

NEW WOMAN *Struggle*

WAND'S Bi-monthly News Bulletin

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STRUGGLE TAKES ON NEW LOOK

WAND's monthly publication *WOMAN STRUGGLE* has taken on a new look. Editor Nan Peacocke is proceeding to Canada on study leave in September.

The *New Woman Struggle* will continue on a bi-monthly basis to provide international news clips, but is being expanded to include topical issues of Caribbean origin.

The publication is one of the results of a review of WAND publications inspired by the November 1988, 10th Anniversary Consultation/Symposium, *Crisis and Challenges* which brought together women from across the Caribbean in a critical assessment of women's organisations and strategies.

Nora Peacocke Takes Up Another Challenge

Former Editor of *The Vincentian* newspaper, Nora Peacocke is the new Editor of the *New Woman Struggle*. Other members of the production team are Sheila Stuart, whose role as WAND's Administrative Assistant has been changed to Communications Coordinator, and Kurlyne Alleyne, former Programme Assistant with *People of Tomorrow*, now WAND's Publications Producer.

Inside:

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SALUTE TO THE SUPERMOMS

In a recent article the *Sunday Sun* focussed on that group of "supermoms" in Barbados who belong to that silent majority in society and who are only noticed when something "news worthy" (good or bad) occurs. We quote from the *Sun's* story which said in part:

"The *SUN* asked a number of single mothers to relate their experiences and how they coped. The following are extracts from two of these interviews.

Our first mom is a 34-year-old clerical officer who has a fifteen year old daughter. They live in a rented house and have 'a good understanding.' But it was not always like this.

For starters, when she got pregnant her family felt she had disgraced them. She, of course, had to stop school and after her daughter's birth had to find a job.

The boy who got her pregnant disowned the child, so together with her aunt, she had total responsibility for her daughter at an age when she was still very immature.

What she remembers most about those early days was having to hurry home after work to take care of her daughter as her aunt either had to go to church, or out somewhere. She also had to give her aunt most of her wages.

Because of this, she had very little time to socialise and not much money to buy anything. *Therefore, many days I regretted not getting an abortion... because while the other girls could go to the cinema, fetes or anywhere they liked, I had to stay home and mind her You can't imagine how frustrating that was.*

As for relationships, when she was able to go out again most of the men thought she was very easy because she had a child at such a young age.

As her daughter grew, the expenses increased and she found it harder to make ends meet. Also her daughter began inquiring more about who was her father and why he was not living with them.

Around the same time, she was going steady with a man who the daughter did not like, and though the little child would tell him, "he was not her father and so could tell her nothing."

When she was corrected for this, the girl would always complain to the aunt who in turn would tell her to stop beating the child.

Those types of problems are now behind her, but she is faced with "the headache" of raising a teenaged daughter. Given her experiences she tends to be over-protective and this causes arguments. Often, as long as she can, she checks behind her daughter, and frequently questions her about the boys who call.

Though she has talked to her about sex, she is also afraid the girl might try experimenting. Another fear of hers is getting involved with someone again who her daughter does not appreciate, or someone who might try to "interfere" with the girl.

Our second interviewee, at age 49, is the mother of four - one boy and three girls. She had her first child at 13, her last at 19. For most of her life she has worked in a low-paying job and had to supplement her income by raising poultry and keeping a kitchen garden. She also sold bread and confectionery.

Hers has been a struggle to support her children, with little assistance from family or friends. At one point she could only afford to drink hot water for breakfast and depend on someone to give her some of their lunch at work.

Given this diet she developed stomach problems which affects her even now.

At one point, she and her children had to wear second hand clothes given to her from the church she was attending at the time. For food their diet consisted mainly of rice, potatoes and macaroni in the week, with any meat only on Sundays.

However, today the children are all well-adjusted young adults. Only one girl got pregnant at an early age, 19, while the others are working.

Sunday Sun May 21, 1989

BLAZE A FIRE



Profiles of Contemporary Caribbean Women

NESHA Z. MANIFF

Sister Vision
Black Women and Women of Colour Press

Caribbean Feature

MOVEMENT OF THE PEOPLE

By Patricia Mohammed

Dorla Bowman was born in Belize. She has spent the greater part of the last decade trying to improve the conditions of women in her society. Since 1985 she has been active in the formation of the Belize Women Against Violence Movement (WAV), a group of women committed to improving the condition of Belizean women's lives. Their focus is the problem of sexual violence which they deal with through public education programmes and support services for victims of abuse. What the women who belong to the organization - Dorla, Marie, Louise, Joan, Cynthia, and others - are really saying to the rest of Belize is that they want to improve the quality of life in their society. Maybe then Belize would be a better place to live in, to work in and to bring up your children in. Yet Dorla finds it difficult to make a living in Belize. She may have no alternative but to leave in order to find a job.

Jostled in the west by Guatemala, hemmed in on the north by Mexico and on the south by Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, washed by the Caribbean sea on the east, Belize seems more part of Spanish America than the official English-speaking Caribbean territory which it is. Its population, calculated as 152,000 in 1981, is also a mix drawn from Central America's Atlantic coast. Creoles - descendants of African slaves and British settlers account for 40% of the population, a Spanish-speaking Mestizo people make up a further 33%,

three Mayan Indian groups comprise about 10%, and the Black Caribs or Garifunas, originally from St. Vincent, form 8%. Smaller groups of Belizean merchants of Lebanese, Palestinian, Chinese, and East Indian descent, and a German-speaking Mennonite farming community are sprinkled among its peoples. To diversify this even further, since 1980 Belize has become home to thousands of poor Salvadorean and Guatemalan refugees. Caribbean societies have been described as 'migrant societies'. Not only were they peopled by migrants but the constant coming and going between mainland and island, amongst the societies themselves, gave the perpetual feeling of societies in formation. The Belize which I visited for the second time in 1988, at the invitation of the Belize Women Against Violence Movement, more than ever recalls the appropriateness of this description.

Ten years after the Belize Women Against Violence Movement (WAV) invited Ellen Spence of Minnesota and myself to share some of our working experience with them. We were to assist in planning their local programmes. Meetings were arranged with officials such as the Chief Commissioner of Police and Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the treatment of abused women in our societies. November 2nd, the third day of the week long visit, according to Dorla's letter, twenty-four professionals including attorneys, physicians, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, chaplains, police and

educators had been invited to participate. Her correspondence also included a fact sheet on the Belize WAV and its activities. It was impressive on paper, but not more so than the spirit and determination of the women who formed WAV.

Belize WAV has six branches, one in each District of Belize which places every branch at least fifty miles from the other. Some are over seventy miles from Belize City, the focal point of all activity. Yet in three short years, the Belize Women Against Violence Movement has carried out a tremendous amount of advocacy work in the country. They have opened counselling, education and referral centres called Everywoman's Place in Belize City, Orange Walk, and Corozal. In addition they offer telephone assistance to women in distress in Punta Gorda, Dangriga and Ignacio.

Violence in any society takes on the particular forms allowed by the culture and the condition of its development. Like many other societies today, Belize is undergoing change. In being uprooted and displaced the peoples who now comprise Belize confront the feelings of homelessness and alienation which themselves arise out of a devastating violation. By its mere existence the Belize Women Against Violence confronts the double violence; by its endurance it builds a home for everyone.

FEMINISM IN THE CARIBBEAN

By Lucille Mair

The view on their understanding of feminism of a number of Caribbean women, were published in *Sistren*, the magazine of the Jamaica Theatre Collective recently. We reproduce here the opinion of Dr. Lucille Mair of the UWI. She is now a Senator, and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in the Government of Jamaica. We quote:

In 1974, one of the eminent professional women's organisations invited me to address them and the officer of the organisation hastened me to say, 'By the way, we're not into women's liberation....' Having made the commitment to speak, I had found it necessary 15 years ago to define what I thought feminism was; and, to say, 'Some of you have done good works. You've proven the status of women in your organisation, and your interests spread beyond your own personal concerns to the wider community. One gives full credit to all of this, so I would not presume to suggest you should use any label which is objectional to you, but I'd like to say I have absolutely no problems with identifying myself as a feminist. I see this as implying that I am conscious of both the strengths and constraints which circumscribe women's lives. I need to closely examine what the sources of those constraints are, and I need consciously to address, challenge, oppose some of the values and systems which operate as a constraint on women. I would

people get caught up with words, they should be quite clear about what the words mean.

Feminism is to do with the liberation of women's energy, resources, skills, talents. And "liberation" is another word for "emancipation" which happens to be a very, very good word in the history of the Caribbean. It's emancipation we're talking about so if you have problems with that - tough! But you still have to think through what are the sources of your reservation. Are they genuine reservations? Are they imposed by the language? It's a soul-searching, primarily individual exercise, but it increasingly becomes a collective exercise. We must have dialogue about what feminism is before rejecting it out of hand.

I would like to think that feminism at this point in time has moved beyond that stage where intelligent, conscious women were terrified of identifying themselves with it. If we still have residues of that feeling in the Caribbean, then we have a serious problem. There has been so much public exposure of the difficulties that women still suffer at all levels of the society, we cannot claim ignorance anymore about our true condition, or that we as women have to do something about that condition. Women, especially those in 'eminent' positions have a responsibility to carry the analysis to its logical conclusion and what has to be done ...

LEADING CARIBBEAN FEMINIST CRUELLY MURDERED

Arah Junella Hector was buried in her homeland, Antigua, on Sunday, 11th June 1989. She was a real Caribbean woman, and women from all over the region were present to pay a final tribute at her funeral.

Mrs. Hector was an active supporter of the Women's Movement, a founder-member and Chairperson of Women for Caribbean Liberation, and a tireless worker against violence against women. She died in a terrible display of violence against women.

"The autopsy determined that Arah Junella Hector was killed by a slash wound to the throat after a gruesome physical attack on her body. The weapon used was probably a cutlass. There are indications that she fiercely resisted her attacker or attackers." It has been suggested that the suspected murderer was on "crack".

Whenever Arah heard of some malevolence done to a woman, she would quote from Ntozake Shange's poem "No Immediate Cause,"

*every 3 minutes a woman is beaten
every 5 minutes a woman is raped
every ten minutes a 'lil girl is
molested
Yet i rode the subway today
i sat next to an old man who may
have beaten his old wife
3 minutes ago or 3 days/30 years
ago.*

Tributes to Arah and messages of condolence to her husband Tim and three children, Che(20), Rohan(18) and Amilcar (12), poured in from the region, North America and Europe.

• Information from *Outlet* (Antigua)
June 9, 1989



Arah Hector at WAND
Consultation/Symposium, November 1988.

ISRAEL:

Women Attacked at Wall

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL -- On March 20, a group of Orthodox men attacked women who were trying to hold a prayer service at the Wailing Wall. Women are supposed to pray in a different place from the men, at a slight distance from the wall. The women have held three previous prayer services, and also were attacked at their February service.

About forty women tried to hold a prayer service, wearing prayer shawls. According to the Orthodox interpretation of Judaism, women are not supposed to carry the Torah or wear prayer shawls. The women reportedly abandoned plans to carry a Torah scroll because they were worried about being attacked.

Dozens of Hasidic men cursed and screamed at the women and formed a chain to block the women from the wall.

The police, who had warned the women not to hold the service because it would be a threat to public

safety, tried to clear a path for the women, at which point the Hasidic men began fighting with the police.

The women began singing, but several were knocked to the ground, and one was hit by a metal chair thrown at her by one of the Orthodox men.

The police dispersed both the men and the women by discharging tear gas.

The government has limited sympathy for the women. Director General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Zevulun Or-Lev said that the ban on women holding prayer services "is tradition in Israel, and this tradition is law and can't be changed."

Susan Kahn, who runs a women's Torah school in Jerusalem, says, "Men don't own the wall."

· *Off Our Backs*, May 1989
(info from *New York Times*,
3/21/89)

MEXICO: Abortion Demanded

Feminists and women legislators protest

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO -- Women who obtain illegal abortions in Mexico are sometimes arrested and beaten. Teresa Juarez, a member of the Revolutionary Workers Party, has made public complaints about what Mexico City police have done to her and to other women who had illegal abortions.

After Juarez and four other women left a clinic in a van, they were stopped by an armed man and woman in civilian clothes who said they were from police intelligence. They called the women who had just had abortions "assassins, whores, bitches," and took them to a jail, where they slapped and kicked and forced to spend the night. They saw a hooded man being tortured by dunking and were afraid it would happen to them.

Feminists and women legislators have protested this abuse of women and have launched a new drive to make abortion entirely legal.

Abortion is legal in Mexico only in cases of rape and danger to the woman's life. In a few states, abortion

is legal if the fetus is severely disabled, and, in Yucatan, if there is economic hardship.

However, it is almost impossible to obtain a legal abortion. The law does not specify who can authorize a legal abortion.

Even the nation's Director of Family Planning, Dr. Manuel Urbina Fuentes, says he does not know how a woman could obtain a legal abortion.

The penalty for undergoing or performing an illegal abortion is a suspended sentence, but doctors lose their licenses.

At the beginning of April, 280 women intellectuals, artists and politicians signed an advertisement in Mexico City newspapers calling for legalized abortion.

Mexico has a powerful Roman Catholic Church and a new anti-abortion group called Pro-Vida.

Off Our Backs, May 1989
(info from *Los Angeles Times*,
4/9/89)

PAKISTAN: Feminists Criticize Bhutto

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN -- The Pakistani feminist group, the Women's Action Forum is criticizing Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for her hesitation to act in the interests of women. Bhutto, who has been in office since late last year, has not yet taken steps to repeal the Hadood ordinances which bar women from testifying in court in cases of crimes such as adultery and, in some other legal cases, specify that the testimony of two women is needed to equal the testimony of one man. Bhutto has said she would move to end legal obstacles to women's equality, but has not yet proposed legislation to do so.

It would be difficult to pass such legislation. Repealing the laws would take a two-thirds majority of parliament, which Bhutto's party does not have.

Bhutto has not yet released the report of a commission formed by the late dictator President Zia al-Huq

to study the situation of women in Pakistan. Zia suppressed the report because it documented so much abuse of women, such as child marriage and violence.

The report says, "The average rural woman of Pakistan is born in near slavery, leads a life of drudgery and dies invariably in oblivion."

Also, the Women's Action Forum said, when Bhutto has pardoned prisoners she has chosen members of her People's Party, not women who have been imprisoned under the law against adultery or other common women.

Bhutto also failed to appear at an International Women's Day event held by the government's Women's Division.

• *Off Our Backs*, May 1989
(info from *Los Angeles Times*)

WOMEN ACT AS WATCH-DOGS TO SAVE THEIR SOCIETY

In Imphal, the capital of the Indian state of Manipur, women have come together in an anti-liquor society - Nussi Bandhi Samaj - to stamp out the menace that drunken men were perpetrating in the form of violence against women and economic destruction of the society generally. Samaj also tackles problems like drug addiction, and excesses by the army.

Drunken men who used to reel around the streets and molest women, now live in fear of the women's patrols, that march around the streets with sticks and torches every night in search of drunks. The women beat up the drunks or hand them over to the police.

Yew, the local rice brew is the alcohol mainly involved. Alcohol is the chief killer in the state after heroin, according to a doctor's survey. The staple food is rice, and diversion to the making of yew has caused starvation and the squandering of family earnings.

From 1978, the Samaj has grown to 500 branches across the state, and a membership of over 10,000 women. Government is now supporting the temperance movement by paying an honorarium to the women for every drunkard handed over to the police. At the beginning the women were beaten and ridiculed.

Although Manipur is "staunch Hindu," with alcohol forbidden, both alcoholism and polygamy are now common. The deterioration is ascribed to unemployment.

Army excesses are being tackled. Guests were persuaded to boycott the wedding of an army man who had decided to take a second wife, and he was forced to pay his first wife and a child compensation and leave his house to them. The women have also extended their protection to young boys from molestation by the army.

The leader of Samaj is a 57-year-old woman who has raised seven children.

RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP AND STUDY/BOOK GRANTS

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) is offering a Research Fellowship to outstanding young persons of less than 35 years of age who are in the disciplines of Economics and related subjects, Management Studies, Agriculture, Engineering, Natural Sciences and their applications, Computer Sciences and Law.

The Study/Book grants which require no age limit, will be offered in the disciplines of Liberal Arts, Agriculture, Engineering, Economics and related subjects, Natural Sciences, Management Studies, and Law.

For more information contact the Caribbean Development Bank's headquarters at Wilkey, St. Michael, Barbados.

CDS/ISIS WORKSHOP



During the week of 17th March - 21st March, WAND staff members Cheryl King and Mona Harvey participated in a CDS/ISIS Workshop which was held at the CXC building, The Garrison, St. Michael, Barbados.

The workshop was conducted by UNECLAC representative Mrs. Audrey Chambers, and was designed to familiarize participants with the CDS/ISIS computer software package. It brought together library personnel from various organisations around the island.

CDS/ISIS is a menu driven generalized Information Storage and Retrieval System designed specifically for the computerised management of structured non-numerical data bases.



From left: Mrs. Jean Callender (UWI); Mrs. Cheryl King (WAND); Mr. Alan Moss (UWI); Ms. Mona Harvey (WAND); and other participants of the CDS/ISIS Workshop.



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