



NUFF NICENESS! Landmark IWD - p. 12



*Fae Ellington and Jean Breeze on-stage at Sister's Celebration.*

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**OUR KIND OF POLITICS - p. 4**

Notwithstanding different ideologies  
**THE PARTY WOMEN HAVE ALOT IN COMMON!**

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## TO OUR READERS

As the New Year started, members of the Editorial Team got together to review the 1987 issues of *Sistren* and plan for '88. We ended up having quite a session in which every issue over the years was brought out in the general assessment! We wanted to start making the change from newsletter to magazine and upgrade the general look. So in this first issue for 1988, you're getting extra pages, and beginning to see changes in the design. We also wanted to add new columns. So in this issue we're starting a Woman's Health column and we're inviting all women's organizations or related groupings to let us have details of their activities on a regular basis in order to start a networking column next issue. As usual, we're depending on your comments and criticism in order to continue our development.

This issue focuses on Women and Politics. We thank our contributors: Joan French, Jennifer Jones, Suzanne Francis-Hinds, Christeline Henry, and our Consultant Medical Practitioner. Hope you find it worth the wait.

A gentle reminder to those of you who have not yet paid your subscription for '88 . . .

All the best.

Joan Ross-Frankson

## EDITORIAL TEAM

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# LET'S GET ACCO

## SISTREN OUT DEH!

We've been very busy between October '87 and March '88 doing our thing to build up awareness on issues of importance to working people generally, and women specifically. Below are some of our activities in the period.

- \* 14 workshops on teenage parenting with high school students in Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Catherine and St. Ann.
- \* 13 other workshops with mixed groups and women's organisations - 6 local and 7 in Canada. Varied topics: peace, Free Zone, building cooperative spirit, building theatre-in-education skills, teenage parenting.
- \* 4 series of workshops with *Sistren* Research on women's history, sexual violence, rasta sexuality and creative writing.
- \* Individual *Sistren* members were resource personnel for 5 workshops in St. Vincent, Barbados, Panama, St. Vincent, and Canada.

## WORKSHOPS FOR DOMESTIC HELPERS

The Workshop Team has just started a programme of workshops for domestic helpers. The programme provides a much-needed forum in which domestic helpers can meet and discuss issues of current interest which affect their daily lives. It also provides a base on which leisure time activities can be developed to enable them to cope with the realities of their situation.

The first workshop meeting, to be held at *Sistren*'s headquarters on Saturday, May 14, will identify the issues participants wished to discuss. Follow-up workshops will utilise *Sistren*'s drama-in-education process to develop the themes. A separate workshop is planned for employees following the series for the helpers.

Interested? Well, you can still take part. For further information, contact **Pauline Crawford, 20 Kensington Cres., Kingston 5. Tel: 92457/96171.**

- \* Local rural tour in 15 communities across the island with the production "Trickster And De Muffet Posse".
- \* Boston tour with "Trickster"; 4 shows to nearly 3,000 people.
- \* 2 local Lionheart Gal dramatised readings and 4 in the U.S.A.
- \* Networking with various groups and organisations was ongoing and interviews for local and foreign media cropped up from time to time as did presentations of *Sistren* Research papers.
- \* Our schedule also included training for individuals and the group, a major retreat, attending seminars and meetings of other organisations as well as textile production, fairs and exhibitions.

TALK ABOUT BUSY? PHEW!



*ABOMINABLE SNOW-WOMAN? No, Textiles Manageress, Cerene Stephenson, bundled up against the weather and finding her feet on a pair of skis in snow-bound Canada. Cerene spent 10 weeks in Canada earlier this year learning new skills at the Frederickton Craft School, New Brunswick and at the College of Art and Design in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Cerene was introduced to Batik and Tie and Dye and upgraded in the use of new dye methods and pigments as well as photographic stencils. She also learnt new skills in jewellery craft. She says, "The trip was very useful and I'm dying for the opportunity to demonstrate what I've learnt, not only to *Sistren*, but to others who need to learn a skill to develop themselves." Cerene's participation in the exchange art course was made possible through sponsorship from the Canadian Craft Council and Oxfam Canada.*



# QUAINTED

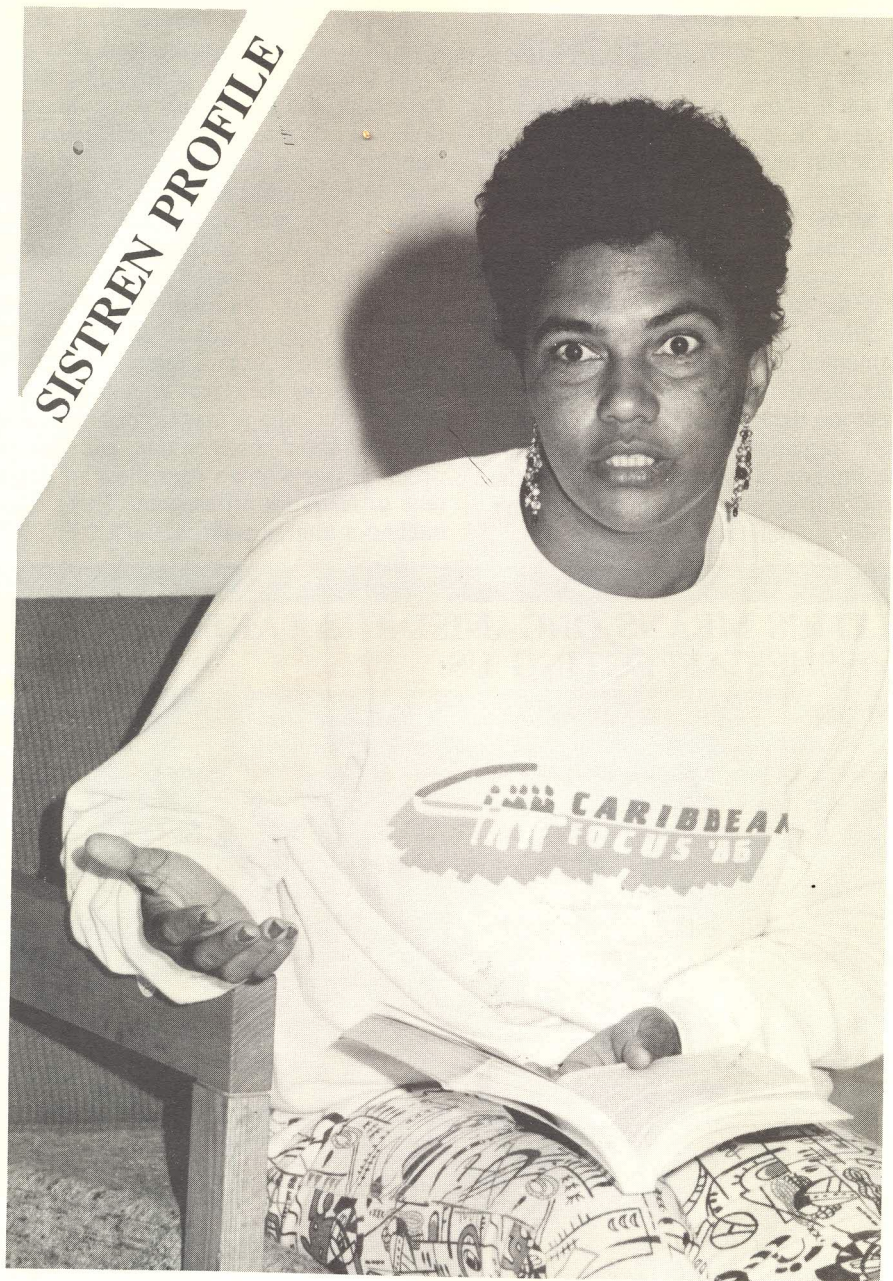
## PERSONAL NOTES

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Sistren's former Secretary, Delores Robinson and the Graduate Theatre Company's Andrea Smith on the birth of their boy babies.

**CONDOLENCES** to Ingrid Kirkwood-Munroe, President of the Organisation of Women for Progress, on the death of her mother.

**GOOD TO SEE:** first issue of a newsletter put out by the UWI Women & Development Studies (Mona Group).

SISTREN PROFILE



*Cerene Stephenson, Manageress, Sistren Textiles.*

Introducing our dynamic Textiles Manageress, Cerene Stephenson. Cerene was born 38 years ago in Top Hill, St. Elizabeth. She has five children, two girls and three boys, with ages ranging from 21 years to 3 years. And the lady is a granny too - her grandchild being the same age as her youngest.

High on the list of hobbies is reading but Cerene says (with the 'wicked' smile she's famous for) she "likes to be entertained and to entertain" and she enjoys male company!!

Cerene's personal ambition is to become "a real good designer" and to help Sistren become more financially viable through a higher level of development in the textiles area.

She says, "Working with Sistren has given me a level of independence that I couldn't have expected otherwise, both economically and socially. I've gained alot of valuable experience travelling around Jamaica, the Caribbean and overseas. I have a greater appreciation of how people live and I've seen that oppression is not just on Jamaicans alone, but a worldwide thing."



## AT THE MEETING PLACE

Two well-attended and lively workshops on man/woman relations among Rastafarians were conducted by Imani Tafari Ama... Other groups meeting on a regular basis were the Women's Media Watch (see page 14), the Sisters Celebration Committee (see centrespread), as well as various sub-committees of the Association of Development Agencies of which Sistren is a member... The Creative Writing Workshop for Women is continuing and attracting more and more participants... Marcia Gillespie, Executive Editor of MS Magazine, and former Editor of Essence Magazine was welcomed to the meeting place for the first time. Looking forward to seeing more of Marcia when she returns to work at the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication (CARIMAC) for three weeks next year... Nan Peacock, of WAND came to talk to us about our participation in WAND's 10th Anniversary celebrations slated for October... American, Dawn Outlaw spent a week with us as part of the research she's doing on Caribbean women's lives and organisations... Among the many others passing through were the "quiet power pol" Rhoda Reddock of the University of the West Indies Institute of Social and Economic Research in Trinidad... New York's CITY SUN photo journalist, Lydia Douglas; Tasha Belfiore from the American feminist grouping, Sister Fire, and Shar Richenstein, freelance photographer and a Probation Officer in London were all here for IWD and checked us.



# EDITORIAL

## Our Kind of Politics

**S**o often when women come together to organise in their own interest we hear them say they are willing to put their efforts into group building "so long as it nah deal wid politics". It is clear they are referring to party politics. This is a sad comment after 50 years of party political organisation in which women have been the main hewers of wood and drawers of water; the cooks, canvassers, office staff, community organisers and devoted followers of "the leader" of our political parties.

Women have gained little from this political fervour. Very few are in the leadership or the executive of their parties (less than 12% of parliamentarians in Jamaica and the Caribbean are women).

But if more women were in Parliament and the party executives, would it mean that the specific problems of women would be better addressed? Not necessarily so. As presenters pointed out at the recent forum on women in politics organised by the Bureau of Women's Affairs, women get into the top ranks of political parties "not because they are women, but because they can win votes". For most of these women, this is a source of pride. But what it means is that most of the women in these positions do not see representation of women and their specific issues, as part of their role. In other words, when push come to shove, they will more often than not toe the party line first and foremost, even when it is to the detriment of women as a group.

This narrow form of politics has been defined by male political leadership. And, according to that definition, defending women's issues does not yet make a winner. Besides, the competitive style of leadership which women in the parties are forced to develop in order to 'make the grade', turns off a lot of women who view politics as the outcome of discussion and consensus rather than being imposed by the most powerful and articulate.

Even where the "women's arms" of parties are active around the defence of women's issues, the fortunes of the women's cause will rise and fall with the fortunes of the particular party.

Women need independent group-building and networking outside of the

parties, in forums that will put women's issues before party loyalties. In fact it is the development of such a movement, particularly over the last 10 years, which has brought about an increased awareness of women's issues today.

This is not party politics but it is definitely politics.

Women know this kind of politics is their kind of politics. It is the kind of politics that has made national issues of rape, incest, domestic violence, conditions at the Free Zone and the kind of politics that has shown us why women can be super-exploited in these ways. This is the kind of politics that will get the National Policy Statement on Women implemented (see page 16). The kind of politics that will make the road easier for Hannah the banana farmer (page 13) and prompt organisation against negative media images of women (page 14); the kind of politics that influences women's movements around the world (page 12).

Indeed it is this kind of independent political action by women that can provide support to women within the parties when they attempt to raise issues within their parties - issues which include their own right as party women to a proper level of recognition for the work they do.

In this context we believe the efforts to develop the as yet embryonic Association of Women's Organisations in Jamaica should be supported by all who wish to help build a society in which all women and men are equal halves of humankind. We commend the Association's steering committee for its co-ordination of International Women's Week activities (pages 10 & 11), and we urge women's organisations and individuals to do their part in building this Association into a meaningful grouping that addresses the genuine and shared needs of our women regardless of class, race or religious differences. That's definitely our kind of politics. ♀

### POLITICS MEANS ORGANISING & TAKING ACTION ON ISSUES AFFECTING US:



For the second year running, as International Women's Day approached, hard pressed women workers at the Kingston Free Zone walked off their jobs to protest low wages and poor working conditions.

The over 2,000 production workers from East Ocean Textiles Ltd., one of the largest export manufacturers in the Zone took to the streets with their placards. Last year March, the East Ocean Textiles workers demonstrated against the efforts of the management to force them to do Saturday work by arbitrarily shifting their pay day.

Two months before that, 42 of the

workers made public their complaints of unfair dismissal. In all three cases the management has been forced to recognise and deal with the just demands of the women.

The actions of these non-unionised women are an example to us all. They are showing us that women can organise, take appropriate action and win more power for themselves. And, they are showing us concretely that politics isn't just about Government and parties but ultimately about life and how to tackle the issues that govern our lives. ♀

# BODY (AND SOUL) SEARCHING AT FREE ZONE WORKSHOPS

Sistren researcher Honor Ford-Smith, Annie Blake and Joan Edwards have been conducting a series of work-shops with women workers from the Kingston Free Zone as part of a UNESCO study. The workshops have used the process of drama-in-education to highlight some of the common problems these women experience at the workplace, and in building their confidence and understanding of each other.

Following are extracts from one of the skits performed by the workers based on their own experiences, and from the subsequent discussion around the question of building unity.

## THE SKIT

The scene is the factory door as the women workers clock out at the end of a long and tiring shift. They are in line waiting to be searched.

### Worker # 1:

Just tek time wid fi me bag yah. Me haffi wuk hard an me caan buy it back.

### Guard:

Pull it.

### Worker # 1:

Ah yuh fi pull it. Ah yuh ah search.

### Guard:

Den me ah go pull it yes. Yuh coulda all have man shirt in deh.

### Worker # 1:

Man shirt! Me nuh waan man shirt fi tief maam. Fi me man nah wear dem ya shirt.

### Guard:

Me ah go gi yuh a body search.

### Worker # 1:

Wha kind ah body search yuh ah talk bout. Is one smaddy can gi me body search and im is not here.

### Guard:

How yuh mean?

### Worker # 1:

Me know me nuh have nuttin an yuh ready fi lif up me frock.

### Guard:

Me see something under deh. Wah dis, wah dis?

### Worker # 1:

Lawd Missis, tek time. Jesus Christ, de woman ah grab up me pad. Is me private part dat!

### Guard:

No sah. It caan fat so.

### Worker # 1:

Nuttin nuh dedeh. Yuh haffi carry me go ah personnel or inna de office.

### Guard:

No. Is me suppose to search yuh.

### Supervisor:

What is happening here?

### Worker # 1:

She ah search me fi see if me have anything under me frock.

### Guard:

Me ah do body search and she nuh waan me fi do body search.

### Supervisor:

But this is a part of the rules and regulations inside this factory. You must get a body search. If you don't want a body search then you will have to leave.

### Worker # 1:

Yes, me know dat maam. But ah nuh so yuh fi do it. Yuh caan just touch up woman private part and feel up woman so.

### Supervisor:

What yuh seh? She feel like she have something under there?

### Guard:

Yes.

### Worker # 2:

Excuse me, I don't think yuh should search ladies here. I just don't . . .

### Supervisor:

Yuh don't think we should search? When I was down the other factory, yuh know what I see? I see a piece of thread hanging down a girl foot. When we give her the body search, is six reels of thread she have underneath there. So what yuh seh to that?

### Worker # 2:

Six reel ah dem big tread! Dat couldn't hold inna nobody drawers. Weh yuh ah seh to me!

### Worker # 3:

Stand up fi yuhself woman. Tell her seh she caan search yuh.

### Worker # 1:

Yuh caan search me man. Yuh caan search me body.

### Supervisor: (threatening)

So what are you going to do about it?

### Workers stand their ground.

'Yuh caan search de woman': 'Lef de woman': 'Yuh caan search any ah we' ... Loud quarrelling and confusion.

## SOME COMMENTS FROM THE DISCUSSION

"Everybody grow inna different environment, so yuh all speak different from each other. But that is not the point; is what we all have in common like this body searching when yuh seeing yuh period. This can happen to any woman because all woman see dem period, right. We don't stan up an laugh when such a situation happen to one because maybe tomorrow morning me face something worse dan yuh . . ."

"I have enjoyed myself especially doing the skits about what's taking place down at the Free Zone. What we would like to see happen is more enforcement down there because we ourselves try to stop what is happening but sometimes it get worse . . ."

"I feel very good about this meeting because we get more experience how to handle the situation at the Free Zone . . ."

"I learn a lot here. I like to see how de woman dem co-operate. Is so we waan de co-operation at de Free Zone . . ."

"We haffi put in a little word to somebody and try get a little group gathering like dis down at de Free Zone, and push . . ."



## FREE ZONE SURVEY

According to the latest survey conducted among Free Zone workers in Kingston:

- \* 80% earn less than \$100.00 a week;
- \* 2/3 of those earning less than \$100.00 a week take home less than \$50.00 after deductions, and work-related expenses;
- \* Almost 70% of the workers are forced to supplement their basic weekly wage by doing overtime;
- \* 80% have full responsibility for supporting their children.

Data for the study was collected by the pastoral team at the St. Peter Claver Church from interviews with 101 workers from 12 factories. It was analysed and compiled by Dr. Patricia Anderson of the Institute of Social and Economic Research of the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus.

# PARTY WOMEN SPEAK OUT

*Women activists in Jamaica's three political parties - the conservative, ruling Jamaica Labour Party, the liberal main opposition People's National Party and the small Marxist Workers Party of Jamaica - are loyal, hardworking and brave. Each of the parties has a "women's arm" - the Women's Freedom Movement (JLP), the PNP Women's Movement and the Organisation of Women for Progress which is led by WPJ women. We spoke to the leaders of these three women's organisations and to grassroots women activists connected to all three parties. Despite their differing ideological outlook and devotion to their particular party we found they had a lot in common. Not least of all is the fact that no matter the time and effort they put into their activist work, their status within the parties remains secondary to that of men. And, when the counting is over and their party is in power, they still have to struggle to improve the status of women at a national level.*

*Following are edited extracts from the interviews.*

## THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

**PRESIDENT:  
PORTIA SIMPSON,  
FORMER M.P. ONE OF FIVE  
VICE-PRESIDENTS  
OF THE PNP**

**The PNP Women's Movement is the oldest and most experienced of the women's arms of our political parties. How has it developed over the years?**

(It) used to be known as the PNP Women's Auxillary. The name was changed when Mrs. Beverley Anderson-Manley became President in the 1970's. When we moved from the era of the Women's Auxillary, we moved from the period when the women's role was serving water and preparing venue and not to be seriously involved in discussion.

In the 70's we concentrated mainly on assisting with party work particularly in the area of political education, and on struggling (with other women's organisations) around issues affecting particularly women and children. For example, the Maternity Leave Law came as a result of strong representation by not only the PNP Women's Movement but a grouping of women drawn from different political backgrounds. Presently we are trying to deal with the total development of women. And, we are not only concerned with (our) members, we are concerned generally about Jamaican women. (At one level) we have been involved in training women in marketing and communications. We are getting out there among women and doing some practical work. So we have done a number of

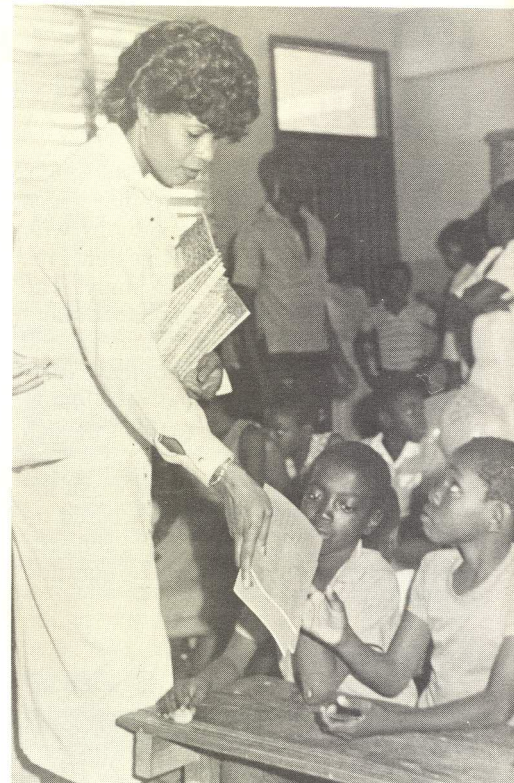
seminars (in several parishes) on Sexually Transmitted Diseases with special emphasis on AIDS. We are also identifying women of varying age groups for training in Community Colleges. And we identify bright women coming up through the party structure (for) political education and encouraging (them) so that later we can assist in getting them into the mainstream of constituency political life.

**Does this mean you are not satisfied with the percentage of women at top levels of the Party's political structure?**

It's very low and that is something that is hurting the Movement. It's not the fault of the party so much. I think women are not coming forward, but our position in the PNP Women's Movement is that we're not just supporting a woman because she is a woman. I must know where her head is at. If you don't know that, you could in fact be supporting a woman who has the body of a woman but her thinking is that of a man. The woman must possess that spirit of love and kindness and must be able to relate to her brothers and sisters. At times we identify a professional woman then discover she wouldn't be able to handle it because she has a problem relating to grassroots people.

**What are some of the difficulties for women in the political field?**

You really have to have a serious level of commitment to be involved at a constituency level because it takes so much out of you. You have no private life. I had to speak to the General Secretary about the programme of constituency visits they were setting up for me - from early morning to the following morning. They would never consider that as a woman you need at sometime in the day to use a bathroom to freshen up. Taking



you way into the afternoon before you get a break for lunch, which would be dinner. As an M.P. the salary is very low (so) it is very difficult particularly for professional women to give up their professions for politics. They are giving up a better life-style. While politicians are seen as having a certain level of life-style, if they don't have other businesses then they will have a problem.

**How do the women in the PNP get their voices heard?**

We have set the stage to be taken seriously. We are the majority of scrutineers, the canvassers, the election day workers and we're not into any hassle or fight with the men. We are prepared to work beside the men. All we ask for, and we've got, is an understanding that we are equal partners in the struggle and we will not settle for less. Any discussion taking place and we're going to be involved. If we are speaking and they're not listening, we stop until we get total silence then we begin to speak again. We try to speak not only on issues affecting women and children, but to everything that affects the daily life of the Jamaican people. For example, if it's tourism we will get the Shadow Minister on Tourism to speak to us on the policy and we make our recommendations. We don't want them to see us just speaking on women's issues. We want them to recognise us as people who are making our contribution to national development.



**Top party women do their political thing:**

- Simpson giving (opposite).
- Gordon-Webley receiving (above).
- Kirkwood-Munroe speaking (below).



**What's your experience as the only woman in the national leadership of the Party?**

I'm the only Vice-President but I'm sure none of the men can match up to me in terms of political work. I have no apology because my record of hard work is there. I set the pace for the men to

follow. It is often said you have to be lovey-dovey with the men (or) you have to go to bed with men to succeed. Well I can proudly say I'm a Vice-President because of hard work, sacrifice and being able to capture the imagination of the Jamaican people.

**Why are there no other women at such a high level as yourself?**

Well I must say we have some good female candidates coming up and we have had some serious and very bright women in the past - Beverley Anderson-Manley who brought a new dynamism to the Movement, Marjorie Taylor, Valerie McNeil and at one time Carlene Robertson. The (lack of women in the top leadership now) is not so much the fault of the party. It is also how you can

influence the Jamaican people. I did not get any promotion; no public relations work was done by the Party to sell me to party people or to the Jamaican people. The party cannot make people love somebody. I could blame the party for not giving me enough help in terms of the kind of resources that could make me more effective. But I would not do that because they don't do it for any other woman in the Party.

**What would the PNP Women's Movement see as the main priorities for women if the party is successful in its election bid?**

Education and training and employment. I really want to see the Jamaican woman develop economic independence. We also think the question of health is important because we must preserve our people. And I must say that in the same way we are vibrant and watching on behalf of the Jamaican people while the party is out of power, we are not going to compromise our position just because it is our government that will be in power.

**What's your view of the present state of the women's movement in the country?**

Even now in Jamaica we're lacking the kind of unity among women's organisations that we should have. We should have a serious women's lobby group to discuss and reach consensus on any policy or issue affecting women and children irrespective of which political party is in power. I know that not all the time we will get what we want because maybe we also have to think of the economy and what government can afford but we should have a say in what affects us and what decisions are taken about us. ♀

## THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM MOVEMENT JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY

**PRESIDENT: M.P., JOAN GORDON-WEBLEY**

**The WFM was formed in the late 1970's. Why?**

"Because we saw atrocities being committed that (were) way beyond what we had wanted - the State of Emergency, the basic talk of the (country's) leadership of the day (which) was one of arrogance. We felt we just had to get together to let the leaders of the day realise that the power is really in our hands. We felt we would have an impact because we were feeling it more than the men. Things were going up, there was little to purchase and salaries were not moving. We felt we were more determined than the men; if we are committed to a cause we stick to it no

matter what. The women are the ones that work in the parties and they are the ones that are the first persons at the polling stations. We felt we had more power (in that) when the men go out there, the police could baton them. It is not so easy to abuse a woman like that. We felt that the women would rise up if that ever occurred, regardless of (party) affiliation.

**What activities did WFM engage in to promote these and other issues?**

We did quite a lot of marching about against increase in prices, no food on the shelves, long lines at the supermarket;

people fighting over little flour, little rice. That was our main focus. And we felt Mr. Estrada (the then Cuban Ambassador to Jamaica) had too much to say in this country. We had constituency representatives in all 60 constituencies. They would have (group) discussions on various topics - pregnancy, that sort of thing. We organised JAMAL classes and had things like Family Day. If anybody within the group had a death or somebody was burnt out, everyone rallied. So in the times when we were not on the road, these (activities) kept us together.

**How effective was your mobilisation?**

It was not hard to mobilise the grass-roots women because they were the ones feeling the brunt of what was happening. The middle-class tend to cut on both sides. They are watching to see what happens and they are not going out there to be seen. They will perhaps call you privately, but then you get the feeling they are doing the same thing across the border to the others. The middle-class (is) a different breed. They protect their own little domain at all times. With the poorer class, you just needed to show them the points and what you are dealing with and they would be there.

**To what extent did WFM advance the cause of the JLP?**

I think (WFM) had a great impact. You really saw the pressure on the government of the day. It helped the JLP.

**How much impact has WFM had on the policies of the JLP since the party became Government?**

If I were to be very honest, our women, having helped to win really did not have much impact on the policies afterwards. I was very concerned after the JLP win, not to have seen some of the women who fought in the forefront even appointed to the Senate. I considered it a great insult that a man was put in charge of women's affairs. One thing I must say is that the PNP did try to bring a few policies to assist women that I'm proud of. That's one feather in their cap as far as I'm concerned. We have been doing that as well, but it's been too little far too late in the day. Why are we just doing it now?

**Are JLP women able to bring pressure to the JLP leadership around issues of concern to them?**

The only pressure we can bring is when we speak out in parliament. And

when you do speak out they (the men) take it personally. That's the worst thing - they take it personally. I must admit that before I worked so closely with men, I used to hear men talk about gossiping women - "That's all they do. Gossip, gossip, gossip." I had even come to believe it myself. (But) when I got into politics and heard and saw them, I know we can't match them. They manipulate us. They use us to get where they're going.

**What are some of the factors holding back more women from being a part of the political structure?**

You have to have an economic base to go into politics. If it was for politics alone I wouldn't eat. The salary I get just about pays my car up-keep and gas. You have a constituency allowance of about \$1,500 (a month) and I have an office I pay \$700 for rent. All the filing cabinets, typewriters, desks - there's no one that gives it to you. My two office staff are on my company's payroll, and (the company) pays the light and gas bills, so we're subsidising politics.

**Can the women in the three parties find common ground to deal with women's issues and is that a good thing?**

There are issues which affect us as women which the men do not have to encounter. Unless we decide we are going to go beyond (partisan) political lines, they are not going to let go one inch of their territory. I think a lot of women have been seeing this. Pat Sinclair of the Bureau of Women's Affairs has done a tremendous job of bringing the women together. The National Policy Statement (on women) is one heck of a step. I think we (the party women) are talking much more, which is good. This in itself will advance women. In the past you used to hear comments like, "Me prefer to work with a man than a woman." Nowadays, I don't think that's so prevalent. It's because we've started to really talk with one another. I'm very excited to see the kind of thrust coming forward from women at all levels. This sort of thrust to bring women together is fantastic, because the sisterhood breaks down the barriers and the fights.



**ORGANISATION OF WOMEN FOR PROGRESS WORKERS PARTY OF JAMAICA**

**PRESIDENT: INGRID KIRKWOOD-MUNROE**

**On what basis and on whose initiative was the OWP formed?**

Workers Party women alongside women from other parties took the initiative, but based on the discussions of Workers Party women. We felt it necessary to have a women's organisation that would unite women, regardless of their party affiliation, to struggle around issues that affect all women. OWP elects its executive and makes decisions about its rules and constitution. Because Workers Party women initially took the decision to form it and have been very active in it; because many women who were not initially members of the Workers Party have joined the party over the years, the influence of the Workers Party and more specifically Workers Party women, is very strong.

**What have been some of the activities of the OWP?**

In the 70's we were very involved in consumer issues - rising prices, shortages and so on - and our members were very actively involved in the Voluntary Price Inspectorate of that time, helping to ensure that scarce items were not being made scarce because of hoarding. We also worked with the PNP Women's Move-

ment and other women's organisations to push for the Maternity Leave Law. In the last few years we have been involved in building OWP Clubs in the constituencies and initiating and developing the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre. WROC provides various services such as family and legal counselling, health clinics, help with school uniforms and books, and is a practical base for helping women. We were also in the forefront of introducing and developing the celebration of International Women's Day locally.

**What is your position on women participating in party politics?**

We have always encouraged women to participate in party politics and women have always participated in party politics. I don't think it is going to be possible to get them not to, nor is it necessarily desirable. What is important for us women to realise is that the parties are always going to utilise women's labour and energies and reliability in doing the foot soldier work - the canvassing, the running and all the baseline work. But they have always tended to include women in the decision-making process of

the party only in a very marginal way. Women need to be organised separately within the parties and look to the interests of women within the political process of that party; to ensure they play a leading role commensurate with their contribution.

### **Why are there so few women at leadership levels within the parties?**

It's a very heavy burden for women to hold a leadership position in political parties. In general women have a disproportionate level of responsibility in their domestic and social lives, even when their men 'help out'. Some of the party men are very insensitive about the pressures of leadership for a woman. They will give the women a disproportionate amount of work to do and we are not sufficiently prepared or willing to take on the extra hassles which go along with leadership. It is in one sense healthy that we are not power-seeking. But in another sense it is not healthy because it does not sufficiently recognise the importance of leadership. A man with less leadership qualities will be willing to take it up whereas a woman will more underestimate herself and think she is not good enough, then end up doing most of the work anyway.

### **What are the ways in which chauvinism has manifested itself within the WPJ?**

Many years ago, the level of chauvinism was very much higher than today. In committee meetings, the men would talk like learned scholars. The women were too intimidated to open their mouths, because often if you did, there would be a silence, and then the conversation would resume as if you had not opened your mouth. What you as a woman had to say was not taken into consideration. If you stood up for anything concerning women, they would call you a feminist, as if that were a bad thing. They would get very personal. I remember it being said I had it (feminism) very badly, that I wouldn't even let my daughter play with dolls. They would undermine you sexually; trying to compliment you and be in competition about who could take you on. Nowadays, there's more respect from them as a result of us standing firm. We have struggled to have two sets of man/woman guidelines drawn up over the years that deal with hours when meetings are kept, the need to make sure women get home safely after meetings, how men treat us as women and so on. And from early on we saw the need for the formation of a Women's Committee through

which we raised complaints and criticism on behalf of all party women.

### **Is Socialism solving the problems of women?**

Socialism is a theory and a way of organising people that has played a big role in assessing where women are coming from historically. But it has not sufficiently addressed where women are going. The question of unemployment for example as a major problem for women in three quarters of the world is not a major problem for the women in the one third of the world that is socialist. But there is still a big problem about the domestic work which is still too much our responsibility. What we should be about is the emancipation of the human body and spirit. The spirit of the woman is doubly shackled under capitalism, but socialism only begins to make certain things possible.

### **What sort of government policies can help to advance women?**

The question of women's employment is fundamental for the majority of Jamaican women to advance. Take the Free Zone women workers as an example. The fact that they were able to get jobs to come out of their homes and communities and get some independent money in their hand-middle to feed their children and take care of themselves is an advancement for thousands of them. At the same time that advancement should not proceed in slave-like conditions. I don't understand why the Government cannot ensure a minimal amount of protection to the Jamaican women workers like that given to the male workers.

### **Should women work more together across party lines?**

We need to find the ways of working together; to strengthen our organisations, become more unified, more vibrant, more creative and supportive . . . and much less partisan. In this way we can contribute to making women the kind of social force that our history makes it possible for us to become. ♀

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## **GRASSROOTS VIEWS**

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*As in the case of their leaders, women political activists at the grassroots level organise well and work hard. They display deep loyalty for their particular party, even as they criticise the way they are treated as women by their parties. Taken for granted? Yes, that's one major negative. Insensitivity about their roles as mothers and wives? Yes, that too. Rewards for women not in keeping with*

*sacrifices made? Most definitely.*

*Following are some of the comments from grassroots women about why they got involved in party work, doing the work and where they've reached after years of labour to put their parties into power.*

### **GETTING INVOLVED**

"Of a fact, it was me madda dat pull me in cause she was a well-known activist fe my party. Me used to see she up and down and people calling out, "Miss B., Miss B.". As a youth me did glad fe hear people call her name and to know seh well she go here and she go there. When me did join it was a form of appreciation for her, coming from me."

"I been in dis ting from de 1960's, from me was just 16 years old. I was living in R.... T.... and dem used to hold meeting. Me would always listen to what de two sides dem haffi seh. From de sounds me develop from dem, me seh bwoy, is dat one fe me. And dat is where me stick . . ."

"I was in one party - same one weh me madda inna from she young, young. But, for me, is like dem neva really serious enough, so after a few years working wid dem, me fall off like, den me join dis one. . ."

"My commitment was to do more for the community because as a youth ah grow up, me see de needs ah de people dem and me seh me haffi do something fe de party because at least when dem in power, dem would give de people little hand, such as work, money . . ."

### **DOING THE WORK**

"My first involvement was in election work, when me was a poll clerk. De polling station was inna me yard, and since which part me live was mostly my party, me only find myself start to pad box and do pure bogus voting. Dat wasn't nothing fe have yuh under pressure. And when me hear seh we win, dat boost me to get more involved . . ."

"Me find seh de woman dem more stronger. Dem ah de one dem weh go out on de battlefield. Dem do enumeration and dem pad box. Inna de polling station, again is mostly woman dat. Is dem cater de food during campaign time and even at de meeting dem, is woman yuh see ah jump round. Canvassing - woman again. Is just woman at all times seeking de vote fe dem party. Den when soldier or police or gunman come fe tek weh de box dem on election day, is de woman dem yuh see ah run wid it fe protect it . . ."

"All me know is plenty meeting me haffi go late up inna de night. Wen de

man dem gaan so fast inna dem car and we de woman leave fe walk street . . ."

"When any money involve den yuh find more ah de man dem. De woman prefer to do voluntary work quicker dan de man dem . . ."

"There is danger to yuh life because, for instance, you as a poll clerk living in a PNP area; well labourite haffi vote, every type ah people haffi come vote. When dem see yuh dem know seh yuh is a PNP so when dem see yuh ah road dem can do yuh someting . . ."

"Inna de last big election gaan (1980) a friend ah mine was working inna one polling station and if she neva know weh she ah do, she woulda dead. Me witness dat. One man come in and give im name and she challenge him, seh she live inna de community and she know everybody and right den is a gun she ah look pon. She did haffi back down . . ."

### JUST REWARDS?

"Well after a time me did get more conscious about myself as a woman and me realise that even though is we as woman who commit weself and put dem in power, dem forget everything bout you as an individual weh help dem . . ."

"Yuh no see de stalwart people dem who give all de help get no benefit. Is only de man dem weh really come upfront

wid de gun and go on wid dem excitement; weh nah do nuttin besides shoot after people; ah dem inherit . . ."

"Me madda come outa it and weh she seh is dat pure nastiness inna it. People will jealous over yuh cause ah your work and yuh get to be well-known. Dem will seh tings bout yuh; who yuh deh wid and who yuh no deh wid . . ."

"When dem come to power dem hardly do nuttin fe woman. Even de little Maternity Leave Law, yuh still haffi fight a hell fight because right now yuh have places where when yuh pregnant and yuh ask for maternity leave, dem hardly waan fe gi yuh . . ."

"Sometimes we have meeting pon Sunday and yuh get fe air yuh grouse but it nuh go further dan de meeting cause councillor nah do nuttin, M.P. nah deal wid it. Dem seh ah woman fe deal wid woman business and is few woman yuh have inna de party who can really stand up fe we . . ."

### PARTISAN POLITICS DIVIDES

"Dis party ting definitely divide de woman dem. Yuh just don't waan fe deal wid yuh one another because yuh is PNP and me ah labourite and dat one is WPJ. Is because de woman inna dis yah country is so divided by dis party ting why de man dem can gwaan so . . ."

"We nah really go reach nowhere until

we see weself as woman first. We know we join we different party, but when it is a woman issue, is just a woman issue an' if we nah deal wid it together, we will lose, cause me nuh see no prime minister, bar none, weh business wid we as woman . . ."



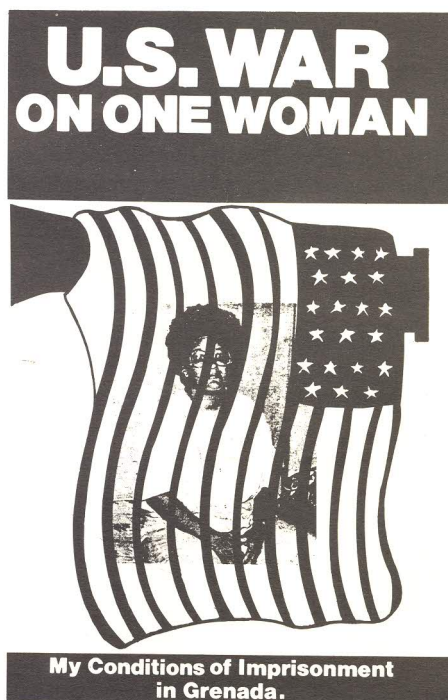
*Good Samaritans: Market women attend to a victim of street violence as curious passers-by look on. The play, "Good Samaritans in Kingston" was produced by the Wesley-Women Drama Group of Tower Street in downtown Kingston with the assistance of Sister Julia Davis, Reverend Barbel Waitenberg-Potter and Sistren Theatre Collective. It was presented to an appreciative audience at the Harbour View Methodist Church on Ash Wednesday.*

## U.S. WAR ON ONE WOMAN

### MY CONDITIONS OF IMPRISONMENT IN GRENADA (October 1983 - August 1986)

Phyllis Coard

Phyllis Coard was Secretary of Women's Affairs in Grenada's Peoples Revolutionary Government (1979 - 1983) and President of the National Women's Organisation. She was also a member of the Central Committee of the ruling New Jewel Movement in October 1983 when the party's internal crisis and the subsequent U.S. invasion ended the revolution. She and her husband, NJM Deputy Leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Bernard Coard along with twelve others have been sentenced to hang for the killing of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and several others. Phyllis Coard is the only woman among the seventeen charged with



Bishop's murder.

**U.S. War On One Woman** is the story of her imprisonment between 1983 and 1986. The story is told in her own words. It documents her loneliness: for nearly two years she was kept in isolation, denied local newspapers and given only two copies of *Newsweek* while all books sent to her by friends, including Agatha Christie and James Bond novels, were banned by prison authorities. It documents her fight back to maintain her sanity: combining physical exercise, personal hygiene, cell cleaning and washing clothes with studying her "pets" ... a family of croaking lizards, rats, mice and spiders which shared her cell. Her 98-day hunger strike is documented and she gives her views on why she's been singled out for "special treatment".

The book is published by Karia Press, 41 Rheola Close, London N17 9TP, U.K. and should become available in Jamaica and the Caribbean soon.



# WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Last year, Sistren's Artistic Director, Honor Ford-Smith, attended an international conference of women from organisations, groups and movements involved in a research project of the ISIS Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange. The participants came together in New Delhi, India. During the conference, they exchanged information about their groupings, and countries. Honor took notes and she'll be sharing the information with us in this and the next few issues.

## SUDAN

Sudan lies in the north eastern part of Africa and is bordered by eight countries- Egypt and Libya to the north; Ethiopia to the east; Kenya, Uganda and Zaire to the south; and Chad to the west. The population of some 22 million people is composed of a large number of ethnic and tribal groups and dialects, although the first language is Arabic and the second, English.

Sudan has had two military regimes since its Independence in 1956 and now has a Parliamentary Government similar to our own.

The women's movement in Sudan has its roots in the national liberation struggles of the mid-1940's. The women who spearheaded the movement at that time were young, educated and from the middle-class. The movement faded but gained strength again in the mid-1950's and early 60's. Activities of the earlier years, taken up mainly by the largest women's organisation, the Women's Union, included education for young women, literacy classes for older ones, and public lectures in child and mother care, personal hygiene and so on.

Later on, the Women's Union became more politicised, raising issues of a different nature such as equal pay for equal work, maternity leave, and suffrage rights, and campaigning for the Personal Status Law and womens' rights within the Islamic family. Later still, when Sudan was ruled by a dictatorship, the Women's Union was banned, but continued its activities underground. Today the Women's Union is again active around such issues as the impact of Islam on women, and seeking strategies to deal with the complex political situation in the country. The most recent development

in the women's movement in Sudan is the large number of groups which have grown up, each of them reflecting different political ideologies and class interests. The fact is that while the dictatorship has been deposed, conflict still rages in the country over which interest group should control power - and the women of the country are very much a part of that process.



*Somali and Sudanese representatives.*

## SOMALIA

Somali women have had a tradition of protesting against oppressive elements in their society through various cultural forms such as song and poetry, and through informal solidarity networks. That's because they didn't have any formal women's organisations before the 1940's, when nationalist resistance against foreign domination started. During this period, sections for specific interest groups, like the Somali Youth League, were established within the major political parties.

Within these sections women were able to voice some of their demands such as their right to vote and for equal education. However, hard as they tried to get recognition, women members were not treated as men's equals within these political parties. The result was that they began forming their own organisations. One such organisation was the Somali Women's Association which was set up in 1959.

After the country's Independence in 1960, women became more disillusioned when their expectations did not materialise. They were still in a subordinate position for the available jobs, for education, in politics and in family related matters. In 1967, the Somali Women's Movement was formed to voice equality

for women in the home and in the larger society. However, it was short lived. In the 1969 military takeover, the movement was banned together with all political and social organisations.

Today, the Somali Women's Democratic Organisation (SWDO), which is affiliated to the ruling left-wing party, is the only grouping with the potential to promote and safeguard women's issues and rights. It is a grassroots organisation based at village level which lobbies for women from all classes.

Among the issues on the current agenda of SWDO are the question of female circumcision, women's economic promotion, their participation at the highest political levels and revision and implementation of the Family Law. Polygamy is not addressed by the Family Law based on the fact that the vast majority of Somali women have rejected this form of marriage. This aspect of the law is expected to change shortly.



## A CASE FOR ORGANISING

To what extent was the passing of the Sexual Offences Bill in Trinidad and Tobago a "Victory for the Women" as the Express called it in an Editorial? Despite the changes that weakened the law, it was something of a victory and not only because definite improvements were gained, but because it showed what women could do when they put their minds to it. Women wrote letters, women marched, women picketed parliament, women spoke on TV and radio and in forums, women signed petitions and most important - women ORGANISED into pressure groups to demand that notice be taken of their views. A most positive side to the whole affair was that women who had probably never given a thought before to the idea of marital rape had been told that their husbands had a right to forceful sexual intercourse with them - and they objected. They demanded that their views be heard.

*Extracted from "The Impact of Women's Consciousness on the History of the Present: The Case of Clause Four" by Tina Johnson.*

*The paper is part of the monthly series of articles, research, etc. published by the Women & Development Unit, Extra Mural Department, UWI, Barbados.*



# SISTER'S CELEBRATION: NUFF NICENESS

\* Fae Ellington, M.C.:

"You think the show worth the \$10.00?"

Audience:

"Yes man, Nice".

Man in Audience:

"It better dan de \$40.00 one dem!"

\* Middle-aged women:

"I went by myself but I didn't feel alone. The atmosphere was fantastic and the show was really well organised."

\* Small Businessman:

"I felt so good about the show that afterwards I packed up the car with people who didn't have a drive and dropped them off at various points around town."

\* Young Woman:

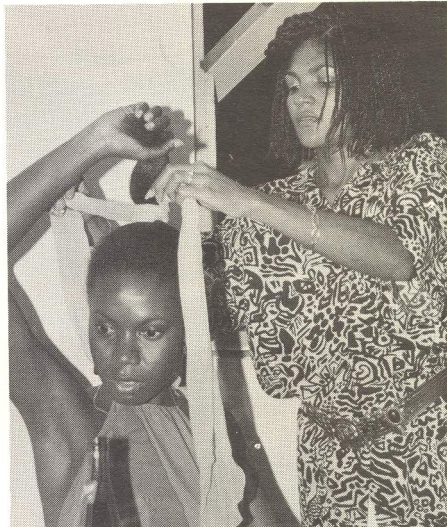
"All I know is . . . the way the place pack up oonu can't keep it deh next year! All kind a people did dedeh."

Where can you find a male diplomat squeezed up between a young rasta-woman with dreadlocks flashing and a Free Zone woman with orange hair - all three rocking till the early morning hours? Or hear Josey Wales denounce "all dem lickle jasey arm DJ bwoy who sing song 'gainst woman"? Or, despite the late hour in the middle of a working week, see the crowd keep Edi Fitzroy and the Unique Vision Band on stage for two encores as they tried to close the show.

The fourth Sisters Celebration, organised by Sistren in collaboration with several other women's groups and individual volunteers surpassed all expectations in terms of turnout, organisation, people's discipline and whole heap ah niceness. A massive crowd packed the amphitheatre and spilled over onto the grounds at the Cultural Training Centre on Tom Redcam Drive in Kingston. The show was varied with poets Jean Breeze, Mutabaruka, Mbala and Pauline Crawford; singers Marcia Griffiths, Carlene Davis, Pam Hall, Edi Fitzroy and the Carifolk Singers; the comedian duo Bello and Blacka and the Makini Dancers; DJ's Josey Wales and Sister Charmaine, all backed by the Unique Vision Band. And all the artists were at their finest, giving hot, hot performances out of love and respect for Jamaican women.

Sisters Celebration has indeed 'come a long way baby' and is readying itself to

go further. It has now become the major event on the International Women's Week Calendar where working women (and men) can get top-class entertainment, without slackness, at a minimal cost. Already, planning for the 1989 show is underway. And we are sure you will be there!



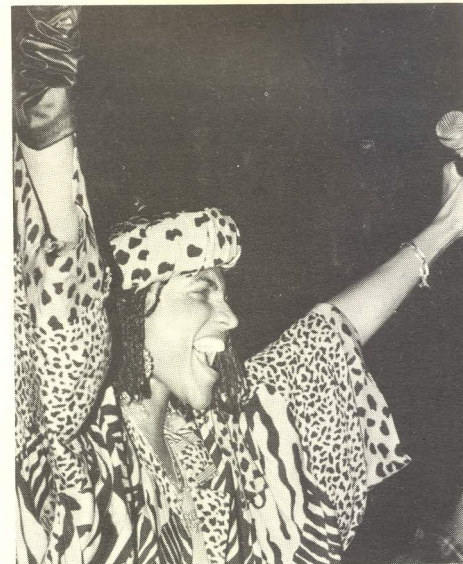
Pam Hall and Carlene Davis - Sisterly vibes backstage.



Edi Fitzroy closed the show.



Sistren members and friends enjoy.



Hoi, Hot Sisters - Carlene and Marcia.



A section of the large appreciative crowd.



DJ Wales - no



ness for the Celebration.

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK: 10th Anniversary Landmark Celebration

The 10th Anniversary of the celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) in Jamaica was indeed a landmark occasion.

It wasn't just the fact that so many events took place over a full week - Sisters Celebration, exhibitions of women writers and women artists, films, a day of solidarity with women farmers in St. Elizabeth, church services, luncheons, a concert, treat and jumble sale for older women and panel discussions were all activities in the mix.

And it wasn't just the fact that this diary of activities drew participation from such a broad section of women - clergy-women, working-class and middle-class women, party political activists and women with no political affiliation, young women and old women - and indeed, a whole heap of men as well.

Neither was it only because we as women had the chance to be entertained and educated about ourselves in a more organised and sustained way.

The most significant thing beyond all else was that so many women's organisations and individual women came together to pool their talents and organisational skills for the well-being of all our women - and it worked.

The activities were co-ordinated by the steering committee of "the new born baby" - the Association of Women's Organisations in Jamaica.

The Association was "born" at the Annual Symposium of the Women and Development Studies Unit at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus in January. At that meeting there were representatives of 26 organisations. They included church women's organisations (Caribbean Church Women, YWCA and St. Peter Claver Church); organisations of professional and working-class women (Business and Professional Women's Club, Combined Disabilities Association Women's Group, Free Zone Women's Group, Woman Inc., Nurses Association of Jamaica, Women and Development Studies, Working Group on Low-Income Households); women's cultural and related organisations (Sistren, Mada Wadada, Women Artists Collective, Women's Feature Service); political groupings of women (Organisation of Women for Progress, PNP Women's Movement); voluntary and government groupings (Bureau of Women's Affairs, CVSS-Women's Sector, Lioness Club of Kingston) as well as groups with an

active interest in women's issues but which are not specifically for women.

Consensus was reached that an umbrella organisation for women's groups should exist. The aims of the Association (see box) were also agreed on and a steering committee elected to co-ordinate IWD '88 activities, seek funding and clarify the objectives. To its credit the steering committee did just that in only 6 weeks. The pooling of efforts under the umbrella of the Association of Women's Organisations gave local IWD celebrations a major 10th Anniversary boost and was good for all of us. We can be inspired to build on the unity fostered during that week because, for sure, there is much that we as women need to organise around, in our own interests throughout the rest of the year. Let's all stick together and strengthen the AWOJA umbrella, resisting all efforts to divide us, and covering new ground between now and IWD '89. Then we can celebrate new gains for ourselves even more broadly, across the entire island. ♀

### ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS IN JAMAICA

#### Aims and Objectives:

- Developing a common voice and pooling efforts to address common issues.
- Creating a lobby/pressure group speaking to issues that concern women.
- Improving the condition of women in Jamaica, as consumers, citizens, and as women.
- Focussing on data collection - locally and internationally.
- Identifying resource persons.
- Implementing a programme of public education and consciousness raising.

If you wish to join or find out more about the Association the contact address is: c/o 12 Hope Rd., Kingston 10.

FLASHBACK

GETTING THINGS DONE TOGETHER - IWD TRADITION

Beverly Anderson-Manley (then President of the PNP Women's Movement) addresses a capacity crowd at the first celebration of IWD in Jamaica, March 8, 1978 at the YWCA Auditorium. That historic first IWD rally was jointly organised by the PNP Women's Movement and the Organisation of Women for Progress, which then had as its President, Linnette Vassell, the YWCA and the National Preparatory Committee for the 11th World Festival of Youth and Students. The PNPWM and the OWP under Anderson-Manley and Vassell, spent the rest of 1978 struggling on all fronts for the Maternity Leave Law. On March 8, 1979 at a second joint rally, guest speaker, the then Prime Minister, Michael Manley, announced that the Maternity Leave Law would be implemented that year. The Law finally came into force December 31, 1979 - the last day of the International Year of the Child. ♀



## IWD IN THE CARIBBEAN: GROWING AWARENESS, MORE ACTIVITIES

International Women's Day celebrations in the Caribbean generally reflected a growing awareness of the role women play in the development of the individual territories. And, as in Jamaica, several territories extended activities of the traditional single day over an entire week.

In the Eastern Caribbean island of St. Lucia, a week of activities kicked off on March 6 with a church service. Here the media played a key role with radio programmes paying tribute to women who have made significant contributions to national development, and a television panel discussion on the role of women as well as a special newspaper supplement on women. This media 'blitz' was organised by the St. Lucia government's Women's Desk. Other activities in St. Lucia included a women's rally in the capital of Castries, which featured leading

entertainers. In addition, to these national activities, individual women's organisations sponsored radio talk shows, panel discussions and community fund-raising activities.

In Dominica, the National Council of Women held functions in various districts, including rallies, video shows and marches. There was a Women's Film Festival from March 7 to 11, and on March 13, all women's groups took part in a rally in the southern region of the island. On March 8 itself, a Women's Bureau organised seminar on traditional forms of food preservation was a successful effort to revive some of those skills.

In Barbados, the main function brought together women from all over the world living in the island for a cultural evening in which they shared their national dishes, national costumes and

other forms of culture.

In Guyana, the Bureau of Women's Affairs held a social evening aimed at improving networking amongst Guyanese women. A week of activities was also organised by the Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement, arm of the ruling People's National Congress. And, the Conference on the Affairs and Status of Women in Guyana (CASWIG) held a series of public events including a seminar looking at health issues affecting women. CASWIG also mounted an exhibition on women's work in Georgetown to highlight the contribution of women to national development. The Women's Studies Group at the University of Guyana contributed with a series of panel and radio discussions focussing on women and their health. ♀

# "THE ROAD WAS SO BAD . . . THANK GOD THAT I'M ALIVE"

by Joan French

Many arguments are advanced for the declining representation of women in agriculture. Hannah's story is about one

woman who loved her work on the land, who fought hard to stay in it, and who finally gave up, unable to withstand the forces against her. Let us hear the story in her own words.



*Women Sugar Workers in Clarendon: Women in agriculture have a hard road, whatever the crop they farm.*

## WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT - Jamaica

- \* 1st woman Member of Parliament: IRIS COLLINS of the Jamaica Labour Party, in 1944. She was also the first woman Mayor (of St. Thomas).
- \* MADAM ROSE LEON of the Peoples National Party was the first woman M.P. after Independence.
- \* Currently there are six women in the 60-seat House of Representatives. (All seats are filled by representatives of the ruling Jamaica Labour Party.)
- \* 1st woman President of the Senate, JEANNETTE GRANT-WOODHAM, who currently holds the post. The only other woman in the Senate at present is HAZEL MONTEITH, an Independent.
- \* In the former Peoples National Party Administration (1976-80) there were two women M.P.'s among the 53 PNP reps, and five women Senators from a total of 13 for the PNP. MAVIS GILMORE-PETERSON is the lone woman in the current crop of Ministers. The former PNP administration also had one woman Minister, PHYLLIS McPHERSON-RUSSELL.

## Jamaican Women at the United Nations and the Organisation of American States:

- \* EVADNE COYE, current Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the OAS.
- \* LUCILLE MAIR was the first woman to hold the post of Jamaica's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations. She was followed by PAT DURRANT who held the post from 1983-1987.

## Jamaican Women Ambassadors and High Commissioners

- \* Jamaica's first woman Ambassador was CARMEN PARRIS who was appointed to head the French mission from 1975 to 1980. Currently, PAT DURRANT is Ambassador to West Germany, and ELLEN BOGLE is High Commissioner to Trinidad. They are the only two women amongst the island's 13 mission heads (including three permanent representatives at the U.N. and the O.A.S.).

"I started farming at 16 years old. My mother was a farmer and I got to the stage where I felt I should have my own garden. So I got somebody to cut the land and then I started farming. I love it a lot. I love to be in the garden.

"I started planting bananas. I would dig 25 banana holes, rest for a while, then I would dig another 25. I was making 50 holes a day, and not getting extra tired. So I kept on planting bananas.

"But there came a time when the struggle in bananas became grave and hard, and that was when I had to go to the boxing plant to sell it."

In academic studies they refer to this grave and hard struggle as "transportation and marketing difficulties". How did Hannah live and feel these difficulties?

"The road was very bad. I had to take two bunches of banana on my head. The children were too young to help me. Once I wanted to make a short cut because the road was so bad and the rain was falling and the load was squeezing me and the mud, all the mud and yu slipping. And I walk and walk because I thought the track was shorter but actually it was longer and I felt so bad I almost vomit with the bananas on my head.

"Sometimes I would have 25, 30 or 40 or so bunches to carry. Then I would reach the end. I got a lot of rejects, because I had to lift them up by myself, and sometimes I tie two together to bring them out, and sometimes they got bruises so I used to have a lot of loss."

Well, Hannah got her bananas to the plant, so you would expect that to be the end of the marketing story, right? Wrong. In addition to all of that she had to contend with the unfair practices of the men in getting her bananas in.

"Most of the time when you came to sell, one man would get number 1, because maybe this morning you had a little breakfast and it keep you back a little so this man get number 1. And I would be standing there with my clothes wet from the sweat of carrying the bananas, and many other women would be waiting too, and then when you hear the number 1 reach on the scales it would be 6, 7 hours before a woman could even pass two bunch of bananas. Because all the other men giving this one man all their bananas to weigh. One handing to the other and as soon as this one finish he call another and he is taking that one's bananas, an' is so it go. Men passing all the while. If you lucky you might get somebody to slip you in, or if you are in that line somebody may do you a favour and pass you on nearer the top so that

*(Continued on page 19)*

# Women's Media Watch Group: IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF OUR WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

The first public meeting of the Women's Media Watch Group will take place in early June when women (representing groups or in their individual capacity) will have the opportunity to join the campaign against the use of negative images of women by the media.

As its name suggests the Women's Media Watch has a system set up for monitoring the media specifically for sexist images of women which are pornographic and derogatory. As SISTREN has said so often, it is these types of images which desensitize the society to the gravity of sexual violence against women and children.

Women's Media Watch also aims at raising the level of public awareness and concern about sexual violence through an education programme including letters, talks, production and dissemination of informative material. In addition, Media Watch is taking action by lobbying those who advertise, dramatise and report in the media, as another means of changing the way women are portrayed.

At its meeting in June, participants will have a chance to join Task Forces to carry forward these strategies. Another aspect of the agenda of the meeting will be the drafting of plans for a one-day boycott of the STAR newspaper, to protest its continued use of bare-breasted women and the general hypocritical policy of the Gleaner Company in its reporting of matters concerning women.

Media Watch also plans a survey of TV programmes in relation to the incidence of violence against women. The survey will be used to raise the consciousness of the viewing public about the link between these images and increased sexual abuse of women and young girls.

The Women's Media Watch evolved out of the November 1987 meeting of 34 women's organisations in Jamaica organised by Sistren Research for the UNESCO project on women in cultural development. It is voluntary, non-partisan and non-profit making. Its overall goal is to improve the image of women in the media as one means of helping to decrease sexual violence in the society.

The incidence of sexual violence in the society continues to rise. As women none of us is safe, whether we live behind burglar bars in Upper St. Andrew, or with

little or no protection against intruders in countless communities across the island, whether we drive a car to reach home or have to 'walk-foot' on lonely roads. It pays us all to get involved to root out

## MEDIA WATCHING

**GO DEH D&G:** All praises for the (You're Right With) Red Stripe ad campaign which is truly patriotic and entertaining without displaying one single negative image of Jamaican women!

**GLEANER & WOMEN'S NAMES:** After 150-odd years, the GLEANER is still insisting on calling us by our husband's names. Who for example, is Mrs. Peter Peterson? She is none other

one of the central causes of sexual violence, and indeed, to win back our right to walk along any street, night or day, without being faced with danger. Membership to the Women's Media Watch is open to all groups and individuals who support its objectives.

Write/telephone for further information:

Women's Media Watch Group  
P.O. Box 344  
Kingston 9.  
Tel: 926-8696.

than Dr. Mavis Gilmore, Minister of Government and a well-known political personality in her own right. Many women use their husband's surnames; many others are moving away from tradition and maintaining their own surnames with or without those of their husbands. Even if the GLEANER doesn't want to move with the times, surely it should, at a minimum, find out the christian names of those married women they report on.

## TAKING ACTION!!

Since its formation, the Women's Media Watch has been very busy. These are some of the actions taken by the group so far.

**Calendars portraying negative images of women:** The group has written to J. Wray & Nephew (White Rum, Red Label, Silver Top Gin), B.J. Hanna (desk calendar), D&G (Red Stripe, Heinekin), and P & S Auto Spares asking them to reconsider the use of such images for their calendars next year. Copies of the letter sent to service groups and women's organisations asking them to take similar action.

**Advertising Policy:** The Association of Advertisers has said it will discuss the matter at its next meeting following receipt of a letter from the Media Watch group asking about its policy in relation to the negative portrayal of women.

**Gleaner's Editorial Policy:** A letter to the GLEANER Editor spoke to the newspaper's 'hypocritical' editorial policy, using the example of an editorial entitled "Respect For Women" at the same time the STAR continues to use

sensationalism in reporting women's issues and to display women's naked breasts. Copies sent to other media houses, women's groups and service clubs.

**Tourist Board:** The Jamaica Tourist Board has been asked to clarify its policy on the use of negative images of women to promote Jamaica's tourist industry. The Women's Media Watch group feels that the Jamaica Tourist Board should take a strong stand on, rather than turn a blind eye to, the Rosen "Beach Bum" posters, postcards and calendars which use Jamaica's name.

**Family Counsellors:** An extensive, updated list of resources for women sent to RJR family counsellor and other counselling personalities and counselling offices.

**On-going monitoring** of the media and the compilation of clippings which will form the basis of a report on how the media deals with women's issues.

**Resource materials** being collected on the topics of abuse against women and children and violence in the media.

by Jennifer Jones

"Six million dollars  
She has a favour  
And a rukum-kum-kum-kum-dash,  
And a rukum-kum-kum-kum-dash,  
Rukum-kum-kum-kum-rukum-  
kum-kum-kum  
Rukum-kum-kum-kum-dash!"

Screams of laughter break out from the children as the demonstration of their ring game ends. "What do you mean by 'rukum-kum-kum-kum-dash'?" asks Hazel, already half-testing in her mind the possible sexual connotation of 'kum-kum' (a less widely used synonym in Patwah for 'pum-pum', i.e. vagina). More laughter. "It is a . . . it's . . .". "It's a . . . It's a game, Miss!" says one of the older boys (11 yrs?) in this Primary School playground. By firmly stating the obvious in a matter-of-fact tone he momentarily clears the uncomfortable air of hesitation among the smaller ones. "When you say 'rukum-kum-kum-kum-dash', what happens?" Hazel continues to explore. "It's . . .". "It's . . .". The girls still hesitate. "Let him show you, Miss," pipes a small boy. His companion, who was last in the centre of the ring, performs clear gyrating movements of the pelvic area. "So it's a dance?" "Yes, Miss" is the chorus and one of the girls announces confidently, "And that's the meaning of 'rukum-kum-kum-kum-dash!'"

The willing and friendly children have demonstrated some of their favourite games: Chinese Skip, Dandy-Shandy, Marbles, Drop-a-Ground, Baseball,

# PREPARING OUR CHILDREN FOR LIFE?

Stukki. We press them for 'the new games'. "Six Million Dollars" is one of the responses. It is introduced by a girl and in the demonstration the circle is formed (as in most ring games) mainly by girls. The first girl who took the centre quietly approached another girl, as the circle was forming, with a movement which suggested she was putting something into the other child's hand. (Was this part of the ritual of the game?) This same child replaced her in the centre of the ring after the first round. The child in the centre dances in a circle, moving from one child to the other. The last child she dances with replaces her.

"I don't know this game - it can't be much more than two years old", remarks Lois, a trained teacher who teaches at a Basic School run by the Mel Nathan Institute, in the heart of a ghetto area in downtown Kingston. It is not many years since she herself was in the playground playing these games.

Our objective has been to find out what the games reveal about the impact of society on our children. Quite frankly, we are more than a little shocked at what we have discovered. This game seems clearly to be our children's response to the growing prostitution and general 'Boops' syndrome in our society where, more consciously and openly than ever before

in recent history, a woman is forced to use her sexuality as a 'favour' to earn the money she needs to survive. We note the children's high estimation of the earning power of the 'favour'.

Returning home I walk through the door to find the children watching 'Music Video', on JBC-TV. The camera shows a significant number of shots of a woman in a bikini dancing. It zooms in on belly button, hips, the front-V of the bikini. "That's mine!" says 5-year-old Andrew from next door in response to the image of the bikini clad woman. "That's mine!" says 4-year-old Kirk, in response to the next shot. "What's that, Andrew?" I ask. "Nothing," replies Andrew. He looks down at his hands and silently counts his fingers, apparently no longer interested in the music video.

Later my 12-year-old daughter laughingly demonstrates the exact movements of 'rukum-kum-kum-kum-dash', with circular gyrations of the hips until 'dash', when the pelvis is sharply thrust forward.

Lois, Hazel and I had pondered on the 'casualness' with which sexual relations are communicated to our children - from the casual situation of teenagers in the neighbourhood who 'rub-a-dub' at weekend dances, to the involuntary communication by parents who are forced to sleep in the same room as their children, to the suggestive shots of the dozens of music videos shown regularly on the TV. We ponder too on the future of those lively primary school girls, the majority of whom the education system will

(Continued on page 21)

THE STAR, Monday, January 25, 1988 - 3



She photo  
MAN FOR MARIA! True blue beauty Maria Whittaker has picked the candidate who gets her vote. The man who gets her backing on the hustings is Felix Toy, Greg Knight Bachelor Greg 18, who's ready to hang on to his Deputy North seat, is also a contender. And our Maria, 18, says she can handle her boyfriend!



?? ?? ??

## The Daily Gleaner Editorial

### RESPECT FOR WOMEN

MISS Portia Simpson, the People's National Party's spokesperson on Pensions and Social Security, last Sunday lamented the serious lack of respect for Jamaican women and called upon them to demand more respect from their men. This lack of respect, she argued, was not limited to gunmen and murderers but extended to professionals. She is on the right track, and her words should be heeded.

Miss Simpson apportions blame to mothers who had their daughters doing household chores but absolved their sons of such seemingly unmanly tasks. The blame is appropriately directed. However, there is more to it than that. We would have thought that even if the sons were pampered, parents would still be teaching them good manners and respect not only for women, but for their elders, too.

Those professional men who are disrespectful to their wives, and so naturally to other women, stand condemned, more so than the men from less privileged circumstances. At least they should have had the proper upbringing, and are expected to set a standard of behaviour that others can emulate.

But it is not only the mothers and the professional men who are caught short. Many of our women contribute, or passively accept the boorishness, the disrespect and even the scorn and ridicule poured on them by men.

One only has to listen to some of the foulness, the expeditives and the nastiness which pass for some of the dance hall music to understand to what low ebb our treatment of women has descended. And what is galling is the fact that in many cases it is the very women who are being so disrespectfully treated who are the first to light up their faces with smiles and take to the dance floor.

The filth, often couched in suggestive language directed at women, is not confined to the dance halls, but has now become the norm on public transportation. The drivers and conductors disregard the presence of women and children. And in the vast majority of cases passengers refuse to make their voices heard. They do not protest. And yet we are persuaded that if they did, very soon there would be improvement.

The disrespect shown to our women is but one aspect of the general deterioration in manners and courtesy that seem to have affected the several spheres of our lives. Improvement will only come when others speak out, as Miss Simpson has done, and relate to it passively while decent standards are eroded and undermined.

The eminence accorded women in so many areas of Jamaican society, and of late its economic organisation, makes the disrespect unwarranted and unfair.

Opinions on this Page, except for those in the Editorial above, do not necessarily reflect the views of the GLEANER.

6 - THE STAR, Saturday, January 25, 1988



TA TO LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE!  
Light, it's sensational Maria Whittaker all set to show you the way to win a fortune. Of course the ladies have taken a shine to her. And she's pretty bright even without those candles. So off you glow, folks.

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**WRAY & NEPHEW**

**White OVERPROOF RIM**

**RIDE TIME!**

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GLEANER'S EDITORIAL POLICY: Hypocritical on women's issues.

Companies asked to reconsider negative calendar images.

# YOU AND YOUR BODY

Women's bodies are a very important part of nature's birth process. They nurture and develop the man's seed and give birth to all humankind. Our bodies are beautiful and we should be proud of them. But all too often we are not encouraged to know our bodies or to find beauty in our sexuality - those complicated aspects which are necessary for us to play our part in the birth process. This regular column is aimed at helping us all to better understand how our bodies work and to boost our pride in ourselves.

## VAGINAL DISCHARGE AND TUBAL INFECTIONS

### Normal Vaginal Discharge

It is normal for women who are in the child-bearing years to have a small amount of discharge from the vagina. Ovulation is the release of the egg from the ovary for fertilisation by sperm from the man. Ovulation takes place midway between the first day of the menstrual cycle and the first day of the next menstrual cycle. For example, if the period starts on January 1, it would normally be expected again on January 28 (which explains how it's possible to have two periods in one month). In any regular 28-day cycle such as this, the woman could expect to ovulate 14 days after the start of the period and 14 days before the next period - in this case, around January 14. At the time of ovulation, the normal vaginal discharge may become a little heavier and slimy.

### Abnormal Vaginal Discharge

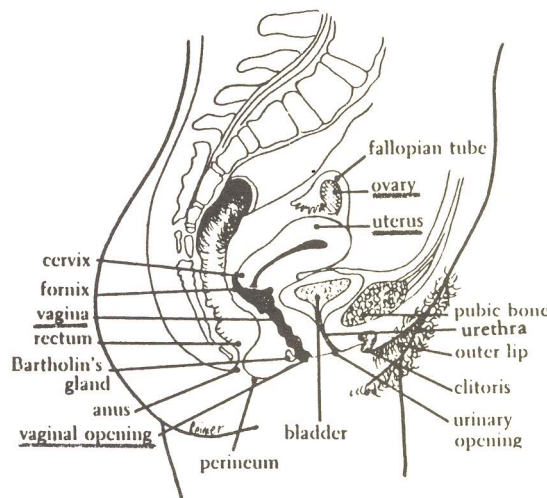
Abnormal vaginal discharge is not a disease in itself, but must always be investigated for diagnosis and appropriate treatment. Infections which cause abnormal discharge are fairly common in childhood, and among women who have gone through the change of life (post-menopause), when the lining of the womb tends to be thin. In our society, a child with a vaginal infection may be sexually active, and should be examined for all possible causes, including sexually transmitted infections.

The most common form of abnormal vaginal discharge is a fungus infection which is caused by *candida albicans*. This fungus infection is known as **candidiasis**, **thrush** or **monilia**. It is primarily an infection which women get. It can occur at any age, and affects both virgins and women who are sexually active. It produces a white cheesy discharge which can cause a lot of itching.

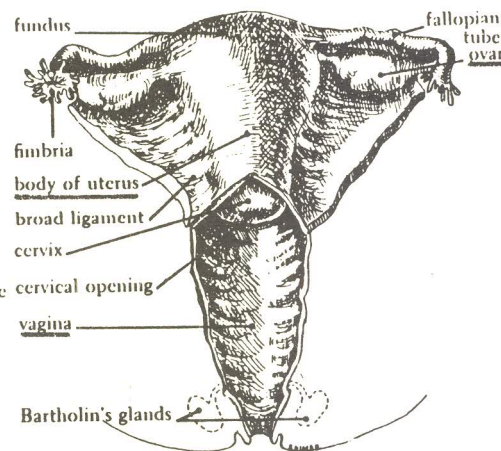
Thrush is a cousin to athlete's foot or liver spots, and is very difficult to get rid of because it loves to grow in areas that are warm and moist - like mildew. Some women are more prone to have it than others, especially during pregnancy.

If you have thrush you can pass it on to others who come in contact with it, including your sex partners. If you have it, you have probably passed it on to your sex partner and he would need to be treated also, but this condition is not primarily a sexually transmitted infection.

Abnormal vaginal discharge can also be caused by overgrowth of the bacteria or vaginal flora normally found in the vagina. Too much douching can cause this overgrowth. Poor hygiene after defecation can allow the bacteria from the stool to travel forward into the vagina and cause an infection and bacterial overgrowth. Worms in children can also travel forward from the anus to the vagina and cause vaginal discharge.



FEMALE PELVIC ORGANS (side view)



(front view)

### Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Most women who are infected with gonorrhoea and other kinds of sexually transmitted diseases have no symptoms. They have no discharge, they have no burning when they pass their urine, and they would feel that they have no problem. It is when they have sex again, and the man complains of discharge or burning that the woman would know that she has a problem. Often the woman may feel that the man is lying; that he could not have got the infection from her because she has no problems, but that is not true.

There are many different sexually trans-

mitted diseases that can cause vaginal discharge, or sores on the genitals.

Gonorrhoea is still the most common one. There is also a newer one called *Chlamydia*, and there is *Trichomonas vaginalis* and *Gardnerella vaginalis*. All these infections may or may not present themselves with a vaginal discharge. If you have a discharge or funny smell or you have been told that you have passed on an infection to your sexual partner, you must go and see a doctor who can do tests to determine which disease, if any, you have and give you the appropriate treatment.

### Sores on the Genitals

Sores on the vagina and vulva are abnormal, and should always be checked by your doctor. The main causes are herpes and syphilis, both sexually transmitted diseases. These sores will heal by themselves, but the disease has not gone away, and will return. It is very important to seek treatment especially with syphilis, which can be cured if identified early enough with injections of

penicillin. If left without treatment, syphilis can eventually cause serious heart disease, crippling, blindness or mental problems.

### Pap Smears

Every woman who is sexually active should have a Pap Smear - a simple, painless test for cancer of the cervix (the neck of the womb). This should be done every two years because if the cancer is found early, it is very easy to treat, but if it is found out late, it will kill you.

### Tubal Infections

Many women have "tubes problems" or "infection in the tubes" and have com-

plaints such as vaginal discharge, "belly bottom" pain and pain when they are having sex.

Tubal infections are not caused by the birth control pill. This is a mistake that many women make. Tubal infections are caused by sexually transmitted infections from man to woman during sexual intercourse (of course, remember that the man got it from a woman, so it is a cycle of woman to man to woman to man and so on). The tubes can also become infected as a result of an abortion or if an Intra-Uterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD), such as the coil, is being used.

Acute pelvic inflammatory disease (P.I.D.), can be a medical emergency, and always requires professional

attention. The main symptom is abdominal pain. The main complication is blocked tubes which causes infertility or ectopic pregnancies (where the fertilised egg begins developing in the tube instead of the uterus).

We will discuss A.I.D.S. in another article, but like the other sexually transmitted diseases, your best protection is to use a condom, and/or to have sex with one partner only who is also faithful to you alone. But remember that to get protection from the condom - protection from pregnancy and protection from disease - **you must use the condom every time you are having sex and you must put on the condom from the start to the end of inter-**

course. If you start without it and then put it on in the middle, you are not protected from pregnancy or from sexually transmitted disease. ♀

## PROTECT YOURSELF

If you feel you are suffering from any of the conditions described go to your doctor or the nearest Health Clinic. Don't waste time.

Pap Smears are available at minimal cost at: The Cancer Society, 16 Lady Musgrave Road, Kingston 5; and The Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC), 47 Beechwood Avenue, Kingston 5.

## THE ROAD WAS SO BAD . . . (Continued from page 15)

you can sell a batch. Most times I stay there till 5 and the children at home, small, with nobody. When my mother was alive she used to give me a little help, but after she dead there was no help."

Between the marketing problems and the rejects, Hannah was in a jam. She tried to find a way out, and still continue her first love, the cultivation of the land.

"When I saw the bananas couldn't really help me, I couldn't put out to really sustain the children or look after myself, I asked a road driver for a job and he gave me a cooking job on the government road. I say, well, alright, during the week I will do it and on Saturday I will look at my bananas. Banana days I will leave early and go and fix up the bananas."

The cooking job was hard.

"Most times I would have to roast plantains and I would have to roast bread-fruit and make bakes, and do cucumbers. Everybody want something different, and they need it for 9 o'clock. So I would have to cough up myself taking in a lot

of smoke. My eyes running, my nose running, and I have to make sure I prepare everything. After a while I said to myself, 'I'm going back to my backgarden'."

By now Hannah's son was bigger and stronger, so he would help her lift the load onto her head, and take a small bunch himself. One day he went to school and didn't come back home for lunch.

"Who give you lunch?"

"Me father."

"Where you know father from? How come father can give you lunch? I left your lunch for you, why you didn't come and eat it? Don't eat no father lunch. Don't eat no mother-in-law lunch."

But he kept on doing it till finally he decided to go and live with his father.

"It grieve me a lot because he was the strongest one to help me. The doctor had already told me I was carrying too much load. I was pregnant and he said that anything I was doing I should sit down. But I had no-one to help me, so I continued carrying the load. But one night I got

really sick, and this time I had to hear the doctor. When I had the baby, he stopped me from getting any more family, because my womb was slacking.

"After a while it was too much for me. Maybe I start too early with it. Maybe all my energy went in it. I couldn't see any real success in it, because it was just me and the load. I still had plenty bananas, but sometimes I just used to cut up a lot and throw them out, because selling them you could just barely get something to buy bread. I jus' decide I mus' stay home because there is no energy left to fight with bananas. I cannot think bananas anymore, because there is nothing in it."

So what does Hannah do now?

"The Methodist church has a class run by the Minister's wife. They teach us to do different things like roti, fry rice and baking. I have been to the class now for 9 years. I'm doing some little cakes and getting them off my hands, and sometimes I get a little cooking job and I occupy myself with anything else.

"We have formed a ladies' group at the church. The church leaders come and talk to us and it is a great spiritual upliftment. Right now we have a campaign to revive the church. We find it is making progress."

Hannah still loves the land, and is strong enough to work it. The land produces well. But the road from the land to the market has forced her to hand it over to her son. Few young people now remain in farming. Will the road from the plot to the market make him leave it too?

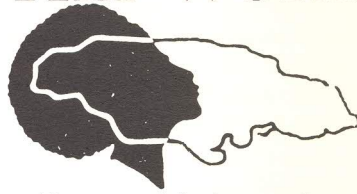
Joan French, Consultant to Sistren's Workshop Team, is currently involved in a two-year research project, 'Women in Caribbean Agriculture', initiated by the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA). The research is being conducted in Dominica and St. Vincent with support from Small Projects Assistance Team (Dominica) and the Committee for the Development of Women (St. Vincent). ♀

# THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY



# JAMAICA'S NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT ON WOMAN: AND NOW THE WORK BEGINS

by Suzanne Francis-Hinds



Jamaica's Bureau of Women's Affairs scored a first in the Caribbean last year, when the Government adopted a National Policy Statement on women.

But that was the easy part.

Now, the Bureau is tackling the difficult task of getting the policy implemented and initiating genuine action on behalf of Jamaican women who make up 52 percent of the population.

It took 18 months to formulate the policy. Numerous meetings were held, and there were major national consultations with representatives of interested groups and organisations from across the island.

Out of this process came a strong appreciation of the many-sided role which Jamaican women have played in the country's development, despite the lack of proper support. The statement notes, "Women's achievements under these constraints only underline the potential benefits to women and to Jamaican society if the historic lack of recognition was redressed."

"The Government can take steps to capture the full capabilities of women for development. Its policy-makers must develop a fuller understanding of what women currently do and must examine whether policies have the result of assisting or constraining women," it adds.

Many instances of such constraints emerged during the consultations held prior to drafting of the document.

These include the difficulty women have in obtaining credit.

Further, there was strong emphasis during the discussions on the low status and wages and poor working conditions of many women in female-dominated occupations.

Home and community responsibilities - especially in the absence of good basic services - were found to fall on women. This restricts their ability to engage in sustained economic activity.

The Jamaican Government has gone as far as directing its ministries and agencies to proceed with implementation.

But Women's Bureau Director, Pat Sinclair, believes this is only the beginning. The agency must now change its emphasis to become a catalyst and coordinator.

The first step is to establish an inter-ministerial committee to oversee implementation of the policy statement.

Initially, the Bureau will begin work-

ing with two ministries, to be chosen from a short-list of three: Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The Bureau will move on - to tackle education, justice, commerce, finance, and so on.

More than just providing a broad policy outline on women's role, the statement has provided government officials with specific guidelines. They will now have to develop the policies and programmes through which to achieve the goals set out in the document. One of the immediate goals to be addressed is to ensure that economic, trade and employment policies protect and increase women's access to employment and income.

Others will include identifying and upgrading existing and potential skills, improving access to credit, markets and support services, improving pay and conditions of women's work, and expanding affordable child care services.

Other objectives - protecting and supporting women and children who are victims of violence and harassment, improving the availability of shelter, improving basic services, and promoting access to fertility control.

In addition, the Government has pledged to implement legal reforms to eliminate discrimination against women in accordance with the U.N. Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

As the Women's Bureau gears itself to nudge the bureaucratic machinery into taking meaningful action on all the plans and policies which have been so painstakingly devised, its Director has not forgotten the need for ongoing evaluation.

Written into the policy statement is a recognition that the development of approaches and measures to effectively implement the plan will require a continuing process of review and evaluation.

Sinclair expects this process to be completed in another 12 to 18 months.

## Women's Feature Service

*Suzanne Francis-Hinds is a well-known communicator with wide experience in the fields of Public Relations, feature-writing, editing and the development of small publications.*



## TAKE ACTION TO GET THE POLICY IMPLEMENTED

Let's do our best to ensure the National Policy Statement on Women is implemented. Here's what you can do:

- \* Make sure you know what the Policy Statement is saying. Get your copy from the Bureau of Women's Affairs.
- \* Pass the information on to a friend, a church sister, a neighbour.
- \* When the Bureau's popularly worded booklet on the Policy Statement becomes available, help with distribution - in your community, through your organisation, your church, etc.
- \* Organise meetings to examine the policy goals. Invite a representative of the Bureau to take part.
- \* Give the Bureau information to strengthen its case for implementation by sharing your everyday experiences as they relate to the policy goals.
- \* Attend the briefings being organised by the Bureau about different aspects of the Policy Statement. One has already been held on Legal Reform.
- \* Contribute information about studies, research, articles, etc. on issues related to the major policy goals, to a central bibliography being compiled by the Bureau for its own use and the use of other groups.
- \* LOBBY! Once you're fully informed about the Policy, write letters, make calls to the media, your MP, etc.

### BUREAU OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS CONTACT:

Sherry Gale, Policy Advisor, 18 Ripon Road, Kingston 5.  
Telephone: 929-7233.



*WELL-RECEIVED: Pauline's first public presentation of the poem "To Paulette Fuller" was well received at the annual Sisters Celebration Concert.*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

*18-year-old Paulette Fuller was brutally tortured for one week while being held without charge by police in St. Mary. The case gained public attention through the popular radio call-in programme, Public Eye. Several women's organisations, including Sistren, wrote a collective protest letter to the Commissioner of Police. Two policemen have since been arrested and are awaiting trial on assault charges.*

**PREPARING OUR CHILDREN**

*(Continued from page 17)*

condemn to 'fail' the Common Entrance Exam (approximately 45,000 Jamaican children take this exam and approximately 10,000 are awarded places, i.e. 'pass'); who will go on to Secondary Schools as 'failures'; (ask any Secondary School Principal about their negative feelings of self-worth when they enter); from whence they will move as 'failures' into unemployment (over 60% of our women between the ages of 15-years to 25-years are unemployed). This playground game, involving children from 6-years old, shows us clearly one of the options society is already preparing them to take.

*Jennifer Jones is a resource person working with Sistren and a freelance journalist and researcher. ♀*

**TO PAULETTE FULLER**

by Pauline Crawford

*A feel yu pain mi sista  
A feel yu pain yu si  
A feel yu grief, yu sorrow  
Lawd, a feel yu agony.*

*Every stroke dat yu get  
Wid di piece a truck tyre  
Every bun from di iron  
An di flames from di fire.*

*Sista, dawta, madda  
Dem feel threaten by wi power  
So dem waan fi mash dung wi structure  
Every hour by di hour.*

*Dem seh yu thief one thousan' dollar  
Yu deny it  
But to dem it neva matta  
Dem waan fi mek yu suffa  
Dem waan fi hear yu bawl  
Dem waan fi si yu crawl  
All when yu back was against di wall.*

*A feel yu pain mi sista  
A feel yu pain yu si  
A feel yu grief, yu sorrow  
Lawd, a feel yu agony.*

*One stripe, two stripe  
No stripe to dem honour  
But, a noh truth  
A noh peace, A noh justice dem did after  
Soh a wah den Mr. Officer?  
Yu eye ketch di daughter  
An yu did want her as brawta  
But she si yu as a bluffer  
And she si yu as a bother  
Soh a revenge fi calm yu ego  
A dat yu go fah  
A dat yu did offer?*

*Yuh noh have noh woman  
Noh daughter, noh sista  
Nor noh mother dat yu concern fah  
Dat yu really care fah?*

*A feel yu pain mi sista  
A feel yu pain yu si  
A feel yu grief, yu sorrow  
Lawd, a feel yu agony.*

*No lick  
No kick  
No fist  
A go silence wi, mek wi cringe  
Inna no corner  
We nah figot yu torture  
Di fire still a bun mi sista  
An wi feel wi strength and wi powa  
So Mr. Officer,  
Di next time yu go fi a dawta  
Remember seh wi deh yah  
Yes mi sista  
Wi deh yah.*

# REVIEW: GTC'S "FALLEN ANGEL AND THE DEVIL CONCUBINE"

by Christeline Henry

The fallen angel and the devil concubine are two half-crazy vagrants living in an old house in downtown Kingston. Katie, the former high class lady with white skin, (**Honor Ford-Smith**, also played by **Kay Shackelford**) and Lettie, the black, former servant (**Carol Lawes** and **Christine Bell**) live like "two man-rat" in the same hole - constantly quarrelling. Lettie says the house is hers. Katie says the house is hers. Nobody comes to visit. They have no family, no friends. Their only contact with the community is the delinquent ghetto boys who throw stones into the house.

As time goes on a relationship develops between these two. They find more things to quarrel over than just the old house and they take to playing little mischievous tricks on each other.

It is one of these tricks which leads Katie to find out that Lettie's child is illegitimate. But, Katie cannot throw stone at Lettie because she, too, has a past, like her love affair with the black man which produced an idiot child.

In the Graduate Theatre Company production, *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*, at the Jamaica School of Drama auditorium,

nobody gets killed; nobody is sexually assaulted on stage; no prostitute turns Christian - in fact, nothing dramatic happens. The two women just talk and laugh and do things that "mad" people do - like live in a different world. Lettie and Katie live in their childhood.

Despite all the fantasy, the play is real. **Henry Muttoo** has created a real vagrant 'back-a-yard' set in which the actresses are quite at home. The truth is, the whole play is too much like life. The mannerisms of the actresses - what they say, what they do - make us feel that we are eavesdropping. As we watch Carol and Honor do their thing as Lettie and Katie, our lives come before us as an open book, naked as a mirror.

*Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* is about abuse and abandonment, of women in particular. It is about hypocrisy and morality. It is about man and woman relationships. It is about madam and servant relationships. It is about needing a friend.

*Fallen Angel* is about all these things and more, yet it is simple and easy to follow. This is probably a result of the kind of preparations and team work that went into making it. **Pat Cumper**

wrote the script and the Director **Hertencer Lindsay** and Honor and Carol, together with **Eugene Williams** helped to build up the characters and the storyline.

In the play, Katie and Lettie no longer live "in society". They are outside abandoned and forgotten. Still they feel guilty for the children they had without marriage. When the boys throw stones at them I was reminded that in the Bible adulteresses (not adulterers) were stoned to death, and that prostitutes are still given this form of punishment in certain parts of the Muslim world. If being stoned is a sign of punishment for these two "fallen" women we may ask, what is their sin? After all wasn't it the overseer who pounced on the young and innocent Lettie and before she knew it she was pregnant?

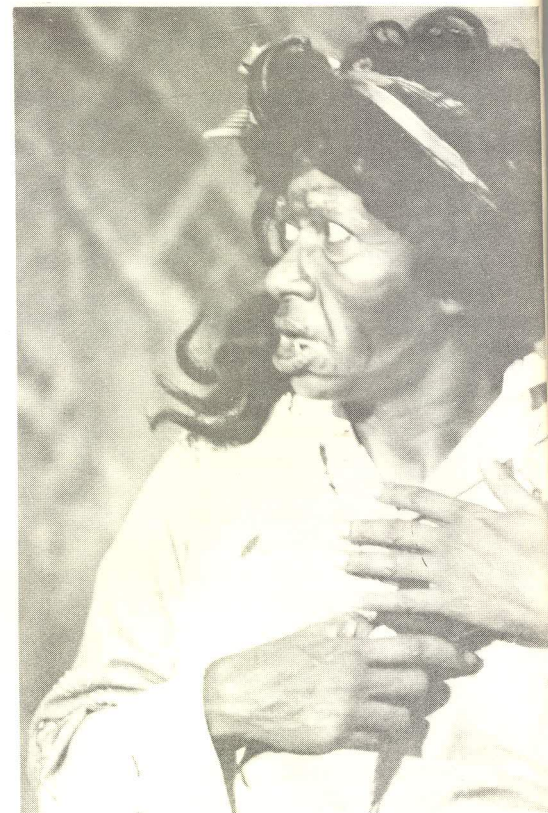
Katie and Lettie have suffered but they do not ask for sympathy. In fact, as they play their lives out on the stage we laugh, but is "we tek bad ting an mek laugh". They survive by living their life out as a fantasy and looking at them we are confronted with the truth.

In the theatre we laugh and cry at the same time. After the performance we go home to worry about our mortgage and leave behind the two "mad ooman" to work out their situation.

*Christeline Henry, a Grenadian freelance journalist, is a former student of the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication (CARIMAC).*



*Fallen Angel:*  
*Honor Ford-Smith as Katie.*



*Devil Concubine:*  
*Carol Lawes as Lettie.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE - WOMEN'S FAULT?

Dear Sistren,

Thank you for your heartfelt and well researched issue on sexual violence.

I am keenly aware of, and extremely distressed by, the circumstances with which we are faced daily, and must consider constantly, as regards our physical safety. While it is crucial that we be as well informed as possible about how to minimise the risk of physical assault, we must also concentrate on doing all that is in our power to root out the problem.

I do not agree that nude photos play a significant role in determining a man's attitude towards women. A man with a healthy attitude toward women will not be transformed into a disrespectful individual because of such "influence". But a man whose concept of woman is already, even slightly warped will, I'm sure, be encouraged in his mode of thinking and that brings us to the problem.

The problem which allows a man to commit an act such as rape, is that such a man does not value the life of another person, the reason for that being that he does not value his own life. The root of the problem is that this man was not, as a child, instilled with a feeling of self-worth, for if he had been he would value his life and that of another.

If we as mothers, sisters, grandmothers, take our responsibilities seriously, we must know that above anything else that we do for our children, brothers, grandchildren, helping them to feel that self-worth, is critical. They must know that no matter what their economic and social circumstances are, their life is sacred, a miracle, something to be thankful for. A person who grows up being thankful for life, would not find it possible to diminish the quality of another's life the way that rape so cruelly does.

And so I'm saying that we women must examine ourselves. Are we making a conscious effort to instill that sense of self-worth to those who need it, and will accept it from us above all others? As women our responsibilities are onerous

because, in most cases, we truly do have more influence in our children's lives than our male counterparts.

We women can make the ultimate contribution to our society by raising children who will become adults with conscience and pride and will therefore form a part of an altogether healthier society.

Sincerely,  
Vicky Matalon  
Kingston

Dear Vicky,

Much of what you say is, of course, true. Women play - or try to play - an important role in teaching values to both their male and female children, in the home. The problem as we see it is that no matter how much we try to teach our children values of self-worth and respect for others, chances are that when they watch the TV, go to the movies, listen to music, ride in the mini-bus or go to the shop down the lane, society is teaching them something different. This makes it very difficult for us to succeed. In fact society must win seeing as how its means of influence, such as the media, are way more powerful than our own.

The use of high technology to display nude photos and flesh ads, is very seductive, and is far more powerful than an individual mother who is overworked, underpaid or unemployed. That mother spends so much time on the matter of survival that she has little time to relate to her children, or to think through methods of relating to them that could effectively challenge the methods of the public media. She has a problem even finding the space to develop her own understanding of what are the factors helping to keep her down.

Even as we teach our children

the beauty of the human body, and that sex is a wonderful gift to be enjoyed, nude photos, flesh ads and suggestive lyrics reduce us to nothing but instruments for the sexual release of men. It follows that for many men, any woman is as useful as the other for the purpose of self gratification. There is no regard for the woman's needs, her personality, interests or compatibility as a special person in another individual's life.

When the woman's right of choice is ignored in this process, this becomes an act of rape and violence against a person whose humanity is being ignored and disrespected. The man can become so debased that he actually finds pleasure in the violation of the act. This warping of the male character could start very innocently with exposure to the culture of nude photos, whose values become part of him over time without him even realising it.

Editor.

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### MINI BUS SINS

Dear Editor,

Your latest issue on Violence Against Women was very good. Every article was worth reading. I would have liked however, to see some analysis done of the DJ music that is spreading like a cancer through the society. Some lyrics that I hear when I am in the bus is enough to make my head swell. The denigration of the sex act, women and morality will no doubt (if it hasn't already) totally destroy decency in the society. No wonder buses are subject to many accidents, etc. Too much sin in the form of music, overcrowding, shoving and pushing takes place in the bus.

Looking forward to reading an article on this.

A very avid reader  
of Sistren

# Popular Education On Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Two educational comic books on issues related to sexually transmitted diseases are now available to the public. One is specifically geared to men and the other to high school students, but both give general information of use to all social groups. The comic books are published by the Association for the Control of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and sponsored by United Way of Jamaica. Contact the Association for your copy at 55 Slippe Pen Road, Kingston.

