

SIREN

VOL. 9, 3/87

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A CALL TO WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS: "UNITE AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE"

May 1986, Clarendon:

Schoolgirl athlete found naked and headless, her left leg and heart missing.

March 1987, Rockfort:

Two young women raped by thirty men for the 'crime' of consorting with soldiers posted in the area.

August 1987, Seaview Gardens, Kingston:

Twelve-year-old raped and hanged with the belts of her four assailants.

September 1987, Westmoreland:

Fourteen-year-old schoolgirl raped and killed while bicycling to the shop for her mother.

September 1987, St. Catherine:

Three sisters aged 14, 15 and 16 years old raped violently by armed men who broke into their family home.

because the intruder who broke into her home and raped her while her husband was away, did not violate her two small daughters.

What few statistics are available on rape and carnal abuse (sex with a minor

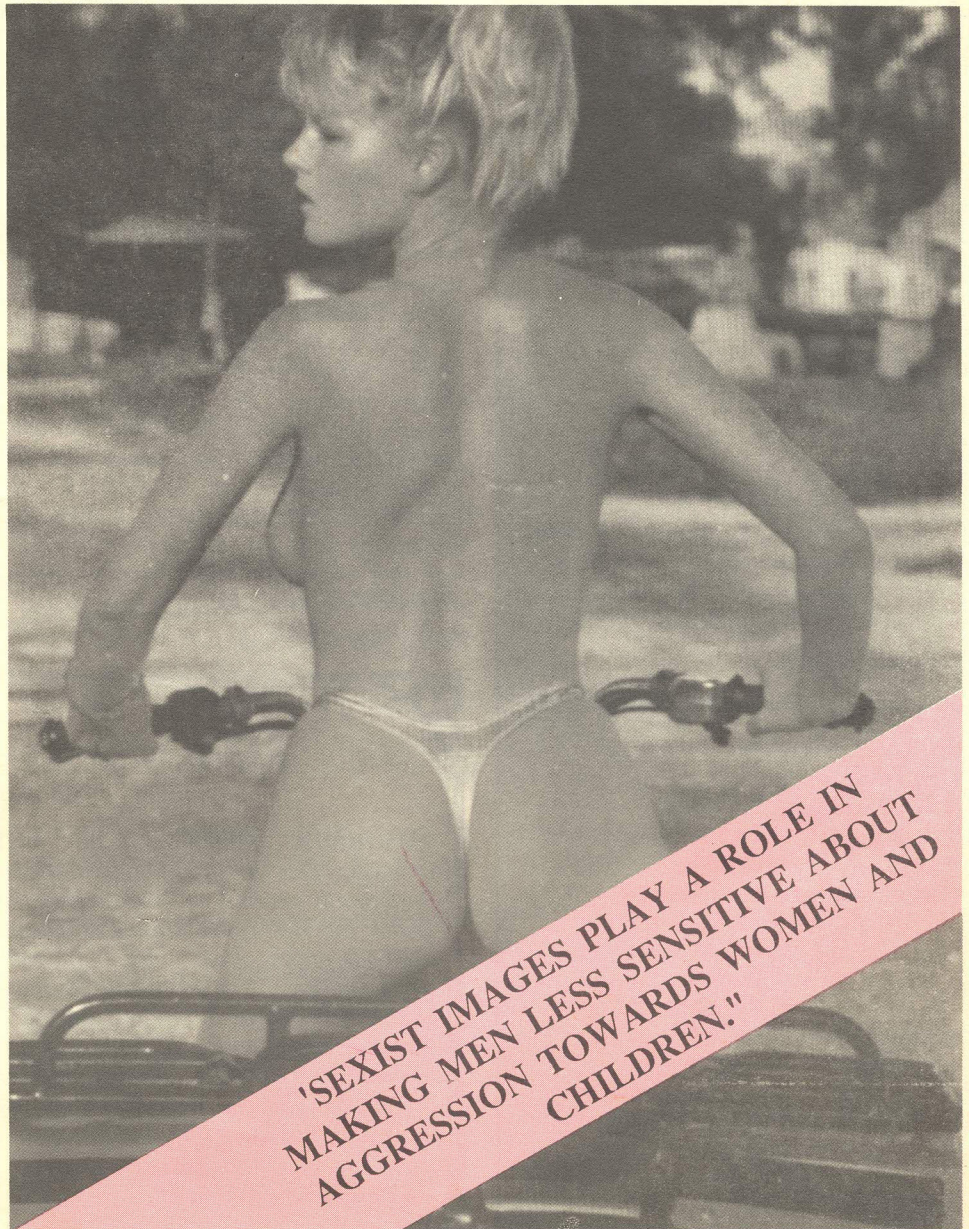
(Continued on page 16)

took 'brawta' along with the TV and jewellery; that married friend, thankful

RAPE MORE VIOLENT

There's no question that the incidence of rape in the society is on the increase. The more sensational and brutal cases like those mentioned above are now more frequently seen in the media. Police sources also confirm that nowadays rape is a much more "serious" matter than it was some years ago. Once upon a time, the humiliation and defilement felt by a rape victim for weeks and months and even years after being forced to accept penetration, alien smells and fluids and the enemy's bodyweight, was bad enough. Now, according to the police sources, 'Rape has become more violent . . . The use of firearms and other weapons during rape, and the incidence of rape coupled with murder, have increased significantly . . .'

We also have the evidence of our own senses. Which of us can say we remain untouched? If we ourselves have not actually suffered a rape attack, then there's a growing number of us with loved ones and acquaintances who have. Our young niece or sister, dragged into a neighbour's garden and raped at knife point while on her way home from church one Sunday evening; a single colleague, raped by two men who broke into her apartment as she slept, and



**'SEXIST IMAGES PLAY A ROLE IN
MAKING MEN LESS SENSITIVE ABOUT
AGGRESSION TOWARDS WOMEN AND
CHILDREN.'**

Sexist images play a role in making men less sensitive about aggression towards women and children.

TO OUR READERS

A HAPPY
AND
PROSPEROUS
NEW YEAR

We take this opportunity to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and all you wish for the New Year. We'd also like to thank those of you who supported our efforts during 1987 — old friends and the many new ones we made as well. We look forward to being with you through 1988.

We've devoted much of the last issue for the year to the matter of sexual violence — an issue we think has reached dreadful proportions. This concern led to the call for unity amongst women's organizations to fight this scourge against women and children in the society (page 1). The magazine includes moving testimonies from women who have suffered rape as well as articles aimed at helping women to cope with rape (as best as can) and a quiz which we hope you will share with others (men, women and children) as a means of exploding some of the myths society nurtures on the issue. We offer sympathy to the many thousands of women who've faced sexual violence, but more than that we pledge to continue our work to put right those aspects of the society which form the root of the problem.

Last but not least a word of thanks to our contributors — Imani Tafari Ama, Honor Ford-Smith and Camille Lampart.

J. Ross-Frankson

EDITORIAL TEAM

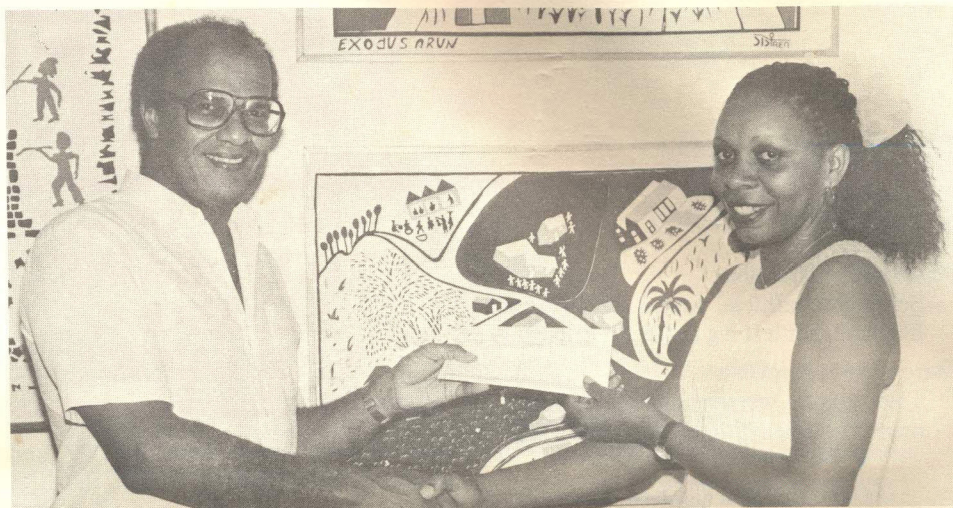
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IN THE FOCUS



FUND RAISING DRIVE FOR SISTERS CELEBRATION UNDERWAY. Mr. Robert Stephens, Financial Manager, Caribbean Aluminium Products, ALCOA is seen handing over a cheque for \$1,000 to Sistren's Lorna Burrell-Haslam, for the fourth Sister's Celebration concert for working women. The event is scheduled for next year's International Women's Day celebrations. The fundraising committee, which began its work in April of this year, now incorporates representation from several organisations including the Organisation of Women for Progress (OWP), Mel Nathan Institute, Projects for People, UWI Women's Studies Group, Women's Working Group and the YWCA as well as individuals. Sister's Celebration, which was first staged at Zinc Fence in 1985, on the initiative of Sistren's Joan French and Delores Robinson, aims to provide

quality entertainment for working women at a cost they can afford. Send your contributions in cash or kind to The Secretary, Ms. Bev Hanson, Sister's Celebration Fundraising Committee, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5.

PERSONAL NOTES

Boy Oh Boy! Santa visited some ladies with early Xmas packages during November. Sistren's Becky Knowles, whose baby daughter bounced in at 8½ lbs., started the ball rolling. Our Editor, Joan Ross-Frankson was next with a son — all 8 lbs. 10 ounces of him. Ann Goffe, Friend of Sistren in MoBay also gave birth to a boy the same day. They were followed two days later by WROC Co-ordinator, Janice Rose — another boy! Our congratulations to all.

MUSGRAVE MEDAL FOR OUR HONOR:

Our Artistic Director, Honor Ford-Smith receives a bronze Musgrave Medal for her contribution to Theatre and Literature from media specialist Alma Mockyen. The prestigious Musgrave Medals are awarded by the Institute of Jamaica in recognition of notable contributions to Literature, Science and Art in Jamaica and the West Indies. Honor, we couldn't be more proud of you girl!



'THE WORST HUMILIATION A WOMAN CAN SUFFER'

Rape is traumatic. It hurts in every way. Women who have been raped report feeling guilt, fear, lack of power, shame, humiliation and deep anger. Many of us cannot speak about this act of violation against our bodies. That is why the testimonies contained in this article do not carry any names. We contacted several women whom we knew had been raped over the past year and asked them to relate their experiences. Despite the passing of time, we found they all remained deeply sensitive about their experience. Some felt they could not bear to relive the act; those who agreed to do, emphasised their wish for anonymity.

FIRST REACTIONS

No two rapes are the same although many take place in similar circumstances. Several of the women we spoke to had been raped in their own beds by men who came to rob them; others suffered at the hands of rapists while making their way home after dark. Their initial responses ranged from an appearance of calm to extreme anxiety, fear, confusion and disorientation.

'I was outraged and in shock. I showered for about an hour and doused myself vigorously to lessen the feeling of having been soiled. I didn't think I'd done anything in life to deserve that happening to me ...'

"I never wanted no man to touch me again"

'I felt like nothing — dirty. I never wanted no man to touch me ever again. I kept thinking I may be pregnant and I vomited because I never wanted to know that a baby could come out of such nastiness ...'

'When he finally left me early in the morning, I showered and fixed the children's breakfast, just like normal. I never broke down till I reached my family. Then I couldn't stop crying ...'

'When him tell me fi wind, me tell him better him use de knife pon me. If me could a find a way, me would a did kill him ...'

'It happened near to my home, in a neighbour's yard. I could hear the television. I was too terrified to scream. Part of my head turned white, I was so frightened ...'

'I was paralysed with fear. I couldn't even talk or explain my condition when I ran to a public place afterwards ...'

POST EXAMINATION AND REPORT

How police and doctors treat you when you seek medical attention or report a rape makes a big difference in how you feel, but all too often there is lack of sympathy for the victim.

'I went to the police at about 6 a.m. I had to wait until after eight before they came and took a statement and all this time the man's nastiness was on me ...'

'About ten police came round me to get the statement. They kept wanting me to talk louder so all ah dem could hear. I refused and the friend I was with supported me. Then two police I knew came in. They took me into another room and were much more sympathetic and sensitive. But if it did happen to me again, me wouldn't report it ...'

'I don't know which was worse — the rape or the examination (by the police doctor). I felt he was unnecessarily hard on my body. He was just doing his job; sympathy never came into it ...'

'The police asked me whether I lived

advocate — a woman who will be with you to give you support and ensure you get fair treatment. Without such programmes operating in Jamaica, it's important that you have the support of a friend when reporting rape.

'The support of relatives and friends was very important. I'd never felt so loved and talking about it helped me re-orient myself ...'

'Talking about it with friends helped reassure me, made me feel less isolated. I found out that others had suffered rape and I was able to see it less as a personal attack ...'

'My women friends were very supportive. Their attitude was to help me get over it in practical ways, like seeing how the house could be better secured ...'

We emphasise however, that all your friends and neighbours won't be fully supportive.

'My near neighbours were very sympathetic and concerned for me. But it was street talk and me did feel bad to see people stand up ah dem gate and point after me ...'

'Some men I knew implied I should be living with a man then nothing would have happened to me ...'

'Some of the men closest to me either couldn't talk to me about it at all or found it very difficult ...'

BITTERNESS

— AN AFTER-EFFECT

One year after being raped, the women in our sample study still felt psychologically affected. Most, however, have had to 'ban dem belly' and learn to live with it while admitting that sometimes the smallest incident or image may bring back to memory the full horror of the

alone and when I said yes, him go on like I shouldn't live alone; like it was my fault ...'

SUPPORT OF FRIENDS IS KEY

Women organising against rape in various countries have two major aims

"I'd like to see more justice. Mainly rapists get away scott-free. That's a real tragedy ..."

in this context. One is to have training programmes established in hospitals and within the police force which teach personnel to respond to rape victims with more sympathy. Another is to make sure women who seek medical and legal aid after a rape have the company of an

rape. One, a teenager, was still in a very highly emotional condition, having been threatened with further abuse by her attacker and having been forced to undergo an abortion. All retain some amount

(Continued on page 4)

TEENS RESPOND TO RAPE IN COMMUNITY

by Imani Tafari Ama

Following the brutal rape and slaying of a 12-year-old school girl in Seaview Gardens earlier this year, seven teenagers living in the area, formed themselves into a group called TEENS IN ACTION to address the issue of sexual violence. The ages of the seven young women range between 14 and 17. Five are still at school, one is in the HEART programme and another has recently started work as a data processor.

The group approached Sistren member Rebecca Knowles who lives in their community and asked if they could become a sub-group of Sistren. They now meet every Sunday at Rebecca's home. I asked them what they hope to achieve through their efforts.

TIA: "We have obtained letters of introduction from Sistren to various organizations like WROC, the Crisis Centre for Women and the Family Court. We are researching statistics which show the rate of sexual violence over the years. We hope to complete this research by the end of November after which we will discuss this material and develop the information into a skit."

The group will direct their message at teenagers generally but primarily at teenage girls.

TIA: "Since the Sistren Workshop Team mainly goes into the high and secondary schools, we will concentrate on the all-age schools and community groups as well. Since the group is very young, we are not planning on segregation; we are not leaving out the men

entirely; but the message is being directed at young women who feel the pain of rape most.

IMANI: Have any of you experienced rape yourself or through someone close to you?

TIA: No.

IMANI: What then made you so concerned?

TIA: We thought that as teens, people both young and old would listen to us and we could come together and bring out consciousness about teenagers' problems like rape, and because we believe rape crimes are related to drugs.

IMANI: What kind of drugs?

TIA: Cocaine. We think that is the biggest problem. We don't think ganja is such a threat.

IMANI: When did the rape incidents in your community start?

TIA: About four years ago. There was a group of men going around with a list of women's names. These women were eventually raped.

IMANI: Are these men known?

TIA: Yes, but people are afraid to talk about it.

IMANI: Are they armed?

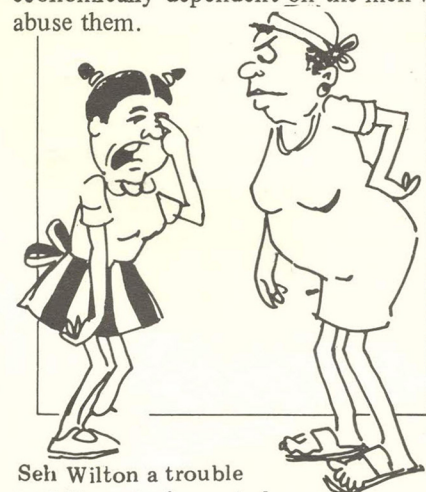
TIA: With knives and ice picks.

Sexual violence, the teenagers pointed out, is not confined to their community — it is unfortunately a widespread phenomenon in the society. If they don't make an effort to do something about it, they said, they will not be able to live with their consciences or even ensure their own safety.

Despite the inevitable frustrations they will face, the courageous commitment of these TEENS IN ACTION to organise against sexual violence is an inspiration for us all.

DEPENDENCY:

Women and especially children find it hard to fight back because they are often economically dependent on the men who abuse them.



Seh Wilton a trouble yu? Yu out of yu mind gal? Is how oonu likkle gal can tell lie so. Yu too ripe.



A coulda true, yu know. But a can't say anything or Wilton wi lef me. Me jus haffe mek it gwaan.

Shapiro 84

'THE WORST HUMILIATION A WOMAN CAN SUFFER'

(Continued from page 3)

of bitterness and anger against the rapist and the society.

'It's not in the forefront of my mind but I will never forget it. I still can't be in a house me one ...'

'I moved house and I still can't go near the neighbourhood without suffering vivid memories of that night ...'

'I have to fight the bitterness hard. In my heart me think yuh should just kill (rapists). Dem man hate and despise woman ...'

'I'd just started a new phase of life at university so that helped me get over the initial trauma, but I know I will never forget it. It's the worst humiliation a woman can suffer ...'

'It mek yuh hard. Yuh jus waan deal with yourself. Yuh feel so bitter that society can deal with yuh that kinda way ...'

'I've managed to distance myself

from the experience. Fortunately I'm employed and my work proved therapeutic. But if I'd had nothing to occupy my mind, it would have been much worse ...'

'Before rape was abstract. Now it's an issue I feel very strongly about. I'd like to see more justice done, more rapists convicted. Mainly they get away with it scott-free. That's a real tragedy ...'

(Compiled from testimonies and references from "The New Our Bodies, Ourselves" by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective).

MAKE THESE DEMANDS AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. EMPLOYMENT

Currently the unemployment rate amongst women is twice that of men. Priority must be given to employment and more diversified training for women. Many women put up with physical/sexual abuse of themselves and their children because they are economically dependent on a man.

2. MORE AND CHEAPER HOUSING

Most women don't have jobs. The majority of those that do work in low-paying ones. Finding a house to rent at a cost that can be afforded can take months. Most women cannot afford to buy a house. This also feeds the dependency syndrome.

3. STOP NEGATIVE MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN

More strict censorship of films, videotapes, songs, and the print media to put an end to the promotion of sexual violence. Censorship bodies must have broad-based female representation.

4. BETTER MEDICAL PROTECTION

All medical insurance should cover sexually transmitted diseases.

5. BETTER LEGAL/SOCIAL AID FOR VICTIMS

- Previous sexual history must not be used in court against the victim.
- How the victim was dressed should not be an issue in the case.
- Rapists should not be allowed to go free because they 'thought' without reason that the women consented.
- Domestic violence should not be dismissed by the society as 'man and woman business'.

IN COURT THE WOMAN IS MADE TO FEEL THAT SHE IS ON TRIAL, NOT THE ACCUSED.



- Statements should be taken with due regard to confidentiality and the emotional state of the victim.
- The police must get specific training to deal with cases sympathetically.
- Victims must have the right to deal with female officers if they so wish.
- Counselling services for victims must be established in all major towns.
- More Crisis Centres for women and children in need of a place to stay.

6. EDUCATION

Public education programmes should be developed to:

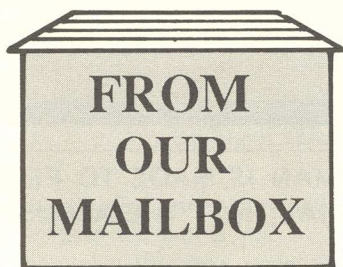
- Inform women of their rights in instances of physical and sexual abuse.
- Educate children, women and men about male and female sexuality and the many factors which influence the sex act and sexual attitudes.
- Show how the way girls and boys are socialised, contributes to sexual violence, and how this can be changed.

WOMEN ARE DEPENDENT BECAUSE:

Many Women have no jobs. Six out of every nine people unemployed are women.



Women get very low wages for the work they do.



"SISTREN" IN ST. VINCENT

Dear Sisters,

Special thanks for the constant attention and inspiration you give to the women of my island home through your sincere sharing of experiences and general information on specific issues related to women, and by natural extension, to families.

Sistren magazine is both regular and always well-prepared. How I look forward to receiving it! But more than that, readers of the "Vincentian" Newspaper, to which I contribute, yearn for *Sistren* excerpts — those vital bits and pieces. That yearning we fulfill by publishing your material, and of course *Sistren* gets well-deserved credit. Keep up the good work.

One Love
Maralyn Ballantyne
The Vincentian
St. Vincent

AGAINST 'BEACH BUM' POSTCARDS

Dear Sisters,

Thanks very much for Vol. 9, 2/87. The whole edition was very good, especially 'Sistren Gaan A Fahrin'; also the 'Beach Bum' postcards item. I must commend the postmistress for insisting that such a postcard be placed in an envelope. The picture really tells some degrading news about Jamaica and our women. I am totally against the low and negative idea these postcards give about Jamaica and our women. Thanks again. God bless you.

Yours truly,
Lana Morgan
Waterford P.O.

SISTREN — INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE

Dear Sisters,

Thanks for sending me current copies of your news magazine, *Sistren*. The magazine is interesting and informative

and will be invaluable to me in my new position in the Women's Sector of the Council of Voluntary Social Services (CVSS). Please include me on your 'notice list' for workshops and symposia on women's issues.

I will be using issues presented by the magazine as a point of focus for discussions at the Women's Sector meeting. I will also make a check of which organizations are currently receiving, using or who would like to have the magazine. In the meanwhile please find enclosed my subscription.

You will be pleased to note that the CVSS Women's Sector also contacted Ms. McLarty (of the Jamaica National Investment Promotion — JNIP) on the

'Bottom Line' advertisement. (See *Sistren*, Vol. 9, 1/87.)

Sincerely,

Sheila Nicholson (Mrs.)
Technical Assistance Officer, CVSS

CORRECTION

In our report on *Sistren's* May-June tour of Canada and the United States we inadvertently failed to specifically mention the University of Delaware as one of the group's hosts. Our apologies to Ms. Gloria Hull, writer and university lecturer, and other organisers of this leg of the tour, and another big thank-you to all in the Delaware Community.

Poetry

SILENT HERO (dedicated to *Sistren*)

*there are more heroes
dan nanny
but dem hero inna di
quiet way
di scrub floor fi sen dem pickney go a
school way
dem hero inna di
faada gaan a rum bar madda tun faada way
di working 17 hours straight inna di
freezone way
di mek ends meet an meet and meet way*

*there are more heroes
dan nanny
but bullet don't bounce
offa dem
an nuff a dem lose di war
an ded
widout fuss nor notice*

*there are more heroes
dan nanny
dem naah get no honor
not even afta
dem ded
but is dem life of sweat
is dem silent
invisible strength
dat save wi
time an time
an time again*

— by Mbala

QUIZ:

TEST YOUR ATTITUDE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Changing people's attitudes is one of the most important aspects in the campaign to end violence against women. One aspect is to encourage men and women to re-examine their own attitudes and to analyse the myths which society upholds about this subject. Our Quiz below

focuses on the issue of rape. Do it yourself and pass it on to a friend, or do it within your women's organization and find out the extent to which you fall into the trap of believing some of the myths in society about violence against women. (See answers on page 10).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?	TRUE	FALSE
1. Women secretly want to be raped		
2. Rape is a crime of sexual passion		
3. Women "ask" for rape by dressing or acting in certain ways		
4. If a woman does not resist when a man tries to force her into a sexual act, then it is not rape		
5. Rapists are almost always strangers to the victim		
6. Rapists are insane		
7. Only women with bad reputations are raped		
8. According to the law, a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband		
9. If you have VD you can get rid of it by having sex with a virgin		
10. Men can get away with rape by claiming they thought the woman consented		

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST RAPE

We don't pretend it is easy to protect yourself against rape. Many aspects of securing your home, for example, cost a lot of money. If you attempt self defence when faced with a rapist we would advise that you first make an assessment of the possibilities of success. Failure may anger your attacker and result in him harming you to a worse degree. Being aware of the possibility of rape is a good first step. Follow the tips below as far as possible.

WHERE YOU LIVE:

- Keep lights in all entrances;
- Ensure you have strong locks on every door;
- Install grills at windows and doors;
- Keep windows locked;
- Don't put your full name on the mailbox or in the telephone directory, especially if you live alone;
- Set up an alarm system with your neighbours.

ON THE STREET:

- Walk with confidence and at a steady pace;
- Try to walk with company at night;
- Don't carry a lot of things;
- Dress so you can run easily;
- Avoid dark and lonely streets;
- Make noise. Bawl out "Thief", "murder" etc., or just scream.

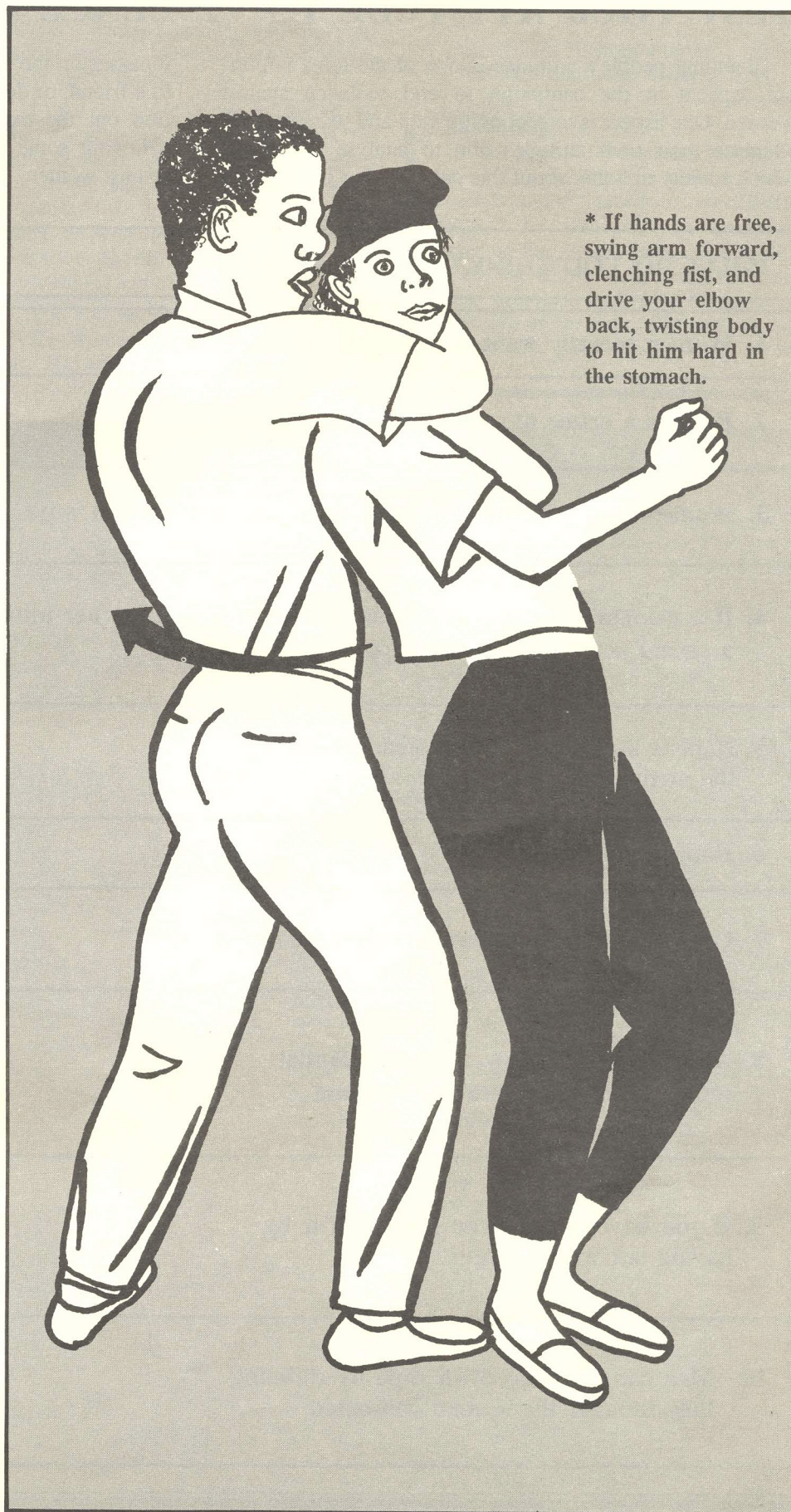
WEAPONS TO CARRY:

- Lighted cigarette or cigarette lighter;
- Spray-can filled with ammonia or soap and water;
- Small bag of black pepper;
- Hairpins, any sharp implement (knife or ice pick), and umbrellas can be useful;
- Use your body; fists aimed at his face; your teeth; kick at his knees or genitals; pull his hair; clap your hands over his ears.

REMEMBER:

Don't do anything that may put you in further danger. The above tactics can help but they are not foolproof. Try to remain calm and to act as confident and strong as you can.

(Adapted from 'How to Start a Rape Crisis Centre' by the Rape Crisis Centre of Washington D.C.)



* If hands are free, swing arm forward, clenching fist, and drive your elbow back, twisting body to hit him hard in the stomach.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE: LEGAL DEFINITIONS

The law has different names for sexual violence depending on the situation.

RAPE: Sexual intercourse without the consent of the female regardless of her age.

CARNAL ABUSE: Sexual intercourse with a female under 14 years of age, even where consent is given.

INCEST: Sexual intercourse with close blood relatives – in the case of a male, with grand-daughter, daughter, sister or mother; in the case of a female, with grand-father, father, brother, sister or son.

INDECENT ASSAULT: Sexual abuse (e.g. fondling) not involving intercourse, but without consent.

ASSAULT: An act which threatens in such a way as to cause fear, even if physical contact is not made. For example, saying, 'I'm going to kill you' is not assault, but if the person's hand is raised to hit, that is assault. This applies to any kind of violent threat including sexual ones.

(Extracted from 'No! To Sexual Violence' – French)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET RAPED

A. DO NOT WASH OR BATHE.

B. GO TO THE POLICE.

Take with you the clothes you were wearing at the time of the attack. Take along a loved one or close friend for moral support.

C. ASK TO SEE THE POLICE DOCTOR.

The law requires that you see the police doctor even if you go to your doctor afterwards. Your medical examination should include the following:

- A pelvic examination for the presence of semen and the possible presence of your attacker's pubic hair;
- Examination and treatment of any external injuries;
- Treatment for the prevention of sexually transmitted disease (STD);
- Treatment for the prevention of pregnancy.

D. TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST.

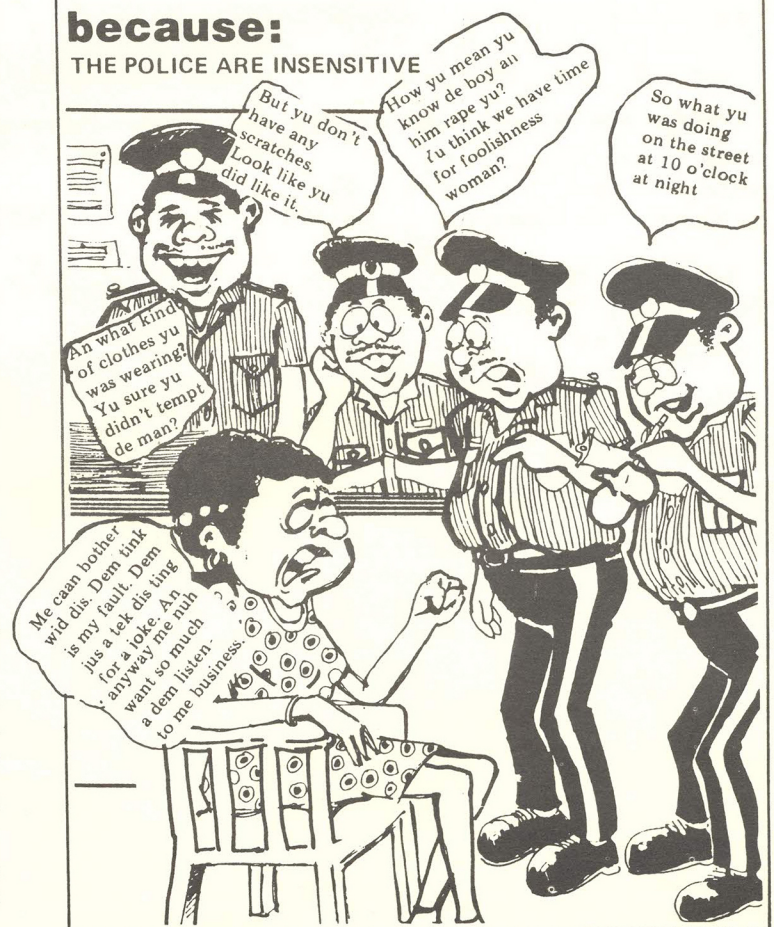
The experience of rape can upset you badly. If you don't have a friend to talk to, seek counselling at the **Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC)**, 47 Beechwood Avenue, Kingston 5. Tel: 96945 or **The Crisis Centre for Women**, Henderson House, 18 Ripon Road, Kingston 5. Tel: 92997.

(Adapted from 'No! To Sexual Violence' – French and 'The New Our Bodies Ourselves' – Boston Women's Health Book Collective).

SOME WOMEN DON'T REPORT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

because:

THE POLICE ARE INSENSITIVE





AT THE MEETING PLACE

The 'Numbers Game' proved a great ice-breaker for a day-long Sistren Workshop with a multi-racial group of women from across the United States recently in Jamaica on a study tour. The tour was organised by EPICA (Ecumenical Programme for Interamerican Communication and Action), a Washington-based task force working on issues of social justice for Central America and the Caribbean since 1968.

The trip focussed on women's issues as well as broader cultural, social, economic and political aspects of the Jamaican and Caribbean reality. It included field trips to ALCAN and the Frome sugar estate in

Westmoreland hosted by Social Action Centre (SAC), meetings with women's groups and Free Zone workers as well as a visit to the National Gallery to view Edna Manley's works. Three of the participants have family roots in Jamaica and they were able to visit their relatives in the country.

EPICA is now placing increased emphasis on study tours to the region. Said Tour Co-ordinator, EPICA's Cathy Sunshine (seen at centre with Lorna Burrell-Haslam), 'We are trying to encourage more people to go to the Caribbean in order to begin building some understanding of your realities . . .'

QUIZ ANSWERS *(from page 7)*

THE REALITY CONCERNING RAPE IS:

Question 1 – False.

In truth, rape victims do not enjoy, expect or "ask for" rape, and most rape victims report feelings of terror, humiliation and degradation.

Question 2 – False.

Rape is a crime of violence and aggression, not a result of sudden uncontrollable sexual urges. The myth that rapists are carried away by uncontrollable sexual desires, and that lack of control is a "natural" masculine trait often serves to excuse the rapist and to place responsibility on the victim.

Question 3 – False.

No person asks to be hurt or degraded, just as no one asks to be robbed because they are carrying money in their pockets. Rape is the responsibility of the rapist, not the victim.

Question 4 – False.

Few women are trained either physically or mentally to defend themselves against male aggression. It is common for rape victims to be immobilized by fear.

Question 5 – False.

Most women are raped by someone they know. In the USA, for instance, over 50% of all women report that the person

who raped them was a relative, neighbour, date or acquaintance.

Question 6 – False.

Rape happens in all socio-economic groups, all professions, in all ethnic groups. Psychological tests of known rapists show no different personality traits from other men except for inability to control anger.

Question 7 – False.

Reputation has nothing to do with rape. This misconception that only a certain kind of woman is raped, is also dangerous because it can serve as a false sense of security against the fact that any woman can be raped.

Question 8 – True.

The law says that it is a woman's matrimonial duty to have sex with her husband even if she doesn't want to.

Question 9 – False.

All that happens is that you pass on VD to the virgin. You do not get rid of it but only spread it. Visit your doctor and get proper treatment.

Question 10 – True.

Even if a woman says 'no' and tries to fight off the man, he can claim that he thought she was pretending, that she 'did well an want it'.

(Adapted from THE TRIBUNE newsletter, (37/38, 4th QTR 1986/1st QTR 1987), and 'No To Sexual Violence' – French)

THE CRISIS CENTRE FOR WOMEN: HELPING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

by Imani Tafari Ama

"We're not just a Rape Crisis Centre" said Leila Whiteman, Counsellor at the Crisis Centre for Women which was launched by Woman Incorporated on February 18, 1985.

"The Centre is set up to deal with anything that affects a woman's welfare, happiness and satisfaction in life. If she is disturbed about the marriage or the man who is battering her, we help . . . We help with incest and in financial crises too."

Ms. Whiteman formerly worked at the Family Court. In an interview with **Sistren** she pointed out that the majority of victims of sexual violence who sought help from the Centre were from a working class background indicating that women from middle and upper classes were reluctant to share their intimate problems with an agency.

"Many of the people we deal with who are victims of rape," she noted,

"come to us long after the incident. They delay sometimes because they are afraid to go to the police who are not always sensitive enough and they (the victims) are afraid of the embarrassment they might encounter. Some people might come to us long after the incident with an unwanted pregnancy and there is very little we can do to help."

Recognising the need for improved relationships between the police and victims of sexual violence, Ms. Whiteman explained that once a year, the Crisis Centre for Women holds a training session with the graduating recruits at the Police Academy at Twickenham Park in St. Catherine. The training sessions are aimed at sensitizing the recruits to women's feelings and showing them ways in which they can lessen the anxiety of the victims. She admitted however, that sensitizing the more seasoned security forces is also crucial to improved communication.

Despite shortcomings within the police force, the Counsellor still felt it was "important" for rape victims to get in

touch with the police and seek medical attention. "The police will arrange for them to see a doctor. Most importantly, they should not bathe. This might be a bit unpleasant," she emphasised, "but necessary for the evidence."

Ms. Whiteman advised that victims of sexual violence should feel free to come to the Crisis Centre for the critically important support offered free of charge.

"Victims usually feel that it is their fault," Leila Whiteman went on. "They feel dirty and as if they could have avoided it. Some are very withdrawn. What we do is talk with them as much or as little as they want. We don't force an issue but we let them know we are here and they can feel free to come and see us anytime. We have found that many victims of sexual violence don't want to talk to their own relatives because they are not supportive."

As a fairly newly established Centre, the clientele is still building up. Between February 1985 and September 1987 for example, only 61 rape victims sought help there.

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SISTREN ISLAND TOUR IN HIGH GEAR

As **Sistren's** 1987 Island Tour moved into its last two weeks in mid-November, well over 3,000 people in 14 communities had so far experienced the group's reggae-drama, 'Trickster and De Muffet Posse'. Photo shows performance and audience appreciation in Nannyville Gardens, where **Sistren** was hosted by the Nannyville Community Council. 'Trickster and De Muffet Posse' has developed from the play 'Muffet Inna All A We', and was first performed in the U.K. last year.



WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Honor Ford-Smith

No me deje sola
Caramba
Suben la voz
Tenemos la Salve
Falta el Arroz

Don't leave me alone
Caramba
Raise your voice
We have the rhythm and the songs
But we don't have the rice

This song is associated with **Mama Tingo** — a black peasant woman who led a large organization of peasants in their struggle for land in the Dominican Republic in the 1970s. **Mama Tingo** used to say "The land belongs to she who works it." She is a symbol of Dominican Feminism and could easily be a symbol for many rural women in Jamaica who face the same problems of "land room". Her struggle today is continued by peasant women's organizations and local women's groups which exist all over the island. In El Sur, a large region near to Haiti, there is a big organization of **Campeonas** (peasant women) fighting for better living conditions, education, outlets for their produce and secure land ownership.

These regional and working class groupings are supported by organizations of largely middle-class women in the capital, Santo Domingo. They provide services and skills to assist the groups with their struggles and to build the network of women's organizations. In doing so, they have tried to create new forms of organizing which will suit women's needs and women's ways of interacting. **Mujeres en Desarrollo (Women in Development — MUDE)** is one such organization. It started as a group which gave credit to peasant women but has now expanded into offering other kinds of support to rural women. **MUDE** has a unique understanding of the importance of creative expression in organizing women. Last year for example **MUDE** initiated a songwriting workshop in which peasant women met to write about their own experience using the rhythms of Dominican traditional music — such as **Merengue, Bachata, Salve** and **Gaga**. The work produced was later recorded

SISTREN PROFILE



Rebecca 'Becky' Knowles

Lead actress in several of **Sistren's** plays, founding member of the Collective, Rebecca "Becky" Knowles who currently co-directs the Drama in Education programme, grew up in Jackson Town in Trelawny, migrating to Kingston at the age of 14. Being a member of **Sistren**, she says, has been a strengthening experience for her in many ways.

"**Sistren** has taught me how to mix with people and to understand issues like sexual division of labour and how this affects man-woman relationships", explained Becky. "I've also realized as a mother, the importance in growing

children of making them feel that you are their trusted friend".

Born 7th July, 1949, Becky who is the fifth of seven children, has four teenagers and a newborn baby girl.

Dressing up, even when she is at home, is one of Becky's favourite pastimes. She also loves to eat — especially her favourite food, stew peas.

Looking to the future Becky says "I hope to see **Sistren** expand to have working groups all over the island and throughout the Caribbean as well".

by Dominican pop star **Xiomara Fortuna**, who took part in the workshop. As a result of this and other efforts the Women's Movement in the Dominican Republic now has many inspiring songs and poems.

CIPAF (Centro de Investigacion Para Accion Femenina) is another organization supporting diverse women's groups in the island. **CIPAF** produces research which can assist women who are struggling

at different levels in the society — whether it be in the family with domestic work, or in the community with Free Trade Zones, sexual violence or water supply. **CIPAF** has created a unique style of popularizing their research through comic books accompanied by discussion guides. These are used in

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FEMINISM IN JAMAICA: MAJOR STRENGTH, MAJOR DILEMMA

by Camille Lampart

... But when me stat fe try
Ooman queeze me, ooman push me,
Ooman frown an cut dem y'eye.
Me tek me time an crawl out back
Me noh mek no alarm
But me practice bans o'tactics
Till me ketch up a platform.

"Federation"
Louise Bennett-Coverley

I had my first introduction to the Jamaican women's movement this summer at the seminar on "Gender, Culture and Caribbean Development" organized by the Women's Studies Group at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies. For two weeks in June, members of government, non-government and private sector women's organizations, the trade union movement, the university faculty and the public discussed issues concerning women in the Caribbean.

Because I knew little about the women's movement in Jamaica, I attended the opening ceremony with very few expectations. Throughout the days to come I was both heartened and dissatisfied, encouraged and impatient.

CHALLENGING CLASS DIVISIONS

It seemed to me that feminism in Jamaica is characterized by a major strength and a major dilemma. The strength is the movement's willingness to confront and challenge class divisions. The class issue was constantly in the forefront. Many of the participants complained that this phenomenon was still the most important hinderance to the advancement of Jamaican women, but the fact that the issue is hashed out rather than avoided reveals an important strength and honesty in the movement. I particularly remember the presentation by Ms. Marva Phillips of the National Workers Union, about the working class women of the trade union movement. She revealed the reluctance of these women to break with their organizations and associate visibly with feminists, even in the face of serious gender discrimination. Their main reason was a perception of women's organizations as mainly upper class intellectual groups. She won applause for admitting that up until just months ago she would

have refused the offer to speak in this setting.

In discussing the role of the Women's Studies Group, we seemed to implicitly accept its responsibility of accurately recording the cultural realities that women face. In the discussion of the "Gender relations and changing family structure of the Caribbean", it was noted that while the nuclear family was a traditional ideal, this ideal may not be appropriate in the reality of certain Jamaican situations. The Women's Studies Group would then be responsible for recording those realities and ultimately identifying areas and methods



Workshop Session run by Sistren: "Rays of sunshine in a flood of scholarly papers".

for improvement. In a sense the university would provide a point of academic exchange between the masses and the decision-making elite.

FEW FOR RADICAL ACTION

It was in the discussion of this last point that there emerged a serious dilemma. While many of the participants acknowledged the depth of subordination of women in our society, few agreed that revolutionary changes and radical action were necessary. One heated debate centered on whether the university had a duty to reach out into different parts of the community as an adviser and an observer. With their already heavy teaching loads, the members of the Women's Studies Group were reluctant to assume any role as focal point for the women's movement in Jamaica.

NONE WILLING TO LEAD

While some of the other feminists agreed that broad political action was necessary, none appeared willing to

accept the role of leader and mobilizer. As Beverly Anderson-Manley pointed out, many members of the women's movement in Jamaica are still at the stage of worrying about their public image. Like the woman in Louise Bennett's "Federation" we should have no cares for how other "ooman frown and cut dem y'eye". Our "bans o'tactics" needs to be a broad range of action in our private and public lives. Dr. Johnetta Cole of Spelman College, Atlanta talked about a woman's potential to exploit another woman, vis, her domestic worker. Dr. Norman Girvan of the U.W.I. reminded us of the enormous power we have as mothers to educate and socialize our children in gender-equality.

LONG LECTURES INAPPROPRIATE

Even in the practicalities of a seminar we can be feminist. We claim in this

movement to be rethinking traditions. It was therefore somewhat ironic to be challenging inappropriate customs in a customary but ineffective setting. Two weeks of long lectures proved to be very taxing to the participants. By the middle of the second week, attendance was low and the discussions were very subdued. I could not help wondering if the lecture formats could have been more informal and imaginative, and the schedule more varied. Those sessions run by the Sistren members were rays of sunshine when we seemed to be drowning in the flood of scholarly papers.

In all, I was very encouraged by the whole experience. As I wrote to a friend recently, Jamaican women have the potential to make great change in our society. It seems only that while the way is there, we have to wait a little for the will to catch up.

(Camille Lampart is a Jamaican student, studying in New York).

HELPING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

(Continued from page 11)

RAPE VICTIMS SEEKING ADVICE — YEAR BY YEAR

Feb.—Dec. 1985	9
Jan.—Dec. 1986	25
Jan.—Sept. 1987	27

Victims who visit the Centre are, invariably, teenagers or women in their early twenties. Teenagers are referred to the Family Court. Ms. Whiteman noted, most offenders go unpunished; the victims may know them but are terrified of reprisals if they make a report. In other cases, she said, they (rapists) cannot be found as the crime is reported too late.

Incest and domestic violence as well as financial and housing crises are other concerns the Crisis Centre attempts to help women of all ages to cope with mainly through counselling.

"Sometimes we have to give a little more help than verbal counselling," Ms. Whiteman said. "If it is a matter of an unwanted pregnancy by a rapist we might assist in arranging for the necessary medical attention in the patient's interest and provide temporary shelter if the woman does not have a place to stay. This is not a formally established service but we have volunteers who help. We assist wives who sometimes want to know what their rights are in cases of divorce or some who are unable to cope with financial difficulties, and we help elderly women who have no place to live."

Counsellors at the Crisis Centre for Women can be contacted by telephoning (809) 92-92997.

WOMEN GRADUATE INTO HORSE RACING



GRADUATE FEMALE ASSISTANT GROOMS — The first women to break into Jamaica's traditionally male dominated horse-racing industry in an organized way. With ages ranging from 18 to a remarkable 61, the six graduates went through a gruelling training course during which three others dropped out. Says 25-year-old **Dorothy Henry**, a mother of three who left her job as a shop assistant to join the programme, "The training was hard at first but patience worked. Any woman can do it once they have the interest." For 61-year-old "Miss Inez", who's been a higgler at Caymanas Park race track for the past 17 years, it's a dream come true. "I love the horses and the life. I was just waiting for my chance." Four of the six graduates have their sights set on becoming trainers, while another wants to become Jamaica's first female jockey. They are guaranteed equal pay by the Racing Commission, which initiated the training programme, and all look forward to earning more in the racing industry than in other areas of work open to them in factories, as domestic workers or as higgles. On the question of corruption in the industry, 34-year-old former housewife, **Emma Searchwell** expressed the confident view of the six. "There's a definite drug ring but I'm not afraid of it. I feel I can handle myself as a woman." The industry itself is said to be buzzing with the news of these first female graduates and the word is that it's a move by the Racing Commission to stamp out corruption. Says **Dennis Lalor**, Commission Chairman, who initiated the idea for the training programme, "Women traditionally have a higher sense of responsibility than men. I don't think women can be induced to do some of the things some men in the industry would be tempted to do . . ."

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

(Continued from page 12)

women's groups throughout the country. In addition **CIPAF** circulates a weekly printout called **What To Do** which is distributed with one of the daily newspapers every week. It keeps women up to date on what's happening and what issues they need to be aware of nationally.

Las Esclavas Del Fogon (Slaves of the Hearth), is a Sister group to **SISTREN** which works at building awareness of women's concerns and encouraging the development of Caribbean cultural identity. **Las Esclavas** is based in **La Romana**, a town dominated by a big American Multinational and a Free Trade Zone.



Members of **Las Esclavas Del Fogon** perform street theatre piece directed by **Honor Ford-Smith**.

Las Esclavas organizes the women of the town through their cultural work and produces plays, poems and songs on themes of concern to Dominican

women.

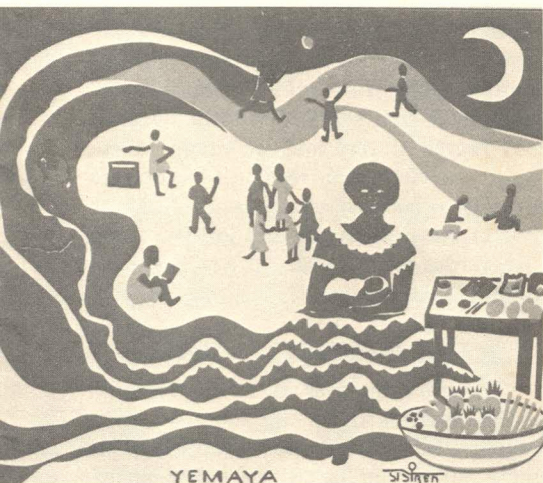
There is also a lesbian women's organization in the Dominican Republic — **The Collective of Lesbians**. In general, sexuality is an issue which is more openly discussed in the Dominican Republic than in the English speaking islands. Lesbian women support the struggles of women on broad issues as well as fighting for an end to fear and prejudice against lesbianism. These women see the issue of women's control over sexuality and fertility as essential to women's freedom, since women's capacity to provide children and to give men sexual pleasure is often the root cause of their exploitation.

The Women's Movement in the Dominican Republic is alive and well and growing daily.

SISTREN TEXTILES NEW SERIES:

"CARIBBEAN GODDESSES"
HIGHLIGHT WOMEN'S HISTORIC PLACE
IN CARIBBEAN HISTORY

Sistren Textiles has created an exciting new series of screen prints under the title "Caribbean Goddesses". The mythology on woman that informs our culture is unknown to many of us. This storehouse of ancestral memory and experience reflects many of the powerful qualities of Caribbean woman as well as some of her outstanding roles in society. Sistren Textiles have produced unique screen-printed wall-hangings, cushion covers, T-shirts and fabric cards as a contribution towards building consciousness of woman's historic place in Caribbean culture. These products are available from several commercial outlets and Sistren Textiles at 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5 (Tel: 929-2457).



YEMAYA – Universal Mother, Goddess of Intelligence and the Rational; sometimes tempestuous and brave, at other times she is calm and sensual. She is Queen of the Sea and the Salt Waters (a universal symbol of fertility). She wears petticoats with six trimmings which represent the birth of humanity and the Gods. She protects the children in her skirts. Her colour is sea-blue with a little white which symbolises the waves. Her emblem is the half-moon.

Sistren Textiles have chosen a street seller or higgler to represent the Jamaican mother.

Yemaya is originally from the Yoruba tradition of West Africa which is maintained in Jamaica in Etu from Hanover. She is also found in Shango (Trinidad and Tobago) and in Santeria (Cuba).



OBATALLA – The androgenous Goddess of Justice, Peace, Wisdom and Purity, represents the duality of earth and sky and usually manifests as a woman. She dresses in white and likes to wear a crown of white silver and bells. Her emblems are the dove (a universal symbol of peace), the elephant and the deer.

Originally from the Yoruba tradition of West Africa, Obatalla is also found in Santeria (Cuba).

Sistren Textiles have represented her as a Jamaican Revival Madda or Shepherdess in her balm yard. In the distance we see society represented as the House of Injustice. In honour of the Garvey Centenary the colours used to screenprint this image are the red, green and black, of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).



RIVER MUMMA – Spirit of the River and the Goddess of Sexual Love; beautiful, flirtatious, a graceful dancer and a musician, she is hardworking as well as erotic. She can be proud in one situation but is grave and profound in another. She lives in the deepest part of the river, combing her hair which is often entangled with the life of the river. The calabash is her light and her home and with it she makes miracles. She is associated with the colour yellow and her emblem is the peacock.

River Mumma is found in Pocomania in Jamaica, as Erzulie, the mulatto goddess of Voodoo in Haiti, and as the goddess Ochun in Santeria from Cuba. Sistren Textiles have depicted her with dreadlocks and have used the Jamaican image of her with a mermaid's fishtail.

The mythology is originally from West Africa.



CHRISTMAS CARDS

Sistren has produced four fabric Christmas card designs. From the Caribbean Goddess series came Yemaya and River Mumma, this time in different representations from those used on the wall-hangings and shirts (these images

are extracted from the "Lionheart Gal" book cover design). On the back of these cards is a brief summary of the mythology behind these images. The other two designs are the Mango Tree and the Peacock.

"UNITE AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE"

(Continued from page 1)

under the age of fourteen) show an increase of 6.1% in 1986 over 1985. Between 1979 and 1982 there was a 22% increase (Economic and Social Survey: Jamaica 1986). One-third of the child abuse cases reported to the Family Court are cases of sexual abuse, many of which result in our children contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STD). At a global level, four out of every 10 crimes committed in the Third World are crimes of rape, while in the United States a rape is committed every six minutes ("No To Sexual Violence" – French, 1984).

FEW RAPE CASES REPORTED

Unfortunately, there do not appear to be any statistics related to what proportion of rape cases are actually report-

ed by victims to the police in Jamaica. We would ascertain from our own straw poll amongst rape victims that it is only a very small minority. This is similar to estimates in more advanced countries such as France where only 10% of rape cases are reported.

POLICE, DOCTORS OFTEN UNSYMPATHETIC

Rape victims cite various reasons why they don't report such assaults – they are afraid of repercussions from the rapist; they feel humiliated and think it may have been somehow their own

fault; police and doctors are often unsympathetic ('What were you doing out at 10 o'clock at night?', 'Yuh nuh have nuh scratches. Look like yuh did like it', 'Yuh sure yuh never tempt the man?' – French 1984).

VICTIMS HUMILIATED BY COURT PROCEEDINGS

Once in court, the female victim is often made to feel as if she is on trial because she may have freely chosen to make love with male friends in the past. Sentencing for this most debasing crime against women and children leaves much to be desired. Take the recent outrageous case in which a retired top level civil servant was given a three-year suspended sentence for raping his helper when he changed his not guilty plea to guilty after



(Extracted from "No to Sexual Violence")

testimony from the victim. He got off because the judge felt he was "man enough" to admit that he had committed the crime! So where is the justice for the woman who suffered at his hands?

SOCIETY NURTURES SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The society itself in which our women are kept in a situation of dependency due to lack of employment, cheap housing and poor health and education services, helps to nurture and maintain this situation. The negative portrayal of our women through the media is another

major factor. Recent studies in the U.S. conclude that 'there is a relationship between viewing violence via the media and subsequent violent action against women and children' and 'When men view erotic material combined with violence, they tend to be desensitised about aggression towards women'. (National Council of Churches).

Now we are not the United States of America but these studies do have some significance for us given the fact that the vast majority of our television programming (87% of which is foreign) comes from there. Consider the combination of violence and "soft" pornography which has permeated our society via the media in recent years. On TV we see Blake Carrington rape his wife Crystal in the soap opera *Dynasty* the night after Peter the Great rapes his wife; television and other commercials as well as local calendars, selling everything from soap to cockroach spray, tell men that the main purpose of women's lives is to make our bodies appealing to men; there are no end of films in our cinemas that show women's bodies being abused; the 'Beach Bum' book, posters and postcards tell our tourists they can get 'a piece of ass' with their sun, sea and sand in Jamaica; our reggae singers and DJ's help to uphold the view that women's bodies are objects to be used and abused ("Siddung pon it, me seh me nah run lef' it . . . Me nah refuse it", "I want to wreck a pum-pum", "Gi me punani" . . .)

TIME FOR UNITY, ACTION

The situation cries out to be addressed more systematically by our women's organisations, for if we don't who will seek redress on behalf of our women? We commend those who in their own small corner have raised their voices against negative media images and sought to organise much needed centres where violated women can seek counselling and practical help. But we think the time has now come when we must act in unity along with all sympathetic men to tackle the outrage of sexual violence through education and action.

We therefore call on all women's organisations to discuss this question within their ranks with the aim of establishing a national grouping for 1988 to begin to deal with the situation from a position of Strength through Unity. We are confident that the talents and capabilities within each of our organisations, when combined, can have a significant impact. Can we afford to wait much longer?