



# Women & Environments

international

**BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA:**

The Postwar Moment  
CYNTHIA COCKBURN

**EAST TIMOR:**

Lessons for Women,  
Constitution and  
Peace-building  
DR. MELINA PIRES

**SOMALIA:**

Redefining Social Roles  
RIMA BERNS MCGOWN

**AFGHANISTAN:**

Women Resisting  
SAHA SABA (RAWA)

**COLOMBIA:**

Black Communities,  
Gender and Territory  
NAMBY MANDINGA

**ISRAEL/PALESTINE:**

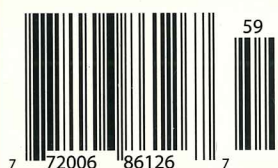
Olives —  
We Need Your Help!  
GILA SVIRSKY

**CYPRUS:**

Hands Across the Divide  
GEORGETTE LOIZOU &  
SEVGÜT ULUDA



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DOUBLE ISSUE

## TOGETHER WE STAND: Resisting & Rebuilding for Peace

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Women & Environments International is a unique Canadian magazine, which examines women's multiple relations to their environments – natural, built and social – from feminist perspectives. Since 1976, it has provided a forum for academic research and theory, professional practice and community experience. By volunteering their time to the collective editing and production of Women & Environments, Editorial Board members contribute to feminist social change. The magazine is associated with the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies at New College, University of Toronto.

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## Upcoming Issues

We are already working on the following issues themes:

**WOMEN & HEALTH** - the social, environmental and economic dimensions of women's health. The issue will center around the 2002 International Women and Health Meeting, held at York University in Toronto. Presentations ranged from reproductive health to ecological links and effects of violence on women's health.

**WOMEN & WORK - AN UNEASY UNION?** – explorations of women's work experiences in a rapidly changing environment and increasingly globalized market place. We will look at public, private, cooperative sectors, small/micro business ventures and organized unions from comparative and analytical perspectives.

**WOMEN GLOBALIZATION AND ACTIVISM** – the feminist and environmental politics of women, North and South, in the anti-globalization movement. How is that movement reflecting feminist and environmental/feminist positions?

**WOMEN & THEIR BUILT ENVIRONMENTS** – an update on women's projects and thinking to realize homes, jobs, services, ways of getting around and communities that meet women's needs.

Your ideas, participation in issue teams, contribution of articles, news and funds are a critical part of Women & Environments International Magazine.

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## ON THE COVER

Ruta pacifica de las mujeres – Women stand together in a vigil of solidarity in Colombia. They express their rights and hopes for peace, truth, reparation, justice and a life without violence. Photo: Jesús Abado Colorado

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## Together We Stand: Resisting and Rebuilding for Peace

— A Word From This Issue's Editors

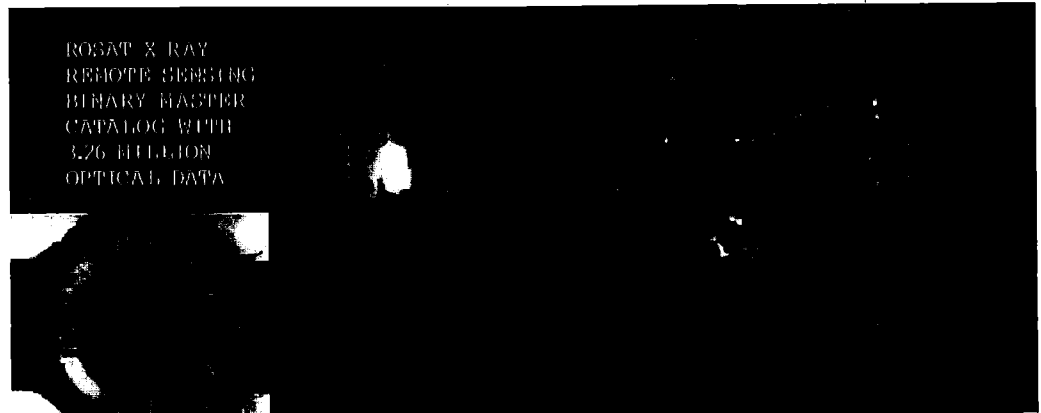
**H**ow do you develop an issue on women, conflict and lessons in rebuilding for peace? That was the challenge that faced the editorial committee the day we had our first virtual meeting in the spring of 2002. Ultimately, we wanted to empower women. We wanted to share new ideas, the latest tools for resistance and change, and explore feminist issues and the barriers to women's effectiveness. Our discussion that day was a good reflection of the complexities of our topic.

We challenged the current focus on 911 which refers to the North American emergency call number. Who would understand this ethnocentric term or find it relevant? More to the point, the North tended to view Sept. 11 as a major discontinuity in world affairs. But colonialism, globalization or global militarization was not invented on this date. Shouldn't this issue point out that this event is on a continuum, or perhaps an intensification of global activities that predated September 11, 2001, by decades and even centuries? If anything, September 11 was merely a catalyst for militarists' agendas that were festering long before. Much to the frustration of peace and human rights activists, September 11 had become a new reference point, taking over public media and political spaces. There was a lot of media airtime devoted to heroes and victims and the newly coined 'war on terrorism'. Little was said about the rise of "terrorist" labels, new "anti-terrorist" restrictions and attacks on hard won human rights, social developments and women's organizations not only in the US but around the world.

We also questioned the terms "zone", "community" or the issue of territory as basic elements in armed conflict. How do you delineate a "zone" of conflict in this era of globalization? September 11 brought this reality into focus for the North American public eye. Also, community building can be a powerful tool in the survival and the empowerment of women. In Columbia for example, communal identity, the group's ability to manage and build an identity within a set territory lies at the very heart of the women's resistance movement. Yet power relationships and control of territory also are patriarchal justifications for armed conflict. In times of conflict, especially in communal or ethnic, fundamentalist or extremist conflict, women become special targets, often violent, for all the well-known reasons. In the

name of the communal, we are forced to reckon with issues of borders and boundaries, nationalism, religion, community, gender and the familiar myths about shame and honour, us and them, blood and belonging.

Violence is the ultimate extension of conflict. Armed forces consciously target women for violence. Yet, women face violence and are targeted not only in declared political war zones, but while engaging in peaceful protests for environmental concerns



such as clean water, pesticide bans, health, education and other human rights. Women often are in the majority, if not the leaders, in many of the environmental and social movements, particularly, those of volunteer-based organizations. Domestic and sexual violence is a common occurrence in most "peaceful" countries. Without personal security, do issues of survival and resistance supplant those of peace building? Are women's silenced voices, and the targeted violence experienced during armed conflict so different from their every day lives?

What people and the media needed was a countervailing force, a space for dialogue, dissent and new perspectives on armed conflict, globalization and peace building. There was still the light of possibility. Several countries were on the verge of peace or ceasefire agreements — Sri Lanka, Cyprus and talks between Palestine and Israel were still alive. It seemed that Afghani women were gaining new voices. It had been almost two years since the historic passing of the UN resolution 1325. Women and gender issues were now added to the conventions of war and peace reconstruction. There had been opportunities to test its power, and new ones on the horizon.

So where did that leave us? First we chose a focus and title that reflects women's commonality — of experiences, of the strength of our ability, the urgency of our need and the continuity of issues in building for peace from pre to post conflict.

Second, we decided to present regional case studies of conflict. This would allow us to reveal the differences and commonality of experiences through time. Many of the cases can be viewed within a multi-layered analysis. Current research breaks the study of conflict resolution into three main time frames: Pre Conflict Conditions/Potential Prevention/Non-Violent Transformation (ie Cyprus or Indonesia); Conflict/Pre-Negotiations (ie, Columbia, Sri Lanka, Israel/Palestine, Somalia); and Post-Conflict Reconstruction (East Timor, Afghanistan, Bosnia). A closer look at these regional cases reveal the difficulty in demarking periods or categorizing regions. Especially in these uncertain times. We decided to put extra attention on Colombian women. This country suffers the longest standing civil conflict in the Americas, and is entering a new phase of intensified war. The experience and perspectives of their women, the most visible opponents of the war, have been largely marginalized, silenced or misrepresented by mainstream media accounts. Understanding these issues which face women and their resistance is key to a sustainable and successful rebuilding for peace.

This marginalization is a common experience for women peace activists. Therefore, we also chose to give space and a voice to women and a face to armed conflict. Expressive pieces were intermingled with the factual as examples, texture and an alternative way of understanding the issues. We have published some solid analytical framework pieces such as Cynthia Cockburn on the Postwar Moment, and Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, "Narratives Routes of Fear". Yet, we chose to focus on activism and activist tools, letting the readers draw their own lessons, comparisons and conclusions.

Lastly, we explored the issues of borders, dislocation, the impact of international communities and global influences on women and armed conflict. While conflict often has a negative impact on women, changes in political structure and chaos do provide an opportunity for action and innovation, especially if women are given access to and leadership within the peace process. Has Resolution 1325 been the useful tool intended?

As is common with many networking and cross cultural efforts, the committee had to contend with broken communications and e-links across time and continents, births and deaths, family emergencies, changing jobs and hearts, increased mobility and limited resources. As a result, it was another eight months before we could see the final collection of this issue.

World affairs, promotions for war and the global context have moved so quickly that the changes seem overwhelming. Regions that were in the process of peace are now embarked on a course of renewed conflict. The patriarchal agenda of globalization and increased militarization is even more evident. It could be argued that militarization is one of the greatest issues today, affecting women, their families and communities everywhere. In the wake of the current crisis in Iraq, the lessons and experiences of the women presented here in our issue, are particularly poignant. So together we stand. It is our hope that we served in some small measure to empower women, share our knowledge and further collective spaces for peace and social justice.

**Editorial Committee, February 2003**

## Together – An Activist Song

**By Surya Women Development Center**

We are going to sing happily, together today  
We are going to sing happily

Like the women of those yester years  
Are you going to live a crippled life?  
Have a look at the women of today.  
Do have a look at the women on the top?  
Out of the hearth today, how many such women  
do you see?

Is cooking only meant for women folk?  
Is sitting by the hearth their work?  
If you know about cooking, it is a real tactful job  
So understand we, the cooks can do any job under  
the sun.

If practiced, we can do any work, all of us  
If practiced, we can do any work.

Giving birth to children is the most difficult job you  
know  
So we the child bearers can do any job under the sun.

On this earth of beauty and richness, know very well  
No one is a slave to the other.  
By nature women and men differ but in constituent.  
Hey, you woman, brave a bit  
The earth will never let you down.

Published in **Third Eye**. Jan 2001, Sri Lanka, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka  
Translated by T. Kirupakaran

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**Dr Shahrzad Mojab,** professor in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, U of Toronto, and a founder of the international Kurdish Women's Studies Network.

## Bosnia

### The Postwar Moment:

Lessons from Bosnia Herzegovina

Cynthia Cockburn



A postwar moment is one of promise — but too often of missed opportunities. So long as there is war or threat of war, heavy militarization and pre-occupation with security strategies can be justified. Every kind of progressive social or economic policy and development in that society may be held hostage. Not now — later!

A postwar moment is the time when policy can diversify again. There may be policy moves on several fronts at once, demobilization, the reconstructions of the economy, the shift from emergency services to social rehabilitation, the reconstruction of state, political structures and law in a new constitution. But will these changes bring a democratic, inclusive and equal society necessary for postwar healing, social justice and substantive peace? This depends on many factors but one that is crucial and often overlooked, is whether the transition includes the questioning and transformation of gender power relations.

In October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted its Resolution 1325. It called on all actors involved in conflict and post-conflict conditions to incorporate a gender perspective in their work. What is more, it called on the UN to recognize gender issues in its own field based operations and to expand women's role, especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel. It committed the Security Council to work in consultation with local and international women's

organizations for these purposes. The resolution had identified, as many women knew, that international peacekeepers have very often neglected women's needs and strengths. What is more, the peacekeepers had played into the militaristic cultures found in war zones and in some cases even contributed to the exploitation and abuse of local women and girls.

This new gender thinking in the UN, its peacekeeping operations and postwar interventions is solidly based on our bad experiences, the effects of mistakes made in past interventions. Bosnia Herzegovina is one such experience. I would like to illustrate this theme of postwar moments, gender issues and the effectiveness of this new thinking in postwar reconstruction by highlighting what went wrong in Bosnia, some of the effects and attempts at correction. I will be drawing on work that is gathered in my publication: "The Postwar Moment: Militarism, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping".

Why are women likely to have a particular agenda for the postwar moment? What's the essence of women's take on a peace process? Why is it that from where men stand it often looks as though using a gun may be the best way to solve a problem, while women don't agree? It's not because women have some natural inborn affinity for peace. It's women's experience of life. It's that the system we live in puts women in a particular relation to society.

Three ideologies tend to be very influential in societies that have been at war.

They're the 'brother' ideologies of militarism, nationalism and patriarchy. The inequalities and distortions of gender in a patriarchal society, that masculinity and men are ascribed higher values than femininity and women, are part and parcel of the power relations of militarism and nationalism. If women are given importance in these cultural constructs, it is as wives and mothers, not for their value as human beings themselves. Women's independence and autonomy, their choices and their self respect do not flourish in militarized, nationalistic or patriarchal societies.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina was negotiated in the US air force base in Dayton, Ohio and signed in Paris in 1995. It brought to an end four years of death and destruction, confirmed the ceasefire, provided for the withdrawal of foreign combatants and established a zone of separation between warring factions. But Dayton wasn't just an agreement between the war makers to end the fighting. It actually introduced a whole new constitution for the country and a system of electoral politics. It provided for the conversion from a communist country to a market economy, and the groundwork for a whole new society. This in fact is what a peace agreement can be about and that is why it is important to look ahead to the changes that are possible.



International bodies were given an almost colonial role, actually running a protectorate, in the shade of which, the native Bosnian political system and civil society were supposed to grow to maturity. It should have been obvious at the signing, that responsibilities were being placed on the international community to observe human rights and democracy in its own operation — and that included gender equity. Christine Chinkin and Kate Paradine have written that the Accords presented the west with “an opportunity to structure a model for women’s empowerment that could benefit women elsewhere, including Western Europe”. But the Agreement failed to “re-imagine gender relations and to provide a contemporary model of citizenship and democracy for women”.

When Madeleine Rees, head of the Sarajevo mission of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, arrived several years into the peace operation, she was shocked to find a total absence of women and of gender awareness in the Dayton peace process or in subsequent international interventions. There were strong reasons to have expected something different. Why?

First, the war in Bosnia had been a highly gendered affair. The war was specifically aimed at uprooting a large number of civilians. The aggressors, by destroying houses, gardens, farms and local economies wanted to make it unthinkable for their targets to ever return home. This war against the domestic environment was against everything women represented or held dear. A high proportion of those who experienced first expulsion and flight, then dislocation, were women and children.

After the end of war, two thirds of the population and the vast majority of household heads were now women. Meanwhile the health and welfare services needed to support women in this responsibility had totally collapsed. And yet, it was the women who persistently started and ran the small local humanitarian and advocacy agencies both during and after the war. They were in fact, laying the foundations of a postwar civil society.

But power in Bosnia, as in other postwar



At Babyi Yar

KAETHE KOLLWITZ 1887-1945

societies, was a highly masculine affair. The towns and cantons were governed by non representative bureaucracies, often consisting of family relatives, mafias, local elites and heads of armed factions such as the military, militia, or secret police. Often the purpose of war is not to win but to prolong the opportunities for profiteering. Power is maintained through various levels and applications of violence. After all, genocide, mass displacement, rape, enforced prostitution and custodial violence, were not incidental to the Bosnian conflict — they were its very goals. The tools for success had been designed with minute attention to gender — the gender of the victim, of the perpetrators, of gender values in the society and its cultures. So should not some, if not all of the 50,000 personnel deployed in the 1996 Bosnian peace operations, have been at least curious about the gender issues?

A second reason to expect better of the Dayton operation was that gender awareness had already entered into the intergovernmental policy process worldwide. There was no excuse this time for neglecting gender and women’s rights in the shaping of the peace agreement. In fact, Rees says that this was more than a lost opportunity. The omission was frankly appalling.

But where was civil society, as a whole, in

all this? The first thrust of the international community was to set up new formal structures for political representation and decision making. But only after the popular vote failed to move forward, did the effort turn to fostering civil society — including NGOs. Yet again women’s NGO’s were not seen as significant. When finally things began to shift, it was women, in fact essentially three women, Madeleine Rees, Heike Alefson (Council of Europe Office) and Elizabeth Rasmussen (head of the Democratization Branch of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) who initiated the change. They formed a Gender Coordinating Group, to initiate awareness and action on gender in international agencies.

While not totally successful, this group was able to have influence on many issues. They were too late to get women a voice in the drafting of the new law on domestic violence, but they were in time to have an input to the drafting of employment laws. Senior international representatives initially intended to cut maternity rights and benefits to a level below that given in the former Yugoslavia. The GCG and local NGO’s worked together to prevent this further reduction of support.

The lack of a clear gender policy has serious effects. For example, the trafficking of

women, a new form of sexual slavery, is rapidly becoming big business worldwide. Soon it will reach the proportions of the drug trade. Traffickers thrive in conditions of war and poverty. In a border town in Bosnia there is a lorry park they call Arizona market. Traders bring commodities that they buy cheap in Serbia and sell dear across the Dayton line. One commodity is women. They come from Moldova and Romania, often as young as 14. They may be told that they will be a waitress or a dancer in "the West". They have no passport, no papers, can't speak the language and may not even know which country they are in. It is estimated that 30% of the clients and 80% of the traders' revenue, come from the international community. Brothels and bars cluster around the bases of the international peacekeeping military. This should have been of great concern to UN officials; it certainly concerned the local Bosnian NGO's. Yet women who exposed the problem or the profiteers, were sidelined. One woman in the International Police Training Force who blew the whistle was fired, and not even the GCG could prevent it. She later brought and won a wrongful dismissal case.

There are two main lessons that can be learned from the Bosnian experience. First, it is absolutely vital that a gender analysis from the very outset is placed at the heart of peacekeeping operations or postwar reconstruction. It should be mainstreamed so that everyone, not just women, not just gender focal points, but everyone thinks about the gender realities of the war and of peace. Second, local women's NGOs must be consulted, befriended, made partners with the international community and have equal rights in the process.

Peace can not be done without the input of grassroots organizations that represent different subsets of the people affected by the conflict. Trade Unions, youth groups and environmental lobbies are a few, for instance. If total inclusion of civil society in a peace process is necessary, how can it be made legitimate? Most importantly, what about women and women's organi-



**Engraving by Radmilla Jorandic** an internationally awarded engraver, an official representative for Bosnia/Herzegovina at the 45th Venice Biennial 1992/3. Because of the siege, the artists and their works were unable to exit the city. Despite the war they presented in Venice through a video tape highlighting the remote exhibitions and catalogues printed in Sarajevo.



**Art Installation Converts Post Office Wreckage:** In their hands bricks of ravaged buildings, pieces of glass from shattered windows, shrapnells and bullets, burnt logs, soot stone and ash became alchemic material which turned destruction into triumph, rubbish into art.

zations in this postwar moment? Can they rightfully demand a space and a voice to express their gender specific experiences or issues? Might not women raise issues such as violence, gun ownership, the right for conscientious objection, or better political representation? Women can't be expected to contribute or make very refined arguments if they are only allowed to shout from the sidelines and demonstrate from the streets. We need to monitor for signs that civil society is being placed centered stage, where it can make a positive, detailed input into a future political structure and society. Mechanisms such as citizen forums, funding budgets for interventions, or a commission of inquiry come to mind.

One could also ask of the peace process, whether the international representatives and negotiators meet the test of gender

inclusion. How familiar are they with CEDAW (Convention on Equality and Elimination of Discrimination) or Resolution 1325? How many of these international organizations are headed by women, how many hold responsible positions and how real is the "gender mainstreaming" in their own operations?

Resolution 1325 did not come from out of the blue. It followed from a long sequence of UN developments in women and gender starting with the Decade of Women in 1975. So what has followed in the period since the adoption of Resolution 1325? Dyan Mazurana points to the creation of "gender affairs" offices as part of the UN peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and in East Timor. There were plans for a similar office in the democratic Republic of Congo. The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations recommended the establishment of a gender unit in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). It argued for a fair distribution of women and men in peacekeeping posts. Unfortunately, it did not get implemented. In the spring of 2001, the DPKO quietly dropped the proposal for a budget request and no gender unit has been formed.

As Dyan puts it: "local, governmental and international women's advocates and organizations need to be at the forefront of monitoring and evaluating the developments in each and every peace process to see that they happen". It is quite clear from the experience of women in Bosnia that resolutions are not enough. Each and every time we must anticipate the opportunities of the postwar moment and work together to realize them as best we can. ✪

**Cynthia Cockburn** is a feminist researcher, writer and professor in the Dept. of Sociology, City University, London. She is the co-author of "The Postwar Moment: Militarities, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping" 2002. Refer to the In Print section for details.

For further resources visit the new BWNET website: [www.keg.org.gr/bwnet/index.asp](http://www.keg.org.gr/bwnet/index.asp) for an electronic network of women's organizations designed to promote democratic practice and build sustainable peace in the Balkans.



# East Timor

## Lessons for Women, Constitution and Peace-building

An Interview with Dr. Milena Pires

Suzanne Farkas

*Where/When: May 4 2002, Sri Lanka, during the period of Sri Lanka's ceasefire negotiations.*

**W**E Magazine editor, Suzanne Farkas talked with Milena Pires about women's involvement in the creation of the world's newest democratic assembly. Until July 2001, Milena had been the Deputy Speaker of the East Timorese National Council and a key member of the transitional government. Currently she is an elected member of the Constituent Assembly, leading Advocate of peace and gender equality at the Catholic Institute for International Relations, and a founding member of the Social Democratic Party in East Timor. She also is an active member of "Rede Feto Timor Lorosae" women's network.

Milena is a young woman who seems to radiate calm patience. Milena was warm, centered, humble and welcoming. A mere 30 minutes had been set aside for an interview pool and yet when my opportunity to engage her in conversation came, she made me feel immediately at ease. Her gaze was a gift and her attention so kind that no matter how trite or poor our knowledge of E. Timor, each question was taken as a jewel of opportunity. She answered each thoughtfully and with grace.

**How effective or relevant has UN Resolution 1325 been for women in E. Timor?**

1325? Perhaps it should have been a reference but it didn't have an impact. Our awareness was lacking. Was it not ratified in 2001? It may have not been available dur-

### CONTEXT

The Portuguese colony of Timor was liberated from Indonesian occupation through a referendum on 20 November 1975 and was the first and only country to be recognized by the United Nations 18 days later. A so-called campaign of procleration followed, in which over 200,000 Timorese were killed and 250,000 individuals lost their lives. On 28 August 1999, following a referendum, the people of Timor chose to become an independent nation.

In late 1999, about 70% of the economic infrastructure was destroyed, including what was left of Indonesian troops and anti-independence forces. Over 100,000 Timorese civilians lost their lives in the war and over 1 million people were displaced and 500,000 people were forced from their homes.

Over the next three years, however, a massive international peacekeeping force of 15,000 peacekeepers (8,000 at peak) and 1,300 police officers were deployed to stabilize the country in both urban and rural areas. By mid-2001, the majority of the displaced population had returned. On 20 May 2002, East Timor was declared an independent state and the world's newest democracy.

The country faces a great challenge in the form of a high unemployment rate of 80% in urban areas and a high rate of violence against women by both military and civilian forces. The violence committed in East Timor during the war of 1999.

There are a total of about 13 indigenous languages spoken in the country, with the official languages, Indonesian, and English, also being spoken.

The National Parliament members are elected for a five-year term. For its first term of office, the National Parliament will have 25 members on an exceptional basis. The number of members will be reduced to a maximum of 52 and a maximum of 65 seats.

ing our process (editor note: It was introduced to the UN in August 1999, ratified Oct 2000). Although UNIFEM was present, there was some philosophical block not yet established. We were not guided [in this resolution] by our UN administrator.

This is a lesson for us. We needed to prioritize, we should have insisted after the ceasefire, [insisted on] the Declaration of Human and Child Rights, and on CEDAW's (the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) rights.



We were so focused on the constitution that we missed the boat. It was so overwhelming. The transition was very fast—too fast. It all was done in 3 months — the constitution, working with a shadow of the UN — we needed more time, the process was not our own. We couldn't get divorce rights in the Constitution; although there are marriage clauses. As well, sexual orientation and security in the homes clauses are not developed, police entry is not allowed at night unless it is life threatening, but at least the language



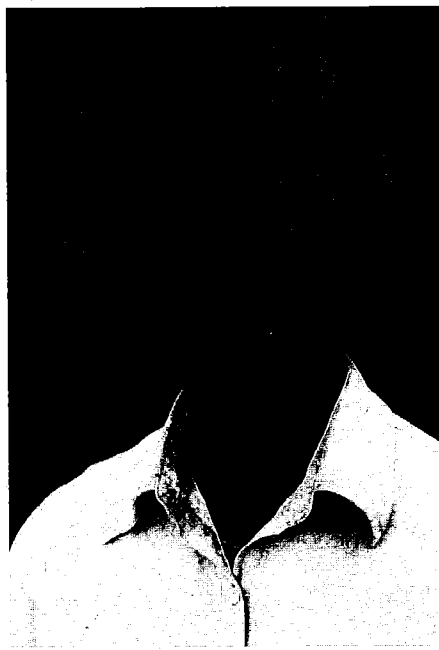
sends a message. Future legislation is needed, and we have planted some seeds.

The fight started well, with no party politics — but things have changed now with the elections. There are 16 political parties, women are now influenced by what their party stood for and haven't been able to form any focused decisions. Party discipline is now occurring. Women are finding their places and now look at each other differently. It's not an easy process for now. Women need to hang on to the set agenda but our network has become divided by party politics and discipline.

**How did women get a voice in the transitional government or new assembly?**

Twenty-four out of 88 delegates is good but we have not yet accomplished our goal. We had wanted 30% minimum (ed note: as recommended by Unifem's Status reports/guidelines). In June a congress of women put together a platform to present to congress. We needed to maintain the position we had attained during the struggle — the need to work, to ensure access to services, health, education, women's participation in decision-making. The platform was introduced by 11 members and was adopted by Congress but many issues were not either dealt with or adopted. We had asked for a 30% quota for women's representation and a guarantee for a winnable position in the party. The E Timor party leaders were at first open to the idea and in agreement. The regulations for assembly demanded a 30% minimum quota for women. However, the main opposition came from the electoral administrator, who was also the UN transitional administrator in 1999. It seemed that the UN was against quotas. It was argued that democratic countries didn't have quotas and thus the UN representative lobbied to have the quota minimum pulled out. Thus we failed to ensure our own constituent of women's support and lost important representation. The Chair of the Council is sympathetic to women's issues and recognizes the importance of women's status to Timor's international image, but we have ignored many issues.

The most pressing concerns for East Timorese women since the 1999 referen-



Ms. Milena Pires, Former Vice Speaker on the National Council of the Constituent Assembly, women's rights advocate and a founding member of the Social Democrat Party of East Timor.

DAWN DELANEY ©

Unless everyone is represented then the issue may be missed. You can't expect to have one woman responsible or to be able to be representative on a myriad of issues

dum are gender related violence and entrenched poverty. Gender-related crimes make up 40% of all reported incidents around the country and domestic abuse crimes make up half of all cases being heard in Dili District Court.

We have got the CivPol Vulnerable Persons Unit and organizations like Fokupers and ETWave providing support to victims of domestic violence. But as a long-term strategy we need other forms of support for women victims of domestic violence in terms of economic independence. We have already taken a big step forward in publicly discussing this issue. We need to strengthen the constitution even if it's only a reference to the position of the family and the

responsibility to the wife. We tend to look at domestic violence in isolation. We write laws and make efforts to protect women, but it's part of a much wider social problem.

Another example of an unresolved issue or missed opportunity is the women's role in the Falintil (ed. note: armed independence guerilla fighters) movement-women have not been recognized as members. Even though they had access, there was no recognition of them in the peace process and the UN didn't want to formally recognize them. There was no recognition in the demobilization package, and there was no demand to give them a place in the Independence Day celebrations, no place in any events.

**Why were they ignored?**

Good Question. It was and is an important lesson to learn. We left them aside because we needed to strengthen our [own women constituent] voices. They were absent physically, as they had gone back to their community, so they were missing from discussions and were not represented in our voices. They were at different working groups in the CNRT (note: National Council of Timorese Resistance coalition) and Congress but they couldn't formally present their views. There was no demobilization section or discussions of our role needs during those discussions. Our Lesson then? Unless everyone is represented then the issue may be missed. You can't expect to have one woman responsible or to be able to be representative on a myriad of issues.

**Did 911 affect E. Timor women or constituent issues in any way?**

There hasn't been enough time to reflect on it, aside from the images. I have no reaction. We've been so involved with Timor that there is a neglect [of other contexts].

**Editors note:** since this interview, in the name of the "war against terrorism" the Bush administration has mounted an aggressive campaign to remove congressional barriers to engagement with the Indonesian military (TNI) authors of the 1999 E. Timor "scorched earth campaign". As of July 2002 bill amendments allow the Indonesian military access to US "anti-terrorist" training dollars and centers.





### What motivated her, gives her strength, or helped her cope?

Women abroad showing solidarity, my links to other activists, training in the Philippine's was inspiring, and finally the women's movement in East Timor.

### Are there any parallels for Sri Lanka or lessons E. Timor can offer?

A very important lesson seems to be in the opportunity for direct access to peace negotiations. The first step if it is possible, is to get women into the first round of peace negotiations talks, and at the same time get together outside of the talks to build a list of demands. You must have your own agenda to get ahead. It is very important to have access to both. It is most touching seeing women gathering together in Sri Lanka and talking, gathering strength from the process of being together and sharing their bereavement.



DAWN DELANEY

Portrait of an East Timorese woman watching a political rally, Dili — a freedom not possible during the Indonesian military occupation.

### What is your vision for E Timor?

Because of our history and location, Indonesia is linked. This meeting of women has made me think. I've been in discussion with E. Timor women and Indonesian men. Timor needs to have some impact on the military action in other parts of the country. We have to deal with the abuse at the hands of the Indonesians, but we should not just focus on E. Timor. We need to do more to show our support and solidarity with the Indonesian women. ❦

**Suzanne Farkas** MES, CIH, is a Board member of W&E magazine. She is a journalist and environmental scientist and consultant. She has served as a Chair of Status of Women Committees and prepared several briefs on Native Land Claims and constitutional issues, as well as women, health and work issues for governmental inquests.

## Ethics the Environment

Victoria Davion, Editor

*Ethics & the Environment* (ISSN: 1085-6633) is an interdisciplinary forum for theoretical and practical articles, discussions, reviews, and book reviews in the broad area encompassed by environmental ethics. Topics include conceptual approaches in ethical theory and ecological philosophy, such as deep ecology and ecological feminism as they pertain to such environmental issues as environmental education and management, ecological economics, and ecosystem health. It is published twice a year.

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# Somalia

## Redefining Social Roles:

### The Extraordinary Strength of Somali Women

Rima Berns McGown, PhD.

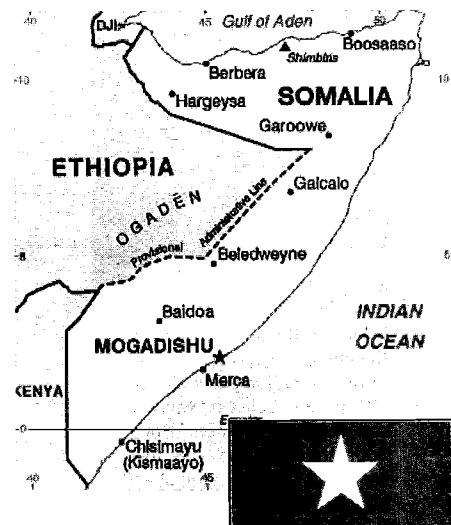
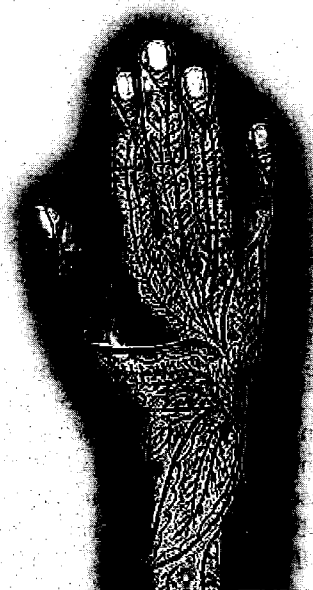
In the wake of the disintegration of civil society in Somalia — the chaos and the civil war that followed the ouster of dictator Siad Barre — hundreds of thousands of Somalis found themselves refugees: within Somalia itself, in the neighbouring countries of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya, and, in unprecedented numbers, in the rest of the world. In a matter of months, communities sprang up in Western cities such as London, Washington, and Toronto. And through it all, Somali women refugees have shown extraordinary strength. They overcame their inner horrors in order to keep their families together in the Diaspora. They led the re-defining of Islam that anchored them and their families when everything else in their lives was in turmoil. They did this against insuperable odds and often amid hostility.

Somalia is still wrestling with the bitter legacy of its civil war. A dozen years after the fall of the Barre government, Somalia has yet to put its political house in order. Several regions of the country — notably Somaliland and Puntland — have declared independence and established regional governments, but these remain unrecognized by the international community. Mogadishu, the capital city, remains a lawless and divided city, its various districts under the armed control of disputatious warlords.

Somalia's woes can be traced, in large part, to clan politics. Yet everyone had lost somebody in cycles of violence the impact of which was not resolved by the flight from Somalia. Grieving and in pain, they were nonetheless forced to build new lives in new countries, absorb new cultures and learn new languages while trying not to lose what was important to them in the process.

And what was most important to Somali women were their own and their children's sense of identity and of self. Women found themselves heads of families or responsible for the family's economic well-being, many for the first time. In the process of keeping their families together — quite literally body and soul — putting bread on the table and trying to keep the family conscious of being both Somali and Muslim, women have redefined their social roles in the Somali context. And it is this strength of Somali women, this redefining of social roles, that may be at the heart and very hope to rebuilding Somali political and civil society.

The nature of Somali extended families and the strong contacts between Diaspora and homeland Somalis ensure that many of the revolutionary changes in social structure occurring in the Diaspora will have repercussions for the rebuilding of social



structure in the homeland as well. Somali refugees retain strong vital transnational connections with communities in other countries, and with those remaining in the homeland. People, money, and ideas are in constant exchange. A significant portion of homeland Somalis' income comes in the form of remittances from family overseas. Due to the strong influence of Diaspora communities, Homeland Somalis are also changing their ideas about the role and practice of Islam.

Virtually all Somalis are Muslims, and, although they had a reputation as lackadaisical practitioners, they are proud of their heritage and their connection, in folklore, to Arabs and to the Prophet Mohammed himself. For the first time, on arriving in the West, Somalis could not take their identity for granted. They had to become conscious of what it was, what it meant, and how to demonstrate what they believed.

Somali Islam was strongly identified with Sufism for most of the 19th and 20th centuries. Sufism is mystical Islam, concerned more with following the 'path' of a particular spiritual leader than with the text of the Qur'an. However, as a form of political protest against the dictator, a number of Islamist groups had sprung up in Somali urban centres. These groups did not have a groundswell of support within Somalia and, hounded as their members were by Barre's government, many of them fled into exile, first to Sudan, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia, and



BBC NEWS ONLINE

"Men call the shots, and shoot the guns," though as Asha Haji Elmi, one of Somalia's 25 female MPs in exile believes, women can make a difference. "Not now but in the future, yes, because we are already one step ahead of men," she says.



HORN OF AFRICA COMMUNITY GROUP

Marwo has a double meaning in the Somali language — it is the name of a woman but is also used as a term of respect when referring to a group of women.

later to the urban centres of the West.

Somali women, faced with the crisis of how to live as Muslims in the West and, most importantly, how not to 'lose' their children, began to redefine their practise of Islam. They began to read the Qur'an, many for the first time. They formed study circles which met on a regular basis to discuss how the teachings of the Qur'an could be applied to their new lives, and could give them guidance. Most Somali women in the West began to wear the hijab, often for the first time, wearing head scarves for religious purposes rather than for beauty or custom. They were more likely to pray five times a day, and to prompt their children to do the same. They became more consciously observant. They were interested in what the Islamists in their midst had to say, but with a twist. Rather than following blindly the teachings of the Islamists, they began to pay attention to the words of the

Qur'an themselves, and to form their own opinions on what was right for them and on how to live as Muslims in the West.

In fact, the thing that was most striking about this newly religious bent among Diaspora Somalis — and particularly women, who led the trend — was its central element of *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is independent judgement, and is of course frowned upon by would-be authoritarian interpretations of a single proper and correct way to practise. Though its practitioners may not have called it by that name, *ijtihad* demonstrated their intention to read and interpret the Qur'an for themselves and to decide how to apply it to their own lives. These were people who considered themselves to be observant and religious and who, in their fiercely independent ways, refused to be the sheep who followed Westerners or the sheep who followed anyone else.

In the process of redefining their practise of Islam, they also redefined their understanding of a "good Muslim woman". This has had huge implications for the practise of female circumcision, among other things. Most girls are infibulated in Somalia, because within the Somali social context, it was the very definition of a both a good Muslim and a woman. Yet Somali women began to study the Qur'an and to become more aware of text-based Islam. It was then that they realized that most Muslims do not practise female circumcision. Further, Islam does not mandate circumcision, it in most parts discourages the practice. This realization allowed the extraordinary step of separating the concepts of "good Muslim woman" and female circumcision. It allowed for a change in thinking about the practice, and the beginning of its discontinuation. What is important to recognize is that the women who decided to discontinue the practice have done so, not because they have become "Westernized" in their thinking, but often because they have become more consciously Muslim. Their embrace of Islam has given them the validation to reconsider the meaning and importance of this practice. These are attitudes and understandings that are beginning to filter back into the homeland as well.

In Somalia itself, women have been credited again and again with rebuilding, or beginning to rebuild, shattered communities. This is not the usual female role of comforter and mother. This is more than that. In Western economies in recent years, small and micro-businesses have been called the true engine of economic growth. For the first time, governments have poured significant amounts of energy and money into understanding just how much financial worth is generated by small business. Similarly, women in Somalia have been starting and running micro-businesses — food, clothing, beeswax products, incense and beauty products, but not just these, and generally but not always from their homes. These micro-businesses that have fed their families and have provided seed-money for small schools and medical clinics are a major key in the rebuilding of a viable community economy. The amounts of money they generate may be small but their impact is immense.

These women have become providers for their families, in a decidedly non-traditional twist of role-playing.

Moreover, though there are not yet opportunities for its expression, political power begins with economic power, and these women are building economic power. The role they have played in holding Somali families together has been anything but that of the weak in need of protection. In the re-creation of the Somali polity, they will in time play a similarly re-defined role. In the exchange and growth of ideas between the diaspora and the homeland, Somalia's social structures have been irrevocably altered. ❦

**Dr Berns.** based this discussion on her research and interviews of diaspora families. She is the author of "Muslims in the Diaspora: The Somali Communities of London and Toronto." Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

# Afghanistan

## Women Resisting:

Building a House with Solid Walls

Suzanne Farkas

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

Oscar Wilde



**CANADIAN WOMEN FOR WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN**

[WWW.WWIAFGHANISTAN.COM](http://WWW.WWIAFGHANISTAN.COM)

Five years ago, Sally Armstrong's article entitled, "Women of Thorns", in *Women's Magazine* was the first exposure Carolyn Reicher had to the plight of Afghan women. When she learned in more than a year of research, shock and sadness over. She had been completely unaware that such a crisis existed.

What motivated you to get involved in the Afghanistan issue?  
 We began in the fall of 1997 as part of a senior level international Development Studies class at the University of Calgary. In September 1998, at a conference sponsored by the Afghan Women's Organization, we met in person with Canadian author and writer Deborah White and decided to start the *Canadian Chapter of Women for Women in Afghanistan*.

As a woman with so many shifts in my life, I literally cannot imagine life for women in Afghanistan. The most common word I hear is "I really believe in the importance of every individual human's right to the essential obligation to realize her dreams."

What are your goals and needs for WWIA?  
 The organization has two goals:  
 1) empower women and their families in Afghanistan and refugee camps in Pakistan  
 2) raise awareness in Canada of the plight of Afghan women

We raise money through public relations, sales of Afghan

## REVOLUTIONARY AFGHANI WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (RAWA)

AN INTERVIEW WITH SAHAR SABA

*I met with Sahar in Sri Lanka, May 2002. RAWA's public affairs officer was shy and retiring. Her head and face were exposed, but she wore a shawl draped over her shoulders. She was comfortable in my presence but she asked that her face not be photographed, for fear publicity would mark her, but also in solidarity with her sisters.*

**What motivated you to get involved or take a position in RAWA?**

There was nothing for girls and women in the refugee camps of Pakistan. My father searched for 2 years for an education for his children. Through friends and supporters abroad, he found out about RAWA. My father saw my interest in learning and finally when I was 9, sent me with my brothers to school. It took me 2 days and nights to travel to the school. I learned about politics through the kindness and teaching of the teachers. It was an underground school, so we were not allowed to play outside and be seen. I began to question why my mother was different from me or my teachers. I was learning about the stories of other women, my life was changing. I thought about the thousands of other girls and the conditions they were living in and it made me crazy to think I might not have had the chance. I can do something; I see that and am motivated. I am not different or better than others like me — I feel I have a responsibility toward others.

**What networks/tools are used by RAWA and do you cross ethnic boundaries?**



handicrafts, public events, and royalties from books sales. We also hold public events, conduct media interviews and write articles for publication. We researched, produced and distributed approximately 240,000 copies across Canada in the spring of 2001. W4W Afghan members recently created and distributed over 60,000 post cards to advocate for Canadian government support to women in Afghanistan. W4WA maintains a web site ([www.w4wafghan.ca](http://www.w4wafghan.ca)), distributes a monthly newsletter and, in conjunction with Development Studies students at the University of Calgary, has developed educational tools for use by school teachers. One of our primary tools and resources, however, is being part of a growing, dedicated network of individuals and organizations supporting women's human rights in Afghanistan.

#### **BREAKING BREAD PROJECT — W4W AFGHANISTAN**

As its editor-in-chief, Sally Armstrong had transformed *Homemaker's* magazine, that "cute little magazine filled with recipes" into a powerful editorial voice. Over the years, that voice has told stories that nobody else seemed to be writing about — child prostitution in Bangladesh, wife assault and most notably, the women of Afghanistan.

"What's happening in Afghanistan right now will have an extraordinary impact on the entire region," she said. If the fundamentalist point of view wins out, then the future of all women in the region is in peril. Armstrong reminded us that the aid promised to Afghanistan by the international community hasn't been delivered. She's worried that as international attention shifts toward Iraq, the ongoing human rights violations that are a daily way of life in Afghanistan will be forgotten.

"The international community will move like a school of minnows to a new feeding ground," she cautioned. "If we fail Afghanistan, we fail ourselves."

She first wrote about the Afghani women for *Homemaker's* in 1996. The article generated thousands of letters of support and spawned a grassroots movement within Canada to help support Afghan women. Armstrong proudly tells the story of one such group, Women for Women in Afghanistan and the Breaking Bread project.

"The concept is simple," she explained. "Host a pot-luck dinner for nine of your friends and have each of them bring along a cheque for \$ 75." Each supper raises \$ 750 — enough money to pay the salary of a teacher for one year in Afghanistan.

Since leaving *Homemaker's* in 1999, Armstrong has continued to give voice to those who cannot speak for themselves. Earlier this year, Penguin Books published Armstrong's book, "Veiled Threat: The Hidden Power of the Women of Afghanistan."

**For more information about "Veiled Threat: The Hidden Power of the Women of Afghanistan"** check out Penguin Books at [www.penguin.ca](http://www.penguin.ca).

For step-by-step instructions on how to host a potluck dinner, visit [www.breakingbreadforwomen.com](http://www.breakingbreadforwomen.com). Please note, 100% of funds raised are used to finance Afghan women's literacy.

**Women For Women:** <http://www.womenforwomen.org/> supports women who are survivors of war and genocide. It formed in 1993 in response to atrocities against women in Bosnia; then added Rwanda, Kosova, Colombia, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

**For more information about Women for Women in Afghanistan,** go to [www.w4wafghan.ca](http://www.w4wafghan.ca).

We go from house to house in the camps and villages. Reactions are dangerous. We start at the bottom, sitting on the floor with the family. We work and talk to the women first, then husbands and relatives. We try to offer literacy courses as an entry for awareness of the issues. We first build confidence about RAWA and about what we are doing. Trust level is very low. We must help with all their problems. We do not just give a course but actually live with the family. Some are resistant to schooling the girls. In one family, the girl went to school for 2 years without her father knowing. RAWA faces great hostility, but the majority just have fear and economic reasons to refuse involvement. You have to guarantee their economic and personal security — you must answer "who will do the carpets if the girls go to school?" Therefore RAWA must try to help with the loss of labor or money.

**What gives her strength to cope and go on in underground work?**

Independent money, financial and international support and support from RAWA; all my social supports. The internet was crucial in our survival. Five years ago no one knew of us. We will not lose hope. We always worry about attacks, we constantly have to change names and worry that information may give others away. The need to protect others prevents us from making wide contacts with people and other women.

**How does RAWA work with other agencies/women's groups in Pakistan or Afghanistan or have you reached out to other groups?**

There aren't many other women's groups in the camps or available to us in Afghanistan. Other NGO's are not as politically aware or we can't be sure it is safe to talk, so RAWA works alone. Others have political affiliations, party policy affects results. RAWA is a common movement, at the ground, living among the people. We have security issues, a lack of information and facilities. We offer independent programs right now and, because of our security problems it is not possible to do more.

**Has UN resolution 1325 helped in any way?**

UN impact has had an impact, but practically it is not important. Our hands were tied. RAWA feels it was failed by the UN.

**What was her experience as a delegate to the first UNIFEM sponsored Afghanistan Women's Convention held in Brussels 02?**

The Brussels meeting did not accomplish much. It was good for discussing issues but did not talk about the root causes. I did not find a real strong connection at the summit. There were lot's of disagreements about solutions, why women were not leaders, but North American women and UN women aren't willing to talk about the real politics. We are on the ground. We have to be at the ground level to know what's needed.

**What is most needed for the women of Afghanistan?**

A peaceful environment. Most important is financial support, international support. The website was very important in making an impact and connecting RAWA. We need more and more schools.





What networks/groups does Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (W4WA) work with in Afghanistan?

W4WA is fundraising for a number of projects in partnership with selected grassroots Afghan non-profit organizations. It is very important when funding projects to first build an relationship of trust, partly through effective evaluation and monitoring procedures. Our three main project partners are:

- o Afghan Women's Resource Center (AWRC) - Projects include literacy and income-generation, rights awareness as well as training for basic health services in refugee camps. AWRC is currently setting up new offices in Kabul, with funding from W4WA. They plan to set up resource centres for urban and rural Afghan.
- o PARSAs (<http://www.parsa-afghanistan.org/index.html>) is a small NGO that works with needy people, particularly widows. PARSAs's programs provide counseling, job training, financial assistance and income opportunities. W4WA has supported a silk weaving project over the past few years that is currently expanding.
- o Shuhada Organization ([www.shuhada.org](http://www.shuhada.org)) is a NGO started in 1989. Projects include mobile health clinics, home-based schools, income generation and relief distribution. W4WA funds medical supplies for the internally displaced children.

How do you work with/coordinate with other women's groups in Afghanistan?

Our main contacts are our project partners. We stay in touch by email and phone, but also in person if they come to Canada. We also network with others who live or work in Afghanistan, or those, such as journalists who travel there. We also try to link Afghan women and organizations with each other.

Has UN resolution 1325 helped in any way with your work?

UN resolution 1325 has brought the issue of women's rights and conflict onto the official stage. In Canada, it spawned the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security.

What was your experience as a delegate to the Canadian Afghan Women's Roundtable Conference?

In July 2002, a series of cross-country Roundtables were conducted with Afghan-Canadian women. The resulting report, "A Stone in the Water," presents seven central concerns and thirty recommendations for the Canadian and Afghan governments, the United Nations or the international community.

The Calgary Roundtable enabled us to establish new relationships with Afghan women in Calgary.

What is most needed for the women of Afghanistan?

Listening to Afghan women through our project partners and at roundtable discussions in Canada, we learned that Afghan women's greatest need is that of security and the protection of their universal human rights. First and foremost, however, Afghan women need peace in their country and support to rebuild their lives. ❧



HARRISON FOREMAN-AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE LIBRARIES

Coochie grandmother and child lead a nomadic life in Afghanistan.

**What are the barriers?**

We hope for the interim government to give access but it's not there yet, and it won't change and we can't trust this government. Many feel that the Taliban regime and Northern Alliance deserve only to be brought to justice. Inside Afghanistan, the fear is such that they don't have the power to demand anything. But there is power to pressure the UN and International community. Women will be in the Loya Jirga, but what type of women and what will be the mentality of these women? Many do not have a clear political background.

**How much support has come from abroad/afghan exiles.**

International support is very important to RAWA. Some support comes from Afghanistan but most is from the West and Asia.

**What is her vision?**

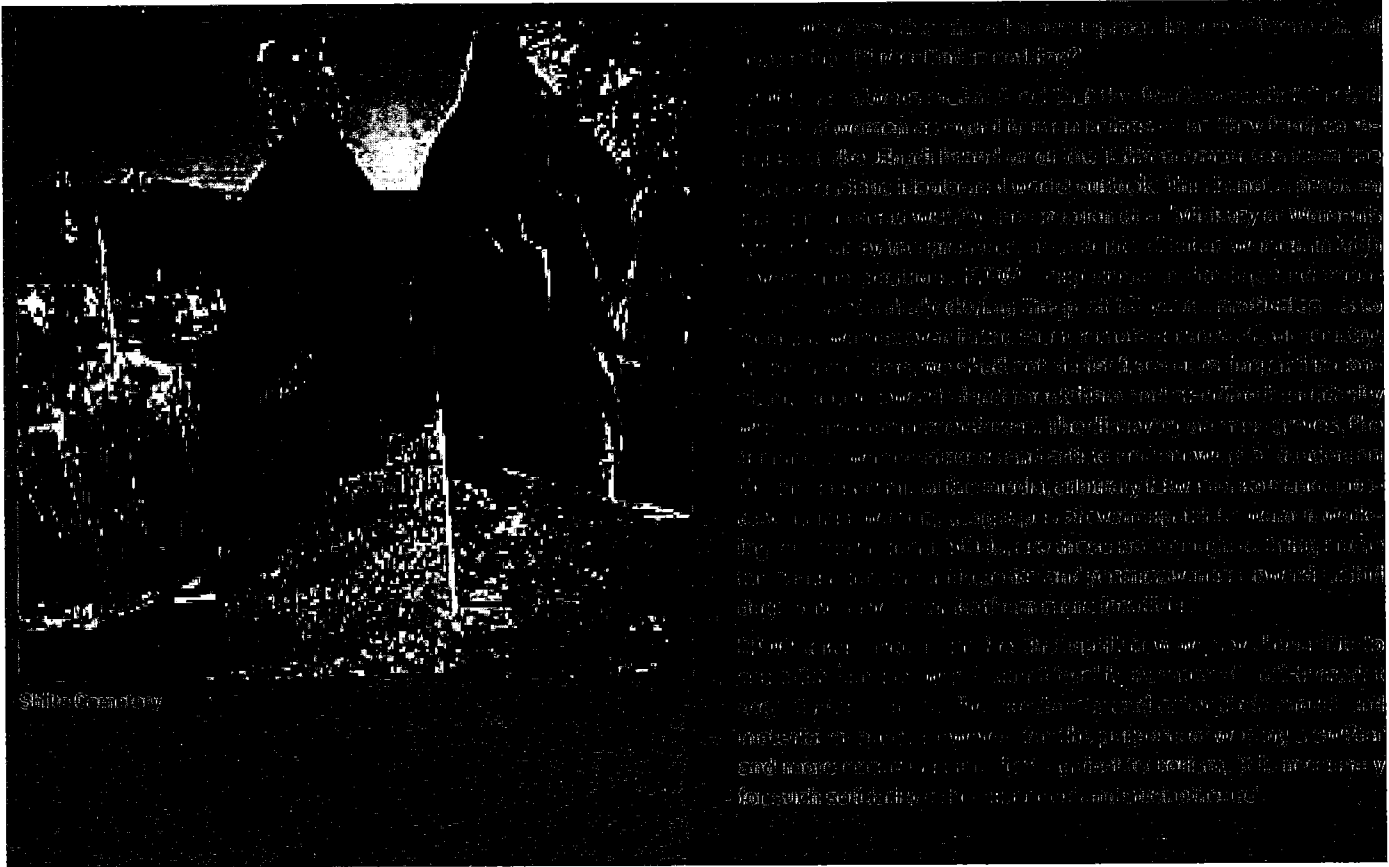
The former King is wanted by 99% of the people — it is the only way to ensure democracy. I hope for simple things, choice and human rights for women and a normal life. ❧

**EXCERPTS FROM THE RAWA STATEMENT ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF SEPT 11:**

For ten long years the people of Afghanistan — Afghan women in particular have been crushed and brutalized, first under the chains and atrocities of the "Northern Alliance" fundamentalists, then under those of the Taliban. During all this period, the governments of the Western powers were bent on finding ways to "work with" these criminals. What was important was to "work with" the religio-fascists to have Central Asian oil pipelines extended to accessible ports of shipment.

Neither opium cultivation nor warlordism have been eradicated in Afghanistan. There is neither peace nor stability in this tormented Country. Women feel much more insecure than in the

continued on page 18



Shahin © Ciruello

# Challenge to The New Political and Military Order

What we are able to challenge

Ariane Brunet

**T**hree days ago, I was wandering the streets of Kabul painfully aware of a solitude I have so easily become accustomed to in foreign lands. Here however, this singularity weighed heavily on my mind. I was the only one of my gender in these streets, where for all practical purposes women are absent. For those who do risk venturing in public spaces, do so for the most part, in a ghostly fashion. Here, I said to myself, a woman cannot be herself. The challenge resides in one's ability to merely exist. So if for the women of

Afghanistan the challenge is merely to be, can I contend that women elsewhere challenge the so-called 'new' order, be it political or military. This is especially true if the new order is allowed to build its legend, its myth on the ruins of Afghanistan.

What I seem to have understood in Kabul is that if we cannot claim to challenge the new world order, we are not fooled by it either.

Afghan women's ability to endure, their brutal confrontation to a patriarchal hierarchy and their endless creativity to survive are true testimonies to their limited

resources and their lucidity. At the heart of each of my meetings with them, we were well aware of the parallel worlds in which we lived, a dimension which demands a further look.

Afghanistan is, in fact, where global capitalism and militarization at its peak meet to build a mythical reconstruction. The international community's commitment to help rebuild Afghan society has taken on an important significance after September 11th.

In its report on human rights and ongoing efforts to rebuild Afghanistan, published in

May 2002, the Center for Economic and Social Rights wrote:

"The international community's public commitment to help Afghans rebuild their society has assumed global significance as a precedent for the viability of humanitarian engagement after September 11. Throughout the world, the reconstruction of Afghanistan is seen as a litmus test for whether the universal values of human rights and development will help define the parameters of global security, or whether the narrow military interests of powerful states will predominate".

Everything was cited: humanitarian assistance, universal values, human rights, development, and security. What the Center for Economic and Social Rights fails to mention is that in Afghanistan the feminist card is also being played by Christian fundamentalists. Women's issues are also part of the arsenal of military propaganda. How many governments, starting with the US, have suddenly started to denounce the status of Afghan women to justify their intervention? Bush is recycling the same speech for his upcoming intervention in Iraq! Therein resides the challenge.

We are no fools and we must rise against the use of feminism, of women's rights to justify wars to come, because after connecting with afghan women and talking about universal values, human rights take on a different meaning. Yes, we must politicize feminism.

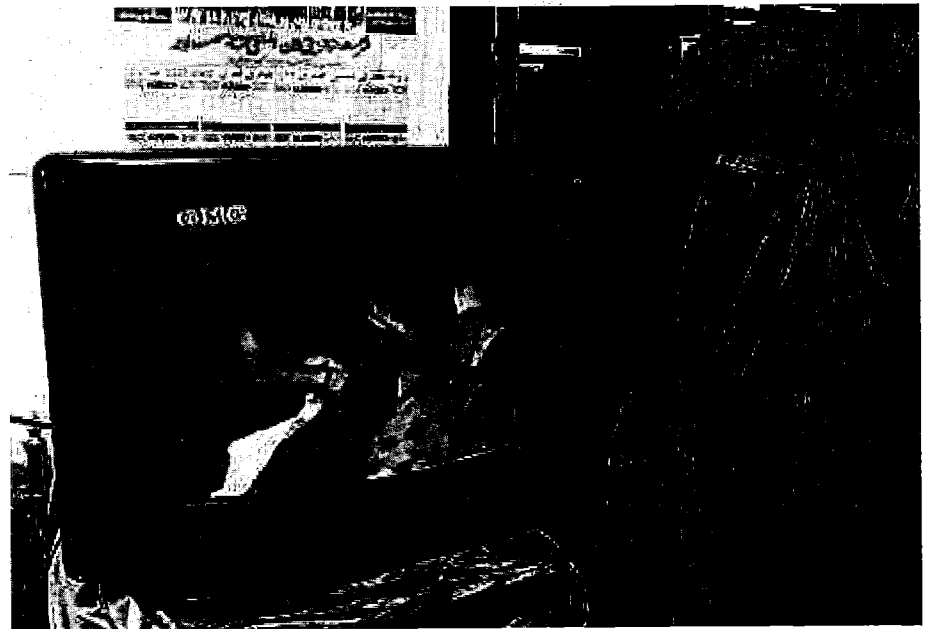
The 4th Ministerial Meeting of the Network on Human Security met this summer in Santiago, Chile. Governments wanted to renew their commitment to support international efforts to eradicate terrorism "through a better understanding of the roots of global insecurity". In this meeting's report, there was not a single word, not even a comma on the ongoing massive global remilitarization... One cannot help but ask some serious questions about this new linguistic machinery at play. There is talk of the importance of education on human rights. Did we need this "new" concept to remind us of the UN's commitments in Vienna in 1993, during the World Conference on Human Rights? A ten-year campaign of education on human rights?

If it is strategic to explore different avenues in the UN's labyrinth, as far as its promotion and advocacy of human rights, could it possibly be a perfect opportunity to ask why the international community is hell bent on producing countless tools and statements? What does this increasingly sophisticated fractionalization of laws mean? Where does the feminist rhetoric and most importantly its practice fit in all of this?

How many such documents have we read since the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights? How much effort is

set of laws we deal with, but rather a labyrinth we venture into, in total darkness.

Beyond the construction of this labyrinth, very little interest is given to the responsibility of states, corporations, and big businesses in the militarization of our societies. Ad Hoc tribunals of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia continue on their merry way with the odd NGOs on their tails, like tics on a dog. Today, the Coalition of Women's Rights in Conflict Situations, which has been working for the last seven years on the International Criminal



Woman watches TV on a street in Kabul

required to ensure a gender-specific approach? How many documents are required for us to aspire to at least an embryonic implementation? Is this overflow of concepts hiding a show of bad faith in respecting basic principles and fundamental rights? Doesn't human dignity imply that we understand each other when we speak to one another?

The idea is not for us to stop our work within the UN's proceedings, but rather to better focus our contributions. More importantly, it is to question new trends, new concepts which superimpose the rights of some upon others, a diplomatic maneuvering which too often allows a right to be forgotten. What was clear yesterday has today become obscure. It isn't a

Tribunal for Rwanda, has been forced to realize that Akayesu's victory has proven to be a mere footnote in history. We have failed to create an automatic response in prosecutors so that they systematically take into account sexual violence in all appropriate cases presented to the courts. Justice is nevertheless a fundamental need. The International Criminal Court is one of the rare tools, which once used properly, guarantees transparency, equity, impartiality and a start toward reconciliation.

We ask all these questions, for we are no fools.

I would like to conclude by citing Arundhati Roy from an article entitled Not Again published in *The Guardian Weekly*,

October, 2002:

"As the disparity between the rich and poor grows, the hidden fist of the free market has its work cut out. Multinational corporations on the prowl for "sweetheart deals" that yield enormous profits cannot push them through in developing countries without the active connivance of state machinery. Today, corporate globalization needs an international confederation of loyal, corrupt, preferably authoritarian governments in poorer countries, to push through unpopular reforms and quell the mutinies. It needs a press that pretends to be free. It needs courts that pretend to dispense justice. It needs nuclear bombs, standing armies, sterner immigration laws, and watchful coastal patrols to make sure that it is only money, goods, patents and services that are globalized — not the free movement of people, not a respect for human rights, not international treaties on racial discrimination or chemical and nuclear weapons, or greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, or, God forbid, justice. It's as though even a gesture towards international accountability would wreck the whole enterprise". ❧

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This paper was based on the speech originally presented to the 9th Forum of the Association of Women In Development Conference, held in Mexico, October, 2002. The Association for Women's Rights in Development's International Forum is the largest international summit on gender equality outside of the United Nations system to consider the implications of globalization. The AWID Forum seeks to create a safe space for critical analysis, to re-politicize the gender and development community and examine work that transforms rather than reacts. For information contact their website: [www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org)

## Choices

We can dive into the excitement,  
Shoot, shout,  
Drug and be drugged  
Drag and be dragged  
Yell "Allahu Akbar" or "Shma Yisrael"  
With explosives around our belts  
Or concocted in the broth for Last Supper.

These days it is "in":  
Exorcise righteousness out of ancient tombs  
Throw regurgitated Time at another's face.

The choices tree ever expanding  
And meandering,  
Branches of wrong takings so entangled  
It is hard to breath  
Or see the light  
This is a labyrinth lover's haven  
Some even pay to get in.

If we find Ariadne's thread  
Will we still remember  
It could take us  
To the exit?

**Orit Adar**

e-mail: [anatar@012.net.il](mailto:anatar@012.net.il)  
Jerusalem 91090  
Israel



URSULA BBIEMANN

# Colombia

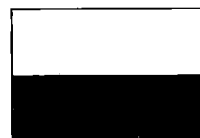
## Diversity and Collective Spaces for Organizing:

Colombian Women's Initiatives and Multiplicities of Resistance

Sheila Gruner

"Fear is a strategy of the totalizing power. That is why the continuity of the courage of resistance, the commitment for life and against war and the "Campaign Against Fear" threaten the totalitarian project. The "Campaign Against Fear" is a political position. The struggle against fear is an ideological struggle, profoundly ideological. To break fear is to break the totalitarian power structure, resist and propose alternatives from the perspective of women".

– Yolanda Becerra, OFP, August 17th 2001, Barrancabermeja:  
"International Women's March Against War"



The women's movement in Colombia is one of the most diverse, burgeoning processes in Latin America. Women hail from such diverse social, economic and political backgrounds, and yet still manage to maintain and develop collective spaces under clear unifying principles. The only way out of Colombia's cyclical and systematic violence is through one such vital principle. This principle states that a negotiated solution to the conflict must directly involve the leadership of women and organized popular social movements. Women aim directly at deepening and strengthening their political process as a tool from prenegotiation to postconflict or postnegotiation.

As a woman and a leader of one of the most visible woman's movements in Colombia recently stated:

"In essence, negotiation is about opening a space for the social and political movements to express themselves. Negotiation does not only mean 'peace' but rather it refers to generating the conditions and making clear commitments so that social movements can express themselves democratically for the reforms and changes to the system that we need."

The Colombian conflict is very relevant to the global stage and the study of armed conflict, and yet it is hardly visible to the world. Colombia is suffering one of the longest standing civil wars in all of the Americas, with over 15,000 dead and 2.5 million displaced. Its position as an entrance to South America and its access to resources, markets, and strategic zones makes it vital to the United States and other multinational busi-

ness interests. Despite this and the influence of outside pressures under the guise of the war on drugs and terrorism, Colombian popular movements have been strong, organized and resistant to the imposition of war and its determinants. It is the current most dramatic expression of the impacts of, and confrontation to, globalization and war in the Americas. Subsequently, the forms of resistance and proposals for social transformation from women at the grassroots level is of vast importance.

According to leaders of many women's organizations, the war financed by the United States is increasingly affecting women and their communities. It limits the efforts they and their counterparts have made to promote a viable negotiated solution to the war and obscures its true under-



SHEILA GRUNER

Women representatives meet to share and strategize for Minga

lying determinants. Moreover, the 'war on terror' has intensified the conflict in Colombia in a battle over control of resources and territory. It has graduated from a military 'war against drugs' to a wider multilayered 'war on terrorism'.

Not surprising to some, U.S. special troops are officially present in Colombia to protect U.S. 'national security' and to 'fight against terrorism'. Coincidentally, in 1999 the Director of Narcotics calculated there were 2,500 mercenaries from the U.S. involved in a number of ground activities in Colombia. Over 90% of the \$1.3 billion funds for the U.S. military Plan Colombia, was spent in the United States on weapons, ammunitions and pesticides for foliage fumigations. There are plans for more funding. Plan Colombia and the more recent Andean Regional Initiative are designed to ensure that a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) can be implemented and promote free trade at any cost.

As many Colombian academics and social movement leaders state, war has become a strategy for displacing people, rather than the otherwise prevalent view that displacement is simply an outcome of war. There is an enormous difference. This displacement is partially fueled by policies such as the "defense and democratic security", in which local groups of armed civilians are used to maintain "security". For "security", civil liberties are curtailed and people are stereotyped, criminalized or hired as local

informants in the zones of guerrilla influence. Against the backdrop of massive unemployment, the war provides incentive for social disaster.

The conflict itself notably coincides with instances of forced displacement in areas of economic interest, further financing economies that use war to access these territories. This has led to a strong and determined response in the country against war itself.

As urban women's movements, such as the Popular Women's Organization (OFP) of Barrancabermeja, and the Women's Path to Peace gain national and international recognition, the hundreds of women's networks throughout the country are also consolidating spaces between each other.

### Multiplicities of Resistance

"Our steps rescue those left by our ancestors and our own tracks now blend with those of so many others who resist, from the countryside and the cities, against the project of terror and death by massacres and globalizations, with mega-projects and fumigations, the buying and selling of conscience and complicit silence, with a project which never ceases in its attempts to break what cannot be broken and to finish what has no end: The decision of Our Peoples is to build autonomy, to extend bridges and bonds between all the excluded majorities."

— *Indigenous, Black and Peasant*

*Declaration made at the culmination of the 330km march from Santander de Quilichao, Cauca province to Cali, Valle province, in which 42,000 people participated called the "Great Minga for Life and Against Violence." Cali, May 18, 2001.*

What does popular resistance to war, displacement, human rights violations, and its determinants look like in Colombia? And what role do women play? In all its diversity, the numerous cultural, territorial and gender-oriented movements fighting for specific and intersecting revindications, constitute some of the most creative and important responses to war and globalization throughout the Americas. The unarmed popular majority are increasingly demanding an autonomous position and demanding integral structural changes to Colombian society. These demands recognize the social and political projects of groups such as the the Indigenous, Afro-descendants, and women who have been displaced or marginalized and excluded by Colombia's severely unequal system.

Despite the obstacles, these movements are increasingly finding common ground while confronting the social control, fear, de-territorialization, and the dismantling of social movements. As researcher and academic Pilar Riano describes, "the places of encounter for Colombians are increasingly not the places of conflict or violent resolution of conflicts, but rather those places in which they can meet as part of a collective group of those who suffer, looking for human answers, expressive channels for sorrow, and means to confront the emptiness left by multiple loss".

Issues related to territoriality, identity and environment are paramount in relation to historical civic struggles to address human rights violations and rampant, longstanding structural inequalities. The recent attempt of the Uribe government to limit the application of the International Criminal Court (The Rome Convention), is a threat to human rights, cultural and territorial gains, particularly those made by indigenous and afrodescendent communities. This move by Uribe's government is seen as a strategy to dismantle the 'estado de derecho' (Rule of Law), which will ensure easier access to

territories and resources, with little or no accountability for human rights abuses and crimes against humanity.

### A Campaign against fear:

The OFP (Women's Popular Organization), in response to this increasing onslaught against popular civic movements and limits to rights and freedoms, has embarked on what they call "the campaign against fear", under the slogan 'it is better to live with fear rather than to cease to be because of fear'. Women led community kitchens engage in outreach to displaced women and families across the city of Barranca, provide basic services to families in need, and develop leadership training for young women. Despite counteractions such as arson, women continue to learn and face the policy of fear implemented against civilians, rather than accepting defeat. There is a great effort underway to study the constant and systematic imposition of fear which many movements confront. The OFP has made this confrontation an explicit political and ideological position.

### Rural and Urban Resistance

Resistance in Colombia is also seen in the countryside, with longstanding processes aimed at addressing dependencies on the global market as a form of resisting the war, the loss of land and subsequent forced urbanization, as well as interrelated environmental, social and economic issues stemming from structural inequalities and dependence on the global system. In a biodiverse and historically rural country like Colombia, food is now being imported. So is coffee.

The rural population understands the problem this poses, as it is their stomachs which are affected first by the policies of globalization promoting dependency on monoculture crops and agrochemicals. Projects of 'economic solidarity' have grown over the last few decades in face of war and the imposition of these policies. ANMUCIC, the National Association of Rural, Indigenous and Black Women of Colombia has created a national network of organized rural women who work at the local level throughout the

country towards addressing issues related to economic dependency, gender discrimination, the extreme impacts of violent conflict and so forth. Their proposals for 'economic solidarity' aim at establishing links among rural communities, developing alternative markets, and capacity building among young rural female leaders to address these and other collectively defined issues.

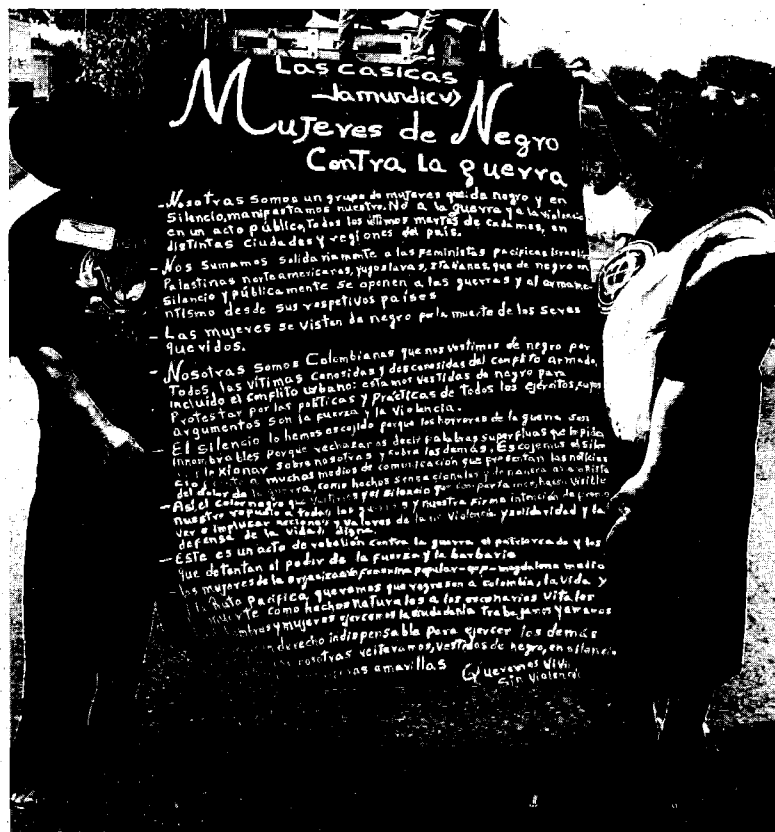
Similar efforts are taking place in urban centres, lead by vast numbers of the rural displaced who arrive in cities without money and very few possessions. Often the only legitimate alternative for surviving is developing viable urban food security projects, which have been developing through cities such as Cali, Bogota and Medellin. It is often women who lead these efforts, as is the case within a vast number of organizations of displaced people. These local organizations are now expanding to include support for social networks, employment and housing, and demand the enforcement, as well as improvement of existing policies and Law 38 legislations for the displaced. (refer to "How a Displaced Woman Lives

in the City of Cali" by Tita Etayo)

### Culture and Territory

The intersecting efforts encompassing culture and ethnicity, territory and gender are fundamental to the resistance movements advanced by women. There are many differences, tensions, and distinct obstacles faced within and among these movements. However, there are also efforts to find the 'common space for expressing pain and grief' while collectively demanding concrete recognition. As evidenced by the articles in this issue, the organized responses from diverse ethnic and social communities are very numerous indeed. Women participate, and take leadership positions, throughout the diverse social sectors and cultural processes including indigenous, rural, urban, union, youth, or afro-descendent movements.

The women's movement has been fundamental towards opening and developing collective spaces for addressing war and its determinants, through such initiatives as the International Women's March, where



Woman in Black rally

SHEILA GRUNER

women from all over the country came initially to stand by their sisters from the OFP. The death threats received by the OFP were directly confronted by these diverse women through the very presence of the peaceful march and mobilization against the use of fear and social control. The effort involved marches and demonstrations throughout the city, and participation in community celebrations. The second International Women's March took place in Bogota in July 2002 symbolically taking back roads and routes of movement restricted by the war. Most importantly, the bonds and relationships built between women across sectors, continue to be developed.

These national networks are tirelessly working towards political consolidation. The National Constituent Assembly of Women, first convened in Bogotá in November, 2002. It developed 12 basic proposals towards an agenda for prenegotiation and negotiation of Colombia's conflict, and detailed strategies to build the political space needed for organized women from popular communities. This assembly is an incipient political movement backed by organizations such as the Iniciativa de la Mujer (Women's Initiative), ANMUCIC, and the Women's Path to Peace (Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres), along with many other social movements in Colombia. This ambitious political effort also aims at promoting an integral democratic agrarian reform. According to Marta Colorado, a representative of the Women's Path to Peace exiled in Canada, the National Constituent Assembly aims at securing a leadership role for women in peace negotiations, which are fundamental towards solving the conflict. Since the war is being fought in two territories, the geostrategic and the physical body — particularly that of women — these territories need to be made an explicit part of negotiation processes. The attention of International law and humanitarian efforts must be given to Columbia.

The woman's movement is essential in consolidating relationships across cultural and social borders. Yet it is important to note the distinctions within and between ethnic and territorial movements. For many women of indigenous and black communities, the reliance on land and territory is

central to their projects of identity and resistance. This often leads to the articulation of women's issues as integrally linked to those of men and the community as a whole, rather than a separate response against systematic patriarchy and related violence. These sometimes subtle differences, as well as the evident class differences among many of the movement leaders, may generate stark divisions and tensions. Women at the international level should pay particular attention to the Colombian experience of movement building across sectors. They have overcome enormous internal obstacles of fragmentation, co-option and dirty war tactics. The often complex task of understanding difference and acting within a spirit of building trust is key. Much can be learned and shared from these women.

The general predictions for Columbia is that 2003 will be a difficult year for women and social movements in general. It is expected that 2003 will be one of ongoing collective negotiations, public mobilizations for workers rights and revindications of the diverse social movements. Women will play an increasingly important role across the sectors, and will face the same challenges faced by many social movements building a coherent, collective and representative response to increased conflict and globalization. The international community will need to pay close attention to the developments in Colombia, as they will have reverberating effects throughout the continent.

Without collective spaces for dialogue, trust-building and the recognition of diverse perspectives and historical experiences, internal and external political and economic interests will consistently have the upper hand. Is this not what we are experiencing around the globe today? ❧

**Sheila Gruner, MES**, is a social and environmental activist, educator and independent researcher, for the Ethics and Development-Induced Displacement Project at the Centre for Refugee Studies. There she researched forced displacement, conflict and globalization in Colombia as well as grassroots strategies for resistance. Sheila has been engaged in developing solidarity initiatives in Canada and Colombia for many years.



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— Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*, 1877

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# Women, Youth, and Girls in the Armed Conflict

Argelia Londono

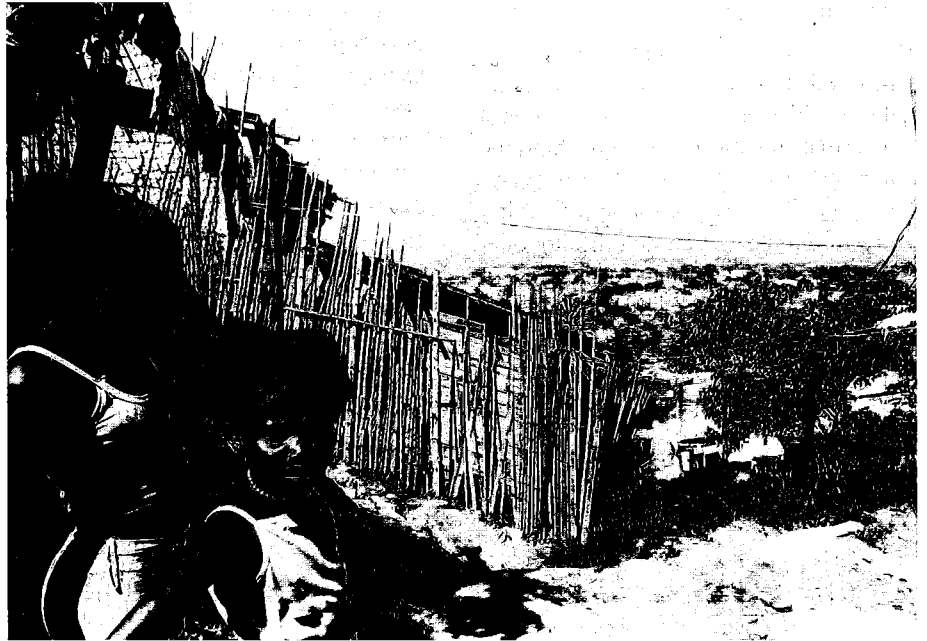
**C**olombia is facing a humanitarian crisis after 50 years of armed conflict. The root cause in pervasive social inequities and a long history of social, economic, and political exclusion of large sectors of the population. The territorial disputes exist between different armed actors who use political and social as well as other forms of violence that affect the country on the whole.

According to the official register from 1995 to 2002, a total of 100 municipalities have been affected by forced displacement, which represents 80% of the total area of the province. The majority of the cases of displacement were of a repetitive nature — meaning that people are often displaced more than once.

The quality of life, facing the displaced populations from zones of expulsion as well as reception, and in particular among Antioquian women, youth and children, are affected physically, psychologically, and socially alongside their families.

The conflict affects everyone. For women, young women, girls and boys, the war has deep and far-reaching human and social implications:

- Children live the same horror as their parents. The social traumas associated with the conflict are often of a long duration and can affect people for the rest of their lives.
- The loss or disappearance of loved ones in the various confrontations, the subsequent widowhood, orphaning, human suffering, familial tragedy and increase of female responsibilities is traumatic. Many women must take on the responsibility of caring for those incapacitated by the war.



SHEILA GRUNER

- The freedom of movement is severely compromised, and insecurity increases in the streets and countryside, fear paralyzes people, uncertainty increases and mistrust, even among neighbours and loved ones increases alongside a generalized sensation of abandonment. Worry and fear are transformed into a collective issue of public health, and in particular female insecurity increases
- Infrastructure: roads, bridges, public buildings, hospital services, housing, energy networks, telephones and aqueducts are destroyed altering the social and familial dynamics. For example: food security is put at risk, with consequences for the most vulnerable groups — infants and mothers and those who require a consistent food intake; the lack of fluid electricity in homes impacts the ability to cook and preserve food.
- Churches, houses and other physical infrastructures are destroyed, stagnating processes of urban development, and forcing municipalities to attempt costly reconstruction efforts.
- Productive processes are reduced or altered and small farmers (campesinos) are forced to abandon their lands, houses and belongings, domestic animals, and cultivations. The displaced population, mostly women and children, increases and their pain of uprooting remains invisible.
- As aqueducts, sewage systems, sanitary installations and health outlets are destroyed or deteriorated, public health is severely affected. Networks of aqueducts can be destroyed or contaminated, greatly affecting health, particularly again facing women and children.
- The risks of increased vulnerability facing women. Violation of sexual and reproductive rights increase: rape as a tool of war, forced pregnancies, forced prostitution, increased sex industry activities among adolescent women and girls. Sexual slavery often affects young women and girls in zones of conflict.
- Many adolescents are pressured to perform sexual services to combatants or are pressured and tricked into giving into

sexual demands in exchange for security for their lives and families, food, housing and clothes. Many armed actors demand the use of young women and girls. The sexual and reproductive self-determination in conflict zones is seriously threatened.

- Some groups also exercise and impose mechanisms of moral control concerning the activities of girls and women: control of sexual and affective relationships, the use of their bodies, their clothes and social and celebratory practices. Girls face severe restrictions concerning their freedom of movement and expression. In the forced coexistence that follows displacement, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, which often precipitates situations of interfamilial violence.

- Sexual crimes against women and girls have various objectives beyond the sexual alone: humiliate women, offend their families and groups to which they belong, or with whom they identify. They also seek to exhibit to these groups linked to the victim, their capacity for generating terror and damage, to make examples of individuals in order to generate fear, to exhibit power, humiliate men of their enemy organizations. Women and children are used as weapons of war.
- Processes of social participation, organization, and mobilization for development is stagnated, fear of participating and committing to social causes increases due to threats received by armed actors.
- Children can be forced to abandon

school because of conditions of displacement and insecurity caused by the war. School buildings, public recreation and cultural zones are often occupied by displaced people or those incapacitated by the conflict. Access to health services, protection and justice is made difficult.

All of this human, social and infrastructure destruction is a result of war. For this reason, contributing to address this disaster is a profound ethical and moral task facing the women's movement and for the men and women that are looking for a political solution to the conflict. The tasks of reconstruction require a strong female presence and active participation. ✽

**Argelia Londono** is the Secretary of Equity for Women in the province of Antioquia, Colombia

# Black Communities, Gender and Territory:

An Interview with Namby Mandinga

Sheila Gruner

**T**he Pacific was once known for its cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence between peoples and was largely left unhindered by the Colombian State. However, the recent implementation of large-scale development projects has coincided with heightened conflict in the region.

The Black Communities Process is both an important movement and ethno-territorial social process. Founded in Colombia in the early 1990's, it has arisen from the experience gained during years of organizing in the afro-descendent communities along Colombia's Pacific Coast.

In order to explore some of these issues, we spoke with Namby Mandinga, a leader of the Black Community Process. She described the current situation in

Colombia, the role of women and how the current conflict affects Afro-descendants, their social process and the relationship to their ancestral territories.

**Namby Mandinga:** What is happening in Colombia today, as most people know, is a situation of brutal war. The situation in Colombia as we see it is at its worst stage, having developed over many years in response to global factors, political and economic interests. We saw how a few decades ago, they used the excuse of "communism" to slaughter many valuable people. They then used the

of drugs to mount a war against our people. Now we are living the period where



Displaced family from the Pacific coast territory.

SHEILA GRUNER

where discourse of “terrorism” is being used to carry out and deepen the war.

More than 50% of those killed in the war are indigenous or black. Moreover, more than 50% of the population who have been displaced in this context — more than 2.7 million people, are again indigenous and Afro-Colombian. It is quite clear that there exists an element of “ethnic cleansing”. It is also reflected in the idea put forth by the former President Gomez some years ago, who had said that “development in Colombia would only be possible through the extermination of the Black Population” — something that had been carried out in other countries such as Chile and Argentina, at that time.

The overall impact is a physical, brutal annihilation of our communities. The other way of killing us is through displacement. This is culturally weakening and destroying who we are. It obviously serves the interests of the war and the capitalist model, through displacement we are forced into a process of homogenization. This serves the capitalist model to reduce cultural diversity.

Currently, the new government is moving towards what looks like a totalitarian state with fascist characteristics, using new mechanisms of control like the “informant networks”. Pictures of masked civilians receiving money from police have already begun to appear in the national newspaper. Taking advantage of the economic and social situation of the poor, we are all being converted into “sapos” {informants}. This is very dangerous for the country. In the midst of increasing poverty, we are being converted into enemies of our own people. They are creating mistrust, and they are breaking, on a deeper level, the social fabric of our country. My neighbour, my friend, my companion, my brother could inform on me. I don't think we can talk about a democracy based on a type of “justice” like this. Democracy cannot be developed in this context, nor real authority and subsequently, real nationhood can not be constructed.

One thing that I have always heard my elders say and in fact I have lived through myself, is that as the western form of “development” began to arrive in our terri-

tories in the Pacific, we became poorer. In the official statistics, it is presented that the Colombian Pacific is the poorest region of the country. But really, this duality of the rich-poor needs to be analyzed according to the perspective from which it is being presented. Rich or poor, according to whom? Before “development”, we considered ourselves rich because we had clean rivers, we had enough to eat because we produced our own food, we had clean air.

As development arrived we began to become impoverished. As we became dependent on food, our rivers became contaminated. What's worse, is that it began to restrict the use of our own territories. So today, the life projects of indigenous and afro-descendants of the Pacific Coast is based on resistance to this form of aggressive development that destroys our lives. When I say our “lives”, I refer to what is intimately linked to the environment, as ultimately part of the ecology. Whatever you folks call environmentalist for us, comes from who we are — for we are born from and we die within a culture that holds territory and our surrounding environment as meaning everything for us. We can't separate that which is environmental from our own lives.

**What is the relationship between what you call “aggressive development” and the conflict within the Afro-descendent territories?**

It is completely related. Colombia has two regions that are completely strategic in terms of the environment — one is the Amazonian region and the other is the Pacific coast. Both are considered important in terms of their biodiversity. The current form of economic development is based upon an aggressive and irrational extraction of natural resources. By our own misfortune, these resources are located in our territories. Gold, petroleum, biological resources, water, whatever you want. And

of course these resources are coveted. We then become an obstacle for those who want to access these resources, a disturbance for their project. Obviously, the displacement from our communities has everything to do with this. The war itself is used as a way to displace us.

**What are the specific impacts of this on women in Afro-descendent communities?**

The impacts on women are seen on vari-



SHEILA GRUNER

ous levels. Firstly, keep in mind that in the Pacific coast over 40% of women with children are single mothers. When a single mother is displaced or pushed into new life circumstances, it is extremely difficult. Today, in the cities where they are now being pushed, for example, they are often turning to prostitution for survival, something they were never required to do in their own communities. The other major issue is that women are being used as “war booty”, by whichever of the armed groups. Also, there exists a state strategy of “whitening” of society — where military personnel have been ordered in the past to “mix” with women from San Andres, as well as the Pacific. This acts on one hand to control and manipulate information, and on the other to “whiten” the future generations.

Overall, the transmission and re-creation of culture has traditionally rested on the shoulders of women. This role that the women have traditionally played is compromised as the social relationships are broken within a given community facing conflict.

**What are the forms of resistance being**

### developed by Afro-descendent women?

Initially, without knowing that we were carrying out a form of "resistance", Black women played a fundamentally important role within the process of resistance in our communities. Specifically after a community had been displaced, the women convinced the men of the communities to return. They were convincing them that the way they were living outside their territory was no good for the community. So when the communities decide to return to their territory, it is the women who lead in the process. Also, concerning resistance, everything that has to do with food security is related to the women. The "resistance" projects that have to do with food security, are basically inherited and developed from and by the women.

### What is the immediate future of land titling in the Afro-Colombian communities?

We are pessimistic about that in the short run. The land titling process for indigenous and Afro-descendent lands, influenced and pressured by international interests, are intended to put an end to collective land title for ethnic groups. Most likely there will be a constitutional development to change the nature of territorial rights for ethnic groups. Moreover, it isn't a coincidence that in the last three years the process of land titling for black communities in the Pacifica has been halted. They have been waiting for these changes to be written. In 1996/97 almost 4 million hectares were entitled to black communities. It is now virtually non-existent. What the functionaries are saying is that there are no resources or funds for entitlement. The paramilitaries have threatened those that have tried to finish their work to comply with the process in place. There are also threats from guerrilla forces. All sides are vying for control over our territories. Each day it will become more difficult to even think about land titling.

### What does the solidarity of women and men mean for the OFP (Organizacion Femenina Popular)?

More than any one, we are calling on the

women of this country, so that we can develop networks of solidarity, where we can carry out analysis of the context, an analysis of the best form of solidarity that is needed right now, and how we are going to face this situation we are living. Very strong solidarity between women, between organizations, between people as historical subjects is needed in order to resist. Although I continue to insist that all is not lost. I think that while we continue to build solidarity between men and women, believing in social justice, believing in life, believing in the values of solidarity, believing in unity, it will be possible to save this country.

The OFP has been leading in an effort known as the "campaign against fear". Given the ongoing situation of threats, selective killings, forced displacement and constant systematic infractions of human rights throughout Colombia, the women of Barrancabermeja and other regions have recognized fear as a tool of political and economic interests. It is urgent that people face the very real fears imposed upon them in a systematic form, but not to cease to express their values, beliefs, their life meaning because of fear. They have made popular, particularly among the women's movement, the phrase... "we won't stop being because of fear..." Fear is a natural and healthy reaction.

In the context like Colombia fear is used as a political weapon against the civilian population, to maintain silence, to contain or eliminate dissent, to remove potential obstacles to the attainment of any number of political or economic interests. It becomes a core part of resistance to address that fear collectively, and take a position facing it. In order to maintain control, and without becoming like them through using their same tactics, the campaign against fear becomes a politicization of civilians who are caught in the middle of a dirty war. As people come to understand how the imposition of fear works, within a given context, it becomes a necessity to analyze how it affects people's lives and aspirations for peace, for justice. We want to build resistance to it on a daily basis, from the every acts and

relationships one engages in, to the construction of political alternatives to war and exclusion.

### Do you have any other comments?

For the international community, especially for the so called first world countries, I would like to emphasize an urgent call that they assume their responsibility in Colombia. Not only in Colombia, but in the so called third world countries. The international community has to understand that in order for them to maintain their way of life, we are increasingly paying for it over here. I think we need to promote further accountability. Not to help us — because we don't need help today. People need to assume their responsibility, and work towards uniting and strengthening resistance that the communities are undertaking in Colombia and in other places. They need to resist this project of homogenization and genocide. ❧

## Feminist Theory

is written also in  
late September, a day  
with a breeze, a touch of  
ice in the air.

a day when I walk to the  
beach, search for  
plants and shells, return  
at dusk to a darker room for  
soup, a bit of wine,  
a book, and  
sleep

never once having  
to question  
a shadow or  
a sound

**Lorri Neilson Glenn**

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# The Violence Continues Against the Participation of Women and Their Organizations

ANMUCIC - Maria Maria Collective

Translated into English by Sheila Wilmot

## THE COLOMBIAN ASSOCIATION OF RURAL, INDIGENOUS AND BLACK WOMEN

ANMUCIC (The Association of Rural, Indigenous and Black Women of Colombia) is a rural-based women's organization with affiliates all over Colombia. It was started in 1984 on a framework designed to develop appropriate state policy. Today, ANMUCIC has over 90 000 associates. Due to the conflict, it has reduced its regional scope from 27 departments to 24, and continues to work in over 400 municipalities.

According to the national newspaper *El Tiempo*, campesinos are in the process of extinction while they continue to resist forced displacement: "Violence and poverty have taken more than five million campesinos off their lands in the past ten years. Currently there are one million seven hundred and fifty hectares of land that have been abandoned in Colombia in an increasingly dark panorama for rural people of the countryside. This week, farm labourers blocked various highways to demand government attention, and were removed by the Public Force (army) — as occurred between Manizales and Medellín."

Women from rural organizations are often left out of urban-centred processes and do not have ready access to on-going international public opinion and protection. There are ongoing efforts within Colombia to build bridges and trust between and among women from rural and urban centers to consolidate women's national networks and initiatives in Colombia. ANMUCIC and their affiliates work on vital economic and food-security initiatives at the local level. The agroschool and project of economic solidarity tries to address concerns about Colombia's food supply caused by the effects of war and the global biopiracy of native seeds. Malnutrition, disruption of the rural economy and subsequent disintegration of the rural family base are the related results.

The following is an article by ANMUCIC about some of the obstacles and issues they face.

The UN rapporteur on Women and Violence, summarized her visit to Columbia in the report "Violence Against Women: its Causes and Consequences". In this report she states "Women's organizations and their leaders, above all the Campesina, Indigenous and Afro-Colombians, have been the object of systematic intimidation, and have been per-

secuted for the work that they carry out in defense of women and for the improvement in the quality of life for their communities". The violence that is carried out against Campesina women, to "dissuade" and "punish" them persists. This violence has been in keeping with the increase in human rights violations and infractions of International Humanitarian Law that affect

the Colombian population, and the rural population in particular.

In the case of ANMUCIC, there have been some advances in protection. This is mainly due to the greater recognition of the social-political violence affecting ANMUCIC women. It is also due to the support of other organizations, especially those of human rights. Nevertheless, these advances in the violence against women more visible, have not meant a reduction in the human rights violations against rural women, or the impunity of the perpetrators.

As a result of a request by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the national government incorporated ANMUCIC into its human rights defenders protection program. Protective actions of the program included providing cellular phones and a radio for eight national and departmental leaders, as well as economic support for their displacement to the city. Even though these national government actions comply with the UN report's recommendation, the payment of displacement subsidies is slow. This is generating obvious obstacles for the development of the organization's activities.

These support and protection measures are still insufficient, if they are not accompanied by effective measures to guarantee the end of impunity. It must send "a message that these crimes will be seriously punished".

The participation of rural women continues to be affected by violent acts carried out by different actors in the armed conflict.

Indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population often hide the conditions of the victims and the seriousness of the events. Thus important information about the impact of

the attacks on the victims, their organizations and those group's effectiveness is not easy to ascertain. On May 2 2002, 117 people died in Bojaya, Choco. Five ANMUCIC leaders died in this armed action. About 200 women from the organization were forced into displacement and a search for protection with their families. Valuable women leaders were lost. As importantly, the organization was forced to abandon their Projects for an agricultural micro-business and another development process Project designed to support the Afro-descendent women.

Selective murders continue to be one of the most serious violations of the right to life. They drastically affect the organizing of women through their message of intimidation. On September 3, 2003 Gloria Marin de Borrero was assassinated in the municipality of Mestizo, Norte de Santander. This ANMUCIC leader also held the position of Director of the Villa de Rosario, Urban and Rural

Women's Association, a group who offers assistance to families displaced by violence. Gloria Marin was assassinated with four other people, presumably by paramilitaries.

This forced displacement continues to be the form most used by the armed actors to limit rural women's right of participation and organization. This year, ANMUCIC leaders have been displaced from Choco, Cesar, Antioquia, Santander and Valle. Some displacements have been due to indiscriminate attacks, others have been from direct threats to women's social and



Indigenous women rally against violence, Minga for life.

political activities: "A year ago the AUC (paramilitaries) arrived in the village. They directly threatened all the leaders that did organizing work. They started to threaten and harass me six months ago, saying that I was on the list that they had. I never believed they were serious, nevertheless I came to Bogota. Three days after I arrived they started calling me on the telephone. In the first call they said that I should go to them or they'd come for me".

The ANMUCIC women that are displaced prefer not to ask for government support,

for fear of losing the anonymity that guarantees them some measure of security. Under these circumstances, ANMUCIC continues to lend humanitarian assistance, without resources or technical capacity. These activities have generated new organizational activities but have also become another risk factor.

In the new Colombian social and political context, ANMUCIC has seen our social and political activities seriously affected, especially our participation in social protest.

Campesino organizations convened a national legal strike. They demanded concrete measures from the national government to overcome the conditions of poverty and violence that affect the campesino population. The campesino demonstration was stigmatized. The argument, that guerilla groups were in their midst, was once again designed to put the protest participants at great risk.

In spite of the fact that the strike was declared legal, the mobilizations were stopped by the army, the police and, in some cases, threatened by paramilitary groups. In one location, the participants' food was taken away from them. In a later meeting, the Minister of the Interior was asked to facilitate the protest participants' access to food, for the health of the women and children. The Minister responded, "These are not places or times for women or children". ☩

JESUS ABADO COLORADO

# The Narrative Routes of Fear

Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, PhD

In Columbia, homicide is the leading cause of death. In the everyday world of Medellín, bloody violence and terror are tangible realities. Currently over 10,000 youths are members of the more than a thousand gangs, guerrillas, militias, self-defense and paramilitary groups with an active presence in the city's landscape. Under this threatening and dangerous social environment, perceptions of danger and fear are transformed by lived experiences of terror that remain impressed in the individual and collective memories of the residents of the city.

Fear, as a sensorial response, is also part of the stories of ghosts and supernatural beings shared in everyday life. It is sometimes in the awaited response of the listeners, in others, it is in cultural representation that contains particular local knowledge, or a set of conventions and implicit rules, such as "no trespassing". An example of this is the story told by Mello, an ex-member of a youth gang and a resident of the barrio in Antioquia. He told a story about a procession and a curse:

"I was very young then, but I do remember, I was in the procession. Along comes a guy named, Yomar, he was on a bicycle, and then came the whole procession. He started to shoot at these pelaos, all in the middle of the procession. The boys ran up to the roof and started to throw roof tiles at him... and, you know, they had a curse on the procession... they say that anyone who defiles a procession or a Mass is cursed. He didn't even last eight days. They got him for what he had done. So that's the story of the processions here. Nobody should interfere with them."

Curses, or better, "the fear of curses," have become a strategic mechanism to ensure that key rituals of the culture are preserved,



Poetry: The Territory of Tolerance

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as in this case of processions, and to maintain a degree of stability in the social life. In the sharing of these narratives, with the informality of a friends or at family meetings or through the whispers of late night story telling, these oral tradition practices open spaces to negotiate fear, to release tangible social tensions, and to deal with the uncertainties and pains generated by the immediate and everyday violent experience.

## Warrior Bodies, Gender and Terror

Stories about warriors illustrate a cultural model for remembering in which violence is embedded in bodily performance. The status and reputation that is gained through the mastery of weapons and fighting support the cultural constructions of the individual and collective self. The Amazon is a gendered cultural construction that locates the body as the expressive means of a feminine and warrior-like figure.

In the figure of the Amazon, physical skill is highly valued. I asked participants in

Antioquia to ask each other about women who were considered leaders in the barrio. Stella reported back on the women that Cesar considered leaders:

**Stella:** He talked to me about a leader family, the Echeverry family, they are the carniceras [butchers], leaders because they are the Amazons of the barrio.

**Pilar:** Amazons? What do you mean?

**Stella:** Women who are true fighters, who take initiative .. (laughs)

**Cesar:** An Amazon is a woman who is a fighter ..who has initiative, says Alonso.

Exactly! Women who are fighters, warriors, are considered Amazons and that is how I consider them ... because they have always been ...

**Jennifer:** They have contributed a lot to the violence in the barrio.

**Pilar:** To violence? They contribute to the violence?

**Santiago:** To violent actions.



SHEILA GRUNER

'Get rid of the fear which we cannot escape so that we can be ourselves.' Playground graffiti — Bogota, Colombia

How can women be leaders, both as “carniceras” literally butchers, who take pleasure in slaughtering, and as Amazons? It is a translation of the warrior values of verraquera, embodied toughness, sharpness and initiative into a local context. Women have had in fact, a leading role in the social life of the barrio. This concept of “leader” posed by these youth, departs from the standard views of a leader as a defender of community rights. This ambiguously mixes local status, the exercise of violence, and the transgression of traditional values of submissiveness with a relationship with the body.

The Amazon model as a form of embodied verraquera is uniquely feminine. Values such as toughness are constructed on the recognition of women’s skills, their sharpness, in the use of their bodies and weapons, in establishing systems of communication including gossip and rumour, and in recognizing routes for circulation. These skills and a female culture of “war,” have been central in maintaining an informal and underground economy of skilled thieves, gang organization and activities, drug traffickers and drug sellers within the

barrio. Thus the Echeverry sisters, known in the barrio as mules, drug carriers, and distributors of drugs, are recognized as leaders despite their active involvement in the bloody violence.

These values are not based on abstract, uni-

local images of sharp bandits and uncanny thieves found in rural histories and urban legends. This cultural landscape sanctions practices such as the use of private ‘justice’ to gain lost honour by means of revenge.

The relationships between gender, agency

In the sharing of these narratives, these oral traditions open spaces to negotiate fear, to release tangible social tensions, and to deal with the uncertainties and pains generated by the everyday violent experience.

versal principles of justice and morality. They are local and gendered relative principles which idealize the values of fighting and neglect the effects of violence on the lives of others. The gender specific frame of heroism combines various cultural influences and breaks stereotypes about the passive and submissive roles of women. It is mediated by media representations of heroism, toughness and bravery. This hybrid figure of the Amazon is also influenced by

and violence are more complex than just a division of violence based on male offender and female victim. This model goes beyond conceiving the dynamics of patriarchal culture in Latin America in terms of the bi-polar concepts of machismo and marianism, or violent subjects (men) and peaceful ones (women).

The cultural construction of the Amazon, that values the agency of woman as a warrior, as one who uses her body to resist,



fight and transgress established morals and dominant values furthermore, highlights the female body as a "charged place." The female body represents a disputed territory upon which violence is performed. Yet it is precisely this that also carries dissonance around the practice of rape.

Rape stories are part of local narratives of terror. Exercise of terror by the various armed groups outlines a cartography of danger in places such as the mangas, green grassy area, parks and dark areas. Within the territorial confrontations between gangs, rape has been one of the weapons used to create and maintain terror and intimidation. For the women in the barrios, these are well known stories. They are about their friends, sisters or themselves. The pain, suffering and sorrow that rape leaves are part of the phenomenology of fear and pain. Terror dismembers bodies, lives and social entities by penetrating the most intimate spaces. There was one instance of such remembering that challenged my position as a researcher, as a woman and in my own ethical stance.

During a session with a mixed group of residents from barrio Antioquia, one ex-gang member remembered the gang of Los Chunes and their bloody revengeful tactics, which included gang rape. These were "things," this man said, he could never forget, "they took the girls to do everything with them; so these are things that one sees and can not forget."

His comment prompted a discussion in the group. A woman in her sixties, an active community leader, asked the others whether one or two men forcing sex on a woman constituted rape. The other participants were a woman in her twenties, the young man and a man in his sixties, all of them actively involved with the community. The youngest man, who had just talked about how terrifying it was for him to be aware of the gang rape, responded that for this action to be considered "rape" it would require the participation of more than two men. The old man gave the example of a needle and a thread—that is part of the Colombian social imagery—to confirm this. "If the needle is moving, there is no way to get the thread through," the older

For the women in the barrios, these are well known stories. They are about their friends, sisters or themselves... Terror dismembers bodies, lives and social entities by penetrating the most intimate spaces.

man argued. This was evidence that a woman could only be subjected to rape when she is physically overpowered by more than two men (gang rape). There was no disagreement in the group and the conversation shifted to recount the number of "wars" that have taken place in the barrio.

This is the dis-empowering of the cultural frame of the Amazon. This is an example of some of the troublesome fissures that exist in the social and ethical fabric of the community. These fissures are the result of the entrenched practice of terror that places a high value on the physical overpowering of the other. It is a patriarchal ideology that legitimizes rape through legal practices while supporting a limited understanding of what coercion means. What disappears from the conversation is the recognition and comprehension of the operation of terror over the feminine body and the suffering and extreme pain generated by rape. The lack of recognition of the individual and social pain indicates the impact of unequal power relations. It reveals the ways this inequality permeates social ties and values linking individuals as members of collectivities.

Scarry notes that pain presents itself as something that cannot be denied but at the same time cannot be confirmed: "to have pain is to have certainty, to hear about pain is to have doubt." It is in this terrain of the "doubt" that this group negotiates their "definition" of rape. This problematic construction of rape responds to a kind of ethical breakdown in the ways men are incited

to recognize their moral obligations, in the ways they manipulate physical and sexual power, and in the social support or lack thereof, that women encounter when faced with rape. These individuals are ridden by ethical ambiguity and moral contradictions. To what extent do these subject positions and cultural constructions of the female body, of the self and the "other" (women), involve the denigration of women's modes of being? This example illustrates a deep fissure in the social and ethical fabric of this community and in the ways its members are called upon to behave in moral ways. These fissures speak of the interplay of power and oppression in the local context. How, for example, the prevalence of patriarchal ideologies legitimate sexual oppression while disempowering local cultural frames of female transgression. These fissures seriously threaten the attempts of city dwellers to construct an ethics of possibility that includes elements of care, dialogue, respect, difference and responsibility.

It is important for the processes of community reconstruction to understand that in everyday living and surviving violence, the boundary between perpetrator and victim or subject is continuously challenged. These "Narratives of Fear" can be used to cope with the uncertainty and the stress of sustained violence, as well as to identify troublesome fissures in the social fabric of communities under reconstruction. Furthermore, we see that the Narratives can be used to understand the ways patriarchal regimes interrelate and enhance other forms of violence. ❧

Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, PhD is associated with the the Centre for Refugee Studies York University, Toronto, Canada and is currently teaching in Ecuador.

This paper is based on research published by the author in **Dwellers of Memory: An Ethnography of Place, Memory and Violence in Medellín, Colombia**, University of British Columbia, 2000. The interactive memory research documented the memories of the inhabitants of the city of Medellín and the ways in which they deal and make sense of violence in their daily lives.

# How a Displaced Woman Lives in the City of Cali

Elizabeth Gómez

Translated to English by Sheila Gruner

**T**here are currently 18 organizations of displaced people in the city of Cali. Out of need, as well as tenacity, they organize by commonalities such as zones of arrival, or gender. Women, who are often alone and vulnerable, play a fundamental role in building these organizations. These women look for opportunities. They are willing to consider nearly anything — and they organize, they struggle, they make demands, they protest in the midst of suffering, pain and ongoing grief. The following testimony is about one of these women, Maria Isabel. She has been advancing the efforts of a displaced people organization, but has had to distance herself as she is unable to find the money to even attend meetings. As is typical, she must survive on a non-existent income. She has shared her story so that she will perhaps be less anonymous and less forgotten.

The features of an indigenous past are embodied in the figure of Maria Isabel, who, at 32 years of age, is breastfeeding her youngest while her eldest has not yet reached adolescence. To have six children in the countryside is something admirable and desired — enough land to plant and harvest food to eat — six children don't weigh you down when there is land to cultivate. Maria Isabel is tearful as she speaks.

Her family began to grow from one moment to the next, and she barely noticed. Now she lives with 27 other people, including her husband and 6 children in a small house in the central-east section of the city of Cali. Cramped, displaced, and unemployed. She used to live in a village in a region of Valle, to the northwest of Cali, in the foothills of the Western Cordillera. The violence forced her out. She arrived in Cali, looking for shelter at the home of a friend. She finally gave



The hands of an indigenous woman of Colombia tells her story

Maria Isabel a house they had been renting out, after witnessing the non-stop arrival of more and more displaced people everyday.

The house is small. All household goods, like the crooked wooden table, the fridge and stove were donated by various people, moved by the pain of others. The scarce help for the displaced is given by the civilian population — through neighbours, recent friends, charitable ladies, community and social workers because the State is once again ignoring its obligations.

For many generations her family — parents, siblings, cousins, have been dedicated to cultivating the land. In her village, Maria Isabel had her house, her land, her motorcycle and a small business in the town's centre — all of which she had to abandon to save her life. Before being displaced, the family of Maria Isabel cultivated corn, tomato, plantain, fruit trees, and a great

variety of vegetables that were used to feed her offspring and to sell in the city. Now they attempt to sell whatever little thing they can, on the street corners and intersections of Cali... without much luck.

Maria Isabel recounts that one day, when taking care of the tomato garden, she began to hear a rain of bullets; a ghost plane appeared, and the soldiers began to shoot and shoot. They killed more than 50 guerrillas who fell among the plants and crops. None of them could be picked up or touched by the local campesinos. The smell of decomposing bodies began to enter the houses. No one dared go or bury them, or even go check on the crops. And so the crops become another victim of the war, along with the decomposing bodies that were eaten bit by bit by animals from the hills.

Between tears, Maria Isabel tells about the day they took away her brother-in-



law. Taken by paramilitaries ('paras'), he was executed for being a guerrilla-supporter — they did not bother to confirm if it was true or not. They made him drink gasoline through a hose until he drowned. She says they found him in a river and that when his skin was touched, it just disintegrated between the fingers... And she said he wasn't a guerrilla.

Maria Isabel had a motorbike of only a few cylinders, her brother had a big motorcycle, and her father had a red truck that he used to bring the products from the country to sell in the city. All of these vehicles had been taken by the guerrillas to carry out various jobs. The guerrilla's left marks to identify them but after they used them, the marks remained. Then the paras arrived, and asked "who owns the motorcycle or the truck". Someone said that it belongs to the father or the brother of Maria Isabel. The senior and the young fellow have nothing to do with the guerrillas. They are only guilty of being pressured into lending the vehicles. And so in the end, they are marked by the paramilitaries, as auxiliaries of the guerrillas.

One day the guerrillas told Maria Isabel's brother that he had to take some gasoline to another village. Their mother begged, on her knees, that they wouldn't force him to do the task. If they wanted to take the motorcycle, fine, but please not her son. The guerrillas said to her "calm down senora, they don't know him, nothing is going to happen to him". Maria Isabel recounts that her brother was scared to death. So that day he had to be the messenger of the guerrillas. The paras then arrived. He had to immediately flee the town, before being accused of being a guerrilla supporter.

There is a pipeline that passes through Maria Isabel's farm. She says that this has been the problem because both the paras and the guerrilla's want it. The key to control in the region is to control the biggest sources of income. This lucky town had to accept a stretch of pipelines belonging to Ecopetrol. Maria Isabel tells us, "one day they (the guerrillas) left me a few gallons in the house. I gave them to a man so that he could sell it. I'm not a fool; it was

already in place, and of course I didn't sell it to him because it scared me" she says laughing. With pressure from both the guerrilla's and the paras, Maria Isabel felt they had no option but to leave.

To find a job or to work in anything at all has been complicated. Food is supplied by whatever way possible. There is the charitable priest in the neighbourhood, or a neighbourhood woman from in front of the *jibariadero* (drug store outlet) that feels sorry for the hungry children and sends something at lunchtime. Maria Isabel can not go out to look for work because she needs a babysitter.

In the first month upon arriving in Cali, the state institution responsible for social assistance gave them a bit of food, but have not given them anything else. And supposedly after a year they aren't considered displaced anymore.

The suffocating heat of the small house where they live makes the situation more unbearable. The public services bills that have accumulated cause them to live with the anxiety of being cut off from water and light at any moment. Maria Isabel says "Hmm, can you imagine, without water and this pile of people living here?". They haven't paid rent. They try to hide from the trusting owner of the house that there are 28 displaced people living there.

Maria Isabel presented herself to the owner of a Residence-Motel that is located near her house to ask for work, telling her story. The man was moved, but told her he needed a letter of recommendation, since she was a displaced person. He said he couldn't contract her just like that. He didn't know her, didn't know where she came from, nor what she did before. Who in the city could give a letter of recommendation to a displaced woman? Her story and those who know her are back in her home territory. Maria Isabel continues to look for work and search for the blessed letter of recommendation any way she can. She still maintains the hope that he will save this job for her.

Maria Isabel doesn't plan to return to the village. She has faith that she can raise her 6 children with her husband because they

already managed to save their lives by leaving the village. They still have the strength and hope to keep struggling in the city. And she is not yet ready to return to the village. She remembers that when they passed by her house they said to her: "Hey Indian, make us some lunch, Indian, make us dinner". She doesn't want to be a cook for anyone with a gun. She is not ready to go back to beg that they don't use her motorcycle, that they don't take her brother away, that they don't involve them in the conflict.

Overcrowding is manifested in many ways; it's the heat of the night while everyone is sleeping together, putting up with each other's sweat, so many children enclosed it's sharing space with so many people from different families; it's making the food spread around so as to be enough for everyone; it's a thick, heavy, suffocating daily life that Maria Isabel never would have imagined, after having been raised in a wide open space with clean air. ☸



MATCH International Centre supports women's groups in developing countries which are striving to enhance the status of women and to eliminate violence. You can read about this year's projects and the issues women are dealing with by going to:

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# Bread & Roses in Madrid, Colombia

Gayle Broad

As the plane circles the landing field over Bogota, Colombia, I think at first that there are vast areas of storage sheds south of the City. That was the Thursday of my first week in Colombia, and I would have to wait until Sunday to find out that in fact, these plastic covered rectangles, were actually greenhouses where 65% of Canada's imported cut flowers are grown. I had travelled to Colombia with the MINGA, a group of 30 Canadians invited to spend two weeks meeting with women's groups, trade union organizations, peasant leaders, faith communities, youth groups, indigenous and Afro-Colombians, and many other leaders of the popular resistance movement, working towards peace.

By the end of week one, I and my five MINGA fellow travellers, were well aware of the challenges facing workers in Colombia and the even greater challenges facing women workers. We had met with a host of groups who told us of the dangers facing the trade union leadership. Last year alone, 169 trade unionists were assassinated as they went about their job of trying to protect workers, and almost every group we met with told us their own experiences with kidnapping and assassination. At one meeting we were informed that a few months earlier, the President of their union had been assassinated at the front door of the building.

By Sunday, we were more than ready for a break in the tension. Through our translator, Edgar Godoy, we were told that we were going to visit some greenhouses in Madrid, an area located just outside of Bogota. I understood that this was to be a break in our demanding schedule and gratefully left my notebook behind. Not so! I should have realized that our hosts, having already let us sleep in on Sunday morning, had given us as much R and R as we were likely to get!

Greenhouses are built on the best fertile

lands, displacing peasants and the growing of foodstuffs. According to information provided to us by CACTUS, a Colombian NGO, it takes only about twenty years to completely deplete the lands used in flower cultivation, due both to over-cultivation and the use of pesticides.

The greenhouses also deplete the underground water levels — up until five years

ago they were at 30 meter levels, but now they have drill down 400 meters or more to reach the water table. Flower companies use the water at no cost, but the community of Madrid has to purchase it for the residents of Bogota.

The displacement of peasants from the fertile farmlands, together with the total depletion of the soil in such a short period of time results in serious conflict. Unfortunately, the conflict is primarily between the people who live in area and the people who earn their living working in the greenhouses — the flower growers.

According to the Colombian Association of Flower Exporters, 75,000 workers are employed directly by industry and another 50,000 the indirect employees. Seventy per cent of the flower workers are women with little or no formal education, and the majority of the women are heads of families. There is little protection from the pesticides that are used constantly on the flowers. According to the workers, they are supposed to leave while the actual spraying takes place, but they immediately resume work with no protective clothing or headgear. We heard several anecdotes about increased miscarriages and children born ill or with low birth weights.

Our bus finally stopped amongst the rows of greenhouses, where we saw a couple of small tents, and women and children sitting around an outdoor fire. The women explained that some of them have lost their homes and they are struggling to feed their children. Some of them are now living in these makeshift tents because they have no where else to go. The women also explained that they are on strike/locked out because when their contract came up for renewal last spring, the employers wanted to reduce their wages. The workers had several health and safety issues which they wanted to negotiate including better protection for pregnant and nursing mothers from

## Minga

"Minga" is the name given by indigenous people in the Andes to an ancestral practice that involves the entire community to achieve a common goal. When a "Minga" is required, it takes precedence over other activities. "Mingas" are acts of solidarity, reciprocity, discipline and dignity, where everyone does their part. All those involved in a "Minga" are individually conscious and committed to their specific duty towards the common good. Personal, institutional and organizational interests are subverted to the common interest and priority of the "minga" at hand.

A Minga has been called by representatives of Colombian popular movements and organizations rendered invisible by a specific expression of a centuries old and expanding global capitalist aggression. The "Minga for Life" is an urgent call for reciprocal solidarity and a conscious decision to join in a global popular effort: "The decision of Our Peoples is to build autonomy, to extend bridges and bonds between all the excluded majorities". The Minga is aimed at exchange and relationship-building between diverse locally-based social movements across borders, who respond in part to a critical global context of increasing war, conflict over resources and strategic territories. In Colombia, there is an aggression against unarmed social and popular movements who are based on collective experiences and efforts to build a new society. Exposing the impacts of this aggression, its causes, means and goals, as well as joining and strengthening resistance efforts through recognizing and supporting the people's "Life Projects", are examples of feasible and diverse alternatives.



## Reaching out: The success of a Canadian Union of Postal Worker's exchange to Colombia

by Ruth Larson

In 2001, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, National Director for the Atlantic Region, Brother Wayne Mundle participated in a Human Rights Mission in Colombia. He recommended that the National Executive Board invite a delegation from the postal sector in Colombia to visit Canada. The resolution was put forward and it was stipulated that there be a gender balanced delegation. The purpose of the invitation was to raise awareness among our members and other union members in Canada of the massive assault on trade unionists and other social activists in Colombia.

There was some resistance to having a woman participate. Finally, Dora Lilia Gomez Menendez, a postal worker from Bogota was authorized to visit Canada on a cross country tour along with Enrique Vargez, President of Sintrapositale. Dora Lilia and Enrique visited several locals across the country and met with various trade unions.

In the Atlantic Region, Dora Lilia was encouraged to participate in all of the organized activities and space was made to ensure that we heard her point of view. This gave her encouragement to begin the process to mobilize the women in her union in Colombia. A small donation of \$200.00 US was given to Dora Lilia to enable her to have a workshop for women.



Ruth Larson, Canadian Postal Union Representative in Minga 2002 and participant in Minga for Life.

RUTH LARSON

On her return to Colombia, Dora Lilia held a one day workshop for union women at Sintrapositale in Bogota. It was well attended and by all accounts a successful event. In August of 2001, I was asked to take part in the Minga tour to Colombia and represent the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. I had heard of Dora Lilia but I had never had the opportunity to meet her when she was in Canada. So imagine my surprise when during the "Minga" exchange, I discovered she was sitting beside me on our bus tour of Colombia!

Later, Dora Lilia wanted me to visit the post office where she worked. I went to the post office and had a tour of the workplace where I met many of the women who had attended Dora's workshop. They thanked me for the opportunity to take part in a rare event, the gathering of union women.

In December of 2001, Dora Lilia was elected to a position in her union, the first woman elected to an executive position for forty years. A true success story! At the National Convention of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers in 2001, Dora Lilia was an invited guest. We welcomed her and listened to her successes in the face of adversity.

The women have a new women's committee and they needed a computer and other office supplies. The convention delegates contributed generously to help Dora Lilia set up an office for women.

the pesticides. In Colombia, all Collective Agreements between employers and trade unions must be signed by both parties and filed with the government prior to the expiration of the Agreement. When the women refused to sign, they were locked out and new employees hired who signed the

Agreement, allowing the company to continue to operate. The company notified the government that the women had quit their jobs, thus justifying their new hirings.

One of our MINGA members was so outraged by what was happening that he makes telephone calls all evening to his

supervisor at the United Steelworkers of America office in Montreal. By morning he has secured enough funding to provide the women with the basic necessities, at least for a few more weeks. We also met with the Ombudswoman to the national government of Colombia. She informed us that her mandate is to investigate individual cases only, but not groups. She would like to help us ensure that the flower workers will be safe but she needs an individual name to begin her investigation. We feel helpless — it is not safe to file the name of one individual, as that person may become a target of the company's paramilitary violence.

Later, in our meeting with CACTUS, they tell us about the campaigns they have been working on in conjunction with CUT and the flower workers, and encourage us to help support that work. NAC and the CAW here in Canada have been helping to develop a campaign to raise awareness in Canada, CACTUS advised us that the NAC-CAW campaign, and the international letters, faxes, emails and presence has been having some effect so we must keep up the pressure.

We were also encouraged to make a phone call to the FTD, the international organization of florists and the Colombian association of exporters to express our concerns about the conditions of the flower workers and the environmental degradation. As always, money talks, and if exporters and importers of flowers realize that their market may be jeopardized by irresponsible and dangerous practices, they will respond.

For over two weeks, as I travelled Colombia and met with women in a myriad of settings — working at subsistence farming, cooking in a market cooperative, acting as "community mothers" to children orphaned by the war, providing leadership training to young women — all showed the same determination to build a good life for themselves and their children despite the conditions of forced displacement, poverty, and severe oppression. ❧

Gayle is the President of the Ontario region of the NDP political party in Canada and a member of the MINGA, Canada-Colombia Solidarity.

# Ruta Pacifica de las mujeres y Mujeres de Negro from Colombia



Women of the Pacifist Route and Women of Black

Martha Colorado

**L**a Ruta Pacifica (The Pacifist Route) originated in 1995 in the middle of the context of the war. In 1996, the Pacifist Route's first National march of more than two thousand women took place. Women travelled to Uraba from all over Colombia. From that moment on, the Pacifist Route continued organising and working regularly as part of the movement for peace. Women from many different organizations and grass-roots groups work with La Ruta Pacifica from 10 provinces, cities and parts of Colombia.

The Ruta has managed to articulate a vision concerning domestic violence along with the war making a political effort to denounce and make visible the diverse violence exercised against women. In its conception, La Ruta is feminist, and seeks negotiated settlement of the armed conflict in Colombia. We declare ourselves pacifists, anti-arms and builders of a non-violent ethic.

To carry out our proposals we are developing a strategy of deconstructing the symbols that strengthen war, exclusion and extermination. We combat these forces with poetry and in the construction of new symbols, language and social practices that build alternatives to militarization, arming and the logic of domination and exclusion which make a cult out of violence and weapons.

This is how the women of La Ruta Pacifica, together with other organisations in Colombia, such as the grassroots OFP (Organización Femenina Popular of Barrancabermeja/Popular Feminine



Women in Black marching for peace

Organisation) have constructed an alliance in order to express ourselves and mobilize as Women in Black. We dress in black for all the crimes committed, for the diverse violence that we are going through in Colombia and in order to express our profound rejection of the war. In this way, we take up the legacy of the other pacifist women in the world, such as the Israelis, the Palestinians, North Americans, Yugoslavians, Italians and Spanish who also, dressed in black, and in silence, oppose war and militarization publicly in their countries.

Since 1999, women from different regions and cities in Colombia have dressed in black. They protest against the policies and practice of all armed groups, whose only solutions are force and violence. They choose to march in silence because they reject the vain use of words which the media all too often treat superficially or with sensationalism. Wearing the colour black and marching in silence is our way of making visible our total rejection

of all violence and the logic of war. The yellow flowers represent the hope we have for peace and to move others to join us in our struggle and show solidarity in defence of a life with dignity for all.

The Ruta uses the symbolic image of a woven cloth which we weave to counteract the war. We weave solidarities, social fabric and links of love; we weave memory in a country where forgetfulness and impunity detract from our dignity, our value and self-respect as a society, a little more each time.

That is why in our agroecological, craft, creative and symbolic projects we work with accumulated grief, past and present, from so much unspoken violence, which always threatens to repeat itself. Symbolically and practically, we work to rebuild and repair the social fabric and our communities.

At the same time, we are trying to rebuild gender identities, working for more equitable and fair relations between men and



### WOMEN IN BLACK INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS:

Women in Black vigils had taken root in every continent of the world, yet cooperation among the disparate vigils was minimal until 2001. This changed with E-mail lists originating in Spain, Israel, and the United States and another International Women in Black campaign which focused on the war in Colombia. This was held in February 2002, with the participation of many Women in Black vigils throughout the world.

### TARGETS OF ATTACK:

Women in Black are often the target of attack, both verbal and physical, independent of country or political statement made. These attacks are almost exclusively a product of anger against the very fact that the women are expressing a political opinion in public. Almost all of the invective hurled at the women was vulgar and sexual. The most common appellation was "whore", a clear allusion to women "flaunting" their views in public and "taunting" men with views that make them angry. For example, in Serbia, where Women in Black spoke out against the policies of their own political leadership, women were frequently threatened and sometimes violently assaulted while accused of being traitors to their own country.

women, for a society where women and the feminine has a place in the world.

From this stance, we share the position of many national and international sectors of opinion who reject the Plan Colombia initiative proposed by the United States to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking. The US confirms the fact that Plan Colombia also covers the counter-insurgency struggle. The implementation of this plan has increased human rights violations and the negative effect on the civilian population, generating new ingredients in the Colombian conflict.

It is not that we reject the economic and political support of the international community. This support is needed for development projects in order to strengthen civil society initiatives and pressure the Colombian state into political negotiation and put limits on the worsening of human rights violations. The Ruta Pacifica has begun a process to weave an

international network of women, people and organisations that support initiatives to counteract the arms race, militarism and war worldwide.

The Ruta and other organisations of women of Colombia have built a national movement of women against the war. In summer of 2002 the arrival of forty thousand women, from all the country to the plaza de Bolivar in the city of Bogota marked our success.

We are betting on sustainable, just, and equal peace, to repair the damage done to the lives and bodies of all those affected by the war and violence.



**Martha Colorado** is a Columbian activist, member of Women In Black and currently living in exile in Vancouver, BC.



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# Israel/Palestine

## Olives - We Need Your Help!



Gila Svirsky

**O**lives are central to the lives of Palestinian families in the West Bank. Almost half of all cultivated land is used to grow olives, and it is a critical source of income for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

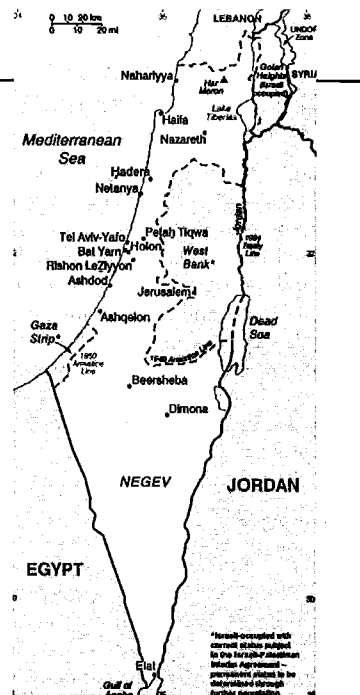
The olive crop is particularly important in a devastated economy. Just yesterday, Major General Amos Gilad, Israel's coordinator in the territories, conceded that 60% of all Palestinians live in poverty — on less than \$2 a day! — although none, he added, are actually starving. The US Agency for International Development tells a different story, reporting that the territories are “in the grip of a humanitarian crisis”, with a quarter of Palestinian children actually malnourished.

The olive harvest in Palestine runs from early October to late November. In ordinary times, this is a period when everyone returns to the family home, and works together to harvest the crop.

These days, however, the harvest cannot take place in many villages, especially those in proximity to settlements. The Palestinians face settler brutality on a daily basis, from shootings to inequitable water supply — 80% of the water from the aquifer in the occupied West Bank goes for Israeli use!

Beyond the deliberate destruction of trees that has happened over recent years and the ongoing constraints of closure, curfew, and gouged-out roads to prevent free movement, this year's harvest has been marked by numerous attacks by settlers. Shooting incidents are rife, leaving Palestinians fearful of entering their orchards. Many have

been wounded in these attacks, and one man was killed last week. In other cases, settlers simply enter the orchards and systematically pick all the fruit from the trees. No one stops them, not even the soldiers watching from the hilltops, whose



### THE UN MARKS THE 2ND ANNIVERSARY OF RESOLUTION 1325

By Gila Svirsky

I had the good fortune to be invited to represent Women in Black and address the UN Security Council on the subject of women at peace negotiations. This session was intended to spur compliance with Security Council Resolution 1325. Also invited to speak were women peace activists from 3 other countries — Burundi, Uganda, and India — and one representative of the organizing group, a coalition called the “NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security”.

At the very last minute, the Syrian delegation, currently members of the Security Council, objected to a presentation by Israel, and others objected to women from Gujarat, India, who [they imagined correctly] would be critical of the Indian government. Despite two of us being ‘disinvited’, the lot of us filed into the Security Council conference room and seated ourselves opposite the 15 members (and their advisors) at the so-called “experts table”. It’s striking, isn’t it, that NOT shooting or throwing a bomb requires expertise.

When Indira Kajosevic of the “NGO Working Group” delivered her remarks, she cleverly presented summaries of the talks that the Indian woman and I had prepared, so I didn’t feel altogether left out. But as the Security Council delegates discussed the issue — in complete agreement about equality for women, wouldn’t you know — I was sitting there wondering what would happen if I simply raised my hand, so I did. Almost at once the Chair recognized me, which astonished me and nearly left me speechless. After a fumbling beginning, I found my voice. I distanced myself from the policies of the present Israeli government, talked about the accomplishments of women making peace with each other and the wisdom of including representatives of civil society (peace activists) at the negotiating table. And then I said quietly that, actually, the conflict in the Middle East was not between Israelis and Palestinians.

The conflict, I said softly, was actually between Israelis and Palestinians who long for peace, on one side, and Israelis and Palestinians who don’t want peace, on the other. When I finished, the only speaker following me was the Syrian delegate, and — to tell you the truth, my heart started to pound just then so I didn’t hear a word — I was later told that my final words headed off the usual Syrian broadside against Israel.

The “NGO Working Group” had also done a great job of arranging a press conference, briefings of senior UN officials, and a public reception, so we did have opportunities to get the message across. I also had the privilege of participating in not one, but two New York vigils of Women in Black — to think of the large and spontaneous movement that is building across the globe.





## Excerpts from the UN Security Council's censored report:

The secret meetings held between Palestinians and Israelis began 15 years ago. These meetings were secret because it was illegal for Israelis and forbidden for Palestinians to meet in those years. One group persisted over time — resolutely grappling with the most difficult issues — and crafted an agreement that was signed and publicized several years before the Oslo Accords. Above all, this agreement declared establishment of a free, independent, secure state of Palestine side-by-side with a free, independent and secure state of Israel.

As profound as this moment could have been in the history of the Middle East, very few people heard about it. Why? Because the agreement was written by women. You may wonder whether the agreement was rejected for other reasons, perhaps because it was a radical statement dreamed up by utopians or marginal people. But these women were neither marginal nor radical. Each delegation included prominent political leaders — members of parliament, government ministers, an ambassador, and a party head. Clearly, the agreement was both pragmatic and moderate. In fact, had the women who wrote it been internationally recognized negotiators, the two Intifadas that followed might have been prevented. This is but one example of the need to implement and enforce Security Council Resolution 1325.

At the grassroots level women have also been at the forefront of peacemaking. In 1988 women in Israel founded the movement now known as Women in Black. Dressed in black to mourn the victims on all sides, Women in Black has kept a one-hour vigil every single Friday for the past 15 years. The Women in Black movement quickly and spontaneously spread around the globe as a public forum for women to say “no” to war and injustice. In Italy Women in Black protest the Israeli occupation and the violence of organized crime. Women in Black in Bangalore, India call for an end to abuse by religious fundamentalists. During the war in the Balkans Women in Black in Yugoslavia set an inspirational example of interethnic cooperation. Today, Women in Black throughout the world are engaged in a struggle to prevent a war from being launched against Iraq. For their remarkable work, the international movement of Women in Black, represented by the movements in Yugoslavia and Israel, were nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace 2001 and won the Millennium Peace Prize awarded by UNIFEM [the UN Development Fund for Women].

The women's peace movement in Israel is absolutely breathtaking: It is alive with new ideas, indefatigable as women have always been and at the vanguard of creative thinking about how to get peace.

Is it not preposterous that not a single Israeli woman, and only one Palestinian woman, have held leadership roles at a Middle East peace summit? Instead, the negotiators have been men with portfolios of brutal crimes against each other — military men who have honed the art of war and who measure their success by the unconditional surrender of the other. Is it any wonder that we are still locked in combat?

What we need now is leadership committed to swiftly concluding this era awash in blood, leadership that understands the price we pay in death and destruction for every hour of delay. What we need now is leadership with expertise at reconciliation and rapprochement. What we need now is women.

only job is “to protect the settlers”.

As in previous years, the Israeli peace movement has organized groups to join in the harvest. As many as 300 at a time have risked their lives and shown their support. This weekend activists will be going to 3-4 villages in the West Bank. But this does not even begin to meet the needs. To really make the harvest possible for all Palestinians, pressure must be placed on the Israeli government to issue orders to the army to prevent the harassment of the Palestinian harvesters by settlers.

### Will you take a moment to write?

According to Maimonides, a revered Jewish philosopher of the 12th century, the very highest form of charity is making it possible for a someone to make a living. This is an opportunity.



A joint Israeli-Palestinian-International march that met on the border of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Organized by the Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement, Gush Shalom, Bat Shalom, Women in Black, and others.

### Update:

The olive harvest, with Israeli and international solidarity, continues apace, despite ongoing settler attacks. In response, the army first declared that the Palestinians must refrain from picking olives, then it rescinded the order, thanks to local activism combined with outraged messages from many of you. Writes Hannah



JEWISH PEACEMAKERS INITIATIVE/ROD FEI SHALOM



Palestinian women in the rubble of damaged home.

Safran of the Coalition of Women for Peace, "If you've never been in a Jewish shtetl [Yiddish for "small town"] in Eastern Europe during a pogrom, why not try it now with home-made Cossacks.... you will never forget the event and your politics will regain its anger and zest."

Settler violence against both Palestinians and soldiers (as the army attempted to remove new settler outposts) has had the useful by-product of again making settlers look like extremists and thugs among mainstream Israelis.

Shalom from Jerusalem. ✡

Gila is a founding member of Women in Black, co-founder of Coalition of Women for a Just Peace: [www.coalitionofwomen4peace.org](http://www.coalitionofwomen4peace.org); Executive Director of Bat Shalom and B'Tselem; and past Director of the New Israel Fund. [gsvirsky@netvision.net.il](mailto:gsvirsky@netvision.net.il)

## WOMEN OF THE PROMISED LAND

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, the members of Palestinian women's and neighborhood committees devoted their lives to building a comprehensive and concrete resistance movement — effectively carrying the Palestinian revolution to a point where the world sat up and was forced to take notice. By March 1988, in fact, there were an average of 115 women's marches in the Occupied Territories per week, many of them in protest over miscarriages suffered from tear gas, as well as in grief over the injuries and deaths of children, parents, friends, and husbands.

The demonstrations themselves thrust Palestinian women into a new role in their society, sparking debate over difficult gender issues including "honor killings," bride prices, spousal abuse, occupational status, and equal payment, as well as the physical safety of women who rejected the rules and constraints of Islamic shari'a dress, the wearing of the hijab.

Lesser known — and rarely reported on — has been the remarkable extent to which Palestinian and Israeli women have worked together and organized for a peaceful end to the 35-year Occupation.

Away from the public spotlight, Palestinian and Israeli female dissidents and journalists have endured torture in Israeli prisons, while dedicated Orthodox Jewish women have objected loudly, on religious principles, to the Occupation. Feminist Jewish lesbians have joined the likes of the internationally-recognized Women in Black in organizing protests and vigils.

Palestinian and Israeli women academics have written declarations, essays, articles and books about their opposition to the Israeli government's brutal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and have issued stinging criticisms of the Palestinian Authority's summary executions, jailings and squelching of dissenting viewpoints.

More so than any other Palestinian woman, the high-profile negotiating skills of the articulate and analytical Hanan Ashrawi defied gender lines and societal expectations. Replying to a 1992 question about how it felt to be the only woman in the Palestinian and Israeli negotiating teams, Ashrawi told a Ms Magazine interviewer the following:

"It is a tremendous responsibility, a great challenge. It is also a great victory for women in general, and in particular for Arab and Palestinian women, because this didn't come out of a vacuum but as a result of a long history of women's struggle in the Occupied Territories, Palestine.

"We cannot afford to waste any more time, or any more lives. We need to think of a new approach. We as women want to bring a new understanding to the situation in the Middle East." — Palestinian feminist Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas, UN Security Council, May 7, 2002

By Silja J.A. Talvi, reprinted from LIP Magazine, November 14, 2002

### STARTING MARCH 8TH:

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To participate in this campaign and to learn more about Peri Dar Inc and our partnership with CARE Canada, visit our campaign description on Peri Dar's events

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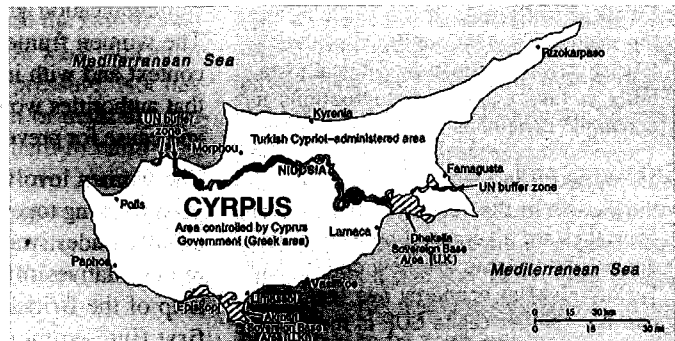
# Cyprus

## Hands Across the Divide



A Case Study in Bi-communal,  
Cross-border Activism

Georgette Loizou, in conversation with S. Farkas



**H**ands Across the Divide (HAD) is a newly formed NGO linking women of northern Turkish-speaking Cyprus and southern Greek-speaking Cyprus. It is unique, the first of its kind in Cyprus, and the first bi-communal Cypriot organization to gain international recognition. So total is the Cypriot partition, that it is legally impossible to register a bi-communal organization in Cyprus as a single organization. So the women of HAD went to London to register. Despite all the barriers to communication across the Green Line, the women of HAD are carrying out joint actions for peace. While the northern HAD women are sharing in the massive demonstrations in the north, the Greek Cypriot members of Hands Across the Divide have started their own action in the south. Cyprus now faces entry to the European Union bringing new urgency to the question of reunification and peace.

### Historical Context

In 1974, Turkey, as a guarantor of the Cyprus Constitution, sent a military force to the island, in order to 'protect its people'. Greek Cypriots refer to this as 'an invasion' by the Turks; the Turkish Cypriots called it a 'peace operation'. In any case, the people of Cyprus, Turkish and Greek Cypriots alike, suffered from the results.

200,000 Greek Cypriots became refugees were forced into exile from their homes in the north, and about 50,000 Turk Cypriots in the

south. In other words 30% of the nation of 750,000 was exiled. Since then, the arbitrary 'green line' has been drawn right across the country, running through even the nation's capital Nicosia. The old capital is now virtually cut in half. This line is not just an ideological split, a pencil mark across the map. It is a long slash of a border patrolled by military from both sides of the dispute —Greek Cypriot in the south, Turks in the north and a third interest group the UN military maintain a 'peacekeeping force' as they call it, to patrol the no man's land areas. Three military forces occupying a tiny land mass.

Before 1996 over 30,000 people, almost 5% of the population had managed to make contact or gain access across the bor-

der. The Ledra Palace of Nicosia, in the UN zone, had become a somewhat sacred spot in which bi-communal groups could meet safely. Greek and Turkish Cypriots could not otherwise meet on Cypriot soil.

In 1996, a change in the North's official position meant that the border was shut. At this point, virtually all bi-communal groups disappeared from common view. There were still some attempts to carry on working together but it became virtually impossible to meet directly even at the Ledra Palace.

### Overcoming Obstacles

Hands Across the Divide grew out of an



March 1989, women under the "Women Walk Home" banner braved United Nations and Turkish troops attempting to cross the line

WOMEN WALK FOR PEACE



## CYPRUS

The state of Cypriot economic affairs are affected by the division of the country. The Greek Cypriot economy is prosperous but highly susceptible to external shocks. Erratic growth rates in the 1990s reflect the economy's vulnerability to swings in tourist arrivals, caused by political instability in the region and fluctuations in economic conditions in Western Europe. The nation's economic policy is focused on meeting the criteria for admission to the EU. As in the Turkish sector, water shortages are a perennial problem; a few desalination plants are now online. The Turkish Cypriot economy has less than one-half the per capita GDP of the south. Because it is recognized only by Turkey, it has had much difficulty arranging foreign financing, and foreign firms have hesitated to invest there. It remains heavily dependent on agriculture and government service, which together employ about half of the work force. To compensate for the economy's weakness, Turkey provides substantial direct and indirect aid to tourism, education, and industry.

Independence from the UK was approved in 1960 with constitutional guarantees by the Greek Cypriot majority to the Turkish Cypriot minority. In 1974, a Greek-sponsored attempt to seize the government was met by military intervention from Turkey, which soon controlled almost 40% of the island. In 1983, the Turkish-held area declared itself the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", but it is recognized only by Turkey. UN-led talks on the status of Cyprus resumed in December 1999, to prepare the ground for meaningful negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement.



TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS

idea for a bi-communal workshop. But the authorization to meet was the problem. Organizers first approached the British Consulate asking for help to organize a seminar called "Women, Media and Communication across the Border Divide". The women framed it in an international context and with international speakers so that authorities would have little suspicion and cause for preventing the meeting.

The women involved in this meeting had been working together for many years, but usually under strained conditions and as representatives of other groups. With the help of the British Consulate, it was the first time women from every NGO in Cyprus had been encouraged and invited to get together and meet. Georgette working at the International EcoPeace Village, was faxed an invitation from the British Consulate. "This was totally unheard of in the context of bi-communal work."

But even with this international support, the government withdrew all permits and permissions a few days before the scheduled meeting. It had become common for



Turkish Cypriot carpet weaver — North Cyprus

NORTH CYPRUS REAL ESTATE AGENTS

uled meeting. It had become common for authorities, especially those of the Turkish Cypriots, to prohibit meetings at the last moment. Thanks to the efforts and energy of many, the British High Commissioner got involved and wrote letters to the leaders of both sides, assertively asking for the ban to be lifted. They did not get the permission for all 45 women to meet and travel to both regions, as they had wanted; but ten did go north one day, and ten went south the other — a victory of sorts.

More importantly, for the first time in the south, a bi-communal meeting was getting negative press. The women leading the semi-

## Sevgül Uluda

never met Costas. I met one of his daughters, Maria, with a wonderful heart. Maria and I were members of the bi-communal conflict resolution trainers group. Our friendship goes back over ten years now. Every time we meet, Maria says, "Koukla mou (my beauty), how are you?" And we soon start discussing things, about women, peace, politics ... We talk about everything happening in our lives. Last week Maria lost her father, Costas, who was 78 when he passed away.

Costas Hadjipavlou was 50 years old when he was forced to leave this soil. At Ayios Amvrosios, or Aygurush, which goes under the "new" name of Esentepe, he had orchards, four daughters, and there were hopes and dreams in every beat of his heart.

In 1974, when the masters made moves on this island called Cyprus, as if on a chessboard, thousands of people were forcibly made refugees. Those were the days when war clouds gathered overhead, when brother killed brother. Those were the days when young girls were raped, when babies, old and young were sent to their graves...

And Costas Hadjipavlou, who had given his name to a famous cognac of Cyprus, became a refuge.

belittled. It was unexpected because officially the south believed in peaceful bi-communal unification. "This really made us think — some one didn't want us to meet — maybe we were more powerful than we realized!"

So they decided, in the end, to form a women's group. It was the first time a Cypriot's bi-communal group would meet to address woman's issues specifically. "We had a simple goal, to have direct communication and be able to cross the green line. We wanted to see our friends, our sisters, that was it."

"But the hard work had just begun". First, it's tough to keep enthusiasm going. Meeting and talking was not without some danger. Second, no one in Cyprus likes to call themselves an organization — partly so as not to attract the attention of authorities. But also, as women we can't give ourselves enough credit. You know we're just a group — nothing too serious. What does a group do? Well, we get together. Well, how do you get together? Well we don't really get together because physically we can't, so we communicate. This was the

backdrop to all our activities. It says a lot about the nature of our organizing.

So slowly meetings were arranged by e-mail and then invitations extended through the British consulate offices. HAD also used their offices but then the British withdrew their support. There were indications that there was outside pressure. Not having a safe place to meet or neutrally conduct business made it hard to build trust. This was a ground up movement. Historically, there is an extreme suspicion in Cypriot culture of having anyone else pave the way to resolution. This is not unusual in conflict issues.

Added to the difficulty were the language barriers — "over the year there were so many issues raised and projects started but never resolved, mainly because of the communication breakdowns. All the bi-communal work had to be conducted in English, no one's first language. There were only a few repatriated Cypriots who had lived in Britain or abroad, but they were the minority of the group. In addition, all our phone lines were tapped. This meant we tended to

use e-mail" — yet not everyone had access to e-mail so this generally excluded many poorer or rural women.

"We only used email because we had no other choice." It was a disembodied voice that was open to misinterpretation. "We were trying to talk with people we did not physically know, hadn't built trust with and did not have time to get to know. Silences were being construed with suspicion by both sides." There is a lot of filling in of the spaces that silence makes. "Is she not answering because she didn't get the message or was it that she really wasn't interested or worse, trying to sabotage it?" They had hoped to be a streamlined group that could act fast "but we couldn't even get a simple letter out". Every sort of anger, misconception, prejudice and miscommunication came up over the nine months. "We were overwhelmed with issues but not able to meet to resolve them."

## Solutions

They realized that they needed relief and

He was dear Maria's father, uprooted from the north and resettled in the south, he made a deal with the church at Stavrovouni, "Give me a piece of land, please" he said raising his eyes to the sky, "where I can at least make a miniature of my orchard at Ayios Amvrosios! Whatever the yield, I will share it with you! ..." and the monks at Stavrovouni consented. Costas planted his orchard. It was certainly not like the beautiful orchards of Ayios Amvrosios... It was, in his own words, a "miniature" ... He planted and watered the soil, loving every single seed, every single little tree — for it was part of his heart. He watched the miracle called life blossoming from the soil...

But Costas carried in every beat of his heart the orchards he had left in the north of the island; for 28 years he kept his dream alive that one day he was sure to return to his village, his orchards, his home.

Tonight, I sit crying for him in a divided city, in the north of Nicosia; my heart beats on both sides of a divided island. I understand how Costas feels, I can feel the planting and the watering, the green of carob and olive trees as they grow, the smell of lemons, the redness of the soil. Only two months ago, he took his car and attempted to cross the checkpoints...The police stopped him.



"Hey, what are you doing? Where are you going?"

"I must go and water my trees..."

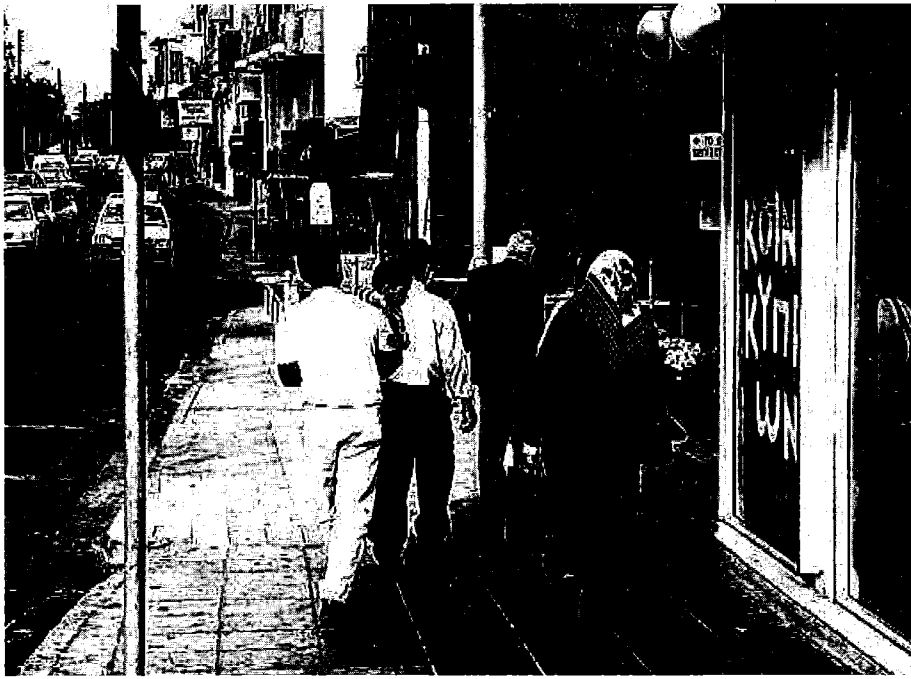
"No way! Go back! It is prohibited!!" How those prohibitions broke Costas's heart!

This piece of news, his death shocked our women's group, "Hands Across the Divide". At the same time, Zehra, a member of our group brought into the world a new baby, named Doga. E-mails brought the news of a birth and a death. I thought that these were the things that life had brought us — news about happiness and sorrow, at the same time... I was in the north and in the south

at the same time. On the one hand, celebrating for the magic baby named Doga, clutching at life with his little fist, and on the other, crying with all my heart for Costas.

Because Costas had never forgotten the trees he had left in the north, or his land, or his homeland that had been forcibly divided. Because this is the homeland of all Cypriots, it carries the same smells, the same soil, the same heartbeats. Costas wanted to be buried in the north, in his village. He wanted to be buried in this land. He was not of course, because the "deep state" governing this place has no relation with human feelings!

They cannot understand an old person's last wish. They cannot



PAPHOSBEACH.COM

Greek Cypriot shoppers approach the Green Line which cuts across downtown Nicosia

a few days to get together, re-assess and build a vision. They got some funding in 2002, mostly from the British Consulate, several smaller funding agencies and women's international groups. They chose London because they had a constituency living there. "It was fundamental for us to be linked to the international community — the region and the globe, partly because there are so many of us now in exile. It is also a part of our reality and provides a large resource for bi-communal resolution. Yet because there is a real disconnection with women's groups in Cyprus. The global context just doesn't exist."

UN Resolution 1325 is a basis or a springboard for further discussions why Cypriot women should get involved in peace negotiations. "We tried to use 1325 to approach the UN or other political powers for leverage. We've tried but we've been totally ignored! Simply put, the voices of women

understand his desire to smell the sea by Ayios Amvrosios, to water his trees for one last time!

I was telling all this to my life-comrade when he said "So, why don't you send him some soil!" And that is what we did ...

If we cannot bring our dead to the place of their last wish, if we cannot bury them where they wanted, we shall share our soil!

We were the "Hands Across the Divide". One of our members, her heart full of sorrow, undertook to carry it out. She cried on the phone for the death of a Cypriot who could not see for one last time the land he had missed. The women in our e-mail group were rebelling. We wanted to be next to Maria in these difficult times, the Greek Cypriot women wanted to visit Zehra's newborn baby, Doga.

But our island is divided. The policies in the Turkish side have no "room" for such humanistic matters. The official policy of the Turkish side is based on the argument that "the borders are impenetrable". So, the Greek Cypriot women could not visit Doga, the Turkish Cypriot women could not cross the border and attend the funeral of Maria's father, Costas. We could not carry out in our land the last wishes of our dead.

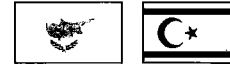
We did carry out my partner's suggestion: Yesterday, we sent Maria some soil from her father's village. A woman, whose heart resists the division, in tears carried this soil and gave it to another woman in a village under the control of the United Nations troops, in the "dead zone", called Pyla. Another woman with a rebellious heart took this soil and this morning took it to Costas's grave.

If we cannot bury our dead where they want, as women of this

island we shall share our soil. We share our soil, our air, our water, our heart, our thoughts; even if the masters who have interests in keeping the island divided do not "allow" us to celebrate together the birth of our children and to grieve together for our dead, we still manage to cross the borders.

A fistful of soil, that's all ... A fistful of soil is shared, carried in a plastic bag and placed on a grave. This evening, while speaking to Maria on the telephone where lines are tapped by all secret services, a tear drops because these borders that have been drawn right in the middle, are inconceivable, illogical, absurd and are against human life. Because our heart beats along with Maria's and the hearts of all Marias beat along the hearts of all newborn Dogas. Because Maria is planting flower seeds on the soil that came from the north so that they blossom on a grave in the south... Because the borders are meaningless, but all that passes through our hearts is meaningful.... Because our hearts are the hearts of human beings. And our strength is right here: in the unbelievable map of the human heart — in the feelings that overcome checkpoints and barbed wires; in the common feeling of grieving for our dead and of being happy for our births together.

Since 2001 there has been a concerted media campaign against journalists by the Denktash regime. Sevgul Uludag, a Northern founder of HAD has been the subject of intimidation threats. Her front page photo accompanied Turkish Cypriot news headlines condemning her as a traitor, a European Union agent and informant. This article was reprinted by permission of the author, originally written for Cockroaches [www.hamamboculeri.org](http://www.hamamboculeri.org) and published in Yeniduzen Northern Cyprus, Underground Notes, 14 October 2002.



ignored! Simply put, the voices of women have been totally absent from these 28 years of negotiations. Talks and talks again, all these international meetings and no women were present, at any level. We tried to write letters directly to the UN, to leaders of both sides, to the UN envoy to Cyprus, but to no avail. The Envoy might have been willing to meet with us, but then again we were not an official organization and we were not organized enough to speak clearly."

Their meeting gave a new momentum. They incorporated as an official non-profit NGO organization, the first of all Cyprus' groups to do so. Incorporating in London had the advantage that "we could each sign the agreement and charter standing together, as individuals, as who we were, when we wanted and as a unified official group." This status allows them to apply for funding and raise their resource base and profile. "We now have a constitution — the first bi-communal group to be recognized internationally, which to us Cypriots is very important."

The time they had each invested in getting to know one another has helped in the effectiveness of their email and processes. We created the function of Email Moderator. Once any member raises an issue, the Email moderator designs a proposal. Participants then have a designated amount of time to vote on the proposal. Voting is based on willingness to support and act. "For example I Agree but can't devote time, or No I don't agree. We wanted a horizontal organization but we also needed to make quick decisions." This process now allows for openness as well as decision making. They also have created a rotating management committee, made up of women from each of the 3 membership areas: north of the Green Line, south of the Green Line, and abroad.

"We are running out of time. As women, we clearly feel differently about the resolution of this conflict. Many young Cypriots, especially in the north can not make a living and are choosing to leave the island. Soon the issue will be resolved because there will be no community left." This is an acute and realistic fear for the

north. By spring 03, the south may enter the EU and Turkey may take the north and secede. "We are calling for a moratorium on the EU membership until the question of Cyprus, as one nation, is resolved. But it is the loss of an economically viable community that most concerns us."

"As this unified group, we want to resolve this destructive silent conflict as one Cyprus. Why can't we have bi-communal women to women systems of barter, a

woman's festival to raise funds together, a women's craft co-op? In/out we should resolve our nation's questions". Despite their struggles it only took the group "a day to resolve our bi-communal differences and draft a constitution. Surely then, the government could also find a peaceful resolution for a unified bi-communal nation". ❧

G L is a founding member of HAD, and a Greek Cypriot, currently living in New York, NY, USA.

### A MOUNTAIN OF WORDS

In the north, thousands of people are being asked to write a sentence for peace and put the piece of paper in a plastic bottle. The organisers are collecting the bottles to create a huge "Mountain of Peace". Eventually all the bottles will be transported to the house of Mr. Denktash, the northern Cypriot leader, where they will be dumped in a pile they hope is going to dwarf his house. The Turkish Cypriots organizing this bottle mountain are currently on a hunger strike for peace.

The Greek Cypriot members of Hands Across the Divide will be similarly collecting sentences for peace from local people, which will then be sent to the organisers of the campaign in the north and added to the mountainous message to Mr. Denktash.

If you want to support this action send an e-mail with your own sentence for peace' to the Secretary of HAD, Tina Kallis at [tinakallis@logos.cy.net](mailto:tinakallis@logos.cy.net). Don't worry, they'll supply the bottles!

### DEMANDING AN AGREEMENT

HAD has issued the statement below and will be distributing this to the public as a leaflet in Eleftheria Square, in Turkish, Greek and English:

"Forty years of separation have alienated the two communities in Cyprus, promoting mistrust and nurturing hatred, instead of reconciliation and rapprochement. We and the generations to come deserve a country without borders, fear and violence, in which every citizen can have the opportunity to live, grow and develop in a society based on values of equality, democracy and freedom. The struggle of our Turkish Cypriot compatriots inspires us to continue efforts towards a united Cyprus and the well-being of all, through the accession of a reunited island to the European Union. We therefore urgently demand the signing of a peace agreement."

### WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Everyone who contributes a 'sentence for peace' will get a copy of the statement and a white ribbon to pin on their lapel as a symbol of peace and solidarity with Turkish Cypriots.

Hands Across the Divide welcomes any publicity you can give their actions.



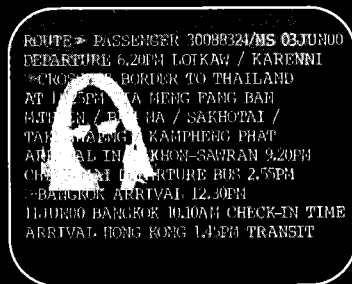
## GLOBALIZATION, GENDER AND BORDER GEOGRAPHY

By Susan Farkas



Ursula Biemann is a swiss video artist, feminist and social commentator who explores frontiers and pushes boundaries. She is testing the borders — all of them, in all their facets—physical and virtual, literal and conceptual. She is creating new visual language and draws a cartography of the migrating gendered body in the flow of global capitalism.

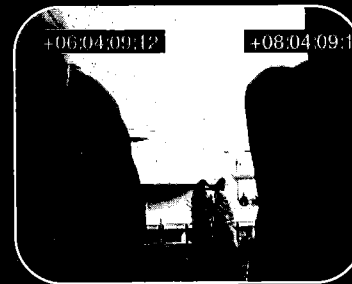
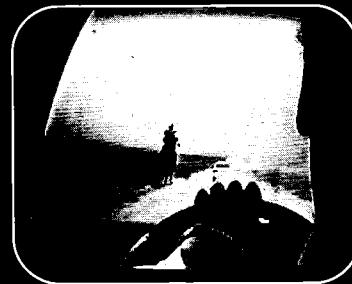
“The questions I have to ask myself as artist and videomaker are: How can I dislocate and recontextualize a much belaboured question such as the marketability of women and the objectivation of female sexuality? How can a video, rather than simply arguing against capitalism and affirming rigid gender identities, reflect and produce the expansion of the very space in which we write and speak of the feminine?”



While these quests are ongoing, she has shown her ability to reach the mark. **Writing Desire** (2000), is a video essay where you, the audience become the dislocated voyeur to oddly innocent cyberspace mail order brides. The order list is generated from militarized and unstable regions such as Russia, the Phillipines, or any desperation zone you, the viewer, care to locate, through the dream screen of the Internet. The experience leaves a chill as you realize the efficiency of technology's ability to enhance the global circulation of women's bodies from the third world to the first world. When I first stepped out of the screening of her video "Writing Desire", I felt like Amelia Erhardt completing her first transatlantic flight. I felt a sort of dyslexic alienation, as both observer and subject, voyeur and object of desire, I was never quite sure where to draw the line. I was relieved that I had made it alive, but left already panting for more. Biemann's capsule had hurled me across space and time, her visual tempo and odd juxtapositions of sound and image references mesmerized me. I was exhausted by the adventure, both elated and despairing.



Among her other video works are **Performing the Border** (1999). This is a journey about the gendered condition of the global digital industry which takes you to the sexualization of the U.S. Mexican border through the framework of labour, prostitution, the entertainment industry, and sexual violence in the public sphere. **Remote Sensing** (2001) is a topography of the global sex trade that traces the routes and logic or motivation of women who migrate into the global sex industry. Biemann invents a feminist media topography, layering her video perspectives of sexual laborers and their 'personal data' within remote satellite imagery of the earth. Ursula Biemann is currently curator of the group Frontera Sur RRV's "**Geography and the Politics of Mobility**". Her latest work "**Gender & Geography**" is on exhibition at Generali Foundation, Vienna April 2003. In these works, visually based in the spanish border towns, we see geography as a spatialization of the relationships connecting systems ranging from the local to the transnational. Border stations leave visual evidence of their funneling function. These are sobering sights. Europe defines itself by its outermost edge. Until recently, Málaga and Almería did not see themselves as borders. Nowadays, the whole of Spain's southern coastline has to uphold the country's European identity, however this is formulated. The simplest form is still, as ever, exclusion.



Ursula teaches at HGKZ Zurich and esba, in Geneva and lectures internationally. She is associated with the Institute of Theory in Arts and Design of HGKZ in Zurich. Her most recent art book is "Been There and Back to Nowhere" a discourse on gender in transnational spaces (available at b\_books Berlin 2000). You can contact her at [www.geobodies.org](http://www.geobodies.org)



# In the Field

## Low Profile Anti War

### HUAIROU COMMISSION REPORT



Sheryl Feldman

**FOR THIS ISSUE OF W&E, THE** Huairou Commission reports eight attempts at dialogue between women's groups and local government in small places with no famous names. So what?

There are wars on, for goodness's sakes. Whole countries are at stake. There are other wars on the horizon. Isn't reporting on eight attempts at local dialogue wasting crucial space? But what if we said that the eight attempts at dialogue were aspects of a Huairou Commission low profile anti-war project? What if they were a global, ground-up, person-by-person, community-by-community, long-term but not particularly well-orchestrated strategy to prevent war? Then the report would deserve space.

### THE HUAIROU DIALOGUES

For those who live in developed democracies, the practice behind the Huairou collaborations will be familiar: The "Local to Local Dialogues" project, funded by USAID and UN-HABITAT, supported community groups with a strong representation of women to develop lasting working relationships with local governments. Four quick examples:

- In Beznice in the Czech Republic, a group of women from a Mothers Center met with the mayor and town representatives to talk about support for the Center, the possibilities for a children's playground, and the creation of a collaborative team between the women and the city.
- In Mtoni Ward of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, a women's housing group faced a conflict between landowners and squatters. To deal with the problem, they educated themselves on land acquisition, transfer and compensation laws, met with the Municipal Director and are now

preparing bylaws for the management of the plot.

- In Saratov, Russia, where community participation in decision-making is a relatively new, ICIWF, a Russian NGO, sponsored a 3-day seminar to bring together grassroots organizations with local self-governance committees, law enforcement officials and local authorities to discuss issues like schools, crime prevention, and urban safety.
- In Cosquin, Argentina, three community based groups joined forces to work with community officials to address issues of poverty and environmental degradation.



"Grupo Intercommunal" Rio Cosquin, participants in the Argentina 'Local to Local' dialogus

### NATION BUILDING AS AN ANTI-WAR STRATEGY.

Each of these projects was a relatively simple exercise in community self-management. But project them against the arguments by many analysts for nation building — after destruction in Afghanistan and possibly Iraq and ask: Wouldn't it generally be better if the nation building took place without the preliminary step of destruction? Kofi Annan, for one, has been calling for the development of cultures of prevention for several years now.

The primary focus of preventive action

should be in addressing the deep-rooted socio-economic, cultural, environmental, institutional, political and other structural causes that often underlie the immediate symptoms of conflict. (Prevention of Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General; UN 2000, 90)

The "Local to Local Dialogues" described above may not look like antiwar activity but, as Dr. Achola Pala Okeyo writes in "The Local to Local Dialogues: Local Partnerships Forged Through Global Initiatives," they are creating some of the means of community problem-solving which can help preclude war. It gives local factions an experience of successful cooperation and alternatives to polarization. It empowers local women and that may lead to further actions to resist impending war.

In a historically state run country where democratic processes are just being established, community based organizations serve as training ground for consensus building and conflict resolution. Thus they pioneer new styles of leadership, decision-making and governance and can build the capacities of local authorities...to learn new democratic styles of governance and collaboration. [<http://www.huairou.org/WIG/>]

The Huairou Commission hopes these newly developed capacities will one day makes issues like this one of Women and Environments unnecessary.

Since 1977, the Huairou Commission has been supporting grassroots actions and women efforts to become more powerful and effective in their local, national and international communities. For more information: Jan Peterson, Chair of the Secretariat. The Huairou commission. 249 Manhattan Ave, Brooklyn, New York 11211 USA P: 1-718-388-8915 F: 1-718-388-0285 E: huairou@earthlink.net ☞

**Sheryl Feldman** is a freelance writer who focuses on grassroots women and globalization. She is based in Seattle, Washington and can be reached by e-mail at [sfeldman2@mindspring.com](mailto:sfeldman2@mindspring.com)

# Embera Women's Cooperative: Basket Art Helping Resist the Impacts of War

Susan Little

**The Colombian civil war extends beyond its own border and threatens yet another people and its art. This newly formed women's co-op is helping the culture of an indigenous people and their rainforest resources to resist the impact of war**

The Wounaan (wow-nahan) and Embera are indigenous peoples who live in the Darien rainforest along the border between Panama and Colombia. The Wounaan and Embera are world class master artisans known for their fine baskets and high quality carvings in wood and tagua. The women do the weaving and the men do the carving.

The rainforest lands of the Indians are being invaded and destroyed by cattle farmers, gold miners, loggers and guerrilla warfare. The border jungle provides a good place to hide and harbor guerrilla forces. Most recently, a Canadian journalist crew was kidnapped by the warlord Castano, who claims they were caught during a fight between left wing guerrilla's and paramilitaries. Panamanian Police stated however, that it was the right wing paramilitaries who initiated the attack on two villages and left 5 dead. As the war in Columbia rages on, it is a serious problem for the Embera and Wounaan. This is their land. This is their home and daily life depends on resources from the rainforest.

Women have been weaving their beautiful baskets for generations and over the years the crafts have found a small market in the tourist stalls of Panama. Traditionally the income is very small as middle men take the lion share of profits from the art which has already been undervalued. The reduction in traveling tourists due to the war and now Sept. 11 only adds to the diminished returns. Income from the baskets is the only significant source of cash income for the Wounaan and Embera women. A source of cash

income is especially vital to mothers who have lost their husbands. Earning an income from their traditional skills allows them to stay in their villages with their families, buy food when crops fail, buy medicine when they are sick and pay for their children's education. Their only other option for survival is to leave their native villages, move into cities and become menial labourers.

Most recently, the women of Cermaco Comarca have banded together to create their first official basket co-operative and with the help of their Chief and some organizers are going directly to market. Thanks to their representatives, they are developing an international network of buyers and gallery distributors. To celebrate their success and ensure their future the men of the reserve have gotten together to help them build their first sheltered workshop.



The wealth of baskets

## The Art of the Wounaan and Embera

The tightly woven baskets are made from two different kinds of palm fiber. A layer of fine chungu palm fiber is tightly sewn over a core of nawala palm fiber. Only the newly emerging spear leaf of the chungu palm is used for these baskets. Dyes are made from rainforest plants and earth. The following are the most common dyes and their sources: brown and orange are made by boiling shavings of cocobolo wood (rose-wood) in water; black and blue from the jagua fruit (this dye



This Embera Women's Cooperative community leader proudly displays her leopard head basket.



Opening the new workshop

is used to paint their body as well); purple and pink are extracted from the leaves of pucham, a violet jungle plant and olive green is derived from organic-rich swamp oil. The viability of this art form is dependent upon an ecologically sustainable system. With everyone's support this community and ecosystem can survive.

**Susan Little and Raymond Hermet** represent a women's cooperative on the Cemaco Comarca (reserve). All profits go directly into the hands of the women's cooperative. They can be reached by email: [susanlittle100@yahoo.com](mailto:susanlittle100@yahoo.com)

# African Women Respond:

## SUMMARY REPORT ON G8 AND NEPAD PLANS AND THE IMPACT ON WOMEN IN AFRICA

**AT THE G8 SUMMIT IN CANADA IN** July 2002, the G8 nations pledged their support for the implementation of NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development) and agreed that by 2006, G8 countries' overseas development aid to Africa will increase by \$12 billion per annum. On November 8, 2002, Women Waging Peace hosted a consultation among eleven African women leaders from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Sudan and representatives from relevant Canadian, British, and American government agencies to discuss the G8's support for NEPAD and its impact on women.

### SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES AND CONCERNS

NEPAD provides a unique opportunity for African nations to focus on sustainable development and peace. However, a number of key concerns were noted:

1. The NEPAD process has been limited to the political elite and traditional leadership in Africa. There are not mechanisms established to bring women into the process.

2. The NEPAD framework does not accurately reflect women's contributions to African nations in the economic, agricultural, social, political, or security arenas. Women are the major agricultural producers and are active in trade and the informal economy yet represent the majority of the illiterate and poor.

3. NEPAD and the G8 Action Plan are not sufficiently gender-sensitive. There is a lack of access to decision-making and it is essential to integrate gender equality issues in all aspects of NEPAD and peace implementation, not just isolated "soft issues" such as micro-enterprise and primary education.

4. Funds must go to grassroots and non-government organizations to address real needs.

5. Donors should be cognizant of women's opinions and solutions, as well as their

needs and concerns. Donors are setting their own priorities and agendas rapidly, with no consultation with or access to women in government or civil society.

6. The issue of HIV/AIDS and its gender-based implications. The potential impact of HIV/AIDS on Africa's security must be fully understood, and more attention must be given to prevention and to women as victims of HIV/AIDS.

7. There needs to be greater clarification on the relationship between NEPAD and the African Union. Not all African nations have been brought into the NEPAD process.

8. The mechanisms for peer review must be implemented effectively. The inclusion of gender perspectives and women's empowerment should be a key indicator of good governance. ❧

For more details on the meeting and the specific recommendations go to [www.womenwagingpeace.net](http://www.womenwagingpeace.net).

## Pax Warrior: HOW WOULD WOMEN SHAPE PEACEKEEPING HISTORY?

**PAX WARRIOR IS A "SIMU-DOC"** — a multi-media documentary and political simulation in conflict resolution. The protagonist is the UN Peacekeeping Force Commander in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Users interact with history, navigating through the extreme situation using a decision web. What are the terrible choices to be made? What would you have done to stop the violence? What will you do to make sure this never happens again?

Compelled to make difficult choices under pressure the user can access information in the research tool. Presented with possibilities and consequences perhaps not available in the real

world, users access a real time research tool to inform their options and explore and exchange true stories of the genocide survivors.

Pax Warrior is the first in a series of "Simu-Docs" to be made available to groups or individuals directly over existing web channels. This interactive model for collaborative conflict resolution will be useful for teachers and students as well as Human Rights and Peacekeeping agencies. Flexible and robust, the core architecture of the program allows for users to collaborate and research in virtual time.

For more information contact: <http://www.paxwarrior.com> ❧



Women and Geography from video works by Ursula Biemann

URSULA BIEMANN

# The Magdalena Project:

UPDATE ON MAGDALENA PACIFICA

Jill Greenhalgh

**THE THEATRE GROUP LA MASCARA** of Cali has suffered a humiliating level of “invisibilization” of their work of thirty years. But they are extremely stubborn and have worked consistently developing performances and working with marginalized groups of women in their community, and their refusal to be undermined by a lack of recognition has now, finally, paid off. The Cali community and the Colombian Theatre community could not ignore the success of MAGDALENA PACIFICA.

In more than 70 events over 9 days spread throughout the city — audiences of Cali citizens packed out the venues and demanded more. The forum was also clearly a watershed series of debates within the context of women and culture in Colombia. Leading feminists, artists and scholars converged from throughout the country. The level of discourse was passionate, forceful, and will likely lead to the insistence of further debate surrounding



Street festival in Bogota

women's social and cultural status.

All the theatre artists of La Mascara are very active in cultural projects with all levels of society. Their energy is boundless and their solidarity with workers, rural farmers and each other is remarkable to witness. There is hardly any government support for art and culture and yet they seem to manage to pull off huge effective gatherings and events. It displays such a positive resistance to all the violence that

swallows everyone's lives.

The Magdalena Pacifica Festival in Cali exhibited performances from some 30 Colombian companies, all of which focused on issues relating to women. The second part of the festival took place in Bogota at the invitation of Patricia Ariza, one of the most important and well-respected theatre activists in Colombia. Patricia organized a number of opportunities for exchange both with artists and political activists. A final meeting in her home gave birth to a new network of Women in Theatre in Colombia and Latin America. Graciella Rodriguez of Armar in Argentina will co-ordinate the practicalities of this network with the aim of creating a number of smaller meetings in Ecuador, Peru, Argentina and Colombia in the first instance. ❧

For more information on The Magdalena Project, check out their website: [www.themagdalenaproject.org](http://www.themagdalenaproject.org).

## Report on the Effectiveness of Resolution 1325

RECONCILIATION AND PEACEMAKING IN THE AMERICA'S

Robin Lloyd (WILPF USA)

*Four members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (LIMPAL/WILPF), from four sections in the Americas, presented their views on Women and Peace Making at AWID's (Assn for Women's Rights in International Development) Guadalajara conference on October 5, 2002. Panelists were Marta Benavides from El Salvador, Mary Day Kent, Executive director of US*

*WILPF, Katty Patino (Bolivia), and Amparo Guerrero (Colombia).*

The conference, entitled Women Reinventing Globalization, drew 1200 women from 100 countries to question and strategize on the advances (and retreats) of the international women's movement since the first

International Conference for women in Mexico in 1975. Executive Director Joanna Kerr threw out a challenge to the participants in the opening plenary: “I do not think we should support holding a Beijing +10 conference in 2005. NGO's (those organizations that commit their energies to monitoring and lobbying the UN), “have been co-opted into a process where lip service prevails.”

This debate on the effectiveness of women's lobbying at the UN, carried on in the following workshops. What are the chances that Resolution 1325 could merely be part of that 'lip service'? The Resolution, passed unanimously by the Security Council in October of 2000, calls for

- 1) gender sensitivity in all UN missions including peacekeeping;
- 2) for women to participate equally at all negotiating tables and
- 3) for the protection of women and girls during armed conflict.

In its 18 points the Security Council "urges", "requests", and "encourages". Unlike its treatment of the issue of arms inspections in Iraq, it does not "order", "mandate" or "require".

Aware of this wording, panelists agreed that 1325, like the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is only as strong as the groups that claim it and proclaim it and fight for it. Katty pointed out that in Bolivia there is a high level of domestic violence and machismo. As a lawyer, and with other members of WILPF, she has made presentations to the government to implement regulations to protect women. They have also set up free legal clinics for women in marginalized communities. They are disseminating information on 1325 to women. Unfortunately, she said "A lot of women permit violence to continue and so the abuse is passed on to the next generation."

During the water crisis in Cochabamba, and land seizures caused by the militarization of the coca-growing Chapare region, they have also sought ways to affirm the human rights of women and children based on 1325. Marta discussed the International Criminal Court and stressed that the Court and 1325 go hand in hand. Since the Vienna Conference on Human Rights defined Women's Rights as Human Rights, women have been seeking to enshrine those rights into law. The Court defines gender related crimes. It is essential that women support the struggle to name a significant percentage of women to the International Criminal Court. Thus the good ideas of 1325 will be formu-

lated into law. Marta added "We have to practice what we preach. We can't have impunity in the home, the church and the schools. We have to transform these conflicts into a process to build a path to peace."

Numerous women participated from the audience. A Peruvian woman, a member of their current Truth Commission, stated, "The human rights of women have not been talked about in my country. The mothers and wives of the dead don't know their own history. They have to be helped to understand their own past. Sometimes women are the last ones who want to talk about what has happened to them. To achieve reconciliation we have to talk together."

A representative from Israel's Women in Black brought up another problem. "Many women on both sides (in Israel and Palestine) are very militaristic. Women often justify violence, even though they don't execute it. To my view, this is an aspect of fundamentalism. Working with women against militarism is one of the most difficult things we are facing." Mary Day Kent summed up by saying that people around the world, especially in the US, do not know about the UN. The opportunity to learn more about this Resolution gives us a link where we can present women's stories to the US public, to women and peace-loving people — and help them see that the UN can help us — that there is a world community of which we are a part.

### **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, United States Section**

WILPF works to achieve through peaceful means: world disarmament, full rights for women, racial and economic justice, an end to all forms of violence, and to establish those political, social, and psychological conditions which can assure peace, freedom, and justice for all. For a list of local chapters and more information on how to support us, contact us at our address 1213 Race St. Philadelphia, Pa. 19107-1691 or through our website at [www.wilpf.org](http://www.wilpf.org). ✉  
International Secretariat Case Postale 28  
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland  
Tel: +41.22.919.7080 Fax: +41.22.919.7081  
[wilpf@iprolink.ch](mailto:wilpf@iprolink.ch)

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Feminist Teacher seeks well-written and accessible essays, articles, course descriptions, and publishing articles that challenge traditional teaching practices, disciplinary canons, research methodologies, and approaches to daily classroom interactions.

No special topics are planned at this moment, but we would love to see articles on feminist pedagogy post 9-11, peace, ecofeminism, the influx of women into business education (majors and minors), the current Vagina Monologues and V-Day phenomena on campuses, teacher education and teaching teachers, working with hostile students, transgender issues, the presence of male and female students in women's studies classes who are there for diversity or Gen Ed or other credit rather than a self-selecting interest in women's studies, women/girls and math, women/girls and science, non-traditional students and disciplines that are not traditional for women.

Please send manuscripts (3 copies) to  
Feminist Teacher,  
c/o Gail Cohee, Sarah Doyle  
Women's Center, Box 1829,  
Brown University, Providence,  
RI 02912. For our guidelines for authors, email [feminist-teacher@uwec.edu](mailto:feminist-teacher@uwec.edu) or visit our website at [http://www.uwec.edu/academic/wmns/feminist\\_Teacher](http://www.uwec.edu/academic/wmns/feminist_Teacher).

# Surviving Violence

## CORROSIVE MALIGNITY IN BANGLADESH

Photo and story by Ulrik Jantzen

**ACID WAS ONCE THE PRESERVE OR** weapon of choice to end a pitiful dispute between two men. Now, acid attacks in Bangladesh have become a daily trend in a war against women.

Shahida Akterpoli is merely 25 years old, and just a couple of weeks ago she was considered one of the most beautiful girls of her neighborhood. Her body is now 40% wounds. For the time being most of them are covered by the bandages that encase Shahida from the waist up. But the bandages do not stop the wounds from leaking; they do little to prevent the itching that covers her body as it tries in vain to heal itself.

"A few times I felt the soul leave my body and I was sure I was going to die, I had no idea what had happened." Shahida tells us as she receives treatment at the Bangladesh Medical College.

She had never seen the man who threw the acid all over her before. All she knew was that she had answered a knock at the door and felt instantly the sting and burning of the acid. She was sure that it was an act of jealousy, jealousy because she and her husband lived a good life. This is just one of hundred such stories.



ULRIK JANTZEN

In the period from 2000 to 2001, acid attacks rose by 53 percent. Often the attacks are the result of jealousy, rejection or failed attempts to bully new in-laws for more dowry money. It is not uncommon for the husband, after failing to receive more money from the parents, to then go and douse his wife in acid. The intent is to disfigure and abandon her for life, guaranteeing that she will never be able to marry and live a normal life. One such

husband recently went further. He threatened his in-laws that if no more money were paid to him, a terrible accident would happen. One night, while his wife slept, he poured acid down the throat of their 7-day-old baby. ❧

Ulrik is a Danish photojournalist. He was selected for the "Joop Swart Masterclass" at World Press Photo 2002 Contact: mail@ulrikjantzen.com, <http://www.ulrikjantzen.com>

# Peace Brigade International

**PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL** (PBI) is a non-partisan, non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1981 in Ontario, Canada to protect human rights and promote non-violent transformation of conflicts. "By our physical presence we protect, make visible and create space for local activists to work for social justice and human rights." PBI workers when invited,

appear in the offices of human right organizations on a daily basis wearing their PBI jackets. They also accompany activists from their homes to their places of work, and as they carry out high profile events and demonstrations, visits to the Attorney General's offices and other government buildings. Through their physical presence, and lobbying of government, the United

Nations, foreign embassies and agencies, and their international network of support they deter acts of intimidation and violence.

PBI has a current support network of 16 country groups. PBI is particularly supportive of women's issues and women's empowerment. Many of the organizations supported by PBI are women's grassroots NGO's. Here are a few such projects:

## PBI-TIMOR/INDONESIA

**Aceh Flower**, provides economic support and empowerment for women, as well as prenatal care and legal aid, and is based in Banda Aceh. It began by focusing on women's issues, reproductive rights and helping women set up small businesses as a way of ensuring their individual independence. One of their most difficult campaigns has been to speak out on behalf of women who have been raped. Currently, Flower Aceh focuses on monitoring the conditions in the refugee camps and human rights abuses by armed actors. In early December 2001, its founder, Suraiya received the Yap Thiam Hien Award for her commitment to human rights issues.

**SPKP-HAM** (Solidaritas Persaudaran Korban Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia) Aceh. The Association of Human Rights Abuse Victims is a province-wide network of torture survivors, founded in November 2000. Their work consists of aiding survivors of human rights violations through assistance with medical costs, transportation to the hospital or health centre, and accompaniment to legal aid foundations. They also lobby the Indonesian government for survivor rights, including compensation for loss of property and rehabilitation for physical injury.

**RPUK** (Tim Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan) or Women's Volunteer Team for Humanity was founded by women from various NGO's and works on the principles of honesty, nonviolence, independence, solidarity and neutrality. RPUK provides direct and logistical assistance to women and children in IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps, alternative education for children in IDP camps, as well as rehabilitation for former IDP women and children. They work with partner NGO's and over fifty volunteers throughout the province, and carry out field work to assess conditions for IDP's.

## PBI— COLOMBIA

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó —(part of the Black Communities project) San José was the very first self-declared Peace Community

in Colombia avoiding displacement by building community development projects. Within the community, all members agree not to participate in the armed conflict, not to carry weapons, provide information or other support to armed actors, to work collectively to benefit the community, and to distribute equally the benefits of local agriculture.

Unfortunately, the community continues to be subject to tremendous pressure. The road that connects San José to the city of Apartadó has been the scene of constant abuses by paramilitary and military forces, food and supplies being robbed from community members, threats, disappearance and even killings. Their goal has been to isolate and undermine the community economy.

On March 30, 2002 armed "Self-Defence Forces" stopped the local chiva (bus) and forced all of the passengers to disembark. They then abducted two women from amongst the group, one of whom managed to escape a few hours later. The other woman was less fortunate. Tragically, the body of Gilma Rosa Graciano was recovered the next morning. It appeared that she had been tortured before being shot to death.

From the end of March through the month of April, 2002, paramilitary forces killed eight people associated with the Peace Community, and neighbouring communities. The crimes have exacerbated the isolation of San José, particularly since three of the victims were bus drivers who used to cover the route between the town centre and Apartadó. Death threats have been issued to anybody who tries to make the journey.

During such moments, international solidarity not only helps to provide residents with some security, but also the moral sup-



Women from the village of Nonkikan, Occussi tilling the communal women's garden

DAWN DELANEY©

port necessary to continue to try and lead normal lives under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. The community itself has said that their suffering has not all been in vain: "Our blood and our tears nourish the soil. No blight on earth can destroy the alternative, cooperative economy we have built in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó".

## CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR PROSECUTING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Not long ago PBI — Colombia accompanied a human rights lawyer to court where she was prosecuting an extortion case involving members of the National Police. The victim (and principle witness) had fled to the United States because of threats on his life. As such, the lawyer had arranged for him to appear via internet video conferencing, the first time this technology had been used for such purposes in the country. A ripple of surprise passed through the courtroom when the exiled witness appeared on the screen. His image, though two-dimensional, tiny and poorly transmitted, represented a small victory against impunity of the national police in Colombia. ❧

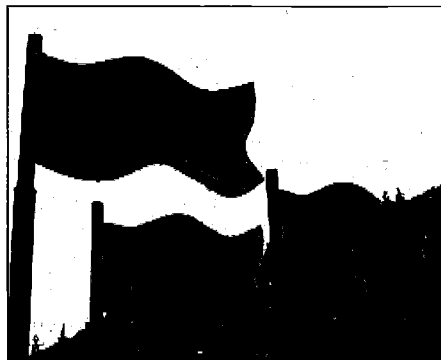
More PBI information: [www.web.net/~pbican/](http://www.web.net/~pbican/)

# International Criminal Court

**AT THE END OF THE BLOODIEST** century in human history, the international community adopted a treaty creating the world's first independent and permanent International Criminal Court. That court is now a reality. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is able to investigate and prosecute those individuals accused of crimes against humanity, genocide, and crimes of war. The ICC complements existing national judicial systems and will step in only if national courts are unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute such crimes. The ICC will also help defend the rights of those, such as women and children, who have often had little recourse to justice.

The Statute outlining the creation of the court was adopted at an international conference in Rome on July 17, 1998. After 5 weeks of intense negotiations, 120 countries voted to adopt the treaty. Only seven countries voted against it (including China, Israel, Iraq, and the United States) and 21 abstained. 139 states signed the treaty by the deadline. 66 countries — 6 more than

the threshold needed — ratified the treaty on 11 April 2002. This meant that the ICC's jurisdiction commenced on July 1, 2002. On September 3, the court's historic first Assembly of States Parties — the ICC's governing body — convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The court's "Advance Team" is already at work in The Hague creating the technical and administrative infrastructure that the court will need to open in 2003. As of December 18, 2002, 87 countries have ratified it.



Concrete Flags from the "Concrete Creek Project"

February 2003, the first 18 judges were elected to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The elected judges include 7 women and 11 men from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America, and Western Europe. This represents a major milestone on the road to the court's opening and securing high quality gender representation on the bench. It represents a break with the traditional practice of excluding women from these positions. Many other international courts have few women judges. The International Court of Justice has had 1 in its many decades of existence. The ad hoc tribunal for Rwanda currently has 3 full-time women judges and the tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has but one. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea currently has no woman judge among its 21-seat bench. The ICC is the world's first global court to try those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. ❧

## THE GENDERING ADOLESCENT AIDS PROJECT (GAAP)

We are a group of Canadian and South African researchers (faculty and students) who are working in several research sites on projects developed for the Gendering Adolescent AIDS Project (GAAP) housed at the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies (IWSGS), University of Toronto. Our research is focused on issues related to gender, youth and HIV risk with the overall goal of developing gender-sensitive HIV prevention strategies with young people.

Our research responds to concerns about the growing rate of HIV infection in Canadian and South Africa youth, particularly in girls, and the belief that young people are the best resource for changing the course of the epidemic.

We are currently working with Canadian and South African youth on a number of GAAP projects which include:

**Gendering HIV/AIDS Prevention: Exploring Gender as a Risk Factor for Canadian and South African Youth** — involves discussions with youth working groups in Canada and South Africa to explore how the social construction of gender can lead to increased HIV risk.

**Soft Cover: Youth, Creative Vision and HIV Prevention (South Africa)**

**Taking Action — Arts and HIV Prevention with Youth (Canada)** — explores youth-based participatory approaches to HIV prevention which draw on youth culture in the arts including hip-hop, dub poetry, computer-based technologies and literature.

**Sick of AIDS: South African Youth Cultures, Communication and Sexuality** — considers three distinct youth focused communication communities in South Africa to explore how to understand emerging adolescent sexuality in the context of illness and death.

**Transnational Perspectives on Gender, Youth and HIV/AIDS** — examines HIV/AIDS in terms of local norms of culture, gender, age, and sexuality as well as in relation to national and international politics and considers the different constructions of youth and HIV/AIDS across national and cultural boundaries.

Check out GAAP online at [www.utgaaap.info](http://www.utgaaap.info) or email us at [gaap.project@utoronto.ca](mailto:gaap.project@utoronto.ca)





# The Golden Fruit

There, in that land,  
the golden reflection  
embraces tomorrow  
in the eyes of the children.

There, the dark radiance  
inrobes over the rock,  
to build the miraculous bolt,  
towards dreams  
of the sacred and divided land,  
the one of green olive groves.

There, the earth bleeds  
while the millennial sun shines  
in the roundness of the Jaffa orange.

Here, no one names truth, not even partly  
while the blind man swings his cane  
making other blind ones fall.

Here, there is no one more blind  
than the one who refuses to see  
with eyes twisted towards the past  
with eyes winged towards the future  
for the always infernal war  
is the present.

There and here, the bitter harvest of the alliance  
Deir Yasin repeats itself every day, every year.  
Hula and Ed-Dawaymeb stand guard from the past  
in silence, without mouths, without eyes, without  
teeth.  
Sabra and Shatila, always here, with the echoes  
of those half-men half-beasts  
made of metal and fire.

From there, Yalu, Emwas, Beit Nuba  
Rafah and Khan Younis,  
with houses demolished and razed  
in front of the lightning-bolt eye of the children.  
Where have all the pieces gone?  
To nourish the desert earth with a grain of sand,  
while it waves and churns the sea of blood.

But even still, there, under the sky  
Always the flashing aura,  
in the eyes of the children,  
in the sweetness of the Jaffa orange  
and in its green olive groves.

And here in exile, "home" is still carried inside,  
it has been brought regardless,  
measured by dimensions  
without knowing the scale that was never left  
with the olive and the cedar,  
with the perfume of orange blossoms  
With the dance of rain and its lovely tune.

Peace? Could there be peace on that land?  
Could it return again to being  
without flowering towards  
by songs of resistance?

There and here behind the hooded eyes  
the golden eyes of Palestinian children.

María Elena Mesa-Majja.

María is a Colombian poet, currently living in Toronto.  
Translated from Spanish by Pedro Sanchez.

## Poet Notes:

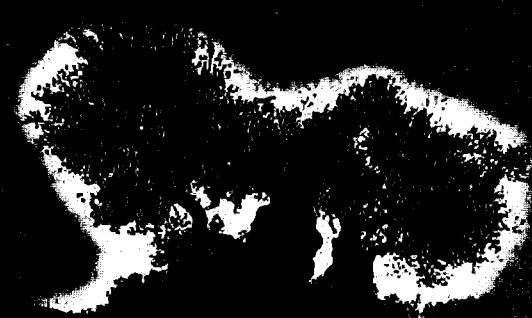
Deir Yasin: over 250 men, women and children killed on April 9 of 1948, the leader of the attack was Menachem Begin.

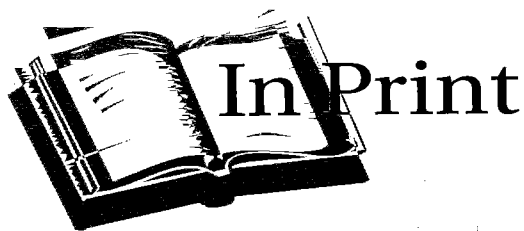
Hula: October 1948, Irbid area village; more than 50 men ranging between the ages of 15 to 60, were killed. The house was blown up on top of them to be their grave.

Ed-Dawaymeb: In the Hebron subdistrict, 200 people, mostly between 70 to 90 years were killed.

Beit, Emwas, Beit Nuba: total destruction of the villages in the Hatrun area.

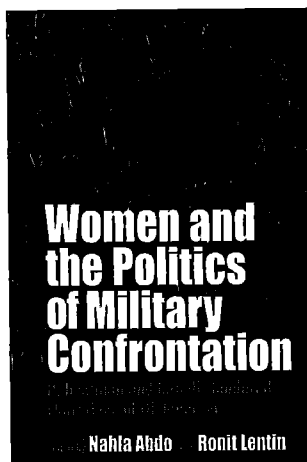
Rafah and Khan Younis: Nov. 22, 2000 - On a one hour raid Hamas hit the Gaza Strip. In 1952, Adil Chaar and the workers of Beit Prithafa of Qibya, and 2000 refugees were killed in the villages given the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.





**WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF MILITARY CONFRONTATION**  
**Palestinian and Israeli Gendered Narratives of Dislocation**

by Nahla Abdo and Ronit Lentin (eds),  
 Berghan Books, Canada, June 2002  
 ISBN 1-57181-498-2 (hardback) or 1-57181-459-0



This is the first time Palestinian and Israeli academic and activist feminists have come together. They offer a vivid and harrowing picture of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and its impact on daily life, especially as it affects women. "History and biography converge in this stunning collection of personal narratives. **Women And The Politics Of Military Confrontation** is testament to the urgency of dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli women....I know of no other

work that so deftly expresses the tenacity of surviving, the daring of resistance, and the will to forge a just peace." R. Ruth Linden, University of California

**Nahla Abdo** is an Arab feminist, Professor of Sociology at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

**Ronit Lentin**, PhD is Jewish and the course coordinator in Ethnic and Racial Studies, Department of Sociology, Trinity College, Dublin. **Contact:** Caroline Graf, 212/222-6502 or publicityUS@berghahnbooks.com

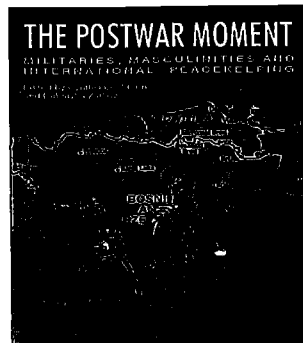
**WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND GLOBALIZATION: Local Struggles and Global Politics**

Nancy Naples and Manisha Desai (eds),  
 Routledge Publishing, USA 2002 ISBN 0 415 93145 2

These essays highlight the common themes and divergent interests in an attempt to explore the ways in which women activists living in urban, rural and suburban contexts are responding to globalization and working for change.  
**Contact:** www.routledge.ny.com

**The Postwar Moment**  
**Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping**

Cynthia Cockburn and Dubrava Zarkov (eds)  
 Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, GB, May 2002.

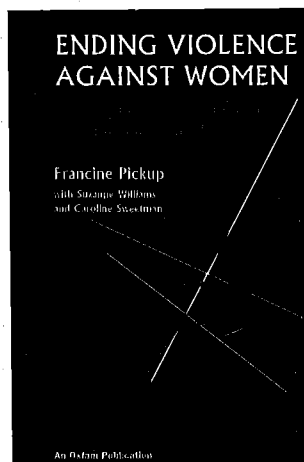


Through a focus on two countries, Bosnia and the Netherlands, linked through a "peacekeeping operation", the contributors illuminate the many ways in which processes of demilitarization and peacekeeping are structured by notions of masculinity and femininity.

Cynthia's next book "The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus" Zed Books, London will be published early 2004. It will explore ethnicity, gender in conflict and partition, and women's activism in contemporary Cyprus.  
**Contact:** 99a Wallis Rd. London E9 5LN, www.l-w-bks.co.uk

**ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**  
**A Challenge for Development and Humanitarian Work**

Francine Pickup, with Suzanne Williams and Caroline Sweetman,  
 Oxfam Publishing, GB, July 2001 ISBN: 085598 4384



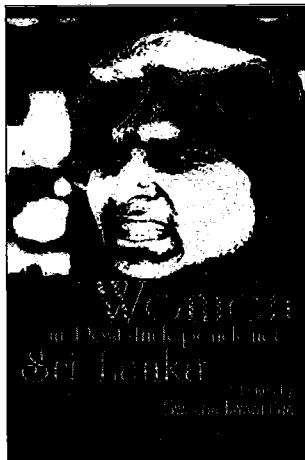
This Oxfam book examines why violence against women is an international problem, what has been and what further can be done. This is the first book to make a sustained case for development organizations to take up this issue as a development issue in its own right.

Francine Pickup is a researcher at Oxfam GB and currently working on her doctorate at the London School of Economics.

Suzanne Williams is Oxfam GB's Gender and Conflict Advisor. Caroline Sweetman is a Gender Advisor and editor of OxfamGB's journal "Gender and Development". **Contact:** Oxfam@bebc.co.uk; fax: 44 0 12102 712930 or PO Box 1496, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset, BH12 3YD, GB

## WOMEN IN POST-INDEPENDENCE SRI LANKA

Swarna Jayaweera (ed),  
Centre for Women's Research, Sri Lanka, 2002  
SBN 0 7619 9503-x



Bringing together activists and scholars, this important book reviews the different paths Sri Lankan women have taken in the 50 years since independence to achieve greater political and economic empowerment and control over their lives.

**Contact:** Sage Publications  
India, sageind@vsnl.net or PO  
Box 4109, New Dehli 110 017

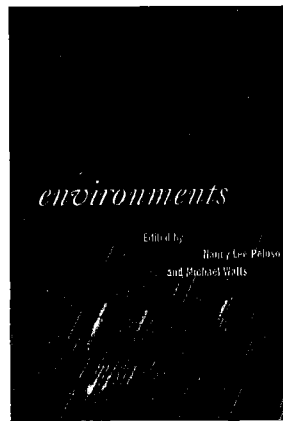
## WOMEN, WAR AND PEACE IN SOUTH ASIA Beyond Victimhood to Agency

Rita Manchanda (ed),  
South Asian Forum for Human Rights, Nepal, 2001

Where are the women in South Asian Conflicts? These studies of women's resistance have the potential to become weapons in the hands of women struggling against unjust and exploitive structures all over South Asia. **Contact:** Sage Publications  
India, sageind@vsnl.net or PO Box 4109, New Dehli 110 017

## VIOLENT ENVIRONMENTS

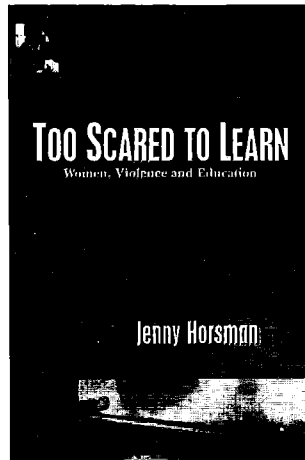
Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts (eds)  
Cornell University Press, USA 2001 ISBN 0 8014 87110 0



Dedicated to the memory of Ken Saro Wiwa, this book challenges and refutes the basis of current US policy about environmental conflict and security and the casual links between population growth, resource scarcity and violence. Studies include accounts of ethnic war in Indonesia, petro violence in Nigeria and Ecuador, wildlife conservation in Tanzania and weapons testing in Russia.  
[www.cornellpress.edu](http://www.cornellpress.edu)

## TOO SCARED TO LEARN Women, Violence and Education

Jenny Horseman,  
McGilligan Books, Canada 2001 ISBN: 0 9698064 8 5



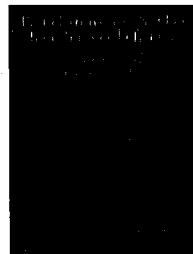
This book re-examines learning through the lens focused on the prevalence and impacts of violence in women's lives. Based on research with literacy learners, instructors and practicing therapists, it brings together a wealth of previously unconnected knowledge to spark new approaches to learning and teaching.

"This is a cutting edge contribution which has the potential to radically change the way adult education is conceptualized" Elsa Auerbach, University

of Massachusetts, Boston. Contact: PO Box 16024, Toronto  
On, Canada M6J 1W0 or [mcgilbks@direct.com](mailto:mcgilbks@direct.com)

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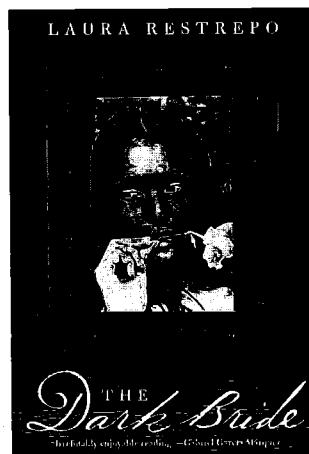
*Canadian Woman Studies* is the only Canadian journal to keep you in touch with Canadian scholarship on women's issues, to provide a forum for the expression of a wide range of views, topics and disciplines and to create a vital link between research and activism by connecting scholars and community workers. Upcoming issues include: Women and Peace-Building; Migration, Labour and Exploitation; Trafficking in Women and Girls; Women and Sustainability: From Rio de Janeiro (1992) to Johannesburg (2002); and Women in the Black Diaspora.

Annual Subscription Rate: \$36 + \$2.52 (gst) = \$38.52. Please make your cheque payable to: *Canadian Woman Studies*, 212 Founders College, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, M3J 1P3. Or order by telephone with your visa card. Tel: (416) 736-5356 Fax: (416) 736-5765 Email: [cwscf@yorku.ca](mailto:cwscf@yorku.ca). Please visit our website: <http://www.yorku.ca/cwscf>

## THE DARK BRIDE (LA NOVIA OSCURA, 1999)

Laura Restrepo

HarperFlamingo/Canada 2002



This authentic novel explores the lives of those on the fringes of society. It is set in the Colombian postwar oil boom of the 1940's and a time when men left their homes in search of work, and women without men joined the prostitution rings that thrived along side. The Dark Bride is a homage to those who comprised this world of poverty, disease and political turmoil.

**Laura Restrepo** is an

International prize winning author. In 1983 she was named as a member of the Colombian Peace Commission charged with negotiating peace with the militant forces. Peace was negotiated, but in 1984 the process ended in a bloodbath, forcing her to leave Colombia. Her **Historia de un entusiasmo** (1986) chronicles this experience. Throughout her political exile in Mexico and then in Madrid, she maintained ties to the political wing of the Colombia guerrilla group M-19. With her help negotiations were reopened. The M-19 gave up its weapons and converted to a legal opposition party, which allowed her to return to Colombia. In the late 1990's she lived in the oil-

producing region of Colombia, researching the lives of oil riggers and prostitutes for her Latin American best-selling novel.

## NEVER AGAIN (Nunca Mas) (1999-2001)

An exceptional new documentary Video by Marta Rodríguez, an internationally acclaimed social-political documentarian from Colombia. Her career spans more than 30 years and in her latest film (2001), Marta Rodríguez tells us about a series of massacres that took place in 1997 leading to the displacement of the communities of Antioquia and Choco, regions bordering on Panama. This documentary follows the survivors who recount the traumatic events through oral testimony and song. Relocated to refugee camps and virtually ignored by the Colombian government, the community members consider economic interests that affect their displacement, while working toward knitting their communities back together and bravely organizing to return to their ancestral territories. Through their music they have created a cultural resistance movement, registering in chanted chronicles the whole history of the displacement using the instruments and rhythms of the Afro-Colombian cultures: Currulao, Chirimia, and Vallento.

Subtitles in English.

Available from the producers: Fundacion Cine Documental or by contacting the Canada Colombia Solidarity Campaign 100 Lambertlodge Ave. Toronto, ON. M6G3X3, [www.gratisweb.com/columbiacrisis](http://www.gratisweb.com/columbiacrisis)

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# Calendar

**June 30 - July 18, 2003 - United Nations, New York City**, Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The countries that will present their state reports include Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Japan, Morocco and Slovenia.

**June 22-24, 2003 - Capital Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C.** Women Working to Make a Difference, IWPR's 7th International Women's Policy Research (IWPR) conference bringing together policymakers, advocates, researchers & practitioners to address issues re. women's economic, political, health, & social status: <http://www.iwpr.org>.

**August 21-25, 2003 - International Meeting of Women in Black**, Italy. For more information, to cooperate in the preparations for the meeting, to participate contact: Simona Lanzoni, ROMA: [nafas\\_din@yahoo.it](mailto:nafas_din@yahoo.it), Anna Valente, TORINO: [anna.valente@torinofacile.it](mailto:anna.valente@torinofacile.it).

**Peacebuilding and Development Summer Institute 2003, American University, Washington, D.C.** The Peacebuilding and Development Summer Institute is a 3-week program that provides knowledge, practical experience and skills in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and development. For more information about the program visit: <http://www.american.edu/sis/peace/summer/>

**June 2-6, 2003 - Peacebuilding, Conflict Transformation and Post-War Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Resolution, Cluj-Napoca, Romania**

This is the only five-days intensive training workshop of its kind, exploring all three phases of violence and war — pre-violence, violence, post-violence. Trainer and Facilitator: Kai Frithjof Brand-Jacobsen, founder and Director of the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR). For more information: [training@transcend.org](mailto:training@transcend.org).

**June 19-July 26, 2003 - NEGOTIATIONS: from a piece of land to a land of peace, Toronto, Canada**  
A multidisciplinary cultural event.

## Announcements

**NEW REPORT: Shan Human Rights Foundation and the Shan Women's Action Network — A new report "License to Rape"** (June 2002) reveals 625 reported rapes by Burmese Military of Shan Women. It documents that the military have tripled their troop strength and that most of the rapes have occurred in Central Shan State where over 300,000 villagers have been forcibly removed since 1996. "we want to remind the international community to look beyond Rangoon and not to ignore abuses against women in Burma's ethnic states." Report is listed at [www.shanland.org/shrf/License\\_to\\_rape.htm](http://www.shanland.org/shrf/License_to_rape.htm)

For further details contact: [shrf@cm.ksc.co.th](mailto:shrf@cm.ksc.co.th); The Shan Women's

**June 8-9, 2003 - UNU/INCORE International Summer School, Northern Ireland**

This programme is an introduction to conflict resolution practices in Northern Ireland UNU/INCORE is a joint research institute of the United Nations University at the University of Ulster. Further details: [www.incore.ulst.ac.uk](http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk).

**July 7-25, 2003 - International Summer School in Forced Migration, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, UK**

This three-week residential course provides a broad understanding of the issues of forced migration and humanitarian assistance. For more information [summer.school@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:summer.school@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

**July 5 - 7, 2003 - "Money Moves -away from Greed and Scarcity" Symposium, and Implementing Global and Bioregional Complementary Currencies Workshop, July 7th-12th, 2003, Lebensgarten Eco-village, Steyerberg, Germany.**

Speakers include: Dr Hazel Henderson, USA-evolutionary economist; Dr Margrit Kennedy, Germany- architect bioregional currency consultant; Dr B. Lietaer, Belgium- Center for Sustainable Resources U of California; Dr S. Turnbull, Australia-pioneer in corporate governance. For registration info: fax:-25 78; [www.lebensgarten.de](http://www.lebensgarten.de) or [info@lebensgarten.de](mailto:info@lebensgarten.de)

**May 9 - September 26, 2004, - Universal Forum of Cultures, Barcelona, Spain**

The first Universal Forum of Cultures is the first celebration of a great new international event. The aim is to contribute to a renewal of thought and attitudes, providing a new platform for moving towards a new coexistence without conflict. In agreement with UNESCO, the Barcelona Forum 2004 is structured around three core themes: cultural diversity, sustainable development and conditions for peace.

**September 2003 - Brazil**

World Social Forum. AWID annual conference. See [AWID.org](http://AWID.org) for details.

Action Network is a member of the Women's League of Burma established in Dec.1999 to build trust and solidarity among women of all nationalities in Burma: GPO Box 413,Chaing Mal 50000,Thailand. or [wlb@loxinfo.co.th](mailto:wlb@loxinfo.co.th)

**Peace Brigades International Seeking Volunteers**

PBI is seeking volunteers to work with teams in Mexico, Colombia, and Indonesia. Volunteers conduct protective accompaniment for individuals and groups threatened with political violence, facilitate workshops on peace education and psychosocial healing, and disseminate first-hand reports to the international community.

**UPCOMING TRAININGS** — Apply now! Mexico: Dec 1-8, Europe; Summer 2003 North America; Indonesia: Jan 13-16, Indonesia; April 3-13, Australia, September 2003, North America/Europe; Colombia: early 2003, Europe  
For more information on PBI: [www.web.net/~pbican/](http://www.web.net/~pbican/)

### CALL FOR PAPERS

**RETHINKING GENDER, WAR, AND PEACE: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES**, 10-12 October, 2003, Washington, DC. Psychologists for Social Responsibility and the Women's Studies Department of George Washington University. The primary objective of the conference is to advance the field of peace psychology by examining its past, present, and future work from a feminist perspective. Deadline: May 1, 2003. For more details: [www.psyr.org](http://www.psyr.org), or PsySR, 2604 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008. (202) 745-7084 or fax to (202) 745-0051.

**LEADERSHIP IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION CONFERENCE**, 2-4 October, 2003, The Center for Women's InterCultural Leadership at Saint Mary's College, IN USA

The purpose of the conference is to develop a more refined understanding of the social and political dimensions of globalization, with special attention given to women's roles in devising practicable responses to problems of their societies that occur within the context of globalization. The deadline for all submissions is May 15th,

2003. For more information: Vicente Berdayes, Department of Communication Studies, Dance & Theatre Saint Mary's College Notre Dame, IN 46556; e-mail: [berdayes@saintmarys.edu](mailto:berdayes@saintmarys.edu) tel: (574) 284-4647 fax: (574) 284-4716

### CALL FOR ARTISTS

**NEGOTIATIONS: from a piece of land to a land of peace**, June 19 - July 26, 2003, Toronto, Canada — A multidisciplinary cultural event. Inspired by Palestinian and Israeli peace activists, we recognize that genuine peace negotiation demands cooperation across divides to reach a common good. The ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine raises questions of global ethical significance for indigenous people's right to land, human dignity and self-determination, as well as having a daily impact on the lives of both peoples. **NEGOTIATIONS** will present projects that actualize these meanings through creative collaboration and shared authorship. Projects will be either new or created after the start of the Second Intifada (2000). Projects possible: film/video screenings, literary readings, performances, public art, creative workshops and panel discussions.

Creative Response brings together artists, writers, educators, and cultural workers to initiate cultural and artistic interventions in solidarity with Palestinian struggles to end the Israeli Occupation. We aim to create an alternative public space for meaningful dialogue to promote a just peace in Palestine and Israel. For submissions or more information visit: <http://creativeresponseweb.net>

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In a land where water is mined like precious gold, a stream is carelessly contaminated. For years excess construction cement has been poured into a creek near Beit Shemesh, Israel. Shai Zakai's work calls attention to the problem through advocacy, site restoration and public art installations using cement reclaimed from the stream. Foreign workers, Bedouins, moshav members and Palestinians, as well as the quarry and factory owners — all took part in the artistic creation, and healing process.

"I opted for the identification and collaboration approach rather than threats of fines and jail. This is an eco-centric, eco-feminist approach which regards the 'rehabilitation' of both man and nature — the stream, organic and inorganic elements found in it and its flora and fauna — with equal importance." The Concrete Creek project attests to eco-art's capacity to bring about change in Israeli society.

For details: [www.greenmuseum.org](http://www.greenmuseum.org)

**Shai Zakai** is Director and Founder of the Israeli Forum for Ecological Art. She exhibited and discussed her ideas of eco art and collaboration at the World Earth Summit 2002 in Johannesburg.



Concrete creek

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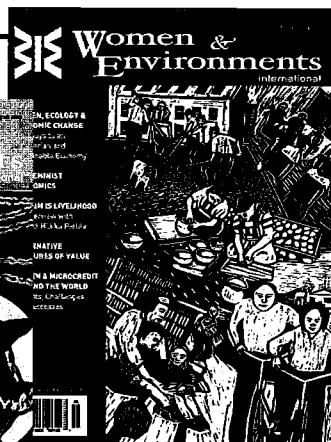
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