

CARFRA NEWS



NEWSLETTER OF THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION
VOL. 7 NO. 1 - JANUARY TO MARCH 1993

SÍ POR CUBA





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

Its main purposes are to:

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

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

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NEWSLETTER

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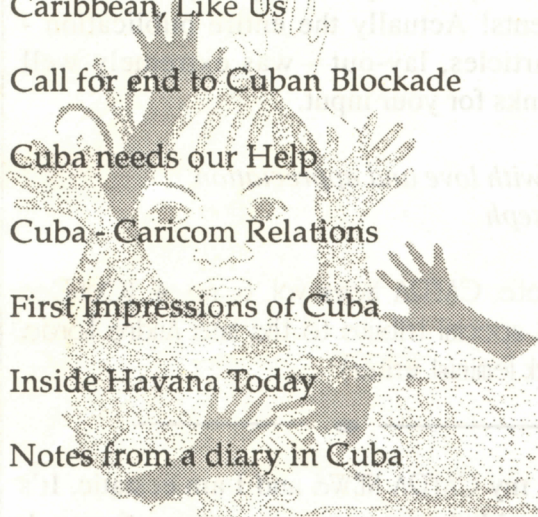
CONTENTS

Editorial	1
Letter to Editor	1
Poem - by Ife	2
I remember ..Summer University in Feminist Theory	3



CUBA TODAY ...Because Cuba is

Caribbean, Like Us	5
Call for end to Cuban Blockade	6
Cuba needs our Help	7
Cuba - Caricom Relations	8
First Impressions of Cuba	9
Inside Havana Today	10
Notes from a diary in Cuba	12
Insights into Cuba's Health System	13
Cuba cares for the Elderly	14
Feminism and Cuban ideology	15
Religion and the Revolution	16
Dr. Cristina in Guyana	17



Women and the Economy	18
-----------------------	----

International Women's Day	19
---------------------------	----

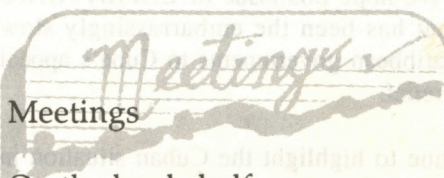
CAFRA writes UN on Women's Day	20
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NEWS - NEWS - NEWS

Highlights:

Female minister ordained	21
CPDC: no to Larry Summers	21
Belize shelter for battered women	21
HIV test for rape	22
CAFRA member joins UNIFEM	23

Meetings	24
On the bookshelf	25
Call For Reserchers	26
Casa Literary Award	26
CARIFEM update	27



EDITORIAL

At the suggestion of Andaiye, whose moving tribute to the late Audre Lorde appeared in CAFRA News vol. 6, no. 4, this issue focuses on the plight of the Cuban people.

The United States has maintained a trade embargo against Cuba for 32 years. In October 1992, the long effort to have other countries institute the embargo was formalized with the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act. In November, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly condemned the stricter sanctions of the Act. It is crucial that we in the Caribbean oppose any aggressive policies on the part of the United States, mobilize all possible support for Cuba's right to self-determination and lobby for an end to the embargo against Cuba.

In an effort to highlight the situation of women in particular and accelerate the regional solidarity movement, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) hosted a meeting in March entitled "Cuban Women in the 90's: Realities and Challenges." CAFRA provided financial assistance for women from various parts of the region to attend the meeting. These women, along with other CAFRA members who attended the meeting, responded enthusiastically to CAFRA's call for articles on Cuba. These and other interesting views on Cuba, are featured.

Delegates at the meeting pledged, inter-alia, to mobilize their countries to provide practical assistance. Such assistance has now become critical since Cuba was hit by a storm two days after the meeting, resulting in loss of life and widespread damage in eight of the island's 14 provinces. We hope this issue of CAFRA NEWS galvanizes what has been the embarrassingly slow response by Caribbean governments to Cuba's appeal for emergency relief.

We will continue to highlight the Cuban situation in subsequent issues and would welcome articles on both Cuba and Haiti, which we recognize to be special cases deserving solidarity and immediate practical support.

Also, in this issue, is our annual survey of International Women's Day celebrations around the region, as well as our regular round-up of news, upcoming conferences and new books received.

In sisterhood
Cathy Shepherd

LETTER

• TO EDITOR •

Dear CAFRA News

Just a quick, short fax to let you know that I received the copies of CAFRA NEWS and the tribute is very lovely. I truly appreciated it. Compliments! Actually the entire publication - content, articles, lay-out - was extremely well done! Thanks for your input.

Sincerely with love and appreciation,

Gloria Joseph

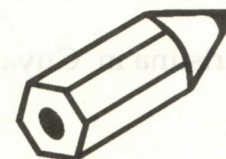
St. Croix

(Editor's note: CAFRA News vol. 6, no. 4, (Oct-Dec 1992) paid special tribute to the late Audre Lorde, noted black feminist writer)

I received my CAFRA NEWS and I am ecstatic. It's given me added encouragement to go forward. Since the workshop, I have been writing and performing my own rhythm poetry at various shows and with each performance I really feel myself coming more into power. I feel like I am on my way and no power can stop this ride.

Enclosed is a poem I wrote after spending time going over all the information I had gathered at the workshop.

One Love,
Ife Harris
Barbados



MAN GET REAL

in de city, yah wanna beat we,
in de town, yah knocking we down
in we belly, in we back
wah we gine do bout that
we gine fight back
we gine show them men something
we gine fight back
cause we got pride
and we got dignity
and yah cann tex it way from we

we gine fight, fah equal rights
we gine fight, fah freedom ah speech
how much children we gine got
wether we wanna mek love or not
we gine fight house wifeization
we gine fight fah career opportunities
yah don think that we want pay
but yah wanna pay we wid sex
and dah does mek we vex
den yah wantta know why we aggressive so
(chorus)

deh got some men wid hands
that like Ben Johnson foot, fast, fast
back arm like Arthur Ashe
fist like Mohammed Ali
but we gine fight
we gine put dem men in court
we gine fight, rape we gine report
and one a we weapons is linking
and communicating wid other women
we gine mek de private political
yah shouldn't use we as a vehicle
our personal rights yah abuse
den yah mek some flimsy excuse
but we ent keeping in we grief
every body gine know who is a beast
(chorus)



KATHY IFE HARRIS on stage, during the 1992 "Summer University" held in Trinidad.

To be born a woman and survive
is a truly mystical thing
cause we are suppose to be
weak and wrong
but instead we are strong
we gine fight, male domination
we gine fight, male oppression
some woman was born to compliment man
to bring him to his full potential
we should be walking side by side
don put we in de back
cause we don like that.
(chorus)

written by IFE

I Remember ... **SUMMER UNIVERSITY IN FEMINIST THEORY**

by Hilary Nicholson, a course co-ordinator at the Summer University

When I remember the 1992 CAFRA/WAND "Summer University," in my mind's eye there is an explosion of colour and excited chatter as 28 participants transform Pax Guest House, Mt St Benedict, into a visual and musical delight, an instant Caribbean showroom. I hear much giggling as participants improvise skits recounting their escapades en route to Trinidad.

I see the wide smiles as early-morning bouquets, encouraging notes and tiny, sweet surprise gifts are found by "secret chocolate" partners.

I see the previously sedate Tea Room, now the centre of activity, with every inch of wall covered in newsprint: coloured diagrams, charts, drawings, thoughts-of-the-day (sometimes provocative, sometimes wise).

I remember strong, welcoming hugs during warm-ups: late-night planning sessions, occasionally by candlelight, when a work-group joined the resource team and, having been challenged by an unexpected turn of events during the day's efforts, juggled and re-worked the week's timetable. I remember women's laughter as Aghista Pierre role-played a pastor addressing "his" congregation deep voice chanting hilarious nonsense, wearing bathrobe and towel with decorum, and ceremoniously ringing the brass bell as a warning to potential (female) deviants. (At other times, the bell meant dinnertime with superb meals tempting us to remain in the dining room).

Aghista re-created so cleverly the paternalistic, alienating and mystifying aspects of religious teachings.

Her characterisation sparked much discussion on the role of religion in women's lives. In another skit, four women burst into a tug of war: they represented traditional religions fighting over a "lost soul."

How we grappled with concepts of spirituality, religion and feminism that day; and with questions such as "Why is it that in the Christian teaching God never had a wife and why were all the disciples men?"

I see, in my mind's eye, the "power poster" created by passing a sheet of paper around the circle, from pen to pen. Like the rolling stone gathering moss, it gathered words which illustrated the essential meaning of "power" for women: self-reliance, determination, unity, inner strength, togetherness, self-knowledge, being involved, independence, commitment, self-improvement, changing structures...



*Ilene Barrett of Jamaica
performs a skit at the opening ceremony*

I remember a group of women bursting with ideas, openly proud of the people they left behind for two weeks in 13 territories of the region. Participants came from small and large women's organisations, religious groups, rural co-operatives, a police union, popular theatre groups, youth groups, women's activist groups, national organisations, and more.

They brought an extraordinary mix of experiences to enrich the intense discussions which took place over the two weeks - sometimes small knots of women were scattered all over the house and grounds, chewing over issues, soul searching. Later, the whole group would come together to develop a Caribbean woman's perspective on a particular issue.

The intention of the Summer University was to develop an

Continued on pg. 4



*Mechtelly Tjin-A-Sie (Suriname)
recites one of her poems at the opening ceremony*



*Sophia Alexander (St. Lucia)
sings "La Rose" at the opening ceremony*

I Remember ...

SUMMER UNIVERSITY IN FEMINIST THEORY

Continued from pg. 3

understanding of feminist theory and practice among women who were active in these areas at the community level but never had the opportunity to reflect on the theoretical bases of their work. The idea for the University grew out of seminars conducted in 1989/90 by WAND and CAFRA. The themes explored at the University reflected issues which have been critical areas of concern to feminism and the Caribbean women's movement.

Many popular education techniques were used along with the formal presentations. This mixed approach generated an unending stream of creative responses from participants who drew on their own experiences then synthesized their observations towards the beginning of their own Caribbean feminist approach.

From the very beginning of the course, participants challenged traditional gender roles, particularly within the family. Can there be rape in marriage? This was one of the most hotly debated questions. It raised the issue of "woman as property" and also of woman's rights - and other rights - within a union.

Do women have the power to change things? The question re-appeared often. Lengthy discussion led to a group view that an important source of power for women lies in the community, where women have strength in numbers - in markets, in PTAs, in the church ... And from within the community, women could take action towards social change.

As if the days weren't brim-filled with new and sometimes difficult topics, there were spontaneous skills-sharing sessions in the evenings: sewing, headwrapping, herbal healing, hair braiding. And the word. "mistresspiece" was added to our vocabulary - the feminine of "masterpiece," describing a superb artwork or presentation.

A range of other activities were organised by participants - early morning walks, video screenings, a fete, beach trip, visit to Hindu temple, talent night; and for the closing ceremony - a series of skits which cleverly highlighted moments of the Summer University.

Ideas just kept flowing. No wonder a participant joked: "Well, all this that I have learnt so much these days that by the time I'm ready to go back home, the airline will charge me for overweight!"

SÍ POR CUBA

BECAUSE CUBA IS CARIBBEAN, LIKE US

The United States (US) has maintained a blockade against Cuba for 32 years, under nine Presidents.

Officially, the blockade began at the end of 1960 but earlier in that year, an arms embargo, an oil embargo and a sugar boycott had already been imposed. At year end, all exports to Cuba except medicines were prohibited. At the same time, Cuba's sugar quota was divided up among other countries in the region.

In February 1962, the embargo was made almost total when the U.S. prohibited all imports from Cuba into the US. In theory, medicines and some foods were still permitted into Cuba, but when Hurricane Flora hit Cuba in October 1963 the United States government prohibited the sending of any food or medicines. In May 1964 the removal of these two "exemptions" was made official.

The imposition of the blockade against Cuba was not a small blow against the Revolution; in 1958, the year before the Revolution, 71 per cent of all Cuban exports went to the US and 64 per cent of Cuban imports came from the US.

The US has kept a consistent pressure on other countries to join its trade blockade against Cuba. For example, under President Reagan, any industrial product from anywhere in the world containing Cuban nickel (an important Cuban export) became prohibited. Under President Bush, a Swedish medical company (Alfa-Laval) was prohibited from continuing to send medical supplies to Cuba because part of one piece of equipment had been manufactured in the US.

In October 1992, the long effort to globalize the blockade was formalized with the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act (dubbed the Torricelli Law after its chief sponsor, Robert Torricelli, Democrat of New Jersey). With this Act, the US trade embargo against Cuba officially extends to all foreign subsidiaries of US companies; and any ship stopping in Cuba is barred from US ports for six months.

Thirty two years, nine presidents Republican and Democrat. This is war. And it is a war that is not really about communism. Several US Presidents have, at different times, made allies of, or at least negotiated with the leaders of the former Soviet Union. The war is not even about race. We have seen at least one US President fawn the Miami Cubans to threaten US politicians. It is about whether the Caribbean is the US backyard or the Caribbean frontyard.



In 1978, when some youth in the WPA (the Guyanese Opposition Party) protested against a proposal that the WPA party programme should include a clause expressing solidarity with Cuba, Walter Rodney intervened. He said he understood that the reason they were opposed was because the Cuban government was close to the Burnham regime, against which they were fighting. But then he added, very quietly, "I don't think there can be any such thing as a Caribbean patriot who does not give solidarity to Cuba." Asked why, he continued: "Because Cuba is small, like us. Because Cuba is poor, like us. Because Cuba is Caribbean, like us. And because the US is treating Cuba like an enemy because Cuba won't give in, unlike us." That is still why we have to give solidarity to Cuba.

Postscript: Two years later, on June 13, 1980, Walter Rodney was assassinated. And in spite of its need to maintain good relations with the then Government of Guyana, Cuba was one of the few Caribbean governments (another was the Maurice Bishop government in Grenada) which publicly condemned the assassination.

by Andaiye



SÍ POR CUBA

CALL FOR END TO CUBAN BLOCKADE

The Regional Meeting on "Cuban Women in the '90s: Realities and Challenges; a Solidarity Meeting," has called for an "immediate end to the total blockade against our sister country of Cuba and the repeal of the Torricelli Act."

The meeting which was held in Havana, in March this year, also called on the US government and other countries of the Organisation of American States (OAS) to respect the ideological pluralism agreement of 1975. That agreement which was endorsed by the OAS had given Member States the freedom to establish relations with Cuba.

The meeting demanded that the United Nations implement the General Assembly Resolution of November 1992 which dealt with the need to put an end to the economic, trade and financial blockade imposed by the US against Cuba. The women at the meeting also planned a global campaign to defeat the blockade.

Representatives of participating organizations should send correspondence to the US President and Mrs. Clinton; to the General Assembly of the United Nations; to the UN Commission on Human Rights, rejecting the appointment of a special 'rapporteur' for Cuba; to the Vatican, calling for an end to the blockade against Cuba, the implementation of resolutions approved by international agencies, and respect for the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples.

HOW CARIBBEAN GOV'TS VOTED

Below is the recorded vote of Caribbean Governments on November 24, 1992, on Resolution 47/19 - "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba."

- In favour: • Barbados, Haiti and Jamaica.
 Abstaining: • Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.
 Absent: • Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis.



SÍ POR CUBA

CUBA NEEDS OUR HELP

On March 12, 1993, Cuba was hit by a storm which left four people dead and 95 persons injured. Losses have been estimated at over one billion dollars.

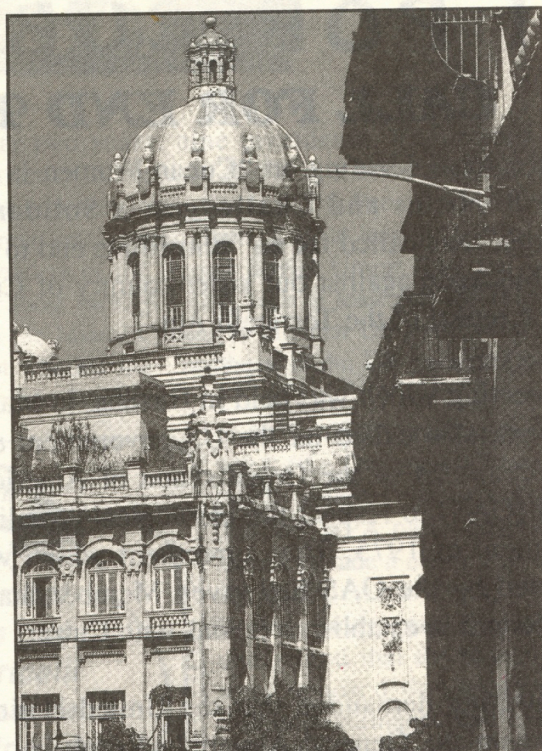
Hundreds of thousands of people are reported to have suffered heavy losses, with tens of thousands of persons in temporary shelters. Many buildings were damaged as waves breached seawalls and flooded coastal communities near Havana and crops in eastern provinces.

While the impact of the storm is still being assessed, a release from the Cuban Embassy in Jamaica, listed some of the damage as follows: 1,484 homes were totally destroyed with 36,401 being partially destroyed; 3,248 buildings, including hospitals, schools, factories, water and sanitation and food storage installation were either destroyed or suffered widespread damage; three tunnels connecting different sections of Havana were totally flooded; staple, export crops and cattle in eight of the country's 14 provinces were hard hit.

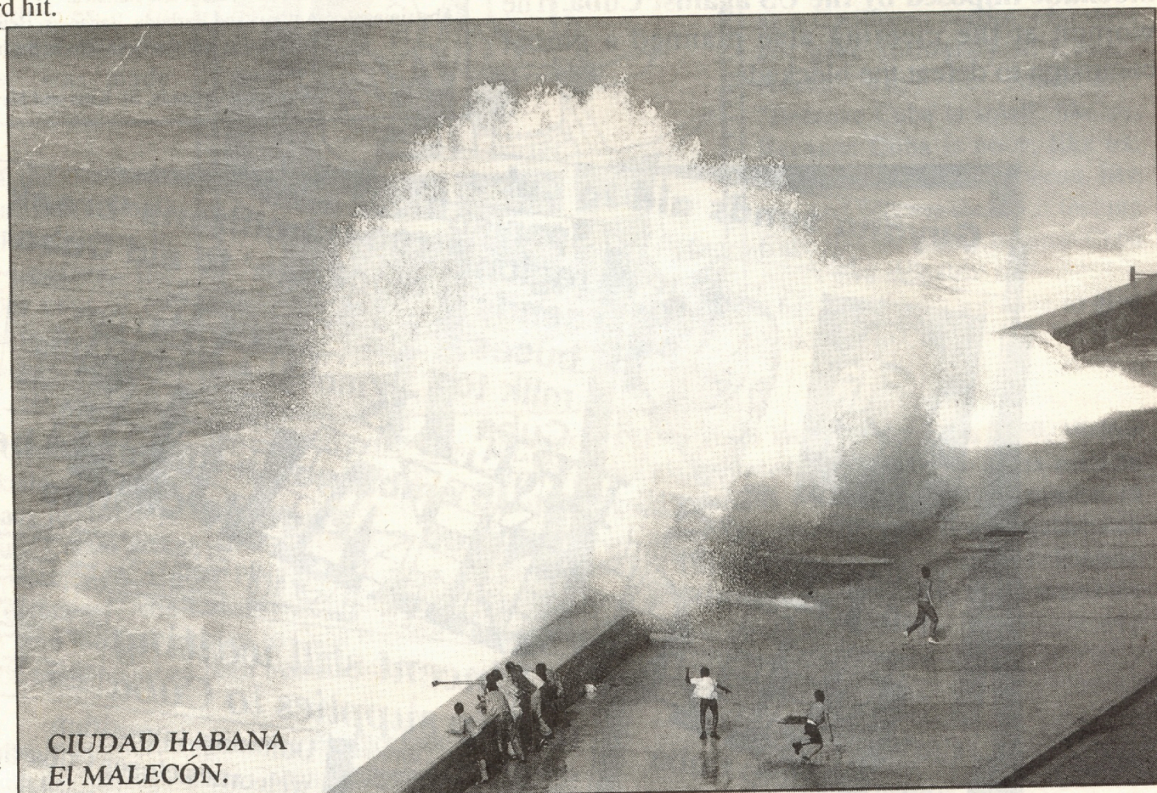
The release also stated that entire stocks of antibiotics and vaccines, blood banks and laboratory facilities, among other medical services were lost.

The storm came at a time when Cuba is facing what is probably the worst economic crisis of its revolutionary history. Desperately needed are supplies of

powdered milk, wheat, vegetable oil, canned food, antibiotics, anti-inflammatory medicines, painkillers, pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.



*Habana Vieja Museo de la Revolución.
Ex Palacio Presidencial.*



*CIUDAD HABANA
EL MALECÓN.*

The Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) and the Jamaica-Cuba Friendship Association are collecting contributions and organizing airlifts to Cuba.

continued on pg 8

CUBA NEEDS OUR HELP

cont'd from pg 7...

CAFRA News readers are urged to respond as generously and promptly as possible by sending contributions in cash or kind through one of the following channels:

Cuba Appeal, Account Number 0125-999-3, Royal Bank of Canada, Broad Street, Bridgetown, Barbados (channelled by the Caribbean Conference of Churches through the Cuban Ecumenical Council);

***The Cuba Appeal Fund '93, Account Number 091126243, Workers' Bank, New Kingston Branch, Kingston 5, Jamaica (channelled by the Jamaica-Cuba Friendship Association through the Cuban Institute for Friendship, which distributes nationally to all groups, according to need) ; Cuban diplomatic missions where these exist.**

The Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre (CPDC), Caribbean Human Rights Network, CCC and the Women and Development Unit (WAND) are exploring possibilities for a wider Caribbean Appeal for Cuba.

CUBA-CARICOM *Relations*

December 8, 1972: Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago establish diplomatic relations with Cuba.

October 1983: The US invasion of Grenada leads to a long period of hostility by some CARICOM nations and low-profile, lukewarm relations by others.

1990s: High-level Cuban delegations have a presence at CARICOM meetings, annual meetings of the Caribbean Development Bank and important regional conferences organized by European and Caribbean private sector organizations.

April 1991: A high-level, 10-member CARICOM technical mission, visits Cuba to examine "the possibilities for closer and mutually beneficial Cuba-CARICOM relations."

July 1991: Cuba applies for observer status in CARICOM.

May 1992: St. Vincent and the Grenadines re-establishes diplomatic relations with Cuba.

June 1992: Cuba gains membership in the Caribbean Tourism Organization.

July, 1992: CARICOM leaders agree to establish a joint Cuba-CARICOM Commission "to promote cooperative relations between the Caribbean Community and Cuba in economic, social, cultural and technological fields."

February 1993: Jamaica and Cuba sign an agreement to cooperate in tourism, economic development and to fight drug trafficking.

March 1993: CARICOM leaders affirm their intention to pursue cooperative relations with Cuba, despite US concern on the matter.

A Cuban official visits Dominica to explore the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations.

SOURCE: Caribbean News Agency (CANA)

SÍ POR CUBA

First Impressions of Cuba by Stephanie Pile, CAFRA member, Trinidad

It was my first visit to Cuba. I went with a completely open mind. We arrived during the night and I was surprised to discover that the airport and surrounding areas were not as well lit as other international airports. Later, I learnt that there is an oil problem therefore electricity has to be conserved.

As for the Regional Meeting on Cuban women itself, it was well organised and the accommodation for approximately 500 women was more than adequate. We stayed at facilities built for athletes during the 1991 Pan American Games.

Although there were simultaneous translations throughout the conference, we (English-speaking delegates) sometimes found ourselves totally at sea outside the official conference proceedings.

The only unfortunate incident I could remember was on the opening day when Sonia asked a Latin American delegate not to blow her cigarette smoke in our direction and her response (in Spanish) was: "You should wear a mask."

I was very impressed with the transport arrangements. We had a caravan of about 11 buses, police escort at all times and an ambulance too.

On the last day of the conference, my group visited a medical clinic in downtown Havana. On the way back, some of us hopped off the bus to take a quick stroll downtown. At the museum, a Cuban willingly offered to show us around to the old Opera House and to some tourist shops nearby but I left empty-handed.

There were no T-shirts, no craft items - nothing much on Cuba that a traveller would want to take back. Instead, there were imported food items, some clothing and items you would more readily find in a grocery than in a tourist shop. We popped in on a grocery and I felt that it may not have been open to natives since only US currency was allowed.

We did not have many opportunities to mingle with the people because of our tight schedules. While driving on the main roads, I saw lots of mango plantations. Instead of ornamentals on front lawns, I saw cassava, tomatoes and rows of corn - even on medians on the roadway. We saw lots of high-rise apartment buildings but not many run down houses. There did not seem to be much of a problem with the availability of food. Lots of fruits were served at every meal.

In terms of health care, everyone knows that Cuba has one of the best health care systems in the Caribbean. We spoke with a Cuban doctor who told us there is a doctor and a nurse to every 120 families, since the Revolution. Interestingly, women medics appear to be in the majority. We saw several black doctors and therapists attending to patients at the clinic. Quite a contrast to the hospitality industry where we saw people of fairer complexions.

During the night, main streets were lit but not the side streets. Yet, people were out there, moving around, walking about very casually, in the dark. Lots of people on bicycles. It seemed to be a safe place.

I have been told that prostitution is



Sugar Cane Truck Driver, Cuba

on the increase. At the hotel where we stayed there were two young women, not more than 18 or 19, plying their trade. People say it's because of tourism and the need for material things - jeans, flashy clothes. At the airport, there were about four to five children begging for chewing gum and pens.

Amidst the whirlwind of such a major conference, I experienced something in Cuba that I'll never forget. During the opening ceremony, we lost our electrical supply for about 45 minutes. Unlike elsewhere in the Caribbean where the people may break into criticism of government and the utilities, the Latinos burst into non-stop chanting of "Cuba, Cuba." They sang nationalistic songs like 'Guantanamera.' People lit their lighters. The chanting will begin with one group of Latin Americans, then another will follow and so on until the lights returned.

SÍ POR CUBA *Inside Havana Today*

I was one of 14 representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who attended a one-week CDS/ISIS Workshop at the University of Havana from March 1-6, 1993. (CDS/ISIS is a generalized information and storage retrieval software package, designed specifically for the computerized management of structured text data bases).

The workshop was organized by a Puerto Rican-based NGO, Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace, and was a sequel to one held in Puerto Rico in 1990. Participants came from Barbados, Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

We stayed at the Hotel Universitario (University Hotel), in a neighbourhood of Havana called Vedado, within walking distance of the University of Havana, the Malecón (sea wall), the Havana Libre hotel and Coppelia, reputed to be the largest soda fountain in the world. Actually, if you're as determined to see Havana as I was, it's within walking distance of everywhere.

We were lucky enough to have at least three hours of leisure time each day, in between classes and dinner, which I used to explore the city about which I had heard so much and finally had an opportunity to visit. We also had an opportunity to visit two NGOs, the Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty of the People, the Centre for Studies on America, the Napoleonic Museum and parts of Old Havana.

It is difficult not to notice that Cuba



Reaping cane in Cuba

is going through the most difficult period of its revolutionary history. Already squeezed in by a 32 year-old US trade embargo designed to punish the communist regime, Cuba has lost up to 85 per cent of its preferential trade and aid following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The Gross National Product declined by over 40 per cent between 1989 and 1992.

Further to this, in October 1992, US President George Bush signed the Cuban Democracy Act, the main aim of which is to hasten the end of Fidel Castro's Communist rule. The following month, the United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution (59-3 with 71 abstentions) asking the US to repeal the Act. It was the first time that the issue of the embargo had come to a vote in the chamber. The Act is a 'tribute' to the influence of the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF), a right-wing exile group based in Florida.

Despite all these pressures, Cuba still stands. The Cuban government has responded to the severe shortages of food, oil, medicines, raw materials and consumer goods, with wartime-like austerity measures referred to as the "special

period in time of peace." More items are rationed than ever before. One roll of bread a day per family. And many rationed items are seldom or never available. Fresh fruit and vegetables are scarce. Chicken and fresh milk are delicacies. To deal with the vegetable shortage, vegetable plots have replaced ornamental gardens in many residential areas.

A restriction has been imposed on "non-essential usage" of paper. Thus, toilet paper was not available in university wash rooms and papers from the Women's Solidarity Meeting (see page) could not be circulated to delegates.

In these times of structural adjustment, it is not strange to fellow Caribeños that Cuban women have been hit the hardest. It was mainly women that I saw lining up outside depleted supermarkets waiting for sugar, milk, eggs, oil, meat, baby food, toothpaste and bars of soap. For Cuban women, it is a daily fight just to feed their families. Castro is reported to have told members of the Federation of Cuban Women, in March 1991, to take good care of their clothes since they may not be able to buy dresses for the next few years.

According to Ilya Villar, a researcher with the non-governmental Centre for American Studies, the average Cuban woman "feels she can take no more." In addition to the "double burden" of having to work in the home as well as on the outside, she has to face the long food lines. Many Cuban women have no memory of the country before the Revolution. What keeps them going, she says, is the knowledge that their children have better opportunities to obtain a university education than children in many other countries of the world.

To conserve energy, factories have been closed and the work force redeployed to agriculture; oxen are used for production and transportation instead of machinery;

SÍ POR CUBA

Inside Havana Today

Continued from pg. 10

and electricity and water are rationed. During my brief stay, I experienced two short power outages and while the hotel always had water, there was no water at the university during the day, for the entire week I was there.

The crisis in transportation was very evident. Bicycles which until recently were virtually unknown in Cuba, appear to be the most common form of transportation. There are even special "cycle-buses" which transport travellers across the tunnel which runs under Havana Bay. For long journeys, the popular practice is to line up at a bus stop, begin running like mad as it approaches and push yourself aboard. It is not unusual to see four or five daring souls hanging from the windows of a dangerously overcrowded bus.

To cope with the economic crisis, Cuba's Fourth Congress adopted a development strategy based on the promotion of non-traditional exports (notably pharmaceuticals and bio-technology), the establishment of new industries based on joint ventures and the expansion of tourism.

Tourism is essential for the provision of badly-needed foreign exchange for spare parts for buses and machinery; to build roads; and provide houses, education and medical care. Regrettably, the expansion of tourism has produced some serious contradictions such as a thriving black market (50 Cuban pesos to 1 US dollar), prostitution and petty crime. Between 1989 and 1992, the black market exchange rate increased six-fold.

Julio Carranza, Sub-director of the

Centre for American Studies, estimates that the average salary in Cuba is 220-240 pesos per capita or the cost of two chickens and 40 eggs on the black market.

Prostitution is one means by which young Cuban women access the black market and earn a high income. These prostitutes ply their trade primarily among tourists since they are not interested in Cuban currency. According to Carranza, the view that prostitution can be easily avoided or, that it can endanger the Revolution, are two extreme positions. The problem is much more complex.

Another by-product of the tourism thrust is "apartheid tourism" - the segregation of those who have US dollars from the have-nots (it is illegal for Cubans to have foreign currency). I became aware of the system when we checked into the hotel and were given a "guest card" and told to show it whenever requested. The purpose of the card was to screen tourists from residents at "dollars-only" hotels, restaurants, night clubs and so-called "diplotiendas" or dollar stores. In this way, Cubans can only patronize these facilities if accompanied by a foreigner who pays for them with dollars.

As a result of "apartheid tourism," it is not impossible for a tourist to be totally unaware of the hardships Cubans endure on a daily basis. Fewer public buses contrast with a surplus of luxury buses and taxis for tourists. As consumer goods disappear from the shelves of Cuban stores, they abound in dollar stores. As food supplies dwindle, more restaurants are opened for tourists. And as it becomes more difficult for Cubans to holiday in their own country, it is easier for foreigners to holiday there. With hotels to suit every taste, swinging night life, fine food and drink, air-conditioning, good shopping and 907 historic monuments



This Cuban peasant plays her part to help feed her country

in Havana alone, Cuba is a very attractive tourist destination. But what are Cuba's options? Julio Carranza believes that there are two: either Cubans find a way to solve the contradictions in the context of the Revolution's goals; or Cuba returns to a US-dependent, capitalist system.

The February 24 General Election (the first direct elections to be held in 30 years), while strictly a one-party affair, showed that support for "Cuba, the Revolution and Socialism" has not been affected substantially. Ninety-nine per cent of the registered voters went to the polls and 88 per cent voted for the entire ticket. But, Carranza says, "support for the Revolution does not mean people are happy. They are confident that this political step will solve problems... Cubans are committed to the revolutionary process but have different views about the way to solve the problems."

by Cathy Shepherd

SÍ POR CUBA

NOTES FROM A DIARY IN CUBA

by Nan Peacocke

March 7

After dinner we stroll to a venue from our hotel to attend "a cultural event of African traditions." In the foyer, several displays have been set out. The one attracting our attention is about the African presence in this creole socialist society. We settle down to a beautifully choreographed story in dance. Dancer after dancer pulls members of the audience into the tale. We are reacquainted with orishas, iremes and el día de los Reyes (Epiphany).

March 8

We meet the Director, Editor and their co-workers at Casa de Las Americas. We talk for an hour about Casa's programme, about what possibilities there are for better communication between our Caribbean homes based on the evidence of a Caribbean culture dwelling within island and mainland territories. We present them with a gift (Creation Fire: A CAFRA Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry) with a tribute painfully inscribed in Spanish.

We are invited downstairs to a celebration where the men have organised a party in a courtyard in the compound, since it is International Women's Day. They have set up tables and chairs cafe-style, seat us and serve us fruit juice with *ron blanco*. They bring out an M. C.: jokes are told, games played. Best of all is a skit with an all-male cast, based on the TV soaps, the text of which is too subtle for me, though the cross-dressers aren't.

Tonight, we are taken by several buses to Garcia Lorca Theatre to a performance by the National Ballet of Cuba. The ballet, by contrast to last night's performance, is very European in form. We are treated to Chopin, danced by the great Alicia Alonso, the prima ballerina absolut of Cuba.

March 12

Storm tonight. Four of us have moved from the Villa Panamericana where the Solidarity Meeting has been held, into the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC) hostel in Havana. The wind is banging things around outside. I go into the kitchen to close a window. There's a little water on the kitchen floor but I feel safe from the storm in this massive, old building with its marble steps and walls of mirrors. I feel especially safe because we're 23 streets from the Malecón (Sea Wall).

March 13

Forty Argentineans show up around midnight. They were marooned at the airport where rumour had it that several planes were damaged, blown around on the runway. Nereda, in charge of the hostel tonight, lines the corridors with mattresses from somewhere and everyone has a place to sleep.

March 15

I walk down to Casa de Las Americas taking the Avenida de los Presidentes. Before I reach Calzada Street, I can smell the salt-soaked mud. In fact, there is a layer of mud over the entire coastal periphery of the city. Three days after the storm, trucks are still hauling away the rubble people are still shoveling out of their houses. I divert for a couple of blocks. A huge hose pumps seawater out of a basement room.

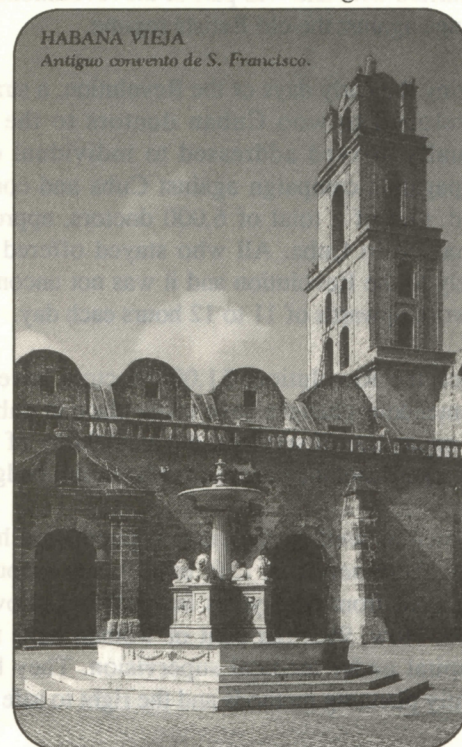
Everybody is busy sweeping and scraping. A very pregnant woman gets into the driver's seat of a Lada and puts her head down on the steering wheel. It hits me that this is the first admission of despair I have seen since I've been here.

When I get to Casa, an elderly gentleman tells me that another 'cyclone' is expected from that direction, pointing to the ominous grey in the north-east sky, and I should get to wherever I'm staying fast. I do. The storm does not show up. Thank God.

Postscript:

Staff of Casa de Las Americas are in the process of assessing the damage done to their library which houses the richest archival material in the Americas. When I spoke to the librarian on March 18, thousands of publications were literally being hung out to dry on lines strung across the main conference room. In the courtyard where IWD celebrations were held the week before, hundreds of sodden books lay opened to the sun. The librarian told me that we in the English-speaking Caribbean could assist them in two ways: by replacing documents in English we may have in our own university libraries and elsewhere; and by providing technical assistance in salvaging of material.

Nan Peacocke is publications editor at the Barbados-based Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the School of Continuing Studies, UWI.



SÍ POR CUBA

Insights into CUBA'S HEALTH System

Dr. Buch is one of the pioneers of the Cuban health care system. Her life captures and reflects the challenges and advances made in Cuba and the many women who contribute significantly to this process as professionals and volunteers.

Before 1959, health care was extremely inadequate and very few could afford private medical care. Deaths from infectious diseases including gastro-enteritis, tuberculosis and syphilis were very common. And very few women trained as doctors.

Dr. Buch's life reflects the struggle of a woman against this kind of discrimination. She came from a rural province in which it was not possible to study sciences. Money was also a problem and it was hard to convince her parents to allow her to study medicine in Havana, as a young woman on her own. However, by 1954 she started training and was one of 30 women out of a group of 450 students.

Much has changed since then. There has been an almost complete reversal in the gender composition of medical students. More women than men are studying medicine.

Dr. Buch, like many other university students at the time, identified with and was part of the revolutionary struggle for change against the old Batista regime.

During the early days of the Revolution, a strategy had been developed to woo Cuban doctors to the USA. Forms actually arrived addressed to individual doctors and a propaganda campaign against Cuba and communism was used. Out of a total of 6,000 doctors, approximately half remained in Cuba. All who stayed offered their services freely to the Revolution and it was not uncommon for them to work upwards of 11 to 12 hours each day.

Since the Revolution, 31,000 doctors have been trained. Tremendous changes have taken place in public health with the expansion of services, the availability of free medicines and significant increases in public health budgets.

Women as well as the general population have benefitted from these services. Life expectancy among women has increased from 60.5 years in 1959 to just over 74 years in 1993. Now, 99.8 per cent of women have their babies in hospital under medical supervision. They have access to family planning methods and the right to safe abortions.

The family doctor health care system allows one doctor to serve approximately every 120 families in one area. Family medicine is a specialty on its own. A nurse lives in the same housing complex as the doctor and they both work to provide a high standard of care.

Currently, no infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and syphilis are causes of death but attention is being paid to the chronic lifestyle illnesses such as heart disease and cancer.

In Cuba, the most common forms of cancer are cancers of the breast, lungs, cervix, uterus and colon. Treatment includes the use of traditional medicine as well as a programme of prevention through education. Research is also being done on alternative forms of treatment including extracts from plants, trees and marine creatures.



This Cuban woman flashes a healthy smile

And what better field to find Dr. Buch? Oncology is her specialty. She is a Professor of Medicine and head of the Institute of Oncology, Havana. The Institute has three functions - clinical, teaching and research. It is also responsible for the training of doctors. In research alone, there are 100 persons.

On the subject of Cuba's future, Dr. Buch is full of optimism. Since the Revolution, the USA has enforced an embargo against Cuba. Today, this embargo is even more rigorously adhered to. Prior to the dissolution of the USSR, Cuba benefitted from a favourable trading relationship. However, since the collapse of the USSR, Cuba's economic pressures are even more challenging.

Despite the many odds Cubans face daily, Dr. Buch speaks with tremendous pride in Cuba's achievements and the spirit of determination and hope which is very alive in Cuba. (submitted by Jeanette Bell, WAND, Barbados and Natalie Charles-Andrew, CAFRA member, Dominica.)

BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. MARIA LUISA BUCH

SÍ POR CUBA

CUBA CARES FOR THE ELDERLY

Like most developing countries, Cuba has experienced its share of migration of the younger generation to the city, leaving the old behind. Although elderly persons receive a pension of approximately 60 pesos per month, income security for the elderly and pre-retirement plans are more often talked about than practised.

Because of this, community members are the ones who seek out ways to enhance the lives of the elderly. Sometimes meals are prepared in school cafeterias and taken to those who cannot fetch their own meals. Members of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) in a particular block may provide home support by washing and cleaning at no cost to the elderly persons.

If an elderly has to be placed in a home, he or she will be required to pay what they can afford. In Havana where there are over two million persons, 20 homes provide care and shelter for elderly persons in need of such services. Two of the homes are administered by regional organisations on State budgets. Each accommodates between 60 to 80 elderly persons.

In cases where an elderly person has never worked and has no relatives to take care of her/him, that person will be given medication, clothing and basic necessities free of cost. Accommodation will also be provided at no charge. Funerals are free of charge too. But should a Cuban elderly request burial at a particular place, additional transportation costs will be met by the persons responsible.

Given the prevailing economic climate, many elderly Cubans continue to work after retirement. In an attempt to stimulate action at the higher levels as well as provide social and economic stability for the elderly who work beyond retirement, the FMC has implemented a number of programmes.

According to Director of the Group for the Holistic Development of the City, Gina Rey, an architect and member of FMC, through the work of the Federation, elderly persons have been reunited with the community rather than separated or isolated. They are introduced to jobs in the community which keep them close to home and free of the transportation hassle. They can also choose how many hours they wish to work.

The FMC has also introduced "Círculos de Abuelos" (Grandparents Clubs) among the elderly. They meet in parks and private homes for a number of activities. To begin the day, all grandparents participate in physical exercise. This helps to fight off disease and increases flexibility.

They play games, learn and teach craft, visit places of interest and organise parties for the elderly in their community. Where larger events are planned, the State provides music and food.

The elderly also get involved in agriculture, growing vegetable gardens for dining halls and school kitchens. Their contribution to the development of the young includes the production of charts and toys for day care facilities.

But, there is a downside. Elder abuse, very common throughout the world, is also found in Cuba. There is an attempt though to sensitize persons to the ageing process. A Cuban has written a book on preparing for retirement and emphasis is placed on radio and television programmes highlighting the role of the elderly in the family. The hope is that these efforts will help to improve the image of the elderly without over protection.

by Greta Lammy,
CAFRA member, Guyana.



SÍ POR CUBA

Feminism and Cuban ideology

by Joan French,
Co-ordinator of CPDC

There was a time when to speak of feminism in socialist circles, was to be openly marginalized as a "bourgeois revisionist." Feminism, it was claimed, had nothing to do with the working class struggle and was irrelevant to the experience of working class women.

Cuba in the early years of the Revolution, was not immune from this point of view. Caught up in the crisis brought on by opposition and aggression from the United States government and the urgency of addressing basic needs - literacy, education, health - Cuban women sometimes tended to neglect their specific needs as women. Instead, many of them became the backbone of the workforce for social transformation which neglected, or addressed very minimally, their subordinate position as women.

Historical factors were responsible for the marginalization of feminism in the early years of the Revolution. In North America and Europe, conservative and reactionary elements used the media to trivialize feminism. Issues were treated superficially and only those aspects with the best potential for fostering ridicule and fear (bra-burning, Radical Feminism, lesbianism and the threat to existing family forms) were highlighted.

At the time of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the second wave of feminism (1970s) had not yet happened. The Cuban process was therefore largely influenced by traditional socialist ideology which saw women's liberation as a natural consequence of freeing women from the "drudgery" of domestic work, to "productive" work outside the home.

These two factors help to explain the limited treatment of gender issues which characterized the early years of the Revolution and persisted into the 1970s. Up to the 1970s, the use of the word "feminism" was still often taboo and issues such as domestic violence and sexual preference were disregarded or considered secondary to the "larger" concerns of women's advancement, and the provision of services to facilitate women's move into "productive" work. The recognition and re-evaluation of women's reproductive work, for example, was a concept which Cuban women activists could not conceive of as late as 1985 - 26 years after the Revolution and at the end of the United Nations Decade for Women.

Since the 1970s however, Cuban women have been re-examining the history of feminism in Cuba and retrieving



Magarita Montalvo, professional instructor, Doll Shop, Havana, Cuba

the specific struggles of women which were previously excluded from histories written from a male perspective. Books and papers have been written about the Cuban feminist movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the link is being made between those struggles and the current struggle of Cuban women.

In the 1993 Solidarity Conference, there were definitely signs of change. Feminism has been restored to the language of

continued on pg. 16

SÍ POR CUBA

Feminism and Cuban ideology

continued from pg. 15

Religion and Revolution

"Danos un corazón grande para amar,
danos un corazón fuerte para luchar."

The singing of the chorus "give us a big heart to love, give us a strong heart to fight" opened the discussion on "Christian Women's Presence in Cuban Society" at the solidarity conference hosted by the Federation of Cuban Women. Approximately 80 women out of the 500 delegates to the conference opted to participate in this session.

Three female church leaders from the Cuban Ecumenical Movement comprised the panel for the session. From the panelists, we learnt that Cuban women have been very actively involved in carrying forward the ideals of the Revolution. The church is co-operating with the government with regard to the care of the elderly, the poor, youth and students. At present, the Ecumenical Movement is also playing a vital role in the collection of humanitarian aid in the aftermath of the storm.

One of the panelists, a pastor from the Episcopal Church, spoke of the role of Christian women in the long struggle for Independence against Spanish colonialism and the deepening of the ideas of the great revolutionary leaders like José Martí.

These women of faith were teachers and missionaries. They founded schools like the Faithful of Christ, the first school in Matanzas. One Christian activist, Magdalena, in 1890, converted her home into a school, taught people to read and write. Christian women founded revolutionary organisations like the Revolutionary Club of Maceo and the Association of Sisters of Martí. Women like Blanca Rosa, called the Mother of the Revolution, taught people how to overcome difficulties and influenced men and women who took leadership positions in the revolutionary struggle.

by Linnette Vassell, CAFRA member, Jamaica

Cuban ideology and aspects of its content which were previously ignored are now being confronted.

Of course, there has been opposition. Male chauvinism is still alive in Cuban society, including the Communist Party. However, in their struggles against it, Cuban women have been strengthened by the fact that the Federation of Cuban Women has provided a forum for the interchange of ideas and struggles and the forging of a unity of direction across classes and sectors; and by the unequivocal support given by the "maximum leader", Fidel Castro. This has helped to deflect "backlash" and to give them the space in which to move forward. However, the situation is still not perfect, the sisters admitted. There is still much to be done. Now, the struggle is against attitudes and socialization. State policies support the process and have been translated into practical measures.

A clear indication of change is the current attitude to lesbianism and homosexuality. The male head of the national sex education programme openly stated that Cubans were generally backward on the issue of lesbianism. More research had been done on male homosexuality, which he felt was a reflection of the chauvinism still existing in Cuban society. The national sex education programme is working to strengthen its programmes in this area and to promote more open and informed attitudes.

CUBAN WOMEN AT A GLANCE

Women account for close to half of Cuba's population of 11 million people. Cuba has 18,500 doctors, sixty-three per cent of whom are women. Twenty nine per cent of the women of working age (37 per cent) are in leadership roles and 63 per cent in the services. The stipulated retirement age for women is 55 years and 60 for men but women do live longer than men in Cuba. The life expectancy for men is 74 years.

Dr. Cristina in GUYANA.

In the mining town of Linden, when country folk think of going to the hospital they usually look to the semi-private Mackenzie Hospital or the Public Upper Demerara Hospital in Wismar. However, they do so with reservations. They say they have to wait all day to see either "one of dem Cuban doctors who don't talk English" or a Medex. Not happy with these arrangements, they painstakingly travel to capital city Georgetown where there are "real" doctors.

Over the past 18 months, something different has been happening. Now, the people make sure that children in their care are seen by the "Black, Cuban doctor who good, good with sick children; who does save nuf a dem who would a dead before and who does talk English."

The cause of this amazing turnaround? It is specialist paediatrician, Beulah Cristina Haughton, a black Cuban, born of Jamaican parents.

Forty-six year old Cristina, as she is popularly known, gives one the impression, on first meeting, of silvery brilliance illumined from within with her silver and black Afro or corn row plaits and radiant smile.

The children's parents are always impressed by her calm efficiency. Her patients are seduced by her warmth. And it

is with this calm efficiency and warmth that she has managed to significantly lower the infant mortality rate in Linden.

Cristina is the first paediatrician in Linden. Her dedication to duty and her professional manner have done much to inspire nurses, fellow doctors and all those who meet her.

All the way from Cuba with its state-of-the-art health institutions, Cristina chose a voluntary stint as an international collaborator, in a place where modern medical facilities are non-existent.

Early in her stay in Guyana, Cristina realised that she needed to learn English in order to better serve the people of Guyana. Soon enough she was fluent in the language. This immediately helped to build the people's confidence in the other Cuban doctors. They understood they were dealing with trained professionals who simply had a language problem.

In her life and work, Cristina has demonstrated what is expected of all health professionals. When the life of a patient is on the line, it is not uncommon to see her going to the laboratory to take requests or collect results, stressing always that the patient's life is of utmost importance.

Though a stranger to the country and on a relatively short visit, Cristina, has turned down many offers to visit the vast expanse that is Guyana, choosing instead to stay close by to nurse patients in the environs of Linden, often in virtually inaccessible places.

She is not "too big" to stand at the junction, hitching a lift from a car, van or motor bike to get to hospital (no transportation is provided, and the hospital is a good, vigorous walk from the accomodation which she shares with two other Cuban doctors working in Mackenzie) or to go shopping in Mackenzie.

If the nurses and other health professionals who were fortunate to work with Cristina practise the caring professionalism she taught them, the standard of health care for the children of Linden will surely improve.

So, when at a farewell function held in her honour, the Cuban-trained medical superintendent could say Dr Haughton's service was not only extraordinary and excellent but exceptional, he was not just mouthing words.

submitted by
Carol Ann Harver,
CAFRA member, Guyana

Women - THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE

Remarks made by West Indian writer:

George Lamming:

*at the Caribbean Festival of Arts Symposium,
as printed in the 'Guyanna Mirror, October 25, 1992.*

Historical and personal evidence is abundant that all men, irrespective of their economic or racial status, hold a common belief about the subordinate role of women in their lives. The Black male labourer and the white male executive director share a profound bond of allegiance and solidarity on that question of the relation of woman to man, whether the union is marital, extra-marital, or ultra-marital.

The treatment of the female as an invisible presence, that is, made absent when she is most present, is a continuing factor in the political and intellectual backwardness of our institutions. The female presence in political office, or in the leader -

ship of the party and the trade union movement is not only rare; but she is often there as a result of male patronage, and not through the attainment and exercise of power in her own right. The major focus in the education of women by women has to be about the dismantling of the dominance in all of our institutions. And while this cannot be an exclusively female concern, the overwhelming burden of responsibility for its achievement will remain for a long time the responsibility of women. But within the ranks of what is called the Women's Movement (bearing the higgler's voice in mind) there is a serious conflict which derives from the fact and function of class in Caribbean Society.

The Women's Movement, as I observe it throughout the Caribbean today, is dominated by a breed of professional, middle class women who are, in fact, the employers of female labour in their homes. This is not in itself a heresy, but the social distance which such a relation implies and confirms

cont'd on pg. 27

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Approximately 150 to 200 women - a fair mix of grassroots and middle class - came together earlier this year for an historic occasion. It was the first National Women's Economic Conference organised and co-ordinated by Women Working for Social Progress (Working Women) from January 22 to 24, 1993.

Headquartered in Tunapuna, Trinidad, Working Women includes among its six major objectives the education and organisation of women for the struggle against obstacles which prevent the development of their full potential. The conference therefore was a very necessary and timely undertaking by the group.

Julie Ifill, the group's Programme Assistant, described the conference as a tremendous success. I fill noted that over the past five years, women have been affected by structural adjustment policies and have experienced a decline in the standard of living. Given these realities, the conference was meant to be more than "just a talk shop." The conference sought to provide answers on the following questions: -how does our economy work; -what are the economic problems that concern women the most; -what can women themselves do about these problems; and - what do women want to recommend to government.

In an attempt to answer these questions and more, the conference focussed on five main topic areas previously agreed upon by women during community workshops Working Women held across the country as a lead-up to the major conference. The topics were:

- **Women and the Job Market**
- **Feeding Ourselves**
- **Sexual Violence**
- **Education, Health and Welfare and**
- **the Labour Market and the Rights of the Woman Worker.**

After one and a half days of intense discussion at the St Augustine Senior Comprehensive School, Trinidad, with presenters such as Andaiye of Red Thread, Guyana, Economist Karl Theodore of the University of the West Indies and Rhoda Reddock, a number of projects were identified for follow-up action. But first, a follow-up meeting. This was held on March 6, two days prior to International Women's Day, at

CityHall, Port of Spain. Here, recommendations of the conference were ratified and a 12- page declaration was presented to Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs, Joan Yuille-Williams.

The declaration comprised a statement on structural adjustment and debt; visions of a healthy economy; and recommendations to government, women's organisations and other people's organisations and a number of projects for follow-up action:

- Collection of 10,000 signatures by November 25 - International Day Against Violence Against Women - to encourage more financial support for battered women and to arrest the deterioration of social services
- establishment of a Women's Credit Union for easier access to money for entrepreneurs and to increase women's financial security
- devise ways and means to improve cultural confidence in indigenous foods
- mount an education campaign to assist women in self-empowerment
- revision of health and safety laws and encourage the establishment of day care centres on or near the job.

To get these projects off the ground, a monitoring committee comprising five to ten persons drawn from Working Women and from women at the conference is expected to hold its first meeting in May. A call-back conference has also been planned for July but Ifill fears that the recent floatation of the TT dollar and its impact on women may place other issues on the back burner. At that time, Ifill said women will decide what responses should be put in place to deal with the new regime and this could well involve boycotting of some stores.

As mandated by the conference, Working Women will also continue its workshops on the economy in communities throughout the country. The workshops restarted at the end of April in Arouca. The Arouca initiative came from one of several women at the conference who requested workshops in their communities. Using popular theatre, the workshops will seek to educate and raise women's awareness about issues that concern us (women).

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day (IWD) -

March 8 - was first proposed at the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in 1910, at the urging of Clara Zetkin, a member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, in honour of the movement for women's rights and freedom. Today it is an occasion marked by women's groups around the world, commemorated by the United Nations (since 1977) and is designated a national holiday in many countries. Below, CAFRA News highlights 1993 IWD celebrations held in the Caribbean.

Belize

The Belize Rural Women's Association hosted a week-long Health Fair/Clinic, offering free blood and urine testing in addition to health information presented in a variety of ways.

Dominica

Dominica's Women and the Law Advisory Committee held graduation exercises for the Para Legal Training Course which was organized as part of CAFRA's Women and the Law Project. Twenty-five participants completed the course.

Haiti

"Women's Rights in the Face of Repression," was the theme of a solidarity meeting in Port-au-Prince from March 5-8, to mark IWD. The meeting was organized by Solidarité Fanm Ayisyen (Haitian Women's Solidarity).

Jamaica

Sistren Theatre Collective hosted its annual "Sisters Celebrate" Concert on the theme "Women in the Security Forces," at the Girl Guides Headquarters in Kingston.

Puerto Rico

A week of women's activities in Cayey, Puerto Rico, included lectures, workshops and meetings on themes such as Women and Handicraft, Abortion, and Women and the Church; a concert, exhibition and sale of

women's handicraft. CAFRA member Dinnys Luciano from the Dominican Republic, was a resource person at a workshop on Violence Against Women which was organized jointly by Casa Pensamiento Mujer and Taller de Educación Alternativa.

Women's Affairs Ministry. Other activities included a mini film "festival," interfaith services, a rally in Woodford Square, afternoon tea at the Hilton, a candle-lighting ceremony and a panel discussion on "Exploring Sexual Violence."



St Lucia

The Women's Affairs Division, Women's Action Council and CAFRA hosted a certificate presentation ceremony and launching of resource material on women in St Lucia at the Francophone Institute, Pointe Seraphine, Castries. Certificates were presented to 29 participants of the Legal Education Programme, CAFRA's Women and the Law Project. Other activities held included a cultural evening featuring poetry readings, music and drama; a rally in Chioseul and a candlelight ceremony in Walcott Square.

Suriname

CAFRA members, activists and women's organizations held a successful one-day seminar on women and violence and received support from female print journalists who wrote articles in the newspapers. Women's activists also presented the president of Suriname with a report on the impact of structural adjustment programmes on women.

Trinidad & Tobago

Women in Trinidad and Tobago were invited to wear yellow on IWD by the

Women Working for Social Progress held its first follow-up session out of the National Women's Conference on the Economy at City Hall, Port of Spain.

CARICOM Triennial Award for Women: CARICOM Secretary-General Dr Edwin Carrington announced the recipient of the 1993 CARICOM Award for Women on March 8, International Women's Day. She is Ms. Magda Pollard of Guyana, honoured for her sterling service in guiding and facilitating development programmes for the women of the English-speaking Caribbean. Ms. Pollard served as Women's Officer with the CARICOM Secretariat from the inception of the Women's Desk in 1980 until 1992.

CAFRA's nominee was founding member and former Co-ordinator of the Women in Caribbean Agriculture (WICA) Project, Joan French. Joan, now Co-ordinator of the Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre (CPDC), was nominated for her outstanding contribution to the NGO movement and in the fields of education and research.

CA7RA writes U.N. on Women's Day

On the occasion of International Women's Day, CA7RA's Co-ordinator Gemma Tang Nain wrote the United Nations Secretary General calling for the proclamation of women's rights as human rights. The full text of the letter follows:



Dear Mr Boutros-Ghali,

On this occasion of International Women's Day (IWD) 1993, being commemorated today, March 8, I take this opportunity to congratulate the United Nations on its recognition of the day.

According to your Department of Public Information, the theme chosen for this year's IWD is Women's rights and Human Rights with a special focus on Violence against Women. This theme is indeed very appropriate, against the background of:

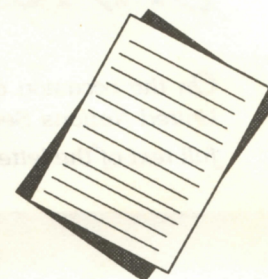
The mass, systematic raping of thousands of women by Serbian soldiers in the former Yugoslavia.

The trivialising of rape by a British judge who allowed a 15 year-old rapist to walk free from the court, awarding 500 pounds to the 15 year-old girl who was raped, 'so that she could take a holiday to get over the trauma.'

The stoning to death of women in Pakistan for alleged adultery. A news item carried on a local radio station on February 8, 1993 indicated that a Pakistani woman, unable to prove divorce from an earlier marriage, has been convicted of adultery by an Islamic court and sentenced to death by stoning.

CA7RA hereby calls on the United Nations to take the strongest possible action against countries which either overtly ignore the rights of women or simply turn a blind eye to violation of women's rights by individuals and women's rights by individuals and institutions within their territories often under the guise of cultural practices. We also call on the United Nations to accept and proclaim women's rights as human rights.

News



DOMINICA WOMEN SHARE INFORMATION ON LAW MATTERS

The Dominica National Council for Women now has a number of women who can share with other women basic information on legal matters and carry out basic legal procedures. These women participated in a Para Legal Training Course, as part of CAFRA's Women and the Law Project.

The course was conducted by a nine-member local committee and covered several areas including the constitution and family law - domestic violence, sexual abuse and property law.

Based on the Council's discussions on the country's Economic Citizenship Policy, a presentation was made to government which outlined the need for more stringent measures to safeguard the well-being of Dominicans.

The recommendations were submitted on October 16, 1992 and pointed out that economic citizenship should not be granted before a five-year period of involvement in the country and that the initial investment figure should be increased from \$US35,000 to \$US100,000. Stringent measures should also be adopted for the screening of potential investors.

Preference should be given to investors whose contribution will enhance and improve the skills of our people, and who will be able to offer innovative and non-traditional skills to the Dominican populace.

FEMALE MINISTER ORDAINED

The women's arm of SPAT has congratulated Rev. Joyce Rohan on her ordination as the first female Minister of Dominica. Rev Rohan will carry out the duties of a Methodist minister similar to that of her male counterpart.

In a press release, dated January 28, 1993, the Acting Women's Programme Officer, Josephine Dublin said it was an historic moment and a realization of the UN conventions highlighting and promoting women as equal partners in development - spiritual or otherwise.

CPDC: NO TO LARRY SUMMERS

Larry Summers' appointment to the post of Under Secretary for International Affairs, United States Treasury, has been described as a "blow by the Clinton Administration against the most fundamental aspirations of Third World people."

Summers, a former Chief Economist at the World Bank, provoked international outrage last year when he advocated the dumping of toxic waste in the Third World.

According to the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), the Caribbean and the South as a whole, had already suffered enormously from insensitive and ill-advised policies emanating from the IMF, the World Bank and associated agencies. During his tenure at the Bank, Summers consistently blocked initiatives to make the Bank more sensitive to environmental and social issues.

CPDC questions how much more will we suffer if such a man is now given more power by President Clinton to unleash his inhuman policies from a key position within the US Administration.

The CPDC has therefore called on President Clinton to immediately revoke Larry Summers' appointment and to ensure that he is not appointed to any other post in which his "dangerous ideas may find an efficient factory for the manufacture of death-dealing programmes of action."

NGOs IN POST-UNCED AT RISK

Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involvement in the post United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process seems threatened by government representatives who are unwilling to follow UNCED procedures for the accreditation of NGOs to the Sustainable Development Commission.

Alternative procedures being proposed by the UN Economic and Social Commission will severely limit NGO participation to well established, mostly northern NGOs, the CPDC says. The G77 (southern) governments, with a few exceptions, are asking NGOs to find a way to control their numbers.

The CPDC has therefore urged all Caribbean governments to demonstrate their commitment to NGOs as social partners with their support at the UN level for the principles agreed to in Agenda 21 and General Assembly resolution of 1992.

Continued on pg. 22

News

Continued from pg. 21

BELIZE WOMEN CELEBRATE

The National Women's Commission recently celebrated its 10th anniversary with the presentation in December 1992 of citations to women and men who had contributed to the work of the Commission and the improvement of the situation of women in Belize. Citation recipients were Jane Usher, Kathy Esquivel, Martha Marin, Dorla Bowman, David McKoy and Remijio Montejo.

The women's Commission was founded in 1982.

FIRST SHELTER FOR BATTERED WOMEN

The first shelter for battered women and children was opened in Belize on Friday, January 29. The aim is to provide safety, food, advocacy and other resources to women to assist them in rebuilding violence-free lives for themselves and their children.

The establishment of the centre was spearheaded by the Women against Violence Movement, the City Council and the Shelter Board.

GUYANA CAFRA COUNSELLING CENTRE

The CAFRA Counselling Centre was launched on December 7, 1992. The centre provides services free of charge at the Guyana Nurses Association Hall to victims of domestic violence, particularly women and children. The centre is staffed by social workers, on a volunteer basis.

Discussions were held in January this year with the Minister of Education with regard to the inclusion of the issue of domestic violence on the school curricula as well as in-service training for teachers to sensitize them to the problem and equip them with counselling skills. Work has also begun on the drafting of the Domestic Violence Act.

The Women's Rights Campaign was launched in November during a media conference at the Forte Crest Hotel and three workshops on Understanding Family Violence were held in Regions 3, 6 and 10. Participants included teachers, nurses, members of the Police Force and social workers. Workshop facilitators were Patrice La Fleur, Christine King and Basmat Shiw Parsad. The workshops were funded by the United Nations Children's Educational Fund.

HIV TEST FOR RAPE

Women of Guyana are calling on the authorities to make HIV testing for rape victims mandatory. And if the test is positive, the rapist should be suitably punished. They are also demanding the banning of calypsoes, dub and other music that promote domestic violence against women.

The occasion was a public forum on Domestic Violence organised by CAFRA Guyana at the Forte Crest Hotel, February 17, 1993 - the first in a series designed to educate women on their legal rights.

The forum heard that most abused women came from one ethnic group. There was alcohol abuse and insecurity among the husbands who were mainly sugar estate workers. One wife told of an incestuous relationship between her husband and 11-year old daughter and the reluctance of the police to do anything about it.

Several reasons were given for domestic abuse which included frustration over economic problems, alcoholism, male ego, lack of education, low self-concept, emulating parent's violent behaviour, economic dependence on a male partner and fear of retaliation.

HAITI

Haiti's Centre for the Promotion of Working Women (CPFO), launched its latest educational publication at its office in Port-au-Prince, last September. Entitled *Gid pou Tabwonn/Ti Koze sou SIDA* (A Manual for Workshops/Talks on AIDS), the manual was written for AIDS educators and is the product of

Continued on pg. 23



Members of the Co-ordinating Committee of the Guyana Chapter of CAFRA, at a media conference in November 1992. From L. to R. Danuta Radzik, Josephine Whitehead, Janice Jackson (National Representative), Patrice La Fleur, Greta Lammy, Basmat Shiw Parsad and Indira Persaud.

News

Continued from pg. 22

three years of research conducted by CPFO staff among factory workers in Port-au-Prince.

Working on labour issues since 1985, CPFO launched into AIDS prevention in response to the concerns of women workers who were involved in the Centre's other programmes.

The 29- page manual is written in creole and contains information on the nature of the disease, modes of transmission, means of protection, use of condoms, myths about the disease, and signs and symptoms.

CPFO's AIDS Intervention Programme is funded by the Ford Foundation of the United States while publication of the manual was funded by the World Health Organization. (From: Liaison, November 1992).

JAMAICA

CAFRA member, Linette Vassell is currently doing research on Voluntary Women's Associations, between 1944 and 1962, focussing on the Jamaica Federation of Women. The study explores the experiences of women in their organizations and their contribution to social development, by examining women's politics, ideology, programmes and the nature of women's response to issues of race, class and gender. (From: UWI Women & Development Studies [Mona] Newsletter



Dr. Marjorie Thorpe (centre) was the main speaker at 10th Anniversary Celebrations at the U.W.I Women and Development studies group, St. Augustine. Also in picture (from left): Jeanette Morris, Co-ordinator of the Women's group. Her Excellency Zelayah Hassanali, wife of President Noor Hassanali and Dr. Linda Baboolal, Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services.

January 1993). Jamaica is now considering two Bills - one on Rape and the other, Domestic Violence. However, there is a feeling among women's organizations that a more comprehensive Domestic Violence Act is needed.

Sistren Research will be finding out women's specific concerns through a series of participatory workshops throughout Jamaica. Researcher Imani Tafari-Ama is working on this project with Sistren Research.

In January, the University of the West Indies (UWI) announced the appointment of its first woman Registrar. She is Gloria Kirton, a former Human Resource

Consultant: Ms. Kirton's overall responsibility covers all aspects of the university's operations involving student matters and procedures for the appointment of staff on all three campuses - Cave Hill (Barbados), Mona (Jamaica) and St. Augustine (Trinidad & Tobago) - and 11 non-campus territories.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

GOODBYE & WELCOME
CAFRA said farewell to Savitri Ramsaran and Roberta Clarke who left in February and March, respectively. Tara Ramoutar and Allison Apparicio later joined the organisation as Secretary and Liaison Officer.

UNIFEM APPOINTMENTS CAFRA member:

Dr. Marjorie Thorpe joined UNIFEM on July 1, 1992, as its new Deputy Director. Dr. Thorpe was Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations from 1988 to 1992 and founder of the Women and Development Studies Group at the St. Augustine Campus, UWI. In September, UWI Professor, Dr. Joycelin Massiah was appointed as UNIFEM's Regional Programme Advisor for the Caribbean. She is stationed at UNICEF's Caribbean Area Office, Barbados.

1993 MEETINGS / CONFERENCES / COURSES



April 9-13

International Indigenous Women's Conference,

Wellington, New Zealand. For a report, contact: Maori Women's Welfare League, P.O. Box 12072, Thorndon, Wellington, New Zealand.

April 24-25

Women and the Media: National Consultation, Jamaica.

Hosted by Women's Media Watch, the meeting will look at access to technology, policy and strategies in alternative and mainstream media.

May 8-16

International Dub Poetry Festival, Toronto. Organized jointly by three Canadian radio stations and Oxfam Canada, the festival will feature performances, workshops, panel discussions and a series of impromptu "guerilla readings." Barbadian CAFRA Member, Kathy Ife Harris, will attend.

May 25-27

Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC). Assembly and Retreat. Barbados Labour College, Mangrove, St. Philip, Barbados.

June 6-9

Calling for Change: International Strategies to End Violence Against Women, The Hague, The Netherlands. Organized by The North-South Institute and UNIFEM, the workshop will bring together invited representatives from women's groups, human rights organizations and donor agencies. Case studies from four countries will be presented to examine how violence against women is perceived in different countries; to show efforts by women's groups to mobilize and organize effectively; and government responses to the issue. For a report, contact: The North-South Institute, 200-5 Murray, Ottawa, Canada K1N 5M3; Fax (613) 237-7435

June 10-12

NGO Forum, Vienna, Austria. Precedes the UN Conference on Human Rights. NGO activities during the Conference include:

* International Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights (organized by the International Women's Tribune Centre and the Center for Women's Global Leadership);

* Workshop: Gender and Human Rights (organized by the Institute for Women, Law and Development);

* Workshop: Training in lobbying (organized by CHANGE).

June 14-25

UN World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, Austria. The Conference will examine the achievements of the UN human rights programme, evaluate its present status and give the programme future direction.

July 15-17

Violence, Self and the Young Male: A Regional Policy Conference, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The workshop will examine the socialisation, psychological development, sense of self and behaviour of the young male and identify appropriate social policy and political responses. For more information, contact: Lucy Gabriel, Lifeline, 9 Eastern Main Road, St. Joseph, Trinidad & Tobago. Fax: (809) 662-3386.

June 22-25

Association of Caribbean Economists (ACE). Fourth Conference, Curacao. The theme of this year's conference is "Human Development and Competitiveness." For information, contact: ACE Secretary-General, P.O. Box 735, Kingston 8, Jamaica. Fax: (809) 927-9363.

ON THE

BOOK

SHELF

Recent acquisitions in the CAFRA Library.

The following publications are available from:

**CIPAF (Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina),
Apdo. Postal 1744, Santo Domingo, República Dominicana.**

Barbieri, M. Teresita de.: *Las mujeres y la crisis en América Latina.*

(*Women and crisis in Latin America*). Lima: Entre Mujeres, 1992. 56 p.

Bujosa, Sagrada and Magaly Pineda.: *Ser mujer en el campo no es paja de coco.*

(*It isn't easy being a woman in the field*). 2 ed. Santo Domingo: CIPAF, 1991

Collection of 19 black and white photographs of rural women in the Dominican Republic.

CIPAF. *Guia para el uso no sexista del lenguaje.* (Handbook of non-sexist language). Santo Domingo: CIPAF, 1992. 36 p (Ediciones Populares Feministas: Serie Educación No Sexista).

Cordero, Margarita. : *Mujer, participación política y procesos electorales, 1986-1990.*

(*Women, political participation and electoral processes, 1986-1990*). Santo Domingo: CIPAF, 1991. 121 p.

Gómez, Carmen Julia: *La problemática de las jefes de hogar: evidencia de la insubordinación social de las mujeres.* (*Women heads of households: evidence of women's social resistance*). Santo Domingo: CIPAF, 1990. 61 p.

Gonzalez García, Lydia M: *Una puntada en el tiempo: la industria de la aguja en Puerto Rico, 1900-1929.* (*A stitch in time: the needlework industry in Puerto Rico, 1900-1929*). Santo Domingo: CIPAF; Puerto Rico: CEREP, 1990. 139 p.

Kaufman, Michael and Magaly Pineda: *La paradoja del poder (discursos Michael Kaufman y Magaly Pineda).* (*The paradox of power: speeches by Michael Kaufman and Magaly Pineda*).

Santo Domingo: CIPAF, 1991. 44 p

.....Cont'd on pg 26

.....cont'd from pg 25

Liriano, Alejandra: *El papel de la mujer de origen africano en el Santo Domingo colonial siglos XVI-XVII*. (The role of African women in colonial Santo Domingo, in the 16th - 17 centuries.) Santo Domingo: CIPAF, 1992. 77 p.

Friedman, Sara Ann: *Education of the girl child: her right, society's gain*; Report of the NGO Conference. New York: NGO Committee on UNICEF. Education Wording Group, 1992. 38 p.

Higbie, Janet: *Eugenia: The Caribbean's Iron Lady*. London: Macmillan Press, 1993. vi, 298 p. Biography of the first black woman Prime Minister, Dominica's Eugenia Charles.

Women Living under Muslim Laws. International Solidarity Network. Dossier d'information sur les crimes de guerre contre les femmes en ex-Yougoslavie: actions et initiatives pour les défendre/Compilation of information on crimes of war against women in ex-Yougoslavia: actions and initiatives in their defence. Grabels: Women Living under Muslim Laws, 1992. [viii], 96 p.

Call for Researchers

Reproductive Rights and Population is one of DAWN's three research programmes. At this time, DAWN is intensifying research, action and networking in preparation for the World Conference on Population and Development scheduled for next year.

In order to include specific gender-based experiences, facts and analyses pertaining to the Caribbean sub-region, we hereby call for Caribbean researchers in the field of sexuality and reproductive rights especially as these issues relate to the question of population and development. If you have been engaged in any form of research in this field, we need you! If you see a direct link with your feminist activities and you wish to liaise or network with DAWN in this area, we need you too! Contact:

DAWN Caribbean Co-ordinator, P.O. Box 4395, Curaçao, phone/fax: (599) 9-368031

DAWN General Co-ordinator, c/o WAND, Pinelands, St. Michael, Barbados. Tel: (809) 426-9288; fax: (809) 426-3006

CAFRA Secretariat, P.O. Bag 442, Tunapuna Post Office, Trinidad & Tobago. Tel: (809) 663-8670; fax: (809) 663-6482.

CASA LITERARY AWARD

To commemorate Camila Henríquez Ureña's centennial, Casa de las Americas will award a special prize for an essay on women's studies. The work should be aimed at expanding the knowledge about the works, the personality or groupings of Latin American or Caribbean women who have excelled in any field of intellectual, social or political life.

All novels, stories, poetry, plays, essays and testimonies as well as categories of literature for children and young people must be submitted by November 30, 1993 to: Casa de las Americas, 3a. y G, Vedado, La Habana 4, Cuba; any Cuban embassy or Casse Postale 2, 3000, Berne 16, Switzerland.

All authors must submit their originals in Spanish, except the Brazilians, whose entries will be in Portuguese, and those of the Caribbean, who will this year be presenting works in French or Creole. In all cases, works must be no longer than 500 pages of 30 lines each and must be unpublished. Works translated into Spanish must have the translator's name and a copy in the original language.

CARIFEM

UP
DATE

CARIFEM UPDATE

COSTA RICAN WOMEN FORM
ASSOCIATION

The Black women of Costa Rica have formed themselves into an association called Nefta - an Ethiopian word which means a free woman. The idea for such an association came from two black women - Luceta Christian and Carmen Hutchinson who realized the urgent need to begin a process of knowing "who we are and what we are about."

Their aim is to take a stand against "the invisibility that is cast around us

as a people." Black women have done a lot in the past and are still doing to support home and society in an economical, political, cultural and religious way. "It is time for us to be recognized. Only we can speak for ourselves."

Nefta is open to all black women regardless of age, profession, skills and denomination. Among the group's objectives are the inclusion of Black history in the education system; help for single mothers; and making international links with other black women's organisations.

Women - The Invisible Presence

cont'd from pg. 17

in practice puts a great constraint on the political thrust which such a movement could achieve.

And that's why the Women's Movement - or elements of it - can be so easily co-opted by all existing establishments and political directorates in the region.

A serious feminist movement, freed from class inhibition would create a source of creative "conflict" between - demands and the self-conserving interests of any po-

litical directorate in any part of this region. It is a crisis which women could resolve, because we know that outside or beyond the functions of wife and maid, the wife is experiencing the same humiliation the maid is going through with their respective men.

The question is how can they create an environment in which they will share - on equal terms, a free open dialogue not just about their respective men, but about the dismantling of that dominance

which characterises all our institutions. And what vision can they offer for an alternative society and a corresponding advance in regional integration? For it must be clear to the most alert among them that the dysfunctional nature of man/woman is not possible without the liberation of the total society.

It is in the Caribbean woman's struggle for her liberation that the complexities of race and ethnic antagonisms are most likely to collapse.

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Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

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

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

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

Structure of the Association

The decision-making bodies of CAFRA are:

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

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