Fair

14-19 June, University of Montreal. The Book Fair provides a unique opportunity for feminists to network and discover each other's work while at the same time, making feminist authors known to a wider audience. The Fair will be bilingual (English/French) but some of the events planned will be held in Spanish. A series of seminars, panels, workshops and readings will take place throughout the Fair. Three theme days have been chosen: Memory, Power, and Strategies for Feminist Thought. For further information write to: TIFBF, 4060 boul. St. Laurent, Suite 204, Montreal, Que., Can., H2W 1Y9 (CAIRA News2.1)

Call for Papers

Canadian Women Studies/les cahiers de la femme is planning a double issue on "Women and Literacy" for Fall/Winter 1988. Reflective articles sought, in English or French, on any aspect of women and literacy, or on specific programmes for women and/or growing out of women's groups.

Send 2 copies of mss. with notes (typed double-spaced, no longer than 2500 words (10 pp.)), a brief biographical sketch and an abstract of your article. Photographs and/or graphics if possible. Deadline 1 July 1988.

To submit work or for further information, write to: Canadian Woman Studies, 212 Founders College, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario, M3J 1P3.



BLAZE A FIRE

Profiles of Contemporary Caribbean Women

by Nesha Z Haniff

BLAZE A FIRE contributes to the field of Caribbean women's oral history while adding to the growing body of literature on women and work throughout the world.

Haniff brings to the reader profiles of twenty eight Caribbean women, some well known locally and internationally, others known only in the communities they serve. The profiles illustrate the changing attitudes and roles of women in the Caribbean and also shed light on the relationship of each woman's personal history and her degree of integration within the society. Agriculture, politics, health and the arts are only some of the areas within which the varied experience and diverse contributions of these women are illustrated.

Written and researched for students in the Caribbean this book will also be of interest to scholars at all levels, as well as other readers interested in learning more about women and work in the Caribbean. It will be useful both as a document and as a reference book for women's studies, Caribbean studies and the general reader.

BLAZE A FIRE



Profiles of Contemporary Caribbean Women

NESHA Z. HANIFF

AUTHOR:

Nesha Haniff was born and raised in Guyana. She received her Ph.D. in Education from the University of Michigan where she is currently a visiting scholar at the Centre for Afro-American and African studies. Her research continues to focus on Caribbean women.

BURNING MARKETS, BURNING HOPES

Norma Shorey Bryan

When a market burns in the Caribbean, the economic livelihood of the market vendors is disrupted. When Marché Soloman was set ablaze by Ton Ton Macoutes in Port-au-Prince in Haiti the market vendors lost not only their shelter but all their possessions, for the market was their home and workplace.

The Haitian marketplace is in many ways similar to markets in the CARICOM countries. There is the food section where the tropical fruits and vegetables are displayed attractively; there is the craft section—but instead of mainly straw goods, a dazzling assortment of wooden carvings and paintings and embroidered items vie for buyers' attention. The market place is a slice of life in Haiti where the rich creativity, colour and beauty contrast starkly with the meagre earnings and intolerable living conditions.

During the turbulent pre-November election period, it was not unusual for a Ton Ton Macoute gang to fire on the market place, sending the women and children scurrying to safety. The brutality and terror which we witnessed on our television screens was the daily reality of thousands of Haitian people.

But during the twenty-one months between the time that Baby Doc fled Haiti (February 1986) and the time scheduled for elections (November 1987) the people of Haiti had some 'space' to work towards change in their society.

Women were active in the many civic organisations which sprung up, and worked tirelessly side by side with men as community animators, literacy teachers, development workers. They recognised that women were the poorest of the poor with the lowest literacy rates, that female headed households were the most disadvantaged. And yet, the Haitian culture, like ours, socialised women to remain in the background to work and not to speak out.

Famn d'Aiti is one of the women's organisations determined to build women's confidence and to encourage women's participation and leadership roles in two major tasks that face the Haitian people. One of these tasks is to change the socio-economic conditions under which the majority of the nation exists; the second, to mobilise women and men to become more conscious of their own power—the power of the people. The successful mobilisation of thousands of women in a march in February 1987 to affirm a change for women's rights in the new constitution was a measure of the level of interest in the issue being raised by Famn d'Haiti.

Many women worked actively in the preparation for the November elections in voter registration, educating people about their rights, the electoral process and the new constitution.

Many were sceptical of the election process, and rightly so as events, now history, have demonstrated. But more importantly, they saw the elections as only one step in popular mobilisation. Whatever the results, change would not happen until women and men gained a new consciousness of their own power and a vision that change was possible.

"Croyons que la société doit changer pour que change la situation de la femme."

"We believe that society must change in order for the situation of women to change."

The events of bloody Sunday Election Day and the farce of the January 'selection' have sent the leaders underground for a time. Although the present government continues the repressive practices of the past one and the Ton Ton Macoutes continue to terrorise the populace, the spirit of the Haitian people is not daunted. They have gained a vision of a new and different society and many men and women are determined to work towards it in their way. We in the English-speaking Caribbean can no longer turn a blind eye to recent events in Haiti. We have to find ways to support the Haitian people as they shape a new destiny.

FORTY FILMS FOR CARIBBEAN FESTIVAL

All film and video makers native to the Caribbean region are invited to participate in the *1st Festival d'Images Caraïbes* destined for Martinique in June, 1988.

On show will be forty Caribbean films from Cuba, Santo Domingo, Jamaica, Haiti, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts-Nevis, Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, St. Lucia, Barbados, Trinidad, Curacao, Venezuela, French Guyana, Guyana. Awards for best screenplay, best image, best soundtrack are being made. The *Images Caraïbes* award, conceived by a Martinican artist, will be awarded to the best short film.

A symposium called "Creativity, Cinematographic Production and Distribution in the Caribbean" is planned. Topics for meetings and debates also reflect the concerns of people involved in this vital new area of Caribbean endeavour. Some are: "Writers and Cinema", "Black actors and Cinema", "North-South Relations of the Image".

MONTSERRAT TO HEAD DELEGATION

Vereen Thomas, General Secretary of the Montserrat Workers Union (MAWU), will head the Caribbean and Latin American Women's delegation to the 14th World Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Australia in March 1988. The theme of the congress is "The Challenge of Change". There will be a separate women's conference before the meeting of the entire body.

TRAINING AND RESEARCH FOCUS IN DOMINICA

Dominica's Women's Bureau is concentrating its efforts this year mainly on training and research, especially in the areas of violence against women and adolescent mothers.

With the assistance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, twenty women were trained to research the topic of violence against women. Research was carried out in August and presently a data base is being established. The survey was carried out with the cooperation of the National Council of Women.

A three-year programme began in September, 1987, when the UNICEF-funded Adolescent Mothers Project was launched. Thirty teenage mothers are participating in the programme, which offers academic and parenting skills training and counselling. The programme also involves the mother's parents and the father of her child.

Two women from Dominica attended the orientation Skills Training Programme organised by the Grenada Women's Affairs Department and sponsored by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and WAND. The next step is an apprenticeship programme for the women, Millicent Stowe in electrical small appliance repair and Gertrude Cuffy in plumbing.

ART GUYANA

The Guyana Women Artists Association is organising a retrospective of women's art. The exhibit will be shown at the Umana Yana in Georgetown from April 7 to 30, 1988. The retrospective exhibit pulls together painting and sculpture from 1928 to 1988. Out of the exhibition a poster by Stephanie Correia and a catalogue are being produced.

WOMEN TALK ON CBI

A small contingent of Caribbean women made a strong showing at the deliberations of the U.S. Congressional Study Mission on the CBI held in February in Barbados. Attending were Peta-Anne Baker (Association of Development Agencies, Jamaica), Joan French (CAFRA) and Peggy Antrobus (WAND). A report on the meeting appears in the March 1988 issue of *Cafra News*.

INTERNATIONAL PEACE MEETING IN VENEZUELA

The University of the Andes, in Venezuela, together with national and international organisations, is sponsoring the "International Convention for Peace, Disarmament, and Preservation of Life", to take place in Mérida, Venezuela, April 19 to 24, 1988.

The principal objectives of the convention are to continue the process of sensitising the conscience of the world to the problems of Peace, respect for human rights and life; to share ideas, experiences, concepts and practices for the promotion of world peace.

This convention which will take place close to the arrival of the new millenium, challenges the people of the world to meet the demands that this moment in history imposes: to find the peaceful means for a better life for all.

The event will use an approach which emphasizes the study of various areas complicating the experiment for world peace. Some of the sessions are: Taking part in the search for peace; Disarmament and Peace; Education, Science, Culture and Religion, Promoters of Peace; Human Rights, Violence, Democracy and Peace; Paying for arms vs. paying for development; Changes for living—or living for changes?

There will be celebration of drama, cinema, dance, poetry, puppetry, plastic arts and music. The closing event will be a "Grand March for Peace".

The convention is open to every school of thought, and to all institutions, groups, movements and individuals concerned with attaining a better world.

Those interested in participating are invited to contact the Director of Culture of the University of the Andes through the following:

Telephone: 074-52-12-58

Telex: CDCH- U.L.A. #74173

Address: Dirección de Cultura y Extensión
Universitaria

Edificio Administrativo 4° piso. Avda. Tulio
Febres Cordero

Mérida — Estad. Mérida — Venezuela.

WOMEN HIGGLERS IN SLAVERY DAYS

"Labour . . . is the basis of all culture" *Lamming*

Higglers, hucksters, hawkers, vendors, traders . . . the movers and makers of the internal marketing system of the Caribbean trace the origins of this business practice to the West African trading community. An article by Lorna Simmonds published in *Jamaica Journal* (20/1) looks back at the economic enterprise of the Jamaican town dweller during slavery, noting the sexual division of labour at the foundation of the urban slave economy.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the lifestyles of slaves living in the towns were very different from those of rural slaves. In fact, the features of that system of labour which had been laid for the construction of plantation society had already been altered by the ways of the town. These included the variety of social groupings, the number of free coloured and black female slave-owners, the presence of foreigners involved in the shipping trade, and the concentration of urban slave labour in economic activities of a commercial nature.

Picture the contrasts between the plantation setting and the urban scene. On the plantations, slaves in the field were assigned the same work, regardless of sex. Men, women and children were placed in the gang system according to age or fitness. It was in other areas of plantation life that the division of labour between men and women would emerge. Specific positions held by slaves, such as drivers and artisans, were dominated by men while women worked in the great house.

Meanwhile, in the urban areas, the division of labour was defined according to sex and residence. In town, slave women were doing domestic work. They were cooks, seamstresses, wet nurses, ladies' maids, children's nannies, washerwomen, cleaningwomen, household servants and in the marketing trade. Male slaves were coopers (barrel makers), caulkers (those who made barrels airtight), bakers, carpenters, masons, butchers, silversmiths, brickmakers on public works programmes, fishermen, wharf slaves, and male slaves manned the vessels which plied the coast of the island. Men involved in these activities, particularly those slave artisans, fishermen, sailors and skilled slaves who hired out their labour, acquired a degree of independence.

Simmonds suggests that this relative freedom of movement and action could have been equalled only by those female slaves who participated in the marketing of provisions. Vending for their master's benefit was one thing (the sale of dry goods, provisions, handicrafts and baked goods was essential to the economic welfare of the urban slave-owners), but slave women were quick to

chart an independent mode of living in the towns. This arrangement also suited the owners who didn't have to provide for the material needs of the slave as the slave-owning planter had to do.

By the early 1800s, a majority of women lived in Jamaica's larger towns. There were a large number of female slave-owners and thousands of women involved in higgling. They carried the goods on trays or baskets about the streets in town. They set up stalls on street corners. They sold in the markets. Slaves travelling on coastal vessels took goods for sale to other towns. Still others went overland to rural communities. The growth of street vending, particularly in Kingston, was providing competition for established shopkeepers and other free traders.

As in the case of Barbados where seventeen separate pieces of legislation came before the House of Assembly, the response of the white authorities to higgling was to turn on the law. However, acts and ordinances designed to suppress trading proved futile. The Jamaican authorities relented toward the end of slavery. Realising perhaps that they were dealing with the character of an already formed social and economic institution, they moved for regularity rather than suppressive laws.

Female slaves marketed imported goods, local products and food provisions. In so doing they played a complex part in the emerging social structure persisting beyond emancipation. Simmonds shows that they created a link between the plantation-slave provider and the urban consumer. They provided the chief means by which the rural slave population could acquire supplements to the basics provided by the slave-owners. Also in their role as middlemen in the provision trade, these women had the power to regulate the price of provisions.

In their pursuit of economic independence, some slaves came into conflict with the law, some faced physical danger and even death travelling over land and by sea to markets and estates to sell their goods. Some would deal in stolen goods, making arrangements with other slaves and with free persons. Their determination to struggle for and achieve some degree of control over their lives is part of a tradition of women that continues today.

(Information from *Jamaica Journal* 20/1, Feb. 1987; and lecture by Dr Hilary Beckles at Women and Development Studies seminar, Cave Hill, Sept. 1987, and WAND/CAFRA seminar, Oct. 1987)

"In a divided world that don't need islands no more
tiny keys can open mighty doors."

from *Rally Round the West Indies*, David Rudder