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KINESIS

News About Women Thats Not In The Dailies

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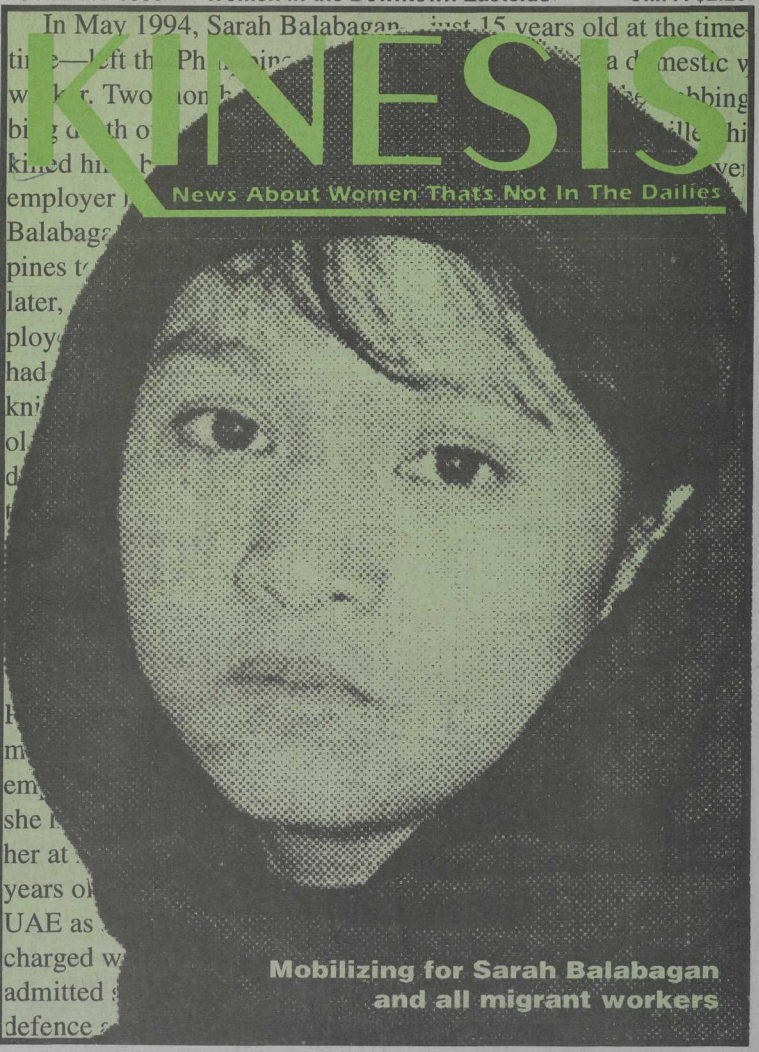

Mobilizing for Sarah Balabagan and all migrant workers

INSIDE

KINESIS

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Kinesis welcomes volunteers to work on all aspects of the paper. Our next Writers' Meeting is **Oct 3** for the Nov issue, and **Nov 7** for the Dec/Jan issue, at 7 pm at Kinesis. All women welcome even if you don't have experience.

Kinesis is published ten times a year by the Vancouver Status of Women.Its objectives are to be a non-sectarian feminist voice for women and to work actively for social change, specifically combatting sexism, racism,classism, homophobia, ableism, and imperialism. Views expressed in Kinesis are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect VSW policy. All unsigned material is the responsibility of the Kinesis Editorial Board.

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Sarah Balabagan
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SUBMISSIONS

Women and girls are welcome to make submissions. We reserve the right to edit and submission does not guarantee publication. If possible, submissions should be typed, double spaced and must be signed and include an address, telephone number and SASE. Kinesis does not accept poetry or fiction. Editorial guidelines are available upon request.

DEADLINES

All submissions must be received in the month preceding publication. Note: Jul/Aug and Dec/Jan are double issues.
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Got an itch to write?
Then drop by to one of
our next writers' meetings
October 3 & November 7 at 7pm at
VSW, #301-1720 Grant Street,
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For more info call 255-5499

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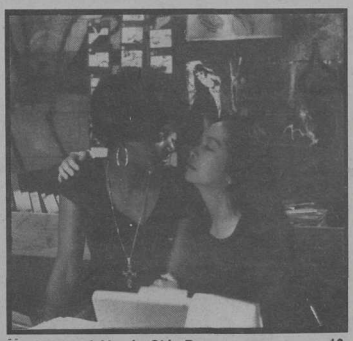


Montana and Alex in *Skin Deep* 16

As *Kinesis* goes to press, Ontario women and poor people are bracing themselves for a lot more hard times to come, as the right-wing Conservative government of Mike Harris gets set to announce major cuts to social programs and other regressive policies that target women, poor people, working class people, and immigrants *[see story on page 7.]*

Following on the heels of Alberta's Ralph Klein, Harris promised during the provincial election that he would cut government spending by $6 billion. Now Harris is saying that his government plans to cut even more—$3 billion more.

After already promising to slash more than 20 percent off social assistance, and to cutback on affordable housing, legal aid, daycare, funding to service agences, and so on...the question is: what's left to slash? The answer Harris will likely have for women and poor people in Ontario is probably pretty, pretty scary.

Moving back west to another Conservative government's attack on women's equality...Ralph Klein took another step in curtailing women's reproductive rights in Alberta—not that this comes as a great surprise. Klein recently announced that his Conservative government will stop paying for abortion services, except in cases where abortion is "medically necessitated." So that leaves women in Alberta no longer with the right to access abortion services in the province...unless of course, they have enough cash to pay for it themselves.

Here's a notable quote from Bob Packwood, the Oregan senator who was forced to resign after the Senate's ethics committee admonished him for sexually harassing 40 women: In defending himself in his goodbye speech to the Senate, Packwood proved he has no clue what sexual harassment is: "I am accused of kissing women, on occasion perhaps over-eagerly kissing women, and that is the charge. Not drugging. Not robbing. Kissing." Well...we think we'll just leave that quote without any further comment.

As *Kinesis* goes to press, the 30,000 or so women who attended the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing and the NGO Women's Forum in Huairou are probably busy sorting through all the things that happened over the 16 days in China.

Over the next two issues of *Kinesis*, we'll be producing special supplements to bring you interviews, overviews and analysis of what happened in China, what was accomplished...or not, and what any of it means for women's equality worldwide.

Speaking of the UN things...a recent report from the UN's Development Program just confirmed something we've always known—women continue to trail men in terms of wages and access to wealth and resources. The UN report also estimates that of the 1.3 billion people in the world who are poor, 70 percent are women.

On that rather sombre note...that's it this time, As *Kinesis* goes to press. Hope you have a great month.

The big news this month, Inside *Kinesis*, is that we purchased a new computer monitor—our old one was fading fast and fuzzily. Now we're looking into raising money so we can buy a faster computer which will help us bring you, our beloved readers, exciting graphics and designs.

We're happy to report that Fatima Jaffer is on her way back from her long travels to the NGO Women's Forum. She did manage to squeeze in a bit of rest and relaxation in a side trip to Malaysia. We're glad she had fun, but we're also glad she's coming home....we missed her!!

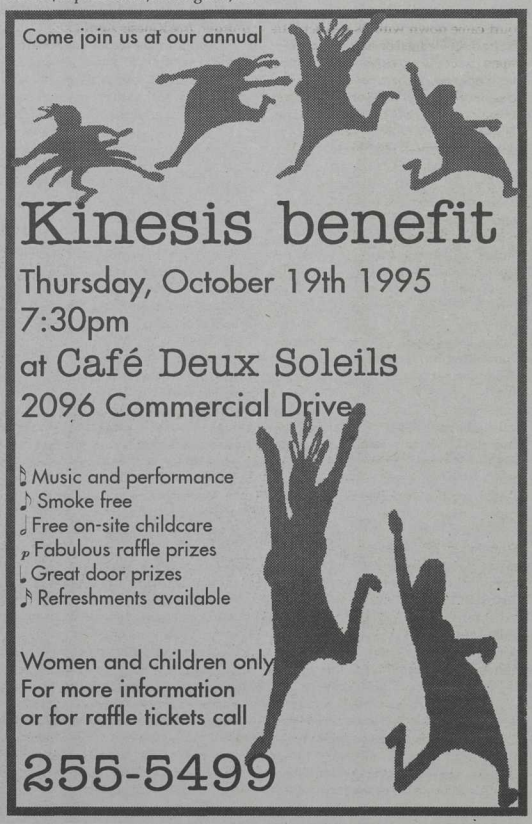
Over the next two issues, Fatima will be coordinating *Kinesis'* coverage of all the news about women from the UN Women's Conference that definitely wasn't in the dailies. Stay tuned.

Some hi's and bye's we forgot to tell you about last month. Warm goodbyes and thanks to Jennifer Johnstone who worked as the administrator/fundraiser for Vancouver Status of Women. One of her jobs during her five years at VSW was helping *Kinesis* keep track of our finances and subscribers. Jennifer has now gone off to work as a fundraiser for Battered Women's Support Services.

Jennifer has passed on all her file folders, deposit books, mailing lists, and more to Andrea Imada. Andrea moved to Vancouver earlier this year from Toronto and got familiar with the goings-on at VSW and *Kinesis* very quickly while working here on two grant projects. We look forward to working with Andrea over the next...ten?...years. Good luck, Andrea.

Welcome to our new writers this issue: Leanne Johnson, Marion Dubick, Frances, Susan, Jennifer and Lulu. This month we'd also like to say hello to the women who came to help out on production for the first time this issue: Dorcas, Nancy Pang, and Leanne Johnson, and thanks for coming in...more than once. If you're interested in writing or helping out on production, give us a call at (604) 255-5499.

Well the time has arrived—our annual *Kinesis* benefit is just around the corner. It promises to be a fun-filled time for all, so please come and join us. The Benefit's on Thursday, October 19th and it'll be an evening of music, performances, munchies, and some great door prizes. Check out the ad below for all the details. Also, don't forget about our fabulous *Kinesis* raffle—there's always lots of great prizes. If you want to buy some raffle tickets, just give us a call, 255-5499. Hope to see you at the Benefit.



VANCOUVER STATUS OF WOMEN

Thanks

Our thanks to Vancouver Status of Women members who support us year 'round with memberships and donations. Our appreciation to the following supporters who became members, renewed their memberships or donated to VSW in September:

Wendy Baker * Gillian Creese * Barbara Curran * Karen Egger * Elaine Everett * Mary Frey * Noga Gayle * Michael & Connie Geller * Teresa Gibson * C. Jackson * Jennifer Johnstone * Barbara Karmazyn * Diane Kewley * Barbara Lebrasseur * Karin Litzcke * Jane McCartney * Davina McClung * Bea McKenzie * Monique Midgley * Gail Mountain * Susan Penfold * Neil Power * Gale Stewart * Dr. Sheilah Thompson * Lynne Werker

We would like to say a very special thank you to all of our supporters who responded so generously to our recent fundraising letters:

Linda Erickson * E. Harris * Pia Kuni * Leanne MacDonnell * M.A. Read * Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 2950

And a very special thank you to **Moira Keigher** whose gift supported our efforts to send delegates to the 4th UN World Conference on Women in Beijing.

NEWS

Filipina domestic worker facing execution:

A call for justice

by Agnes Huang

Filipino migrant workers and workers' rights groups mobilized quickly to call for justice for a 16 year old Filipina domestic helper, after she was ordered executed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

On September 16, an appeals court in the UAE convicted Sarah Balabagan of murdering her employer and sentenced her to death by firing squad. The appeals court decision reversed an earlier trial verdict that sentenced Balabagan to prison and ordered her to pay a sum of money to the family of her employer.

In May 1994, Sarah Balabagan—just 15 years old at the time—left the Philippines to work in the UAE as a domestic worker. Two months later, she was charged with the stabbing death of her employer. Balabagan admitted she had killed him, but said she had acted in self defence after her employer had raped her at knifepoint.

Almost a year after charging Balabagan with the murder, the Islamic court came down with its verdict. The court acknowledged Balabagan had been raped, but still convicted her of killing her employer. The court sentenced her to seven years in prison and ordered her to pay a fine of 150,000 dirhams (US$40,000) as "blood money" to her employer's family. His family was also ordered to pay Balabagan 100,000 dirhams (US27,000) in damages.

In overturning the Islamic court's verdict, the appeals court rejected the evidence that she had been sexually assaulted by her employer, and thus her plea of self defence.

Within a week of the appeals court verdict, Filipino women's and rights groups in Vancouver—SIKLAB-BC, the Philippine Women Centre, and the BC Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines—organized a demonstration in front of the Philippine consulate to pressure the Philippine government to call on the president of the United Arab Emirates to overturn Balabagan's death sentence. Balabagan has one more level of appeal that must be decided within 90 days from the handing down of the appeals court's verdict.

Cecilia Diocson of the Philippine Women Centre believes the only way Sarah Balabagan will be released is through an order from the president of the UAE. The groups are calling on the presidents of both countries for Balabagan's total acquittal, unconditional release and immediate repatriation to the Philippines. If this appeal fails, Balabagan will be executed.

The death sentence ruling for Sarah Balabagan comes just six months after another Filipina domestic worker was executed. Last March, Flor Contemplacion was hanged in Singapore for the murder of another Filipina domestic worker, Delia Maga, despite the fact there was new evidence indicating Contemplacion was framed for the murder. *[see* Kinesis *April 1995]*.

Demonstration in Vancouver calling for justice for Sarah Balabagan, a 16 year old Filipina domestic worker who has been sentenced to death in the United Arab Emirates. Photo by Leanne Johnson

Despite a massive international outcry and protest by women's and migrant workers' groups calling for a stay of execution and a full review of the new evidence, Contemplacion was hanged.

After her execution, Contemplacion's supporters continued to pressure the Philippine government to review her case. President Fidel Ramos, bowing to protests, ordered an autopsy be performed on the body of Delia Maga. The autopsy confirmed that Contemplacion likely did not kill Maga—the medical examiner suggested it would have taken someone much stronger than Contemplacion to have strangled and bludgeoned Maga to death *[see* Kinesis *May 1995]*.

The cases of Sarah Balabagan and Flor Contemplacion bring into sharp focus the vulnerability to abuse and exploitation of migrant workers. Since Contemplacion's execution, women's and workers' rights organization have continued to press world governments to ratify the 1990 United Nations General Assembly Convention for the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and members of their families. Few countries are signatories of the convention—Canada is not among them. As well, organizers of the Vancouver demonstration point to the need for bilateral agreements between the sending and receiving countries to ensure protection of the rights of migrant workers.

Suzanne, a Filipina domestic who spoke at the demonstration, says the Philippines must be held accountable for the safety and well-being of its citizens working abroad. "The Philippine government didn't do anything to help Flor Contemplacion. Now we have to make sure they do something for Sarah Balabagan and all other migrant workers. We cannot let this happen again."

There are about 6 million Filipinos working abroad—70 percent of whom are women—with over 2,500 people leaving the Philippines each day to work as overseas contract workers (OCWs).

Following the execution of Contemplacion, the Philippine government brought in the Magna Carta policy to protect the rights of OCWs. And in the Sarah Balabagan's case, Fidel Ramos has instructed the Philippine embassy in the UAE to file an appeal on her behalf and explore all legal diplomatic options to obtain a favourable ruling.

But Suzanne says she is critical of the sincerity of the Ramos government in wanting to safeguard the rights and well-being of Sarah Balabagan and other Filipino OCWs. "How come the Philippine government let Sarah go out of the country? She was only 15, in her second year of high school, when she was forced to leave the Philippines to work," says Suzanne. Suzanne adds that when she left the Philippines six years ago, there was a policy that migrant workers had to be older than 25 years, but now it seems the policy no longer exists.

Women's and migrant workers' rights groups say that while international conventions and bilateral agreements, on paper, may appear to afford migrant workers some protection, they do not address the root cause of why so many people from countries in the South are forced to work as OCWs.

Cecilia Diocson says that globalization of world economies and the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programs on "developing" countries in the South by industrialized countries are ensuring there are few jobs that pay wages to allow people to survive in countries in the South.

"Global economic restructuring is forcing people to seek work abroad," says Diocson. "We believe the root causes of Filipino people leaving the Philippines to work as OCWs are landlessness, poverty, and that there is no industry in our country," says Cecilia Diocson of the Philippine Women Centre.

Cora, a domestic worker in Vancouver, says the Philippine government must change its labour export policies, otherwise the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers will continue. "The Labour Export Policy doesn't really work or help the whole country. Many women are forced to leave the Philippines, their families, their children, just because there are no jobs at home," says Cora. "Unless the Ramos government changes its labour export policy, there will be many more Sarahs, many more Flors."

Suzanne says the government of the Philippines is unwilling to change its labour export policy because migrant workers are a valuable source of money for the government—money that is being used to pay off the country's foreign debt and not to benefit people in the Philippines. Filipino migrant workers contribute US$2 billion each year in remittances back to the Philippine economy. As well she says, migrant workers are required to pay US$125 in order to leave the Philippines to work abroad. And recently, the Ramos government introduced a new policy to collect another US$25 from migrant workers everytime they renew their overseas contracts.

The Philippine Women Centre's Diocson says the solution to prevent the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers is not going to come through international agreements and conventions. What is needed is more national industry, and agrarian and land reform in the Philippines to ensure that Filipinos can work and survive in their home country and not be forced to seek work in other countries.

But in a climate of increasing global economic restructuring—a climate that promotes the creation of a cheap, migrant labour force—the situation for migrant workers will likely only worsen.

Organizers of the rally are calling on as many people as possible to petition the governments of the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates for the acquittal, release and repatriation of Sarah Balabagan. Letters should be sent to: His Excellency Sheikh Zaid Bin al-Nahayan, president, United Arab Emirates; and Fidel Ramos, president, Republic of the Philippines, Malacanang Palace, Manila, Philippines.

For more information on Sarah Balabagan's case and the struggles of migrant workers worldwide, contact the Philippine Women Centre, 1101 E. 59th Ave, Vancouver BC, V5X 1Y8; telephone and fax: (604) 322-9852.

BC Women's Hospital:

No more formula freebies

by Andrea Imada

Canada's largest obstetrical facility has become the first Canadian hospital to refuse corporate handouts from companies selling infant formulas. In mid-September, the BC Women's Hospital in Vancouver announced its decision to begin buying infant formula rather than accept free or low-cost substitutes for mother's milk. The decision is one step in the hospital's program to promote breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding advocates welcomed the move, but stressed the importance of combining the buying decision with breastfeeding education and training among health care workers, who are often the sole information source for pregnant women and mothers.

"The vision and leadership shown by the BC Women's Hospital has set an example for hospitals across Canada," said Elizabeth Sterken of Infant Feeding Action Coalition (INFACT). "Hopefully, this move will serve as a catalyst for implementation of policies and practices that will assure infants the best start in life, and guarantee mothers a supportive environment to exercise their choice to breastfeed."

Renee Hefti, a director of the BC Breastfeeding Society, has campaigned for years to end the practice of corporate formula handouts. "This was a very ethical decision," Hefti said when the announcement was made. "It's a real victory for babies and it's a real victory for mothers who have been trying to breastfeed."

In addition to offering free supplies to hospitals, formula manufacturers have directed promotional and marketing efforts at health care and maternity workers who advise pregnant women. Women who switch to infant formula, a practice which often begins in the hospital, eventually find their milk production will stop and then they will have no choice but to continue to use breast milk substitutes. Studies show that replacing mother's milk with infant formula results in greater health risks to the child and mother. As well, there is the financial cost of buying formula.

Malnutrition, infections, diarrheal diseases and reduced immunity in infants are some of the health impacts associated with the substitution of formula for mother's milk. Studies have also found that women who breastfeed reduce the risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

Free supplies of commercial formula in hospitals is only one of several systemic stumbling blocks faced by women who choose to breastfeed. The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) has identified "lack of maternity leave, inadequate support from family, health workers and employers, inappropriate hospital practices, bad work conditions, and misinformation from the infant food industry" as some of the obstacles faced by women who breastfeed.

The BC Women's Hospital's decision brings it one step closer to earning the "Baby-Friendly Hospital" designation sponsored by the World Health Organization and UNICEF. The joint project aims to reduce infant mortality and improve health through "a global effort to rehabilitate a breastfeeding environment beginning with hospitals and maternity services."

The "Baby-Friendly Hospital" designation demands a series of 10 components including training for health care providers; information, education and training for pregnant women about breastfeeding; and policies to encourage breastfeeding in the hospital and its continued use after women leave the hospital.

In 1990 at the World Summit for Children, national governments—including Canada—promised action to help stop the trend towards use of infant formula and away from breastfeeding. The Summit also agreed that distribution of free or subsidized infant formulas in maternity units should be ended by 1995.

Canada continues to lag behind other countries. Worldwide, over 1,000 hospitals have been designated "Baby-Friendly Hospitals." As well, an estimated 14,000 hospitals in the South are changing procedures to support breastfeeding. And given that BC Women's Hospital is the first hospital to stop distributing free formula, it is unlikely that Canada will meet the 1995 target deadline.

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- **fundraising activities to secure the organization**
- **public education on violence against women**

...among other things

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These jobs call for a commitment to ending violence against women, anti-violence organizing and experience, creative feminist leadership, initiative, flexibility, stamina, giving and taking supervision, and a willingness to work collectively in a group that has a largely volunteer membership. To take the job is to make a commitment to the long term strength and stability of the organization.

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We are especially, but not only interested in applications from first nations women, women of colour, and working class women.
Full time pay is $31,000 per year plus benefits and one month's paid holiday. We are open to the possibility of job sharing.

Please apply in writing to 77 East 20th Ave, Vancouver, BC V5V 1L7.
Applications close November 15, 1995.

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter
77 East 20th Ave
Vancouver
BC V5V 1L7

United Nations 4th World Conference on Women:

Overview from Huairou and Beijing

by Fatima Jaffer

In late August, women from around the world began to converge on China for the start of United Nations Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Women's Forum—August 30th to September 8th—in Huairou, and the 4th World Conference on Women—September 4th to 15th—in Beijing. The two meetings brought together the largest number of women ever to discuss women's rights and organize strategies and actions for achieving women's equality.

*In our upcoming two issues—November 1995 and December/January 1996—*Kinesis *will be including special supplements with news, interviews, analysis, and commentary highlighting the events and outcomes of the NGO Forum and world conference.*

Thirty thousand women came to Beijing and Huairou, China on August 30th, and over the course of the next 16 days, we talked, debated, challenged each other, celebrated, complained, laughed and cried, protested, strategized, workshopped, saw the local sights and shopped. By September 15th, the historic meeting of the largest gathering of women ever was over and most women returned to their countries with "post-Beijing musings" as diverse as the women who attended.

There are mixed reviews about what came out of the NGO Forum. The general feeling is that we won't know what impact the Forum will have had on women's organizing and movements for social change until years after Huairou—but that opinion was not shared by all. Many women felt the gathering was important in building on the global networks that began to gel following the last world conference on women in Naroibi, Kenya ten years ago. For most women attending, the NGO Forum offered a look at what is happening in women's movements today globally, and gave us an opportunity to see where the global women's movement is going.

There is also uncertainty as to the final outcome of the official world conference, attended primarily by government officials and some NGO delegates. The main function of the conference was to work on the Platform for Action—the policy document outlining priority areas for action towards the advancement of women's equality. The Platform discussed at the Beijing conference is intended to review, update and appraise Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000—the document that was produced at the Nairobi conference.

Not surprisingly, the NGO Forum proved to be more useful, interesting and accessible than the official conference. The conference was often times alienating, frustrating, and not woman-friendly at all. This opinion was common among other NGO (and even the governmental) women at the conference, even for those who were experienced at participating in UN conferences.

The official "UN-speak" used at the conference and the formal, "malestream" structure of the UN make it difficult to be certain about what actually went down at the conference or how the Platform for Action will be translated by world governments into any real advances for women.

The NGO Forum was by no means perfect—among other things, there were some logistical problems that had to be worked out. The Forum site was physically inaccessible to women with disabilities and some older women. The women with disabilities' tent and many of their workshops were located a long way from the central communication and meeting areas. Prompt and concerted protests by international coalitions of women with disabilities resulted in their tent being relocated to an area near the core of the Forum site, special on-site transportation being provided, and other changes which facilitated the participation of women with disabilities at a world conference in unprecedented ways.

Contrary to corporate media reports globally that participants at the NGO Forum were so caught in a logistical quagmire, so awash in mud and besieged by draconian Chinese security guards that we never got down to work, women did get a lot done.

Two main things were happening at the Forum: women were in dialogue with each other—discussing, sharing, workshopping and planning for the future—around the particular issue areas they work in on a daily basis; and women were working together to set the agenda and strategies for influencing world leaders to ensure the language women want will be included in the Platform for Action.

Each day in Huairou began with plenaries and workshops, and ended with cultural activities and formal and informal gatherings and discussions.

Daily plenaries were held on five critical areas of concern: political participation; globalization of the economy; media, culture and communication; the rise of conservatism in its many forms; and peace, human security, and the effects of militarization. Getting work done was hindered by space limitations—plenaries were held in a hall that could accomodate only 1,500 women, which restricted the ability of most Forum delegates to participate in these broader strategizing and planning sessions.

Over 5,000 workshops on the 12 theme areas, identified by Forum participants, were held over the course of the ten-day NGO Forum. These areas covered the economy; governance and politics; human/legal rights; peace and human security; education; health; environment; spirituality and religion; science and technology; media, arts and culture; race and ethnicity; and youth.

The diversity and number of workshops offered choices and created dilemmas for women. For example, on the first day, between 9 and 11am, there were 129 workshops offered simultaneously. It was difficult to narrow down which workshop to go to—many women could find at least 30 they wanted to attend.

Most of the workshops were overflowing with women from different regions of the world, so if you didn't get there early, you'd miss the chance to participate. But that didn't mean the morning was a total loss...it then gave you the chance to head over, past the Global and Youth Tents, to catch the panel in the Peace Tent on "Peace Reconciliation" by the Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace.

If you had missed too much of the panel talk, you could still go check out the World Posters exhibitions at the Exhibition Hall. And if you couldn't decide on where you wanted to be, you'd miss out on everything. That happened to everyone at some point.

There were daily on-site demonstrations on a range of issues. Groups of women demonstrated against nuclear testing by the French in the Pacific; women marched against Japan, demanding compensation for the Japanese Army's use of Korean women as "comfort women" during World War II; and every morning, Iranian women now living in exile performed symbolic stonings to illustrate political violence against women by the religious fundamentalist regime in Iran.

The Women In Black—primarily women from the Asian region—held a moving, silent tribute to women survivors and victims of male violence one evening. Canada's National Action Committee on the Status of Women co-organized a demonstration against the economic policies of Group of Seven countries (leading industrialized nations). The demonstration was aimed at the Structural Adjustment Programs in the South and the dismantling of social systems in the North, and brought together delegates from some 60 "first" and "third" world groups.

A couple of times over the Forum's ten days, women unfurled banners commemorating students killed by Chinese army during a pro-democracy demonstration in Tienanmen Square in Beijing in 1989. These commemorations went relatively unchallenged by on-site Chinese security agents. Protests against China's occupation of Tibet did provoke some response by Chinese security, but there were no serious repercussions against protesters in the short run.

One of the largest demonstrations on site was the Lesbian Visibility March on September 5th. Thousands of lesbians and lesbian-positive women from every region of the world marched over every inch of the site, provoking displays of support or derision from others at the Forum. Indeed over the course of the ten days, the Lesbian tent—despite being located in a peripheral part of the site—attracted a disproportionate amount of attention from both media and Forum participants, which tent organizers saw as successful consciousness raising and a tribute to lesbian organizing at the Forum.

Probably, the greatest success of the NGO Forum was the depth and breadth of the challenge to the rise of conservatism globally in its many forms—religious, nationalist, racial/ethnic and homophobic; particularly religious and homophobic conservatism.

Muslim women were the most vocal in their challenge of various forms of violence against women in the name of religion in Islamic countries. Among the protesters, there was a surprisingly large number of women who openly reject religion altogether and who are organizing both within and outside of Islamic countries against Islamic fundamentalism and its abuses against women. These women demonstrated publicly despite the risks to their own personal safety.

There was also a strong presence of Christian fundamentalists on site—for example, the anti-choice propaganda film *The Silent Scream* played hourly at one venue every day of the Forum. However, the challenge to them by Western anti-fundamentalist activists was not as visible nor as strong as the anti-Islamic fundamentalist protests. There was also surprising silence from anti-fundamentalism activists from India on the rise of and response to religious fundamentalism in India.

In light of the amount of activity and work at the Forum, it was interesting to see the amazing disparity in the kind of media we were getting internationally. The focus of corporate media reports on logistical problems at the Forum site were baffling. We heard that delegates awash in rain and mud, were being hounded by security guards at the Forum; were under constant surveillance by Chinese secret service agents; were forced to use unsanitary toilets; lacked adequate food, shelter and transportation...

There was mud and rain, but the toilets were clean and the food—which one had to line up for—ranged from good to bad. In fact, the logistical problems were no more than to be expected of a gathering of tens of thousands of women focussed on changing the status quo in a country which, like most others, is averse to tolerating alternate views on social, economic and political matters.

Some women did express regret, saying how completely ignorant they felt about what was going on in the other parts of the Forum site or in other issue areas because of the enormous number of things happening at the same time and because they were concentrating on their particular issue area all the time and workshopping with the same women.

But overall, there was lots that was positive that happened at the NGO Forum, including an enormous amount of organizing. Women filled workshop spaces, celebrated victories with each other, shared stories of experiences since the Nairobi conference, and much more.

Fatima Jaffer represented Kinesis as a member of the Canada-Beijing Facilitating Committee team to the Huairou NGO Forum. She wrote this story while on a post-Beijing, fact-finding holiday in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Women's monument update:

Marker of change: women's monument project underway

by *Kinesis* Writer

The building of a granite monument in Vancouver to serve as a reminder of male violence against women is a few steps closer to becoming a reality.

In September, the Women's Monument Project (WMP) received a major contribution in the form of over 70 tons of Laurentian pink granite—the amount needed to construct the monument. The granite was donated by the Rock of Ages granite quarry in Beebe, Quebec.

As well, the Vancouver Parks Board gave approval to the design of the monument, clearing the way for the monument to be built in Thornton Park. Construction of the monument is expected to begin next summer.

Called "Marker of Change," the monument will serve as a permanent memorial to the 14 women murdered at Montreal's L'Ecole Polytechnique on December 6, 1989 by an anti-feminist man. The monument will also be dedicated to all women who are victims of male violence.

The Women's Monument Project was initiated 5 years ago by a collective of women. Christine McDowell, one of the original members of the collective, says that the murders in Montreal shocked many women as to the extent of male violence against women.

"I was so afraid after the 14 women were massacred, and it really opened my eyes to the murdering of women and to the fact that men were getting more violent," says McDowell. The collective came up with the idea of creating a monument after realizing that there were no permanent markers remembering the lives of women who have been killed by men.

"Marker of Change"—designed by Beth Alber—will consist of 14 benches made of pink granite arranged in a 300 foot circle. The inner side of each bench will bear the name of each of the 14 women killed at L'Ecole Polytechnique. The top surface of each bench will have a slight indentation or reservoir where rainwater will gather in a symbolic pool of tears or memory. And the names of thousands of donors will be inscribed in the clay paving brick which will surround the granite forms.

Alber, a Toronto silversmith and artist, was chosen through a national competition to design the monument. She says that pink granite from Quebec was key to the piece, adding that the fact the quarry which donated the granite is near Montreal just adds to the significance.

Suzanne Laplante-Edward, whose daughter Anne-Marie was one of the 14 women killed, adds that the donation "brings the monument one huge step closer to reality." She and Alber had approached Rock of Ages about a donation.

With two-thirds of the required funding now in place—the total cost is $390,000—and the final design approval from the Parks Board, it seems that the monument project is well on its way is, indeed, close to becoming a reality. Construction is planned to begin next summer.

Getting there, however, has not been an easy road. In 1993, the Women's Monument Project was bombarded with a tirade of criticism—by a number of mostly male, mainstream media columnists—who charged that the monument was anti-male *[see* Kinesis, *September 1993]*.

The backlash, which often reached hysterical proportions, was aimed at the proposed inscription that will read: "In memory and in grief/for all the women murdered by men/for women of all countries, all classes, all ages, all colours/We, their sisters and brothers/remember, and work for a better world." The monument's detractors zeroed in on the words "for all the women murdered by men," charging that the words imply that all men are murderers.

Not surprisingly, there were also attempts to pit women against each other by distorting and manipulating concerns and comments about the project made by women from the women's community and elsewhere.

But Project organizers held firm to the wording of the dedication, which was proposed in response to concerns among some women's groups that the monument should acknowledge not only the 14 women killed at L'Ecole Polytechnique, but all women killed by men.

McDowell says the Project organizers are pleased that the Park Board took a stand and accepted the original inscription without forcing any changes.

The Park Board has also made a commitment to upgrade Thornton Park to make it more accessible and safe. Thornton Park is being readied for the monument's arrival, with new lighting, pathways and turf expected to be installed as part of an upgrade and restoration project. McDowell says the changes "will increase the safety of women in the area, an issue about which we are deeply concerned."

"The Park Board has taken advantage of a unique opportunity to improve Thornton Park," Park Board Commissioner Donna Morgan said. "I am very pleased, especially with the added lighting which will make the park safer for everyone. And the new pathways and turf will complement the beauty of the existing trees."

Although construction of the monument is expected to begin sometime in 1996, work will not start until all funding has been secured. So far, various fundraising initiatives have raised about $250,000 of the total $390,000.

The Project has received donations from over 5,000 individuals, as well as from Vancouver City Savings, the BC Ministries of Women's Equality and Attorney General, Canada Council, BC Hydro, and Nancy Jackman. Sumas Clay in Abbotsford has also committed to donating the bricks for the circle of donors.

In December, the organizers will be hosting a Filmathon—Reel Change: Towards a Day Without Violence—from which they hope to raise another $100,000.

For more information about the Filmathon or to make a donation to the Project write to: the Women's Monument Project, c/o Capilano college, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, B.C. V7J 3H5; or call Christine McDowell or Loreen Bennett at (604) 986-1911 local 2078. Tax receipts will be issued for donations over $10.

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Dismantling of social programs in Ontario:

The cuts keep coming

by Kay Ray

In June, when Ontario's Progressive Conservatives, led by Mike Harris, defeated Bob Rae's beleaguered New Democratic Party in the provincial election, they did so with a campaign promising to cut back on government spending and social programs. The Conservatives had campaigned on a platform that employed racist and sexist stereotypes about poor people, welfare recipients and employment equity programs. Calling his plan an effort to restore dignity to Ontarians, Harris labeled his agenda the "Common Sense Revolution" [see Kinesis July/Aug 1995].

Now, in the name of 'common sense,' Ontario residents are witnessing the latest wave of intolerance and welfare bashing that avoids real discussion about joblessness, underfunding of training programs, and lack of jobs in the province.

Within 30 days of taking office, Harris dismantled employment equity programs and slashed $2.25 billion from Ontario's $6.3 billion annual social assistance budget. The cuts systematically attack women, poor people, children and the agencies that service their needs.

Mike Harris would have us believe these are tough choices in a province that will become a "kinder, gentler and fairer" place under his leadership. Ontario residents now are asking the question—kinder and gentler for whom? Not poor people, not women, not children, not immigrants or refugees—all of whom are being scapegoated for the recession, job loss and government debt.

It is not surprising that Harris's first major fiscal move was to announce massive cuts to social assistance. During his election campaign, the Conservatives played up the image of the lazy mother who lounges comfortably on welfare, while having endless numbers of children. Unfortunately, many voters accepted this as truth.

On October 1st, Harris will cut social assistance rates across the board by 21.5 percent. The cuts will apply not only to individuals collecting General Welfare assistance, but also to all single parents who receive Family Benefits.

Marnie Hayes of Neighbourhood Legal Service in Toronto says that these cuts mean a single parent with a child under 12, currently receiving $1,221 per month, will only get $957.00—a loss of more than $250. In a city, such as Toronto, where downtown rents average about $750 per month, a single parent with one child will now have only about $6.50 per day left over to pay for food, clothing, transportation and entertainment.

After October 1st, many women may be forced into making the choice between paying the rent and eating. Women and children who depend on food banks will be turning to them even earlier in the month, and food banks and other support agencies may have to decide who to turn away if they don't have enough food to offer.

Recent comments by the minister of community and social services made it very clear that the Conservative government does not have any understanding of the root causes of poverty. In late September, David Tsubouchi suggested that poor people could manage with the 21 percent cut in social assistance, if they just shopped wisely by buying dented cans or food in bulk.

Women will also have no guarantees that the amount they pay for housing won't skyrocket. The Conservative government is considering removing rent controls and opening up housing to the whims of the "free market." In taking a further swipe at affordable housing, Mike Harris cancelled a number of social housing projects—including a 300 unit coop housing project in Toronto that was already midway through completion.

For single mothers, childcare may become even less accessible. Those who work in daycares say they expect Harris to announce funding cuts to licensed daycares in his next budget, which will result in a reduction in the number of licensed daycare spots and a limitation on daycare subsidies available.

Service agencies will also be facing the dichotomy of handling an increase in demand for their services, while at the same time bracing themselves for deeps cuts in provincial funding. The Harris government is proposing cuts to community service organizations to the tune of five to 25 percent. Given that many organizations receive matching funds from federal sources, the total loss could amount to double Harris' proposed cuts.

Harris also delivered a blow to social equality in Ontario with the immediate dismantling of the province's employment equity law. The legislation, implemented under the NDP government, required private companies with more than 50 employees to establish hiring quotas.

The demise of Ontario's employment equity was welcomed by some disgruntled voters who bought into the sexist and racist stereotypes employed by the Conservatives which suggests that employment equity allows unfit and under-qualified people—namely, people of colour, First Nations people, people with disabilities and women—to be favoured over more qualified white men.

The Harris' government returned to defining employment equity as "equal opportunity" for all people—a definition that does not take into account the historical, systemic and ongoing discrimination against certain communities of people. The small number of gains made by women, people with disabilities, Aboriginal people and people of colour during the NDP's time in office will soon be eroded.

In another move that further undermines the work prospects for poor people in the province, Harris cancelled JobsOntario—an employment training program for people on social assistance. And with the proposed workfare for people receiving social assistance—otherwise they will be cut off—it also appears Harris is intent on creating a pool of low-wage labour.

In human terms, the effect of all Harris' cuts to social and employment programs—and there are more to come—is devastating and those who bear the burden of these cuts are a disproportionate number of women and children.

In late September, Harris kept one of his campaign promises by announcing cuts in provincial taxes. The tax cut is based on a percentage decrease, so Ontarians with higher incomes will benefit more than those with lower incomes. Even though Ontarians will be able to keep more of their income, the question that needs to be answered is: what will these tax savings amount to if people are faced with user fees in the health care system, a jump in rents, the possible loss of daycare spaces and subsidies? There are also rumours that Harris will bring in user fees for library services as well as parks. Given all the cuts to social assistance, the increased cost to individuals for services following cutbacks in government funding, the proposed introduction of user fees, and so on...whether or not the tax cuts will result in any real savings—except for wealthier people—is unclear.

Women's and anti-poverty groups and social service agencies in Ontario are doing more than just bracing themselves for increased caseloads, evictions and hunger when the cuts come in October. Forging coalition between women's, anti-poverty, progressive goups and unions to challenge the Harris government has been an ongoing effort.

To lead the fight back against the Conservative government's budget cuts targetting women, immigrants and poor people, a coalition of groups formed the Embarrass Harris Campaign. The coalition of more than 30 women's, anti-poverty, progressive and labour groups—including Women Working with Immigrant Women, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, the Toronto Coalition Against Racism (TCAR), the Toronto Direct Action Committee (TDAC) and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP)—has been organizing actions since the first in a series of cuts were announced in July.

The Embarrass Harris Campaign has so far organized a demonstration outside of Queen's Park—the home of the provincial legislature—on the day the Harris government was sworn into office, and is continuing to strategize and mobilize people—including members of the opposition parties—to oppose Harris' plans to dismantle social services and programs in Ontario.

As Harris is preparing to release his government's first mini-budget, women and poor people in Ontario are expecting another round of cuts that will further undermine their survival and economic well-being. With Mike Harris' war on poor people rather than on poverty, community organizers face one of their greatest challenges.

As Kinesis goes to press, the Ontario legislature opens for another session and the Embarass Harris Campaign is planning to march on Queen's Park to protest the Conservative government's regressive social policies and budget cuts.

For more information on the campaign against the Conservative government's cuts, contact the Embarrass Harris Campaign at (416) 778-8578, or the Toronto Direct Action Committee, 249 Sherbourne St. Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2R9; tel: (416) 925-6939.

Kay Ray is a writer and educator, living in Ontario, who expects to be affected by the Harris agenda in all aspects of her life.

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Status of women in Canada:

Where's the improvement?

Canada went to Beijing for the 4th World Conference on Women to present itself as a leader in the fight for women's rights. In Beijing, the Canadian government delegation—led by secretary of state for the Status of Women, Sheila Finestone—was touted as an key instigator for pressing other national governments to adopt the Platform for Action—the document outlining priority areas towards advancing women's equality.

Feminist activists in Canada say the federal government is being contradictory by claiming to be a global leader in the advancement of women's equality, while in the meantime cutting back heavily on social programs—these cutbacks do little to support women's equality and, in fact, undermine the status of women.

According to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), the situation for women in Canada has not improved over the last decade,—since the last World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya—rather it has regressed. In its summary report prepared for the Beijing conference—*A Decade of Deterioration in the Status of Women in Canada*—NAC highlights areas in which women have lost ground in the struggle for equality and social justice. The report was released on September 6th—the International Day of Action for Women's Equality—in Beijing by NAC president Sunera Thobani and at press conferences in several cities across Canada.

Cenen Bagon, NAC's BC Regional chair, spoke at the press conference held in Vancouver on the situation for women in Canada and NAC's work in mobilizing women to stop the dismantling of Canada's social safety net and resist the attack on women's rights. Here is an excerpt from her speech:

"We are greatly alarmed by the erosion of the gains women have made in Canada on the issue of equality. In 1970, United Nations ranked Canada was ranked second when the status of women was taken into account in the United Nations Human Development Report. In 1995, Canada is ranked number nine.

"When women's wages are compared to men's Canada ranks 47th out of 55. Where women make up 60 percent of all minimum wage earners, the value of the minimum wage decreased by 48 percent between 1976 and 1992.

"In the midst of increasing violence against women, our federal government refuses to fund women's centres and sexual assault centres. Those centres which receive government funds continually face cuts every federal budget announcement.

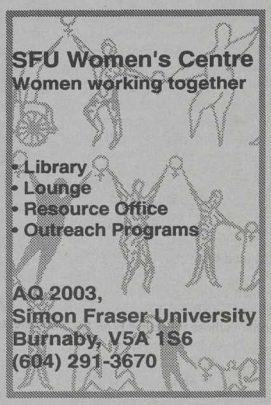
"Under the proposed Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), transfer payments from the federal government to the provinces will be cut drastically which will mean "further erosion of our medicare, education and social service programs—programs which can only barely meet the current needs of most women and their families.

"And there are shocking statistics of how many women and children live in poverty, especially women with disabilities. Currently, 60.6 percent of all families living in poverty are headed by single mothers, and one million children live in poverty; 80 percent of women with disabilities earned $10,000 or less in 1994 with almost 60 percent of these women reporting no income at all.

"The Canadian government regresses also in its immigration policies, especially in its imposition of $975 head tax, the proposed sponsorship bond of $10,000, the proposed user's fees for settlement services, and the domestic workers' continuing vulnerability to exploitation due to the requirements of the Live-in Caregiver Program.

"In this climate of conservatism in Canada, racism and sexism are on the rise. And in this climate where our government fully embraces the dictates of the multinational corporations and the international financial institutions, the government's status of women report card rates a total failure—especially so, when the corporate agenda has become the 'national' interest and women's equality a 'special' interest."

To obtain a copy of A Decade of Deterioration, *contact NAC: address #203-234 Eglinton Avenue East, Toronto, Ontario, M4P 1K5; fax: (416) 932-0646; toll free phone: 1-800-665-5124. The cost of the report is $3. To find out about NAC's campaign for Social Justice and Equality, contact the Toronto NAC office, or call Cenen Bagon in Vancouver at (604) 876-4119.*



On September 6th, millions of women worldwide gathered, organized, demonstrated and celebrated in a show of strength and solidarity in the struggle for women rights everywhere. The International Day of Action for Women's Equality marked the culmination of the 180 Days/180 Ways Campaign, which began on March 8th—International Women's Day—and which called for a 180 degree reversal of the regressive trends that threaten progress towards women's equality *[see Kinesis Sept 1995]*.

In Canada, women from Newfoundland to British Columbia took part in the Day of Action with protests, ceremonies, street theatre, media events, and a Women's Tent City (in Toronto), among other events. And thousands of women rallied and marched through the streets in more than 50 cities and towns across the country to Take Back the Night and protest violence against women. Vancouver's Take Back the Night [pictured above] drew more than 1,200 women out onto the streets. Photo by Denise Howard

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Movement Matters is designed to be a network of news, updates and information of special interest to the women's movement.
Submissions to Movement Matters should be no more than 500 words, typed, double spaced and may be edited for length. Deadline is the 18th of the month preceding publication.

by Robyn Hall

Press Gang celebrates 20 years

On Saturday November 18, Press Gang Publishers will be hosting a gala literary event to mark its twentieth anniversary of publishing vital and provocative books by women!

Press Gang Publishers was founded in 1970 as a political print shop. It became a woman-only collective in 1974 and branched out to include book publishing the following year.

To celebrate their history and their perseverance, Press Gang Publishers is inviting everyone who was ever involved in Press Gang to come out for this event. This includes early collective members; women who have volunteered or were on staff at Press Gang Printers over the years; women who contributed to anthologies published by Press Gang; all authors of Press Gang books; women who have done freelance work for Press Gang Publishers; artists and photographers whose work has been featured on books; and, of course, friends of the press.

Featured at the anniversary celebration will be readings by authors of Press Gang's new fall titles Larissa Lai, Marion Douglas, Chrystos and Joanne Arnott; a performance by Kiss & Tell; a video by Shani Mootoo; and a musical set by Sandy Scofield.

The event will take place in the Multipurpose Room, Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library, 350 W. Georgia St, Vancouver. Doors open at 7:30pm. The venue is wheelchair accessible. Advance tickets are available at Women in Print, Little Sister's and Octopus Books, $8-15. For more information, call Press Gang Publishers at 876-7787.

Health information for disabled women

The Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute, based in Calgary, has sponsored the production of three pamphlets on health issues, by and for women with disabilities. Publication of the pamphlets was supported, in part, with funding from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, and Alberta's Department of Family and Social Services.

The idea for the pamphlets came from women getting together and relating their experiences with the health care system. Often this system treats women insensitively or abusively, providing inadequate care.

Three pamphlets have been produced, in easy-to-read language, to help women access the health care they need. One pamphlet covers general information about health care, such as how to choose a doctor, what to expect during an annual examination, and what questions to ask about medications.

Another pamphlet focuses on sexuality and women with disabilities, including information on pregnancy, birth control, STD's, lesbian sex, masturbation, self-esteem and abuse. Phone numbers of resources are also included.

The third pamphlet deals with the issues addressed in the other pamphlets but is written for health care providers. The pamphlet covers issues such as physical barriers, communication, privacy and abuse.

The pamphlets are available on audiotape, and a limited number of audiotapes are available on short-term loan from the institute's resource centre, with borrowers asked only to pay for any necessary postage. The pamplets are also available on formatted WordPerfect diskette for the use of women in other locations, so that relevant local information may be inserted. Both audiotape and diskette can be purchased at cost.

For more information, or to be sent pamphlets or to purchase diskettes or audiotapes contact: Janet Pringle, The Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute, Research Department, 3304-33rd St. NW, Calgary, Alberta, T2L 2A6; telephone: (403) 284-1121; fax: (403) 289-6427.

Free legal advice for women

University of British Columbia law students are offering free legal advice to women who cannot afford a lawyer. The Law Students Legal Advice Program (LSLAP) will hold twenty-two neighbourhood clinics throughout the Lower Mainland, including two specialized clinics for women. LSLAP also offers specialized clinics for seniors, First Nations people, Persons with AIDS, and Cantonese and Korean speaking people.

The clinics for women have been established to enable women to get legal advice in an environment that is sensitive to the barriers women face when dealing with the legal system.

At the clinics women can receive advice on a wide variety of issues including welfare, UIC and criminal injury appeals, small claims matters, workers' compensation, wills, landlord-tenant disputes, employer-employee relations, and simple criminal charges. LSLAP also offers a Do-Your-Own-Divorce program which provides a low-cost alternative for those seeking uncontested divorces.

For clinic times and locations or to make an appointment, call 822-5791.

Reproductive technologies resource guide

Uncommon Knowledge: A Critical Guide to Contraception and Reproductive Technologies is now available from Women's Health Interaction and InterPares.

The booklet is a set of "fact sheets" describing reproductive technologies and methods that either inhibit or promote fertility. The technologies are discussed in a feminist framework and use the experiences of women both in the South and the North. The guide emphasizes the potential for abuse of these technologies, especially for population control.

Some of the technologies discussed are those controlled by the individual woman such as fertility awareness, the pill and breast feeding as birth control. Also analyzed are the methods controlled by the health provider, for example, sterilization, Depo Provera, Norplant and IUD's. The booklet also looks at the technologies currently under development, the anti-pregnancy "vaccine" and RU486\PG. The guide is $10 or $8 for orders of ten or more copies.

Also available from InterPares is *In The Name of Development: Exploring Population, Poverty and Development*. This booklet examines the question of whether population control is a development or anti-poverty strategy. The booklet is $6 or $4.50 each for bulk order over 10 copies.

Women's Health Interaction is a volunteer feminist health collective which advocates for women's health and economic justice at regional, national and international levels. InterPares is a Canadian social justice organization which builds relationships with development groups in the South and provides support for community-based programs.

To order either publication write to: Women's Health Interaction and Inter Pares, 58 Arthur Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 7B9.

Women's movement archives in Victoria

Victoria feminists have started up an archive of the women's movement in Victoria, British Columbia. The Victoria Women's Movement Archives is a joint project of the University of Victoria Library, the Department of Women's Studies and the grass-roots activist community. The Archives is housed in the library of the University of Victoria and was officially opened on September 21.

The Archives feature records of groups active in Victoria since the early 1970's period of Second Wave feminist organizing. Some of these groups still function; others have ceased operating. All are part of a rich legacy of feminist activism which serves all women in the Victoria area. The Archives have released documents relating to many of these groups, herstories which had been left languishing in the attics and basements of the homes of Victoria feminists.

The Archives not only provide secure and accessible records for scholars and activists, but will also, more importantly, give women a sense of a wider historical context and pride in the work that has taken place in Victoria.

The idea for the Victoria Women's Movement Archives came out of conversations between Susan Moger, a long-time activist and feminist researcher, and Deborah Yaffe, a women's studies professor at the University of Victoria with roots in the feminist activist community. A number of other women involved with the university's library, the women's studies department, and the local feminist community, were active in making the archive project come together.

Anyone interested in the process of setting up a similar archive in their own community is encouraged to contact Deborah Yaffe at (604)721-6261 (fax: (604)721-7210; email: dyaffe@sol.uvic.ca) or Jane Turner at (604)721-8258 (email: jturner@uvm.uvic.ca). Anyone in the greater Victoria area who thinks she might have suitable material for the Archives should also contact Jane Turner.

Although the Archives are partially funded through the university, donations are still needed to cover some administrative and advertising costs. Anyone able to donate should send cheques, made out to the University of Victoria, to Deborah Yaffe, Department of Women's Studies, University of Victoria, PO Box 3043, Victoria, BC, V8W 3P4. Donations in the amount of $25 or over will receive a tax receipt.

Neighbourhood quilt project

The Kensington Community Centre, in south-east Vancouver is putting together a community quilt this fall. Caffyn Kelley, a local fabric artist and feminist, and the present Artist-in-Residence at the centre, will be coordinating the production of a huge community quilt celebrating the lives of people from the Kensington area.

"There is room for everyone who wants to get involved in the quilt project," says Kelley. She is encouraging people to make fabric squares for the quilt or to contribute photos of people in the neighbourhood or interviews with residents. The deadline for contributing a panel to the quilt is November 12th.

Workshops will also be held for those interested in exploring various techniques for telling stories in fabric. Everyone is welcome, no matter what your age, stage, or skill level, and no workshop costs more than $4.

Anyone interested in participating in the Community Quilt project should drop in or call the Centre. Open houses will be held on Sundays from October 1 to November 12th, 2-4pm at the centre.

For further information on the Quilt project, please contact Caffyn Kelley at the Kensington Community Centre, 5175 Dumfries Street at 37th Avenue, Vancouver, (just east of Knight Road), or at (604) 327-9401.

Canadian AIDS Awareness Week

This year's AIDS Awareness campaign, coordinated by the Canadian AIDS Society, is aimed at addressing the issue of homophobia and AIDS. AIDS Awareness Week runs this year from October 2 to 8.

The Society says it chose the theme because homophobia remains one of the biggest obstacles to an effective, compassionate response to AIDS in Canada. Homophobia and AIDS are so firmly linked in the minds of many Canadians that their response to a person with AIDS is often inseparable to their response to homosexuality.

The Canadian AIDS Society is encouraging individuals and organizations to participate in the annual AIDS Awareness Week by taking action to fight against homophobia and ignorance about AIDS, and to create a better atmosphere of acceptance and understanding for persons with AIDS.

WHAT'S NEWS

by Shannon e. Ash

Ontario opposes lesbian spousal rights

The new Ontario Conservative government is now acting against lesbian partnership rights, reversing earlier action by the former NDP government. In a civil case currently before the Ontario Court's General Division, the Ontario government, acting as an intervenor, is arguing against changing the definition of spouse in the Family Law Act. In 1994, then NDP government Attorney General Marion Boyd, had fought to have the definition changed to include same-sex couples. However, she was unsuccessful.

The current case involves two women who had been in a ten year relationship, until one woman locked the other out of the house and business they had established together. The lawyer for the locked-out woman asked that "two persons" replace "a man and a woman" in the Family Law Act's definition of spouse. This would make the Act's support provisions apply to any couples—same or opposite sex—that had co-habited at least three years.

The government's lawyer Robert Charney, along with the defendant's lawyer, is asking that the claim for support be dismissed. Charney says that, the support rules were intended to benefit women in heterosexual relationships who are financially dependent on their husbands and not same sex couples. In restricting the definition of spouse to exclude lesbians and gay men, the assumption is that there is less likelihood of a financially dependent spouse in a same-sex relationship. In supporting the government's position, Charney referred to the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in May that supported the exclusion of a gay male couple from receiving Old Age Security spousal benefits *[see* Kinesis *July/August 1995]*.

The government's lawyer contends that it is not necessary to change the definition of spouse because a judge could still remedy a dispute between lesbian and gay partners under the current family law system. Charney says a judge, after establishing "unjust enrichment" of one of the lesbian or gay partners, could order that person to pay financial remedies or support to the other person.

Judge returns gun to abusive man

A North Vancouver judge changed a probation order for a Whistler man convicted of assaulting his wife, allowing him to get back one of his firearms held by the RCMP. When the man was arrested in November 1994 for assaulting his wife, police seized 14 firearms from his home.

He plead guilty and was given a one-year probation term. One condition of his probation was that he was not to possess firearms. But when the man applied to have one rifle returned for hunting, his request was approved by Judge Walker of the Squamish provincial court, despite opposition from the RCMP.

The man's estranged wife and her daughter (the father is alleged to have assaulted her as well) had already moved out of the area, fearing for their safety. They have been notified of this latest development.

The ruling sends a negative message to women who are assaulted by their husbands and male partners. Corporal David Little of the RCMP, says the ruling may deter more women from pressing charges for assault. "Here we are, trying to convince these women to come in and testify, that they don't have to take the crap that they've been taking. We want them to feel safe, but how can they? Women have every right to be upset about this."

Cuts to immigration staffing

Workers with Canada's Immigration Department are bracing themselves for massive job losses. The department has announced that almost 1100 full-time staff members will be laid off as the federal government shifts to a greater reliance on computer technology. Most of the cuts—over 800—will come from application-processing units, but there will also be cuts at regional and national headquarters. The department currently employs 4500 people.

Centralized offices will process routine applications by mail, despite the fact there has been criticism of a current centralized office in Alberta.

Use of centralized and computerized services means that applicants themselves will be required to do more work in gathering and preparing documents for a visa. The bonus of this system the department contends is that it anticipates the processing time to be greatly reduced.

To facilitate the use of computer technology, immigrants will soon be required to carry identity cards. The cards contain a digitized photo and an identifying mark, such as fingerprints. Immigration officials say the move will save the department $54 million from its annual budget—the department's total budget is almost $600 million.

The poor get poorer

According to a poll conducted in August, 52 per cent of Canadians say they have been finding it harder to make ends meet—up from 38 per cent in a 1989 poll. Nearly two-thirds of households with pre-tax incomes below $30,000 are feeling more financial pressure, while only 42 percent of families with incomes of $60,000 or more said they were finding times more difficult.

Other national statistics have indicated that the incomes of poorer families have taken the sharpest dive. The median income of families fell 2.9 percent after inflation between 1992 and 1993. Even worse off were single parent families—90 percent of which are headed by women. Single moms saw their family income drop, taking into account inflation, by 8.6 percent over that period.

It won't be getting any better for single mothers and poorer families, as the federal and provincial governments' slashing of social programs will surely drive down their family income levels even more.

World Bank counts (live) trees

The World Bank now admits that GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is "grossly inadequate" as a measure of the wealth of a nation, because it fails to take into account the long-term sustainability of a country's economy and future potential.

When using the measure of GDP, Canadians rank 16th in the world with an average per capita income of $20,670US. But under the new system of calculation—which takes into account natural and human resources [the earth and people] as assets which need to be maintained and "developed,"—the wealth of each Canadian jumps to over $704,000US.

Ironically, at a time when the federal and provincial governments are cutting programs to support development of people, some economists are saying that the "new wealth calculations confirm that a country's human assets are the only guarantee of its future well-being."

Under the old system these resources were not counted except as products. For example, unharvested forests [live trees and ecosystems] were not counted, whereas harvested forests [dead trees] were. Cutting trees would "depreciate assets", unless the profits are used to improve human resources [give people education and health services]. The factors used to calculate GDP actually account for less than 20 percent of real overall wealth.

The question now is, when will women see our fair share of this nation's wealth.

Kitchen Table Press ransacked

New York-based Kitchen Table: Women of Colour Press is trying to recoup its losses in the face of robbery and vandalism at its Brooklyn offices. Staff at the progressive publishing house arrived one morning in late July to find the office ransacked. Among the items stolen were computers, a printer, fax machine, typewriter, telephones, television and a refrigerator.

"It's really devastating," said Andrea Lockett, publisher for the 14-year-old press. The thieves had ripped through padlocks, doors and locks to gain access to the press offices.

Kitchen Table is known in the women's community for publishing books such as *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color; I Am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities; Cuentos: Stories by Latinas;* and *The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism.*

The publishing house is hoping to raise over $8,000, and is seeking in-kind donations of equipment and office supplies, in order to keep the press operating.

Monetary donations can be sent to Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, PO Box 40-4920, Brooklyn, NY 11240-4920. For in-kind donations, please call (718) 935-1082.

Information from Sojourner: The Women's Forum, September 1995.

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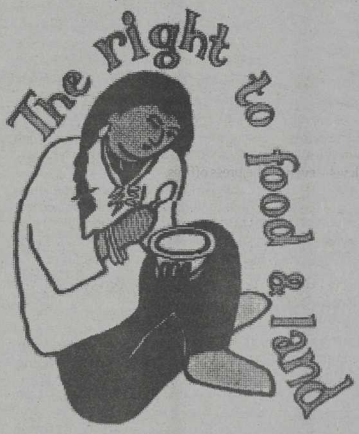
Women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside:

Policies leading to more poverty

by Dibetle Masemola

Earlier this year, Canada's parliament passed a new bill titled Bill C-76 which will come into effect on April 1, 1996. Under this new bill, the Canada Assistance Plan—which guarantees Canadians the right to social services and welfare, among other things—will be eliminated. These changes will have a profound impact on poor people and working class communities throughout Canada.

Nowhere in BC will these changes have more of an impact than among the women residing in the community of the Downtown Eastside in



Vancouver—an area largely concentrated around Main and Hastings streets. In terms of per capita income, the Downtown Eastside is the poorest community in Canada. Although a predominantly male population, women make up 27% of the residents (1991 Census).

The majority of women in the Downtown Eastside live well below the poverty line and are largely dependent on social assistance. The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre says that a 1989 survey of sixty women living in the Downtown Eastside indicated that the source of income in 92% of instances recorded, was income assistance in the form of GAIN or GAIN for Handicapped.

Multiplicity of issues have been and are the cause and effect of extreme poverty for these women. The issues most widely articulated by the women are continuous lack of employment; inadequate housing and homelessness; addictions and other health problems; violence and abuse; child apprehension; and mistreatment by the ministry of social services and its staff. First Nations women and women of colour—who make up a smaller percentage of the population, albeit a highly visible one—also face racism daily from social services, the police, landlords, as well as other residents.

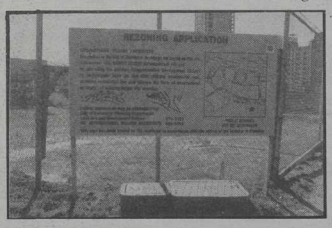
Many women say they fear the worst once this new social policy comes into effect. The current monthly income received from social services does not adequately provide for basic needs.

Women are expected to survive on only $542 (approx) for a single person or $975 (approx) for a single parent with one child per month, a grossly inadequate amount. Basic necessities such as reading materials, music, phones, bus tickets or movies are a luxury.

As stated earlier, one of the major issues for women in the community is lack of affordable housing. With few options available in housing, most of the women have had to resort to living in the so called hotels, which are single room dwellings with communal washrooms. Most of these hotels lack basic amenities such as a stove, fridge or proper bedding. Security is also a major problem because doors leading to suites and washrooms are constantly broken and left unmended for long periods at a time. Many of the women complained of lack of safety for themselves and their belongings.

Alternative housing such as Co-ops is not being seriously addressed by the three levels of government. The Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA), an agency focusing on housing issues in the area, has been actively lobbying for affordable housing co-ops in the neighbourhood. Bridge Housing Society, another agency also focusing on that issue, is planning to build a housing co-op for women, but this will only make a small dent in the amount of housing needed.

According to a report written by the Women's Centre, "As of March of 1992, DERA had 3,984 applications on their active list" for affordable housing. Meanwhile, the city of Vancouver has approved development of several condominiums in the area. Marion Dubick, a worker at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, says "these condos being developed are not for poor people...these developers have no interest in building affordable housing, they're more interested in making money. The government doesn't seem to care. Housing is a nightmare in this community."



Common signs of "development" in Vancouver's downtown eastside.
Photo by Leanne Johnson

Activists and agencies working within the community forsee disastrous results when Bill C-76 comes into effect. Eliminating basic economic human rights guaranteed under the Canada Assistance Plan such as:

. the right to income when in need;

. the right to an amount of income that takes into account budgetary requirements;

. the right to appeal decisions about welfare that they think are unfair; and

. the right not to have to work or train for welfare

will increase the poverty and vulnerability of people in the Downtown Eastside.

Many women feel the government is playing into the corporate right-wing agenda of blaming the deficit and budget problems on social programs and the people who use them, especially poor people. This has created a climate that is anti-poor people, anti-working class people, anti-immigrant...and in this climate things can only get worse.

Dibetle Masemola is an African woman, activist, temporarily living in Vancouver. She is currently organizing with women of the Downtown Eastside. She would like to thank all the women who contributed to this report.

Graphics by Laiwan

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside:

Women speak of the neighbourhood

as told to Dibetle Masemola

Kinesis *had the opportunity to speak with four women who live in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, and who use the services at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. The women have offered to share their thoughts, concerns and personal experiences about living in the Downtown Eastside. They touch on a number of issues which affect women in the community—issues such as housing, unemployment, drug and alchohol addictions, child apprehension and racism, to name a few. Their stories do not claim to represent an entire picture of the Downtown Eastside but they offer a perspective that is too often ignored. The women chose to be interviewed separately, rather than tell their stories as part of a group discussion. In the interest of their privacy and safety, all four women are using pseudonyms.*

Interview with Frances

Dibetle: What are the most important issues for you?

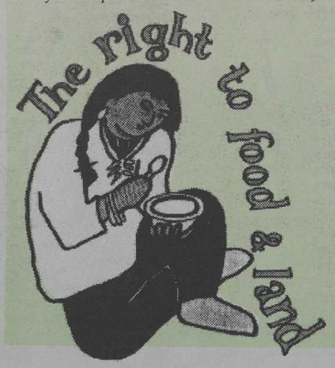
Frances: Safety. Personal safety. On the street. A place to stay. A place for women to be especially during the day. It's not nice to stay in your room all the time. The women's centre is definitely a good place to come to for me. When I was first came down here, I didn't know about the women's centre really and I just kind of tried to depend on my friends. But they were people with problems so you couldn't really depend on them. When I did find out about the women's centre I thought it was great. You come here and you have a place to relax and you're out of your hotel room and you get a break from looking at four walls.

Dibetle: What are some of the problems you personally face daily?

Frances: I have a problem with alchohol and it seems that I drink sometimes just for the sake of drinking. I know a lot of other people who drink for the sake of drinking, just because there's not much else to do. Walking down the street to Carnegie, you're constantly harrassed by people on drugs. There's people there who'll take advantage of you if you're drunk and vulnerable. That happened to me once. It really changed my attitude about being down here and thinking that nobody could hurt me...but one slight provocation and they're on you like that. I basically keep to myself down here. I talk to the women in the women's centre. It's a safe place and they have good references and information.

Dibetle: What are your specific concerns as a first Nation woman?

Frances: I see many Native women who are struggling with their alcohol problem, and it seems like they've lost the will to even try to save themselves. They suffer from very low self esteem and a have a really negative outlook on life. Often it's the attitude. I've had that attitude. Sometimes you're thinking about survival, just getting through the day, so they don't actually contemplate what their actions are actually doing. Its a very sad situation. Right now I'm focussing on building up my self esteem and I'm starting to feel more positive about things.



Dibetle: How do you think First Nations women deal with the feeling of hopelessness that seems so pervasive in the community?

Frances: I think it's got to definitely be that person wanting to change themselves. There are places for people to do that. I think there aren't as many detox places for women as there are for men. I realized this when I phoned around a couple of places and they said 'men only,' which at the time I thought was kind of a drag because I was in a real tough situation. I realized I was drinking a little more than I should, or I wanted to but the support was not available. That's a problem.

Dibetle: So you are saying services are often unavailable when you need them?

Frances: The detox centres mostly have space for men. The youth place [at DEYAS] has a good one for the younger women and men, but for the older women I don't think that there is anything there.

Dibetle: What has been your experience as a lesbian in the Downtown Eastside?

Frances: Being gay and down on the eastside doesn't have any revelance. I see a few gay Native women down here. We've talked to each other but it's not as much of an issue as being First Nation. People I associate with are pretty supportive about my sexuality, they don't judge me.

Dibetle: In this community, there are a number of issues concerning welfare. What has been your experience when dealing with social services?

Frances: There's definitely a lack of respect in the welfare offices towards people in this neighborhood. You go into the office for a purpose, to get help, but a lot of the times the workers just ignore you. They make you wait for long periods. But I challenge them when they are being rude that way. I have been on welfare since last October and I find it deppressing. With support from friends and the Women's Centre, I've worked on my resume and I am looking for work. But in order to get out of that cycle you have to have support, a comfortable place to sleep, good surroundings. There has to be positive things to encourage people to change. In terms of the overall situation, there's a lot of dependency on welfare in this area. You can see it in people's eyes, they can't wait for the next cheque day.

Dibetle: Do you have any other concerns you'd like to discuss?

Frances: Well, the police in this neighbourhood are a problem. I find that they're really disrespectful especially towards Native women. They look down on us and they don't take us seriously. I've tried to talk to cops who are working the 'beat,' but like I said they don't respect us. They are basically on a power trip.

Dibetle: What kind of changes would you like to see take place in this community?

Frances: Basically take away the drugs, create a healthier environment. We also need better housing instead of these hotels.

Interview with Jennifer

Dibetle: What do you think are the main issues affecting women in this community?

Jennifer: The main problem around here is housing. The place I am living at right now is filthy, everything is dirty and there are cockroaches everywhere. I am scared to go out at night because it's not safe.

Dibetle: What are some of the problems you personally face daily?

Jennifer: I am not able to do things I would like to do because I'm poor. I can't go to places because I have no money. But I try to exercise, have one good meal a day and keep my room clean. I go to the Women's Centre to talk to other women and that helps my day go easier. Right now my health is not very good. My doctor is giving me pills that don't even work. I would like my health to improve so that I can go back to work.

Dibetle: What kind of changes would you like to see take place in this community?

Jennifer: I think poor people should be allowed to have more input in the agencies that are supposed to be for us. The police should be more caring towards us instead of being abusive.

Interview with Lulu

Dibetle: What are some of your thoughts on living in the Downtown Eastside?

Lulu: There's a lot of different populations in the Downtown Eastside, but I'm thinking a lot about the Native sisters. 300 or 500 years ago, the white man in Europe came over here and said, "this is all of our stuff, get out..." and went about to sytematically stamp out life as the Native people saw it or had known it for all those thousands and thousands of years. The white man took the land in order to establish their dominance in the world—they basically wanted to keep people where they're at.

Anytime I try to get out of [this oppressive] system, I am always confronted with being true to myself or trying to fit into the system. I could become a great social worker because I'm very caring, but fuck it. Why should I go into a system that perpetuates oppression? The oppression of all peoples in the Downtown Eastside is just a reflection of [what's going on everywhere].

The whole system is built around the breathless, lifeless dollar—that is what is the king. [And it says that] anything that is of a life form of any kind needs to be stamped out and people buy into that. The whole system keeps people in their place for a reason, and it's for the almighty fucking dollar. And these major corporations want their money.

I was just thinking of the word fallacy, like phallic. Fallacy as in untruth. This whole planet is under patriachy—the male is worshipped unbelievably. It is to the detriment of women who are life givers.

I am a single parent and I'm thinking it would be in the best interest of my son to place him in a foster home so that he can be provided with better material conditions, a decent meal every day and good role models which I can't always do. [But it has to be] on my own terms, where I am still active in his life.

It's so stressful—running here and there, no car, no home, no yard, the noise, all these problems. One time my son was getting on the bus, and because he's Black, this old drunken man thought he could hit my son with his cane. And the police said, "well, the old man was drunk." But as far as I am concerned, that's racism. There's people calling native people in this neighborhood 'wagon-burners,' 'just good for the bottle,' 'they'll always be good for nothing'... That has to stop.

Dibetle: Tell us about some of the issues and problems taking place in this neighborhood?

Lulu: Let me just start with several things I know about the neighbourhood. I know there are building managers—both in BC housing and private rentals—who profit from the welfare system. They get money out of welfare to fix things in the hotel suites, when they really don't need the money to fix it, they could fix it themselves. But they take the money and nothing gets fixed.

I know people have been living on the streets. Social services is not helping. I know of a woman...her son was murdered and she wasn't given funeral expenses. And one time, I needed bus tickets to go to a medical appointment and my son was in daycare at that time. I got into a lot of trouble with welfare when I keep on insisting they give me the bus tickets they're supposed to.

The children are the most vulnerable victims and there's no one to advocate for them. They're just told to behave like little robots. That's been my experience. The system doesn't care about the side effects of sexual abuse.

Dibetle: One of the more painful issues for women around here is apprehension of children by the ministry of social services. As a single mother, has this been an issue for you?

Lulu: For child apprehension, social services has way too much power. In terms of my experience, they didn't give out the resources I was asking for. I didn't get a babysitter, I didn't get any respite. And they knew this and they watched me slide down. I knew that they were going to take my son away.

What they said was, "We've taken him away because you need a break and you've interfered in resources we have given you." That was used against me. Well, I am the child's advocate, the child's mother and I am supposed to interfere if I think my son's well being is not being looked after properly. He was getting stomach aches, headaches and asthma attacks and they were saying he just wants attention.

This guy [a psychiatrist] was doing a lot of behavioral stuff on my kid that I did not agree with. The worst thing about being poor is the lack of respect towards you. When I went to trial the other day for my child apprehension case, I was astonished. We submitted an affidavit that said how my son's father had abused him and myself. I've been raped. I've been abused in every shape and form and so has my son, and still they want to inform the father of the removal of my son from my home.

They said he has the right to apply for custody because it's the law. The reason given is that charges have never been filed against him. Since the crimes took place in another city in Canada, I've never been able to afford to fly there and file the charges there. I have asked social services for a plane ticket but they've refused to help me. What do they want? Does it take the blood of my son on the floor for them to believe me? There is no justice.

Dibetle: You've mentioned quite a number of issues here, are there any others you'd like to address?

Lulu: Two very fundamental issues are violence and separation. We've been separated from nature, from the land—we've lost caring and empathy for each other. We need more understanding of what the effects of abuse are. The effects of abuse are disassociation. You're not yourself anymore. You become this thing that can be manipulated, be told exactly where to sit. At the end of this long lineup with other people sitting, waiting for the basic necessities of life.

I think decriminalizing drugs would help in this neighbourhood. A lot of people in this neigbourhood have been abused by the system and sometimes by their families too. Another problem we have around here is the number of hate mongers and poor bashers who are pushing their right wing agendas on people. They've got good resources and they're well organized.

Dibetle: In terms of strategy, how do you mobilize a community where many of its residents have been stripped of their dignity and self worth?

Lulu: I think we need to go underground because the goverment, let's be honest, is being run by corporations and is also downscaling to be more 'efficient'. Lets take this opportunity to treat each other as human beings. I'm very good with collecting information and kowledge and then simplifying it. I think that would be helpful for the women. Also linking up with each other as sisters and as brothers because I don't want to alienate the men in this community who are very supportive and want to help in constructing a new world order, better than what we have now.

Maybe what I'm going to do now is concentrate on my own story. Part of the healing is dealing with one's own issues. Support from my sisters in this community is important to me. There are a lot of sisters who are working hard and being supportive, but they are not enough. The thing we have in this community is we have other sisters who—because of their own internalized oppression—are oppressive to other women.

I've had comments said to me like "well, excuse me, I'm glad your son was apprehended" or "what are you talking to us about false memory syndrome, what do I care I just want some donations here, some clothing and some free food," and then they say fuck you. We need to support each other as sisters. That's where I get off. If its a dog eat dog world I'm not interested. What I'm interested in is linking up with other people who are making the choice of bringing change in themselves and also having it reflected around them. Maybe certain people have given up, but I think we can't give up.

Interview with Susan

Dibetle: What do you think are the main issues affecting women in this community?

Susan: I think the most important issues are housing and health problems. Most of the women, myself included, live in one room hotels. The one I live in is the best one on the strip but the rest are really bad. They have cochroaches, broken doors, windows and busted walls. They're basically unsafe places.

Dibetle: What are some of the problems you personally face daily?

Susan: I am trying to stay away from drugs and I've cut down on my drinking. Trying to keep my relationship together is really important and making sure I eat a hot meal at least once a day. You can't really do a lot of cooking in the hotels because you don't have a kitchen, just a hot plate. I go to the Women's Centre for a meal.

As a First Nations woman, we face a lot of problems with the police. A white person gets more respect from them. I have a friend who was being abused by her boyfriend. She reported the beatings to the cops but nothing was done about it until he stabbed her, almost killed her. It took a stabbing for the cops to deal with the situation, now they're acting all concerned. I think that's wrong.

Dibetle: What has been your experience living in poverty and trying to survive on welfare?

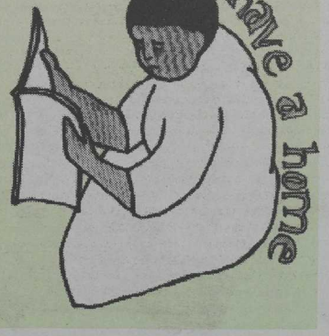
Susan: The money I get from welfare is not enough to live on. After I pay my rent, I've only got $261 to get my groceries. Sometimes welfare gives you crisis grants but it's getting harder to get that. This is one of the reasons I come to the Women's Centre to eat. Personally, I don't take crap from the welfare workers but I'm getting a bad rap for that. The workers don't like it if you challenge them. The worst thing about being so poor is not being able to do things that you want to do, like going to the movies or taking trips. You're just barely surviving from one month to another.

Dibetle: Would you like to comment on the issue of child apprehension?

Susan: It's happening mostly to the Native women. I'd rather not talk about it too much, it's a really painful subject.

Dibetle: What kind of changes would you like to see take place in this community?

Susan: We need better housing, anything but hotels. I would like to live in a housing co-op, that way I'll have more options. I could bake, I love baking and I could have my kids visit me. We need recreation facilities. Britannia is way up Commercial drive and Strathcona is not that good. This is why a lot of us hang out in the bars, there's nowhere to go, especially at night. I call the bar my living room. I would also like to see less drug dealers around here. They're always hustling people and it's especially hard when you're trying to quit drugs. They're always in your face.



Women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside:

Fewer resources for poor women

as told to Dibetle Masemola

Marion Dubick works as a counsellor at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. She spoke with Kinesis *about the role community organizations and service agencies play in the lives of women in the Downtown Eastside. She also draws attention to the inadequacy of resources and how cutbacks in government social spending could undermine those resources even further.*

Dibetle: From your perspective as a community worker, do you think there are adequate resources to deal with the issues confronting women in this community?

Marion: No. Look at all the women that work in the Centre, we're overwhelmed. I can't even get in to ask our legal advocate a two minute question never mind the other hundred women sitting out there who need to talk to her as well. She goes into her office at 9:30 in the morning and doesn't resurface until 5 clock. And that's constant, non stop. We need half a dozen more legal advocates. There's a lot of pressure on existing resources. For instance, since the shutdown of Riverview hospital [for mental health patients], we are seeing more mental health patients coming in to use the services at the Women's Centre. This is a serious problem since we don't have any workers trained in mental health advocacy. We really don't have the funding and the resources to support these women.

Dibetle: It seems that services for women in this neighbourhood are really minimal. For instance, the only detox centre for women, Pender Detox, closed down recently. What kind of effect is this having on the women?

Marion: It's really frustrating. You try and get a woman into a Vancouver detox and it's next to impossible. I now have a connection with a recovery house in Surrey that will take women who haven't gone through detox. And when it gets really bad, they'll take them to a hospital. In Vancouver, women can't get into a recovery house without first going through detox, but they're all full. It's that bad. And as more and more services are getting cut...

Women can't even get clothing vouchers anymore from welfare. A women comes out of prison, all she's got on is a pair of shorts, a halter top and a pair of sandals. This is the end of September. She goes to see her worker and says, "this is all the clothes I've got on my back," and the worker says, "here's a list of all the places that have free clothes. You can go to the Women's Centre, you can go to St. James..". That's all the support she gets. And then she has to run around looking for free clothes. Who wants used underwear? She then has to return to welfare with letters from each place she visited stating that she couldn't get clothes that she needed. The worker then reassess her case and if she is lucky she'll get a hundred bucks. It's a total joke.

Dibetle: Next year there's going to be further government cutbacks on social programs. What impact will these cutbacks have on the women in this community?

Marion: The number of women coming into the Women's Centre has doubled from last year, and I can see them more than doubling next year because of the cutbacks. Where are the women going to go? They're going to come here. We offer a free meal. Our line-up for lunch goes out the door now and this is a long building. We are going to start running out of food.

Dibetle: How are agencies such as the Women's Centre going to function with such minimal support? Do you have any strategies in place to try to obtain more funding for instance?

Marion: We're not getting enough funding as it is. As the government cuts back, are they going to say..."we're cutting back here, and we're going to give it to these people down here who are helping"? No, they are not. They're going to say we're cutting back from everybody, but it's the poor who are going to feel it, not the rich. We're going to have more and more people sleeping under bridges. You go down to Seattle and you see people all over the place sleeping on the streets, in cardboard boxes and alleys. That's what Vancouver is turning into. Sure, do your cutbacks, build your condos. Where are the people going?

Dibetle: In what ways can you mobilize people and effect some kind of change?

Marion: By just staying as visible as possible. The different organizations down here are getting more united. There's more communication happening between them. We should be telling other people about what's going on in this neigbourhood and what we need. We should be talking to the media.

Dibetle: Do you have anything else you want to add?

Marion: Yeah. If anybody wants to help, give us a call. We could always use donations. Cash donations.

Resources in the Downtown Eastside

CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTRE
401 Main Street
Vancouver V6A 2T7
Tel: 665-2220
Carnegie is a drop-in centre open to everyone. The centre has a book and video library, weight room, pool room, and seniors lounge. Carnegie's offers low cost dinners daily at 5:30pm. The centre also provides workshops in computer training and job skills, and a variety of workshops. The centre offers free haircuts three days a week. Carnegie also has special discussion groups, and a gay and lesbian drop-in every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month from 3-5pm.

DEYAS
432 E. Hastings St.
Vancouver, BC V6A 1P7
Tel: 251-2517
Fax: 251-9973
DEYAS (Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society) offers a youth detox program, provides a drop-in Monday through Saturday, a weekly food bank, counselling, and peer support training.

DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINIC
412 E. Cordova St.
Vancouver, BC V6A 1L6
Tel: 255-3151
Fax: 255-0314
Offers free medical services for the residents of the downtown eastside. Open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:30am-4:30pm and Wednesdays from 8:30am-3pm.

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE
44 E. Cordova street
Vancouver, BC V6A 1K2
Tel: 681-8480
Fax: 681-8470
The Women's Centre is a drop-in centre which offers monthly programmed activities, free clothing, food, tampons, condoms. Also provides referrals, legal and welfare advocacy, counselling, support and crisis intervention. Showers and laundry facilities available. Open Monday to Friday from 10:30am-5pm and Sunday 12-5pm.

THE LIVING ROOM
528 Powell St.
Vancouver, BC V6A 1G8
Tel: 255-7026
The Living Room is a drop-in centre that provides services for people with mental health histories. Activities include a women's group, writers group, movie outings, and life skills training. Open Monday to Friday 10am-9:45pm; weekends and holidays 11am-6:45pm.

POWELL PLACE SHELTER FOR WOMEN
329A Powell Street
Vancouver, BC V6A 1G5
Tel: 683-4933
Fax: 683-3425
An emergency shelter providing accomodation for women and their children experiencing crisis. Gives suport and provides information regarding available resources. Staffed 24-hours.

SHEWAY PROJECT
455 E. Hastings St
Vancouver, BC V6A 1P5
Tel: 254-9951
Fax: 254-9948
Sheway, a project of the Vancouver Native Health Society, offers practical support and counselling for high risk pregnant women who live or access the downtown eastside area. Issues covered include prenatal health, nutrition, alcohol and drug dependencies, women's health, parent support, and infant development. Open Monday to Friday 12-4pm; closed on weekends.

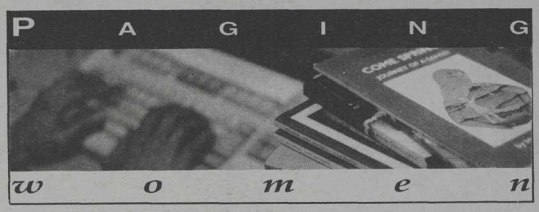
VANCOUVER NATIVE HEALTH SOCIETY CLINIC
449 E. Hastings St.
Vancouver V6A 1P5
Tel: 254-9949
A free walk-in clinic for residents of Vancouver who would like to receive medical treatment but may not have medical coverage, are receiving income assistance, or are new to Vancouver. Offers consultation with physicians, referral to specialists when necessary, blood testing for a variety of conditions including STD and HIV/AIDS, and referrals to other community services. Open from 10am-8pm Monday to Thursday; 10am-4pm Friday; and 1pm-4pm Saturday.

WISH PROGRAM
First United Church
320 E. Hastings St.
Vancouver, BC V6A 1P4
Tel: 681-9244
The WISH program is a drop-in centre for sex workers. Provides food, clothing, showers, and counselling. Open Thursday to Monday 5:30-10pm.

YWCA CRABTREE CORNER
101 E. Cordova St.
Vancouver V6A 1K7
Tel: 698-2808
Fax: 689-5463
Emergency and short term child care by professional staff for children aged six weeks to six years. Provides a women's drop in centre, single mothers groups, camping program for women and their children, free soup and bannock program, clothing exchange, workshops, general support and advocacy, and referrals and resource information for concerns such as sexual abuse, battering, drugs and alcohol dependency and parenting. Offers two specilized prevention programs: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Neonatal Abstinance Syndrome (NAS) Prevention Project, as well as a suport group for moms with children who are affected by FAS/FAE. Also has single moms food bank trips and operates the Downtown Eastside Family Drop-in on Saturday from 10am-4pm with new activities every week.

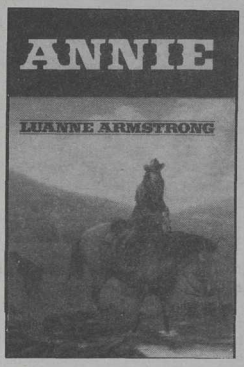
Information gathered from advocates working in the Downtown Eastside and from The Red Book, *a directory of services produced by Information Services Vancouver.*

ARTS



A number of new books written by women come into our offices each week, so Kinesis thought we'd share with you, our readers, a sampling of some of the recently-published fiction and non-fiction titles. If you are interested in reviewing any of the books listed below for Kinesis, or know of any other exciting titles you would like to review or that Kinesis should review, please give us a call (604) 255-5499 or drop us a line.

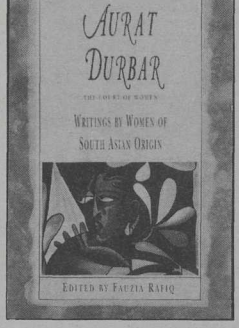
compiled by Meh Najak and Leanne Johnson



Annie, by Luanne Armstrong. *Annie, Luanne Armstrong's first novel, was borne out of Armstrong's childhood desire to be a cowgirl. (Armstrong grew up and lives on a farm in south-eastern British Columbia.) Annie is a cowgirl with strength and determination who faces the wilderness and conquers hardship in order to pursue her dreams. Armstrong's stories, poems and articles have been published in many journals and anthologies.* (Polestar Press Ltd, Vancouver, 1995.)

On Women Healthsharing, edited by Enakshi Dua, Maureen FitzGerald, Linda Gardner, Darien Taylor, and Lisa Wyndels. On Women Healthsharing *is a collection of articles first published in* Healthsharing: A Canadian Women's Health Quarterly, *which closed its doors in February 1994. Throughout its fifteen year history,* Healthsharing *has explored and debated many issues pertinent to women's health including: the politics of work and health; reproductive health and rights; aging through menopause; and notions of disease.* (Women's Press, Toronto, 1994.)

Sweat, by Lucy Jane Bledsoe. Sweat *explores the relationship between women and sport. In this her third book, Lucy Jane Bledsoe brings the reader into the world of competition and provides a look at what it takes to win, lose and compete. Through stories and a novella, we are introduced to many characters, including a park ranger in an isolated station torn between risk-taking and clinging to safety, and a young woman who fondly remembers youthful innocence, a time when softball represented love, family and physical empowerment.* (Seal Press, Seattle, 1995.)



Aurat Durbar, edited by Fauzia Rafiq. *This collection showcases the prose and poetry by thirty-one women of South Asian origin. Aurat Durbar—which means "the court of women" in Hindi/Urdu—explores issues of racism, immigration, intolerance and sexuality with passion and anger. Writing from the particularities of their individual experience—of origin, caste, class, ableness, sexual orientation—the contributors (now living in Canada, the United States, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) critically examine their own cultural traditions as well as their lives in their new homes.* (Second Story Press, Toronto, 1995.)

A Woman In My Position: The Politics of Breast Implant Safety, by Linda Wilson with Dianne Brown. *In this book, Linda Wilson, co-founder of Canada's first support and information network for women with breast implants, describes her many ordeals with the medical system after doctors recommended the Meme breast implant to her following a diagnosis of fibrocystic disease of the breast. After discovering the Meme had never been safely tested, registered or approved by the Department of Health and Welfare Canada or the FDA, Wilson became involved in the fight to have the Meme implant taken off the market. The campaign finally succeeded in 1991. This book chronicles her emotional and medical experiences with lawyers, government, and court officials and politicians who were more interested in protecting their own interests and those of the Meme's manufacturers than the public.* (NC Press Ltd, Toronto, 1995.)

Fracture Patterns, by Gail Helgason. Fracture Patterns *is a collection of stories centering on the great Canadian outdoors and women's relationship to it. Helgason's characters face the rugged Canadian terrain and wild waters in an attempt to come to terms with the elements. Not all of the women succeed, but they discover that the wilderness can also heal.* (Coteau Books, Regina, 1995.)

Man-S-Laughter, by Ellen Frith. Man-S-Laughter, *Frith's first novel, traces the life of Raymonde Susan Bailey, her three (literally) short-lived marriages, and her friends' suspicion that Bailey had pushed these men to their deaths. Firth uses humour to examine women's often misguided attempts to forge relationships with men and each other.* (Oolichan Books, Lantzville, British Columbia, 1995.)

Reckless Driver, by Lisa Vice. *Set in 1960 Indiana, this novel is told from the point of view of the young girl, Lana Franklin, who perceptively narrates the events surrounding the disintegration of her family. Abandoned by her mother, Lana tells how the loss of her mother begins her father's descent into madness and violence.* (Dutton Books, New York, 1995.)

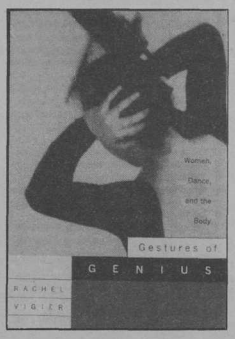
Desperate Women Need to Talk to You, by Joan Frank. *The title of this book was taken from an advertisement for phone sex. Frank found the ad ironic and decided to use the title to address women's feelings as they approach middle age. Frank incorporates her journalist background to tackle issues that many women of her age are feeling—the longing for the fountain of youth; the decision to have children or not; and the perils of pantyhose.* (Conari Press, Emeryville, California, 1994.)

Lives in Transit; Recent Russian Women's Writing, edited by Helena Goscilo. *This book is a compilation of recent works by twenty-five Russian women writers. The anthology offers an eclectic mix of prose and poetry that focuses on the break-up of the Soviet state and the radical transformation of Russian woman's culture.* (Ardis Publishers, Dana Point, California, 1995.)

Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book, by Susan M. Love, M.D. with Karen Lindsey. *Dr. Love has revised her book to reflect all the new developments in breast care, screening, diagnosis, treatment and research. A down-to-earth guide, this edition includes updates on silicone implants, imaging techniques, genetics, risk factors and prevention, hormone use, bone marrow implants, tamoxifen, immediate reconstruction, and treatment for metastatic breast cancer.* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995.)

Last Resort, by Jackie Manthorne. *Another intrigue-filled 190 pages of the adventures of Harriet Hubbley, lesbian sleuth extraordinaire! Travel with Harriet to Key West where her ex-lover Barb Fenton owns an elegant guest house. Barb is mysteriously attacked and Harry has to uncover the plot. A who-dunnit in the Manthorne tradition.* (Gynergy Books, Charlottetown, P.E.I. 1995.)

Mothering the New Mother, Your Postpartum Resource Companion, by Sally Placksin. *For the up-to-date information on everything you need to know about being a mom — from breastfeeding, to going-back-to-work options and more. Based on the important need to nurture and support women during their adjustment to motherhood, this resource is thoroughly researched — from services and support groups, to books and videos, to stories and experiences of other mothers. Useful for new mothers. However, the typeface this book is designed in can be tiring on the eyes.* (Key Porter Books, Toronto, 1995.)



Gestures of Genius: Women, Dance and the Body, by Rachel Vigier. *Beginning with a brief overview of the history of women's dance and the relationship between society and the restrictions on women's movement, to looking at famous women in dance like Isadora Duncan and Zelda Fitzgerald, to stories and experiences of contemporary women dancers from a variety of communities, this book is for women who want to understand the history of their bodies, women's dance and movement, and includes a photo essay.* (Mercury Press, Stratford, Ontario, 1994.)

A God Who Looks Like Me: Discovering a Woman-Affirming Spirituality by Patricia Lynn Reilly. *This book shows how the patriarchal images of early childhood experiences stand in the way of a self-defined spirituality. Personal memories are interwoven with collective stories of women buried in the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian Bible finding the lost glory of Eve, Lillith, Mary and others.* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1995.)

Review of Midi Onodera's film **Skin Deep:**

Beyond scratching the surface of engendered bodies

by Laiwan

SKIN DEEP

Produced by Daruma Pictures Inc. Toronto

Skin Deep is a fictional narrative about an award-winning filmmaker, a lesbian of Japanese descent, named Alex. Thirty-to-forty-something, tough, ambitious and egotistic, she embarks on a new film that her producer describes as "tattoo-woman goes crazy and kills her lover". Alex, however, wanting a larger vision for her film, starts researching experiences of tattooing and places an ad in a tattoo magazine.

Chris works as a mechanic in a small town garage. He sees the ad and writes to Alex. Alex is intrigued by Chris' poetic descriptions of the states of being tattooed and sends him a ticket to come to the big city for an interview.

From here starts the spiraling complexities of two worlds colliding with obsession, misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Chris is attracted to Alex. Alex is too busy and too wrapped up with herself to deal with it. Things become uncomfortable with Chris' strangely intense presence and the slow realisation that Chris, who had passed as a man, is actually a woman.

Chris, with unspoken feelings building up, stalks Alex and invades her personal space. The film climaxes with Chris proclaiming his love to Alex and unable to handle the pain and anguish, he attempts to kill himself uttering "I just want to be normal!"

With this her first feature film, Midi Onodera places into question *'What is normal?'* Throughout the film, our expectations and assumptions are destabilised by various visual and moral plays.

Keram Malicki-Sanchez, a male actor playing Chris who is transgendered with a woman's body; Dana Brooks, a female actress playing Penny, a woman who passes as a man playing a drag queen; Melanie Nicholls-King playing Montana, Alex's lover and production assistant, who is Black and can speak fluent Japanese, and Natsuko Ohama playing Alex, who is Japanese and cannot speak the language — are examples of how Onodera juggles characters and deftly pits stereotypes against each other. By doing this she undermines our judgemental and essentialist perceptions that form our prejudices. At first glance, both Chris and Penny are definitely not easily identified by gender; this makes the viewer do a double take and makes us question our constructed notions of gender.

However, it's not such an easy task to unravel stereotypes. In other instances Onodera is close to crossing the line to create more stereotypes. The image Onodera creates of Alex is contrary to the demure, submissive, delicate Asian woman, and is instead the aggressive, ambitious, erotically charged tiger-lady. It is uncertain if any stereotype has been dispelled here. However, I'd rather see a take-charge Asian lesbian on film than the ever-so-common images of the studious-dutiful-Asian-daughter or the slutty-bad-girl-behind-the-triad-boss types.

With the portrayal of Chris, however, the task was much more complex. There are no films I know of that have attempted to reflect the lives and experiences of transgendered peoples, and specifically not stories of 'a man in a woman's body'. The danger of painting Chris as unempowered, inarticulate and victim is countered by the reality that empowerment, the chance to speak, to be heard and to have a safe place in society is very rare for marginalised groups like transgendered people.

Trying to review this film, I realised how intricate and new these issues were and what were Onodera's challenges. I realised too that it raised many complex questions which this review may be too short to analyze, but, I'll tackle some.

At a very basic level this film makes visible the misunderstanding of, and the lack of resources available to, the lives of transsexuals and transgendered peoples. In real life this can be seen in the current case of *The People of the State of Colorado vs Sharon Clark aka Sean O'Neill*, where O'Neill is being tried for sexual assault and criminal impersonation. His four teenage complainants are ex-girlfriends who claim they did not know O'Neill was a girl, and that this gender deception is tantamount to rape. Another case is that of Teena Brandon aka Brandon Teena, a 21 year old Nebraskan who was raped and murdered by two former male friends who were outraged to find out Brandon had so convincingly passed himself as a man.

Keram Malicki-Sanchez plays female to male transgendered Chris.
Photo by Candy Pauker

These youths who are struggling with issues of identity and sexuality usually find themselves isolated, out of home and school by mid-teens and working the streets to get by. Many do not survive.

At an even more basic level, woven into the heart of these complexities are misogyny and homophobia, both in our external social environment and internalised. In *Skin Deep*'s climactic scene, when Chris angrily tells Alex "You like men, REAL men" what is being implied, in contradiction, is both "I am your man...you are not a lesbian" and "I am not a man...am I a lesbian?" Chris' attempt then to kill himself is in response to the futility of this dilemma — the concept of what is real becomes skewed.

Dana Brooks plays a woman playing a man doing drag, and Natsuko Ohama plays an award-winning filmmaker, Alex Koyama, in Midi Onodera's dramatic feature debut *Skin Deep*.
Photo by Gabor Jurina

For Chris to become empowered he needs compassion, to be heard, to be seen, to be real. From the beginning, his attempts to be who he wants to be is negated by how he is seen and the realities of his biological body. Soon after his arrival, Chris and Alex accidentally bump into a drag queen who hotly retorts "You should watch where you're going, Hong Kong!" When Chris chivalrously steps in, the drag queen bellows "Who do you think you are, baby dyke?" This brief interchange is loaded with a confusion of boundaries: a drag queen — a male dressed as a female; Chris — a female passing as male mistaken as lesbian, and Alex — a female as female as lesbian loaded with the stereotype that all Asians are the same...Hong Kong-Japanese, same dif.

With all of these marginalised identities taking a mixed-up front stage I'm really wondering *What is normal?* With *Skin Deep's* emphasis on the so-called 'abnormal', what I begin to realise is that which is assumed *normal* is that which is dangerous and actually very common. Alex, the successful filmmaker blinded by ambition, too busy to take care of her relationships or herself and too high-achieving to notice who she uses and discards — Alex passes all of this as *normal*, and we as audience fall for it, especially if we feel outrage at how Chris is portrayed, which seems to be a point of contention among audiences.

At the core of Alex's so-called *normalcy* and Chris' disempowerment, are issues of class. Chris, a mechanic, is invited as a research subject to enter Alex's fast-paced, glamorous world. How Chris as research subject becomes demoted to a gopher on Alex's production set is unclear to me. When the production decides Chris has to go due to his strange intensity and his intrusion into Alex's space, the producer says to Chris "I have a friend with a garage who could use some help" it becomes clear how patronized Chris is in this world.

Alex is never truthful to herself about her using of others to be successful. In her egotism, nothing is more important beyond herself. When she and Montana are breaking up, Montana blames Alex for her poor communication. Alex retorts "This (the relationship) is a luxury...I don't have time to communicate."

In the end, Chris in rage and humiliation tells Alex "I trusted you...When I look in the mirror all I see is a lie. Someone I don't even know." Here, many things are being said. Chris' betrayal is based on his assumption that Alex had the compassion and insight to really see Chris. And yet, Chris too did not know how even he could see his real self. The lie is true on both accounts — to Alex he is not who he is, to himself he is not who he internally is. This trap occured because there was no basis for understanding, no models for both Chris and Alex. Chris' attempts to be seen were unsuccessful from the beginning, let alone that he was dealing with an insensitive Alex, and because of this his reaching out became frantic, obsessive, desperate acts — a typical, *normal* human reaction. What Chris needed to do was to untangle the web, the seduction of Alex's *normalcy* and be on his own terms. This he does, packing his bags and leaving Alex to ambition on in this production-valued world.

From images of luscious tattooed bodies in the opening scene, to the intricate soundtrack of drumming from *Chirashi*, Vancouver's Uzume Taiko's first CD, to the rare lesbian of colour gaze established in the first act with Alex and Montana in steamy sex, to the elegant set design of Alex's studio and to the humorous choreography of the drag queen acts — Onodera, even with the struggles of this being an independent, low budget, first feature, has successfully put onto the big screen much to revel in, contemplate and question oneself about.

This isn't your mainstream-Canadiana, "family-values" content, nor is it your lesbian of colour, Asian/Japanese, feminist, love pic standard. Skin Deep is definitely not a comfortable film — neither in the challenging subject matter, nor in the day-to-day filmmaking struggles that Onodera faced over the last six years in researching the script, fundraising, filmmaking or now finding a distributor. It is always this daring and filmmaking integrity that makes Onodera's large body of work unique, troubling, refreshing and controversial, but never Hollywood.

Be warned, Diane Keaton is preparing to produce her version of the Brandon Teena story starring Drew Barrymore based on a homophobic novel by true-crime writer Aphrodite Jones. Yes, Hollywood knows no justice, and capitalism knows no boundaries!

Laiwan is an interdisciplinary artist and writer, born in Zimbabwe of Chinese (Toisanese) origin.

Interview with Midi Onodera:

Trying to film without compromise

by Laiwan

During the Out on Screen, Lesbian and Gay Film Festival *in Vancouver this past summer, there was a press ban around Midi Onodera's film* Skin Deep *due to difficulties with the film's distribution negotiations. Many of us attended the premiere with no information on the film or on why there was a press ban. But we attended with an excitement around the mysterious new feature from Onodera.*

This month's Vancouver International Film Festival *did not accept* Skin Deep *to be shown among its screenings because the film had been shown at* Out on Screen. *This is unfortunate for both those who missed it and the missed opportunity for* Skin Deep *to be exposed to a wider audience.*

Midi Onodera is a Toronto based, Japanese-Canadian filmmaker who has a large body of respected work, of primarily experimental films, built consistently over the last decade. I had the good fortune to talk with her after a panel during Out on Screen:

Laiwan: What inspired you to make *Skin Deep*?

Onodera: Well, I began *Skin Deep* about six years ago researching and developing the project. It came out of my previous films specifically *Ten Cents a Dance, Parallax* and *The Displaced View*. With *Ten Cents A Dance*, I was trying to focus on issues of sexuality of that time — 1985. With *Displaced View*, I was dealing with racial identity, if you want to distill it down to that, and specifically, the links between two generations of Japanese Canadian women. What I decided to do after was try and push those ideas further into what would be the next logical step. With *Skin Deep*, I really felt gender was the first step I wanted to explore. I think gender is really the most basic component of who we are. When you walk into a crowd of people the first thing you notice is whether or not they're male or female, then you notice if they're short or tall, fat, slim, good-looking, not good-looking according to what you think. If you can't get past categorizing gender like this, then it can become problematic in the way that we socialize with each other.

Laiwan: Looking back at your two most recognised films: *Ten Cents a Dance* is structurally experimental with controversial subject matter exploring different sexualities and sexual expression; and *The Displaced View* is a touching love letter to the women in your family made in a documentary style that is also experimental, pushing the boundaries of language — of what is translated and what is untranslatable and what is gestured. What kind of direction have you taken with *Skin Deep*?

Onodera: In between *Displaced View* and *Skin Deep* I had written two half hour scripts for television. I was already dabbling, I suppose, in that narrative three act structure. Early on with *Skin Deep*, I made a very conscious decision to make it a conventional narrative because I felt the issues I wanted to cover in the film were very outside of what usually is represented in the mainstream. I felt I needed an entry point for my audience and that entry point, for me, is the structure of conventional narrative. So, there are characters, there is a story, a beginning, middle and an end. For me, that is part of my experimentation. On one level one can say well, its a conventional narrative. On another level, I can personally say it's an experimental film with a form of narrative that introduces and interjects, and hopefully, pushes the boundaries of narrative construction.

Laiwan: What do you think are the specific gender issues you're dealing with in *Skin Deep*?

Onodera: What do you mean?

Laiwan: In the film there are issues of abuse, dysfunction or not being accepted, discrimination, the articulation of transgendered experiences... What were you hoping to bring out through the exploration or the representation of these issues?

Onodera: Certainly I never felt I was representing a positive role model for the transgender community. That of course is a very loaded issue to begin with. But I was trying to get across the kind of pain, the kind of anguish and the kind of isolation some people, who are transsexuals or transgendered, feel when they realize, and are beginning to accept, that perhaps what they perceive themselves to be on the inside is not what they were born with. I think that is a very painful process to go through. What I was hoping to do was to put a character out into the world people would take a second look at and relate to on a human level rather than the level of 'these people are strange, they have nothing to do with me.' Emotions are human, that is how we connect with each other. We have to feel for each other before we can move on and before there are clear lines of communication between us. It's like saying 'spend a day in my shoes and you'll see.'

Laiwan: What has been the general response to *Skin Deep*?

Onodera: If I can say there is a general response, I would say it has been incredibly mixed and the film hits a lot of nerves. A lot of the reactions are incredibly raw and direct. Some people find the issues and the representations in the film are working against political struggles that are happening now. Other people really feel it is an important film because it is putting those issues out, perhaps for the first time in their eyes. It gives them the opportunity to discuss and perhaps analyze it further for themselves.

Laiwan: This film has taken you six years to make. What was that made up of?

Onodera: It certainly wasn't spent twiddling my thumbs! Six years ago when I was beginning to form these characters for *Skin Deep* I spent a lot of time researching transsexuality. Now the landscape, dialogue and political priorities of that community have changed over the years, even the term transgender at that time was not really a political focal point for identity. It was more dealing with the issues of transsexuality and cross dressing. So, it took me at least a year, if not more, figuring out how I felt about female to male transsexuality, how I fit in to that kind of continuum as a lesbian and in relation to female to male transsexuals. I specifically centred my research on female to males. I did not deal a lot with male to females and that was a conscious choice on my part to narrow the politic. Of course the script has gone through many revisions and the process of raising money takes up an enormous amount of time and energy.

Laiwan: There must have been a reason why you chose 35mm as a film format for *Skin Deep* because *Displaced View* and *Ten Cents A Dance* were 16mm. So you're moving to a larger format, hopefully a larger audience, and you're wanting distribution probably in the mainstream.

Onodera: The whole (industry) structure of a feature narrative is one of distribution. In a country like Canada with very few distributors, you have to follow the format of what's out there in mainstream theatres and that is 35mm projection. In places like artist-run-centres they only usually have 16mm, super 8mm and video projection.

I want to engage with the mainstream form but it does not mean that I'm going to limit myself to features now.

Laiwan: Can you describe some of the difficulties of going onto 35mm?

Onodera: I think that any low budget feature has inherent problems. For *Skin Deep*, the cash budget is still under half a million which is incredibly small for film. But we did an amazing job with that money. With a film like *Skin Deep* it could never have been done without the efforts of hundreds and hundreds of people. So, the film is not only mine, it is also theirs. The problems are always financially based. There's never enough money so you always have to find creative ways of getting your vision across. For me, this was my first dramatic film, so of course it was my first time working with actors, and with a huge number of crew members, and that was a huge challenge for me.

Midi Onodera, director of *Skin Deep*.
Photo by Candy Pauker

I want to see characters who are multi-dimensional, who are not perfect, who do other things besides sleep with whoever. There are 24 hours in a day... (But), if I was a financially ambitious filmmaker, I would make a soft lesbian romance.

Laiwan: What kind of funders did you find? Was it difficult to find funders who would support this kind of subject?

Onodera: I initially went to the arts councils for support because my other films have received arts funding from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council. So that was an obvious place to go. I think because of the arms length policies within those arts councils, the subject matter was not a problem. What they look at is the progression of my work, where the new film fitted in and how well I convinced the jury I could make the film.

We also received money from the Toronto lesbian and gay community. It was a small amount of money but it was important for me to have that kind of financial acknowledgement and support from the Toronto lesbian and gay community. We also, surprisingly enough, received money from the National Association of Japanese-Canadians. They have a community source of funds which is primarily from the redress settlement around the internment of Japanese Canadians. So that is community money and is dispersed through the community. Certainly the proposal for *Skin Deep* was very different from the usual 'I would like to take piano lessons' or 'I would like to learn Japanese brush painting' or anything like that. It was a wonderful message of support from the NAJC not only financially but also personally.

We received a lot of support at the end of the project from the National Film Board Studio D. And again, Studio D is known as the women's studio but working primarily in documentaries, so they were stepping outside of their known projects. *Skin Deep* is a co-production with the National Film Board. We received money from Heritage Canada and the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto, Racial Equity fund. These two components were supporting apprenticeships for people of colour, artists of colour to work on the film and that was another key component I had wanted.

Who we did not receive money from was the Ontario Film Development Corporation and Telefilm Canada.

Laiwan: Why didn't Telefilm Canada and OFDC fund you?

Onodera: Telefilm Canada, which is the federal agency for supporting film and feature films in television production, has a guideline that if you are making a Canadian feature film you must have a bona fide Canadian distributor attached to the project before you even walk in their door. What that means to Canadian filmmakers is that there are about 5 or 6 distributors in the country and because Canada is so small it's very difficult to recoup your costs at the box office. So then you rely on television sales. The way the country works is, of course, no one ever goes to see Canadian films so you have an automatic cut off at the box office. It costs a lot of money to launch a film theatrically, but more so in Canada because we're so spread out.

I think the strength of Canadian films is their individual nature and uniqueness. But the fate of a film is in the hands of the distributors in terms of what gets made and what gets screened. It is not only a dilemma which we faced, but it is a dilemma which every independent filmmaker in this country faces trying to make a film that is outside of the mainstream Canadian model.

We chose to continue to make the film without distributor support which is why it has taken this long. The only supportive government money out there are the arts councils and they are limited especially because cultural funding is getting cut back all over the place, not only in BC but across the country.

Laiwan: You would have to have a distributor approve the script and project?

Onodera: You would have to have a distributor who was willing to say yes, this project is really exciting and I can see I'm going to make money, I'll break even or for whatever personal reasons. So you go in at the script stage and of course they have criticisms, they have comments, they have changes. It's dependent on whether you are willing to make those changes on everything from story to casting to editing. And then Telefilm wants control as well.

Continued as Midi *pg 20*

Vancouver's Fringe Festival:

A few from the fringe

Vancouver's Fringe Festival was "Alive on the Drive in '95." After ten years of being held in the Mount Pleasant area, festival organizers decided to shift the festival, held in September, to the Commercial Drive area. Another new feature for the annual theatre festival this year was the outdoor stage in Grandview Park, featuring clowns, buskers and family free entertainment.

This year about 100 different groups and individuals—from Canada, Britain, the United States and Mexico—provided Vancouver theatre goers with a wide variety of shows to sample from. By the end of its ten day run, the Fringe had drawn over 58,000 people to its 500 performances. Shannon e. Ash and Leanne Johnson had a chance to catch a few of the plays written, produced and performed by women, and provide **Kinesis** *readers with their thoughts and reviews.*

by Shannon e. Ash

BOADICEA - THE RED-BELLIED QUEEN

Originated by Foursight Theatre, in association with Cath Kilcoyne
Foursight Theatre
Wolverhampton, England

It was my ninth-grade Latin teacher (back when they still taught Latin in public schools) who first revealed to me, in dramatic tones, the story of Boadicea, the Celtic queen who led a rebellion against the Romans in first-century Britain. Those who have read Anne Cameron's books know Boadicea is a favourite heroic figure. In *Boadicea - The Red Bellied Queen*, Foursight Theatre—whose task is to bring historical women to life—takes the legend and history of Boadicea through a complex, if not complete, exploration.

Given that little of Boadicea's history is established fact, it is open to a vast amount of interpretation. In Foursight Theatre's play, Boadicea's daughters are fleshed out: Voddiccia (Katharine Ratcliffe), the eldest, represents revenge and fierce pride; Voada (Sue Pendlebury) is compassionate and critical. And the character of Marius (Simon Thorp), a Romanized Celt, is introduced.

The beginning of the rebellion is presented simply: Rome will not accept the rule of a woman—Queen Boadicea (Stephanie Jacob) of the Celtic Iceni tribe—after the death of the Celtic king. Boadicea refuses to submit her people to Roman rule. The subsequent flogging of Boadicea and rape of her daughters is presented through an intense use of breath, timing, motion, and text.

The tragic theme is juxtaposed with humourous "post-traumatic stress" scenes where dead characters rise and speak again (not to mention, argue, shout, and play music.) I found this humourous aspect almost overwhelming, even confusing at the beginning, putting the viewer off-balance. Perhaps that is the intention, given that these scenes give a critical look at the heroic legend of Boadicea. Boadicea is called on by other characters for inaccuracies in her version of events, such as her heroic call for rebellion. In reality, she admits, "we had to be secret."

There is skillful use of movement, words, song, and music throughout the play. The songs are stark and powerful, and great battles are convincingly represented with a few people.

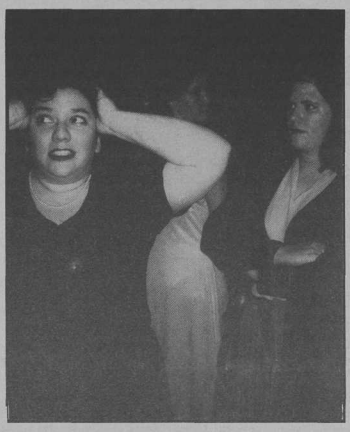
The dangers of the warrior path, even when taken against oppressors, is the complex theme tackled here. The songs speak of protecting sacred groves, but also promise spilled blood. As the rebellion continues, Boadicea prays to the Goddess to rid her of compassion and mercy: "Destroy my mother heart."

Voada is frightened by this blood lust. The magic stone which holds her mother's cast-off qualities represents "love" to her, but "weak things" to her fierce sister, Voddiccia. When Boadicea decides to torture captured Roman women and their infants, Voada protests: "They're innocent." Boadicea counters: "Your sons raped my daughters."

Among the most powerful images are the funeral procession for the king, with singing mourners carrying a box draped in a beautiful Celtic design, and the interaction/juxtaposition of Boadicea and Roman General Suetonius (Simon Thorp), who reflects the smug, superior face of imperialism: Boadicea represents "everything I loathe about the Celts," he says.

I found the only weak spots to be an anti-climactic ending and the linking of Voada's pregnancy (by Roman rape) with her compassionate feelings—it smacks of "maternal instinct." As well, a knowledge of Boadicea's story is a definite asset, given the complex presentation and lack of program notes.

Boadicea skillfully integrates all aspects of theatre, in a professional, powerful, arresting work.



Left to right: Susan Helenchilde, Andrea Rasmussen and Ali Rosenhek in Sacraments of Freedom, at the Vancouver Fringe Festival, 1995. Photo by Heidi Henderson

SACRAMENTS AND FREEDOM

Written by Susan Helenchilde
Style of Cause
Vancouver, BC

"In 1935, a woman had three choices: be a wife, be a nun, or be dead." So goes the teaser for *Sacraments and Freedom*, which examines these options through the characters of three Irish Catholic sisters living in Depression-era New Brunswick. The bulk of the play is a conversation between two sisters, Norah and Molly, in the bedroom they share in their family home. Their drunken father is heard occasionally in the background, singing bits of cliche Irish songs; their mother is dead, and the third sister, Kelly, is a cursed topic to Norah.

Norah (Ali Rosenheck) is pious and plans to be a nun; Molly (Susan Helenchilde) is worldy-wise and plans to marry and move to Montreal with a Protestant boy. She can't get her own home or a business, she reasons, "so I'll settle for a family." She chafes at the restrictions on women.

The dialogue is humourous, and Helenchilde carries the scene well with dry wit and energy, but Rosenheck's performance of Norah is lacklustre and her accent is shaky. The ghostly appearance of Kelly (Andrea Rasmussen, in an uneven performance), her bloodied gown evidence of her illegal abortion, gives hope that the play will become more engaging. The revelation of Kelly's fate is not predictable, and her death from a back alley abortion is convincing. Unfortunately, the thread of didacticism running through the play comes to full flower here, as Kelly's ghost lectures her sisters on the best options for them.

Style of Cause's members have day jobs as (mostly) lawyers. Helenchilde also wrote and directed a previous Style of Cause production and her work here shows potential, despite *Sacraments and Freedom* being, overall, disappointing.

SLAP!

Originated by Naomi Cooke and Kate Joseph-Hale
Naomi Cooke Productions
Wolverhampton, England

Here's a different, and much more accomplished, take on three Irish Catholic women. *Slap!* was first seen in Vancouver as a work in progress at last January's Women in View festival.

The talented Cooke, formerly of Foursight Theatre, portrays, in a series of monologues, an Irish Catholic grandmother, her daughter and granddaughter, living in Northern Ireland. The preparation and cooking of a simple meal (liver and potatoes) links the three women: Gracie, the grandmother, begins, and Theresa, the granddaughter, completes and eats it.

Gracie speaks of her dead husband with both hate and affection; she lives within the strictures of her religion—except for a brief experiment with birth control pills given her by her rebellious daughter Shauna, which she gives up after they increase her sex drive, not something she desires. She has 13 children, she tells us, and as we watch, she relives the pain of a miscarriage. "I'm not afraid of the dark," she says at the beginning of her scene, and in her voice we hear both stoicism and fear.

Naomi Cooke in *Slap!*

Shauna, now a middle-aged mother, describes her life of assisting women seeking help with birth control and information, and supporting the Irish Republican Army (IRA). She is cynical and

Vancouver's Fringe Festival:

SLAP! continued from previous page

tough, cursing at her mother's ignorance, and disdaining some of the women she aids. Politics—that is, the Republican political movement—is her driving passion.

She reminisces of the heated days of the Troubles, and how her mother's miscarriage coincided with Bloody Sunday—the oppression of her mother and the Irish people, by the Catholic Church and the British Army, linked together.

Theresa is a young, energetic woman, a lesbian...and pregnant, whence comes the joking reference to "virgin mother." She bounces around the kitchen as she tells us how, unlike her mother,

"I wasn't interested in fighting men, or fucking them."

But she has now left Belfast, no place for a gay person—among other reasons, the IRA doesn't approve of homosexuality—to live with an old school friend, whom she met in Belfast's only gay bar.

And we learn that her grandmother, who knew of her sexuality, left her small estate to her, so she could escape the limits of Northern Ireland.

Cooke portrays, in a very human way—humourous, touching, and complex—what are in effect representatives of three generations of Northern Irish women. Both writing and presentation are superlative.

by Leanne Johnson

FAT GIRLS (WEAR ALL SIZES)

Written by Kelly Jo Burke
Invisible Actors Inc.
Vancouver, BC

Fat Girls is a simple and delightful local production. Invisible Actors Inc. deliver, with one set and good performances, exactly what a Fringe Production should. This bizarre comedy is both entertaining and thought provoking.

Fat Girls addresses the constant pressure exerted on women to be thin, and examines the damage that results from this pressure. Two sisters, Lisa and Bettina, are brought together when they are told their mother is dying of cancer. In a bizarre but sobering twist, we are informed that their mother, Faye (Marion Eisman) is ecstatic she has cancer. The reason for her joy is she has lost 57 pounds as a result of her unsuccessful cancer treatments. Eerily enough, this plot twist seems too plausible, and is reinforced by her oldest and slimmest daughter Lisa's (Tanya Huse) fear of pregnancy. She fears that being pregnant will make her fat.

From Left to right: Marion Eisman as Faye, Tanya Huse as Lisa and Sharlaine McIntyre as Bettina in *Fat Girls (Wear All Sizes)* by Kelley Jo Burke. Photo by: Emma Cheevers

Society's obsession with thinness is underscored by Lisa's constant emphasis on Faye's weight loss "mother you look great." Bettina (wonderfully portrayed by Sharlaine McIntyre), the youngest and fattest daughter, drolly delivers the play's wittiest lines. She wryly reminds her family that they have their priorities skewed, "What I wouldn't give for a terminal illness." The scenes between mother and daughters are dry, witty and fuel this comedy.

The dramatic scenes occur when the characters are left alone with the "mirror" (Jacques LaLonde), which is an empty frame with the LaLonde standing inside. The mirror espouses societal views on weight and reveals how each character has internalized these views. *Fat Girls* opens with the mirror lip-syncing to "Young and Beautiful." When this song ends, the mirror begins to recite several fat jokes to Bettina.

The mirror is present throughout the length of the play, but is used to best effect when each actor is alone with it. The most moving exchanges are between Bettina and the mirror. It is then that we are shown the pain that wise-cracking Bettina does not reveal to her family. The exchanges between Faye and her daughters expose the familial roots of all three characters' obsession with their weight.

One small note of complaint. I felt that the few references to *Alice in Wonderland* did not set-up the ending. Bettina's symbolic struggle in the last scene lost some of its intensity due to this half-hearted narrative technique. The play seemed to stop rather than end, and the audience's only cue that the play was finished were the lights coming back up. With that said, this was a truly enjoyable Fringe Production and I look forward to seeing more work by this excellent team.

FOR THE LOVE OF LUCILLA

Originated by Della Ann Kenward
Dangling Sister
Vancouver, BC

I was somewhat relieved to see a play at the Edison Electric Gallery. The Edison is my favourite video haunt, and I knew that the seats would be more comfortable than some of the other venues I had been to.

The seats may have been plush, but Della Ann Kenward does not deliver comfortable theatre. Kenward wrote and performed this one woman play. The play opens with a battered Lucilla rushing the stage in a candy vendor uniform. From the start, Lucilla is frenetic and sensual. She seduces a young customer and takes him back to her favourite make-out places. This is where her lover finds and shoots her. This is the only straight-forward narrative we get, the rest of Lucilla's story is told in flashback through several characters.

It is a struggle to keep up with the story, as the characters are constantly changing. Each character presents their particular take on Lucilla's life and actions. Through their dialogue, we discover that Lucilla is the wayward daughter, irresponsible sister, beautiful seductress, and untamed spirit. I must confess that I was confused by Kenward's rapid character changes. I had trouble sorting out whether these characters were internal characters or actual people in Lucilla's life.

The circus setting further blurs the distinctions between what is real and what is not. The staging creates an atmosphere of tension and unease. The set consists of two chairs that are joined by a long piece of rope stretched out like a tightrope. The rope reinforces the circus setting, and the precarious nature of Lucilla's existence "don't let go of the rope." Kenward constantly goes under the rope or ominously balances on chairs, as she begins to unravel the many narratives of Lucilla's life. Watching her perform this kind of storytelling is intense and challenging.

Shannon e. Ash is a regularly late contributor to Kinesis.
Leanne Johnson is a Vancouver writer who loves art in all of its guises.

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Midi *continued from pg 17*

Laiwan: Last time I spoke with you, you were doing a project with CBC. What happened to that?

Onodera: I wrote two stories for an anthology series called *Inside Stories*. One was shot in Toronto, it was called *Then Now*. That's a whole other story. The other one was shot in BC and was called *Heartbreak Hoteru*. It was about a Japanese-Canadian Elvis impersonator and his no-good gambling brother and was a comedy.

Laiwan: Were they shown? How was it working with the CBC?

Onodera: The series were made by independent producers. The CBC had commissioned two sessions of *Inside Stories*. One was Toronto-based only. The other one was a national collection of stories and they were stories from various cultural communities. So, I guess in a way, mine was the Japanese-Canadian story but I would never personally call it that. I didn't really deal specifically with the CBC other than with my first show *Then Now*, which came under very heavy scrutiny because one of the characters was a lesbian. This was before *Roseanne* (who had one of the first on-screen TV lesbian kisses).

Laiwan: And what happened to your Asian lesbian character?

Onodera: There was a very heated discussion about an onscreen kiss between two women. This was about 1988-89. It was felt by the CBC that since there was only one Japanese Canadian story, they did not feel comfortable representing a lesbian character because the public could perceive the entire Japanese community to be lesbian or gay. So that onscreen kiss ended up on the cutting room floor. There was also a statement by the main character about her being gay. I think that reference also got deleted. But in the end it was the support and push of the actors in the way they performed their roles that really made it an integral part of the story. When *Then Now* came out, I did get some comments from people within the Japanese-Canadian community who knew me and knew my work. They asked why was I being so soft? There wasn't any knowledge of the censorship that happened and there was nothing that I could do about it.

Laiwan: Can you comment on the rising popularity of lesbian films in the mainstream?

Onodera: I guess with *Go Fish* it started to be trendy and cool to have a lesbian film in your distribution catalogue. So if you were Orion Classics or Sony or whoever, you were out there pushing that untapped market which of course on some levels helps to raise the visibility of lesbians in the mainstream. But on another level what kind of representations are getting out there? I think that is the big question. What is deemed appropriate? What is deemed acceptable?

Laiwan: Do you think that these distributors are channelling what is deemed acceptable?

Onodera: I think at this point, within a lesbian mainstream cinema, soft romantic love stories is what is acceptable. I don't cater to that personally. I want to see characters who are multi-dimensional, who are not perfect, who do other things besides sleep with whoever. There are 24 hours in a day. What is partly controlling things is, yes, distribution, but it is also about money and recouping that money in the world of feature film. So, if I was a financially ambitious filmmaker, I would make a soft lesbian romance.

Laiwan: What is your next project?

Onodera: I think I'm taking a little break. But we are developing another project which is also supported by the National Film Board, Studio D. Again it is not a conventional kind of Studio D film. At this point it's a satirical comedy dealing with a legend where Jesus did not die on the cross but actually lived to marry a Japanese woman in Japan.

Laiwan: But I thought he was gay.

Onodera: Jesus? Oh, maybe that's another film.

Don't miss these Women Who Write Jackie Kay from Scotland and Canada's Carol Shields, Judith Merrill and Audrey Thomas.

The Vancouver International

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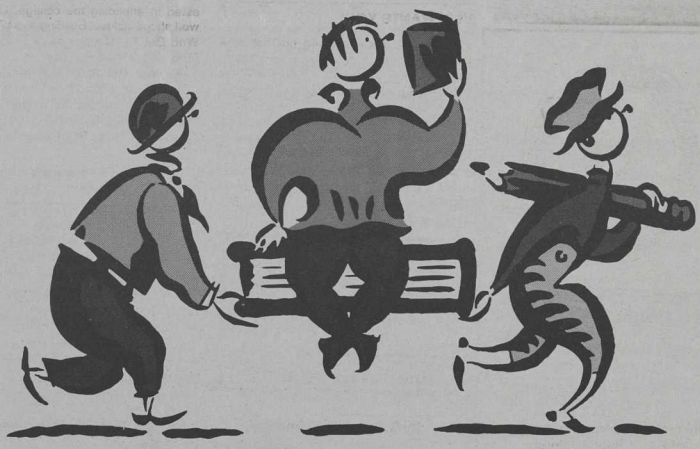
(& Readers)

Festival



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Other free notices will be items of general public interest and will appear at the discretion of *Kinesis*.

Classifieds are $8 (+$0.56 GST) for the first 50 words or portion thereof, $4 (+$0.28 GST) for each additional 25 words or portion thereof and must be prepaid.

Deadline for all submissions is the 18th of the month preceding publication. Note: *Kinesis* is published ten times a year. Jul/Aug and Dec/Jan are double issues.

All submissions should include a contact name and telephone number for any clarification that may be required.

Listings will not be accepted over the telephone.

***Kinesis* encourages readers to research the goods and services advertised in Bulletin Board. *Kinesis* cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or the safety and effectiveness of the services and products listed.**

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INVOLVEMENT

WANNA GET INVOLVED?

With *Kinesis*? We want to get involved with you too. Help plan our next issue. Come to one of our next Writers' Meetings: **Tues Oct 3 or Tues Nov 7**, 7pm at our office, 301-1720 Grant St, Vancouver. If you can't make the meeting, but still want to write, call us, (604) 255-5499. No experience is necessary, all women welcome. Childcare subsidies available.

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

Are you interested in finding out how *Kinesis* is put together? Well...just drop by during our next production dates and help us design and lay out Canada's national feminist newspaper. Production for the **November** issue is from **Oct 18-24**. No experience is necessary. Training and support will be provided. If this notice intrigues you, call Laiwan at (604) 255-5499. Childcare subsidies available.

ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

The Vancouver Status of Women's Assertiveness Training Program will be starting soon. If you would like to volunteer or participate please call Andrea at (604) 255-5511.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Seeking women in business...with an eye for the social--as well as financial--bottom line. The Vancouver Status of Women is compiling a directory of women in business who incorporate their social principles into their business practices. For more info or for our self-audit questionnaire, call (604)255-5511 or write VSW at 301-1720 Grant St, Vancouver, BC, V5L 2Y6.

VSW WANTS YOU!

Want to get more involved but not sure where to begin? Join us--become a volunteer at Vancouver Status of Women. VSW volunteers plan events, lead groups, raise funds, answer the phone lines, organize the library, help connect women with the community resources they need, and other exciting tasks! The next volunteer potluck and orientation will be on **Wed Oct 18,** 7 pm at VSW, 301-1720 Grant St. For more info, call Andrea at (604)255-5511. Childcare subsidies available.

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EVENTS

ALTERED TERRAIN

Altered Terrain, a show of Jennifer Walton's paintings will be appearing at Artspeak Gallery until **Oct 7**. The gallery is open from Tues-Sat 12-5pm and is located at 401-112 W. Hastings St, Vancouver. (604)688-0051.

RACE AND GENDER CONFERENCE

Race Gender and the Construction of Canada, a conference organized by the Centre for Research in Women's Studies and Gender Relations at the University of British Columbia, will be held **Oct 19-22** at UBC. The conference will feature keynote speeches by Glenda Simms, Himani Bannerji, and Tony Penikett. The cost of the full conference is $175 or $75 for students. The talk by Glenda Simms on **Thurs Oct 19** is free and open to the public. Daycare subsidies are available. To register or for more info call (604) 822-9171.

PERSON'S DAY CELEBRATION

This year, West Coast LEAF Association will be hosting *Person's Day Breakfasts* in Vancouver and Victoria. In Vancouver, the breakfast will be held on **Wed Oct 18** 7-9 am at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Keynote speaker will be Christine Boyle. Tickets are $45. In Victoria, Sharon McIvor will highlight the breakfast **Thurs Oct 19** 7-9am at the Harbour Towers Hotel, 345 Quebec St. Tickets are $25. For more information or to reserve tickets, call West Coast LEAF at (604) 684-8772.

FREE WORKSHOPS FOR WOMEN

Douglas College Women's Centre is offering free workshops for women attending or interested in attending the college. Upcoming workshops include: Building on self-esteem, **Wed Oct 18**, 10am-noon; a Talking Circle **Mon Oct 23** 4-6pm; Confidence Building Skills **Wed Oct 25**, 2-4pm; and Assertive Communication **Wed Nov 1** 10-noon. Workshops will be held at the Women's Centre, Douglas College, Room 2720-700 Royal Ave, New Westminister, BC. To register call (604) 527-5486.

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EVENTS

LUANNE ARMSTRONG

Activist and writer Luanne Armstrong will be reading in Vancouver from her new novel, *Bordering*, **Tues Oct 10** at 7:30pm at Women in Print, 3566 W. 4th Ave. *Bordering* is a novel about a lesbian coming out in a small town, and is Armstrong's second book. Admission is free. For more info call (604)732-4128.

JENNIFER MITTON

Acclaimed author Jennifer Mitton will be reading on **Fri Oct 13** at 7:30 pm at the Vancouver Women's Health Collective 219-1675 W. 8th. Admission is free. For more info call (604) 730-1034. Hosted by West Coast Women & Words.

CYNTHIA HEIMEL

Village Voice columnist Cynthia Heimel will be reading from her new collection of caustic wit, *If You Leave Me, Can I Come Too* **Fri Oct 20** at 7:30pm at Women in Print, 3566 W. 4th Ave. The reading is free. For more info call (604)732-4128.

GETTING PUBLISHED

West Coast Women & Words is offering a workshop on *How to Keep Getting Published* **Fri Oct 27** from 7:30-9:30pm at the Vancouver Women's Health Collective 219-1675 W. 8th Ave. The workshop will be led by Jill Williams and is by donation. For more info call (604) 730-1034.

AGM

West Coast Women & Words, a charitable organization supporting women's writing and women writers for over 13 years, will be holding their annual general meeting on **Sun Oct 22** from 2-4pm at the Vancouver Women's Health Collective 219-1675 W. 8th Ave. All women are welcome. For more info call (604) 730-1034.

LESBIAN DINNER DANCE

Victoria's Hot Flashes Coffee House will be hosting the 8th annual Lesbian Dinner Dance Gala **Sat Oct 21** at Crystal Gardens, 713 Douglas St. Featured will be Marga Gomez who will perform her *Half Lesbian Half Cuban* monologue. Doors open at 6pm, dinner is at 7pm. Tickets are $35 for dinner and dance; $13 for dance only. Tickets are available at Everywomen's Bookstore, 641 Johnston St; or by calling Jenny at (604) 474-6085.

REPORT FROM BEIJING

WomenSpeak Institute is hosting a panel discussion reflecting on the 4th World Conference on women and the NGO Forum **Tues Oct 24** 7-9pm in the Douglas College Boardroom, 700 Royal Ave, New Westminister, BC. Panelists include Suua Geuer, China-Canada Young Women's Project; Joyce Lydiard, Helsinki to Beijing Peace Train, Gulzar Samji, chair of the BC Beijing Steering Committee; and others. The discussion will focus on the implications for women's rights and recommendations for local action. Admission is $5 or $2 for students. For more info, call (604) 527-5440.

PRESS GANG TURNS 20

Press Gang Publishers will mark its 20th anniversary **Sat Nov 18** with the launch of four new titles from Larissa Lai, Chrystos, Marion Douglas, and Joanne Arnott, and other entertainment. The gala event will take place in the Multipurpose Room of the Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library, 350 W. Georgia St. Doors open at 7:30pm, readings begin at 8pm. The venue is wheelchair accessible. Advance tickets at Women in Print, Little Sister's and Octopus Books, $8-15. For more info call Press Gang at (604)876-7787.

CCLOW AGM

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) will be holding its annual general meeting, **Sun Oct 15**

BULLETIN BOARD

EVENTS

12:30-2:30pm at the Primrose Hotel, 2nd Floor, 111 Carlton St, Toronto. Guests are welcome. Please RSVP by Oct 10 by calling (416) 699-1909.

JAM. ISMAIL

Sensational jam. ismail will be reading and performing her work **Thurs Oct 19**, 4:30pm at Capilano College, FIR 402, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver. Admission is free. For more info, call (604)984-4957, local 2424.

WOMEN IN MUSIC

Women in Music presents *First Sunday's*, a monthly music performance, at the Arts Club Backstage Lounge, 1585 Johnston St. Granville Island, Vancouver. Shari Ulrich and Christine Duncan will kick off WIM's *First Sunday's* **Oct 1**. The monthly event will include an up-and-coming musician and feature act, followed by open stage for women of all musical genres. Doors open at 7:30pm; show starts at 8pm. Tickets are $6 or $4 for members of WIM. For more info, or if you are interested in performing, call WIM (604) 684-9461.

HONOURING WARRIOR WOMEN

Honouring Warrior Women: Past, Present, Future, an Aboriginal Women & Wellnes Conference, will be held in Victoria **Oct 11-13** at the Victoria Conference Centre, 720 Douglas St. Topics to be discussed include: Oral History of First Nations; First Nations Women in Treaty Making; Holistic Health; Decolonizing the Family; First Nations Women Herbs and Medicine; and Internalized Racism from a Metis Perspective. For more info call Tara Banaee at (604) 384-3211.

CRIAW CONFERENCE

Northern Visions: Northern Futures, a conference organized by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, will take place from **Nov 10-12** at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George. Panel discussions will include Women and Community Building; Education and Work; Environment and Sustainability. The cost of the conference is $300 and $75 for student/community or non-profit delegates (maximum 2 delegates). For more info or to register, call (604) 960-5610 or write to The University of Northern BC, c/o CRIAW, 3333 University Way, Prince George, BC, V2N 4Z2; Fax: (604) 960-5791.

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL

The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society is presenting its 2nd annual *Bringing People Together* Aboriginal Cultural Festival **Fri Oct 13** 5pm-12am, **Sat Oct 14** 11-12am, and **Sun Oct 15** 11am-10pm at the Plaza of Nations, 750 Pacific Boulevard South. Tickets are $5/day or $10/3 days. Youth (12 & under) and seniors free. For more info call (604) 251-4844.

GRRRRLS WITH GUITARS

Grrrrls with Guitars features Melanie Dekker and Jewish-African singer/songwriter Mignon (on tour from south Africa) **Wed Oct 18** at the Lotus, 455 Abbott St. Vancouver at 10 pm. Admission is $3-5. And Grrrrls with Guitars will feature Kym Browm, Carmen Diane Barbarash and 10ft Henry on **Mon Oct 30**, 9:30pm at the Railway Club, 579 Dunsmuir St. Admission is $3/members; $5/non-members. For more info call (604)685-3623.

UNDERGARMENTS AND BEAUTY

Not Another Fucking Fashion Show Productions presents *Support Undergarments for Beauty School Drop-outs*, a multi-media, costume-based performance featuring the flamboyantly cheap fetish ensembles of C. Aileen Alida. The Show will be performed **Sat Oct 21** at the Rainbow's End Boutique, 573 E. Hastings St. Vancouver. Doors open at 8pm; show starts at 9pm. The venue is wheelchair accessible. Childcare and refreshments. Admission is free; donation welcome. For more info call Caroline (604)252-9575.

EVENTS

GET DRESSED!

Seattle's Radical Women will be holding a Halloween party **Sat Oct 28** starting at 7:30pm at the New Freeway Hall, 5018 Ranier Ave., Seattle, Washington. The party includes a fall harvest buffet, dancing, comedy spoofs and a costume contest. Wheelchair accessible. For more info, or for rides or childcare call (206) 722-6057 or 722-2453, two days in advance.

SHOP FOR CHANGE!

Helping Women Leave Violence Behind. Liberty Thrift, located at, 1009 Commercial Drive is holding its biannual bag sale on **Sat Sept 30**. Everything you can stuff in a bag for $10., or 50% off individual items. Doors open at 12 pm.

ALPHABETICAL REFLECTIONS

Lisette Coates' paper pulp art show, *Alphabetical Reflections* will be shown at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, 1895 Venables St until **Oct 23**. Gallery hours are 10-7pm weekdays and 3-7pm weekends.

SCARLET UNDERDRESS

Choreographer Chick Snipper presents her dance piece, *In her Scarlet Underdress*, featuring dancers Cari Campbell, Anne Cooper, Kathleen McDonagh, Susan Elliott and Catherine Lee, at the Firehall Arts Centre, 280 E. Cordova St., Vancouver. The show runs from **Oct 4-7** at 8pm, with a 2 for 1 preview on **Oct 4**. Tickets are $16 or $12 for seniors, students and members. For more info call (604)689-0926.

KWA AND MARLATT

Lydia Kwa and Daphne Marlatt will be reading their poetry **Thurs Oct 26** at 8pm at the Western Front, 303 E. 8th Ave, Vancouver. Admission is free. For more info call 731-8299.

ART THERAPY CONFERENCE

The Canadian Art Therapy Association (CATA) is holding a conference, *Art Therapy: a creative way of healing*, **Sat Nov 4** at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Presentations will cover such issues such as Art Therapy in Community Mental Health; Multiculturalism and Art Therapy; and Art Therapy in Cyberspace. Registration fees are $140 and $100 for students if received before Oct 20, and $160/$110 if received after that date. For more info call 254-0418 or write to CATA, #101-1515 E. 6th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V5N 1P2.

SHEILA NORGATE

Vancouver artist Sheila Norgate will be exhibiting her new work entitled, *It's More Fun When You Know the Rules: Etiquette Problems for Girls* until **Oct 26** at the Community Arts Council Gallery, 837 Davie St, Vancouver. Gallery hours are Tues-Fri 10am-4pm and Sats 1-4pm. Norgate has extracted text from etiquette books from the 40s and 50s and combined them with images from Women's Magazines from the period. The result is at once both poignant and hilarious; guaranteed to tickle the most weary of feminist funny bones.

HONOURING OUR ELDERS

Womenspeak Institute presents *Honouring Our Elders* **Thurs Oct 5** from 7-9pm at Douglas College in New Westminister. Become more attuned to the contributions, accomplishments, and significance of women in mid-life and beyond as grandmothers Barbara Wyss, historian and First Nations activist, and Ingrid Parsons, therapeutic recreation practitioner, and others describe ways for celebrating older women's power and wisdom. Admission is $5 ($2 for students). Call (604) 527-5440 to reserve seating.

GROUPS

L'ARC-EN-CIEL

L'Arc-En-Ciel, Les Francophones et Francophiles des Communautés Gaies et Lesbiennes, vous invitent a venir voir ou revoir le film *La Cage aux Folles* (version originale sous-titrée en anglais). Le visionnement aura lieu au Centre des Gais et Lesbiennes de Vancouver, 1170 rue Bute, **le samedi 14 octobre** a 7:30pm. Pour de plus amples informations, n'hesitez pas a composer le 688-9378, poste #1, boite vocale #2120.

SEEKING A BAND

The Penticton and Area Women's Centre is looking for a band for their dance on **Sat Nov 18**. The Centre is desperately in need of music for "all the wild womyn who need to boogie for the good of their sweet souls." If available call Laurel at (604) 493-6822.

REDEYE

Redeye, a collective of women and men who produce a 3 hour arts and current affairs radio program from a variety of feminist and other progressive perspectives every Saturday morning on Co-op Radio (102.7FM) is looking for volunteers for an alternative media project. Training in all aspects of radio. Bring a friend. For more info call Lorraine at (604)254-5855.

LEGAL CLINIC FOR WOMEN

Battered Women's Support Services and the University of British Columbia Law Students Legal Advice Program (LSLAP) is co-sponsoring free legal clinics for women on **alternate Tuesdays** from 6:30-8:30pm until Nov 14. For info or appointments call LSLAP at 822-5791.

VLC

The Vancouver Lesbian Centre now has new hours: **Thurs & Fridays** 11am-6pm and **Sats** noon-5pm. To find out about the VLC's groups and upcoming events, drop by Centre, 876 Commercial Drive, or call (604) 254-8458.

BEYOND BEIJING

Beyond Beijing: What women really need to gain is equality. WomenVisions, on Co-op Radio--CFRO 102.7 FM in Vancouver--reminds listeners to join in for their Autumn Airlift Fundraising Special **Mon Oct 16** from 7-9pm. Tune in. Call up (604)684-8494, make a pledge and support community radio.

GLC

The Gay and Lesbian Centre of Vancouver now has a province-wide toll free phone line: 1-800-566-1170. The line is open to all lesbians, gay men, families and friends looking for info, referrals, peer support. The phone line is open **Mon-Fri** 1-4pm.

CONTACT POINT

Contact Point is a group for mature lesbians and double-spirited women (the present age range in the group is 39 to 72) who are mainstream women with many and varied interests. The group meets **every Thursday** from 5:30-6:30pm at the Vancouver Women's Health Collective, 219-1675 W. 8th Ave. Your 'anchor woman' is Rhodea and if you desire further info, please leave your name and number with Raine at the Health Collective, (604) 736-4234 or fax (604) 736-2152 and Rhodea with get back to you.

Want to advertise in Kinesis? Call us 255-5499

SUBMISSIONS

ASIAN CANADIAN WRITERS

Powell Street Festival, an annual celebration of Japanese Canadian art, culture and history, is co-sponsoring an event with the Vancouver Storytelling Festival in March 1996. The Festival is looking for submissions from Asian Canadian Women writers, storytellers, poets. Please send submissions to: Powell Street Festival Society, 450-1050 Alberni St, Vanxcouver, BC V6E 1A3. For more info call (604)682-4335. Deadline is Nov 30.

WET BEHIND THE EARS

Wet Behind the Ears: An Anthology About Young Lesbian and Bisexual Women is the first collection compiled by and for young lesbian and bisexual women. If you're a woman 26 years old or younger, we want your submissions on topics such as coming out/developing identity, dealing with family, finding community, political struggles, developing pride, youth and power, violence, physical and mental health issues are welcome and should be no longer than 2500 words or ten pages. Send poetry, erotica, photography, art, essays, comics, prose and short stories. Please do not send your originals as we will be unable to return them to you. Send your submission and a short biography to the In Your Space Collective c/o Women's Press, 517 College St, Suite 233, Toronto, ON, M6G 4A2. Deadline is **Oct 15**.

ASIAN PACIFIC LESBIANS

Asian Pacific lesbians and bisexual women are invited to submit work to *Wild/Rice*, a forthcoming anthology of erotica by Asian Pacific Lesbian and Bisexual Women. "Suzy Wong, geisha, Jungle girl, dragon lady, submissive slave, Madame Butterfly, Miss Saigon, mail order bride, wanted: docile, demure Oriental girl to please white master"--these are the words that have been used to describe us. Take back the words and use the power of the erotic to tell YOUR story. Seeking steamy, stunning, wild, tender, fierce, passionate, funny, stormy stories that seduce and scream. 3-10 pages, double-spaced, typed or good quality printer. Enclose SASE. Submissions will not be returned. Direct submissions and queries to the editor: Kitty Tsui, PO Box 13081, Chicago, Illinois, USA 60613. Deadline is **Oct 30**.

CALLING DYKE PLAYWRIGHTS

Margo Charlton, a lesbian theatre director and producer, has received a Manitoba Arts Council grant to do research on lesbian theatre and is looking for scripts. Charlton is interested in any genre: drama, comedy, satire, collective creations, performance art, etc. Her plan is to write an article on her findings, to compile a list of writers and to distribute this to all the women who send scripts, and to produce some scripts in 1997. For more info, contact Margo Charlton, 1-895 Palmerston Ave. Winnipeg, MB, R3G 1J6; tel (204) 775-5320 or fax (204) 775-3664.

QUEER PRESS

Queer Press is a volunteer-run, community-based micro press dedicated to providing opportunities for lesbians, gays and bisexuals to experience the power of the written word; and especially for women, people of colour and queers living in rural areas. If you have a manuscript, or if you're a community group interested in putting a manuscript together, tell us about your work. Write to Queer Press, PO Box 485 Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2T1. For info or to order our writer's guidelines, call (416) 978-8201.

BULLETIN BOARD

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BELLYDANCING

An Evening of Bellydance with Joan of Art, Troupe Rose, Vancouver choreographer Elizabeth Carefoot. **Sat Oct 14** at 8:30 pm at Cafe Deux Soleil, 2096 Commercial Drive. $5-$10 for tickets. Available at Urban Empire and Women in Print. Doors open at 7:30 pm. All welcome. For Friday evening and Saturday workshop call 253-7189. A Sounds & Furies Production.

MARGA GOMEZ

Marga Gomez will be performing *Half-Cuban, Half-Lesbian* for the first time in Vancouver at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre **Sun Oct 22**, 8pm. Born in Harlem to a Cuban comedian and a Puerto Rican exotic dancer, comic Gomez thinks of herself as "an exotic comedian". Tickets $14-$20. Available at Little Sisters, Urban Empire and Women In Print. A Sounds & Furies Production.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

The 2nd annual *Women's Arts and Crafts Faire* will be held on **Sun Dec 3** at Heritage Hall, Main and 15th, Vancouver. For table reservations and cost call 253-7189. A Sounds & Furies Production.

NOT SO STRICTLY BALLROOM

Not So Strictly Ballroom--a group of lesbians of all ages who love dancing are starting up another 10 week dance session, both for Basic and Intermediate levels, in rhumba, jive, waltz, tango and more. Starting **Sat Sept 30** at the Dance Hall at 1795 E. 1st Ave (at Salsbury), Vancouver. For info and to register call Hazel at 255-1937.

WRITERS' GROUP WANTED

I write fiction and am looking for a group that critiques vigorously, writes lots and has fun. All women or mixed M/F okay. If you would like a new member, call Elaine 255-5513.

HERITAGE HALL FOR RENT

Magnificent restored Heritage Building at 15th and Main St. in Vancouver. Available for special events of all kinds. From benefits to book launches, conferences to cultural celebrations, banquets to private parties. The building is smoke-free, wheelchair accessible, on the bus line, and offers non-profit rates. For more info call (604)879-4816.

CLASSIFIEDS

STONEWALL FESTIVAL

The Stonewall Festival Committee is having a meeting to plan the festival for 1996. The meeting will be held on **Wed Oct 18** at 6 pm at Charlie's Lounge at the Heritage House Hotel, 455 Abbott St. New ideas and energy welcomed and appreciated. For more info call Jenn at (604)874-8299.

ILW

International Lesbian Week is getting ready for its 10th anniversary in February 1996. The first planning meeting will be held **Sun Oct 1** at 6pm at Charlie's Lounge, Heritage House Hotel, 455 Abbott St. For more info call Jenn at 874-8299.

CUSTODY INFO WANTED

Access and custody information is wanted by single mom with 18 month old girl. I think I know the hard legal processes, but I need to find strategies that keep us both safe and not in contempt of court. Call or fax me, maybe we can start a support group or connect on the Internet. Call Roz at (604) 658-1960 or fax to Burnaby at 444-4196.

KARATE FOR WOMEN

Shito-ryu karate taught by female black belts. Learn a martial art for self defense, fitness, self confidence! At the YWCA, 535 Hornby. Mon, Tues, Thurs, 7:15-9pm. $45/month. Beginner group start Oct 2. Call 872-7846.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

A cool, politicized (at least open-minded) sign language interpreter is being sought for the spoken text of the performance piece, *Support Undergarments for Beauty School Drop-outs*. The show will be performed on **Sat Oct 21** from 9-11pm. An honorarium may be available based on donations received. Please note, this performance contains non-negotiably explicit political and sexual material. If interested, call Caroline at 252-9575.

MY NAME IS KAHENTIIOSTA

Kahentiiosta with her son Rorhaki, above, in a new film by Alanis Obomsawin, the award-winning director of *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance. My Name is Kahentiiosta* is a 29-minute documentary profiling a young Mohawk woman's ordeal during and after the 1990 Oka stand-off. Produced by the National Film Board of Canada, *My Name is Kahentiiosta* will be screening at the Vancouver International Film Festival on Monday, October 9th, 7:00pm at the Ridge Cinema, and Friday, October 13th, 12:30pm at the Robson Square Media Centre. Another film *Broken Promises* will be shown along with Obomsawin's film and is part of the programming titled "Land Rights". Photo by Shaney Komulainen

MARILYN WARING AND TERRE NASH

***Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics* charts the life and ideas of New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring. As the youngest-ever female MP elected to the New Zealand parliament, Waring is famous for bringing down her government in 1984 on the issue of a nuclear-free New Zealand and her groundbreaking work on women's enormous, yet unrecognized, contribution to the world economy. Directed by Terre Nash, *Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics* is a National Film Board of Canada production and will be screening at the Vancouver International Film Festival on Wednesday, October 11th, 9:30pm and Friday, October 13th, 4:45pm, both times at the Robson Square Media Centre.**

Photo by Ron Simon

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WOMENFRIENDS MUSIC CAMP

Enjoy a weekend with women where your infinite creativity and musicality can find expression. Play, sing, chant, jam, perform, compose, meditate, give or take a workshop, or simply relax. **Nov 3-5**, at Camp Alexandra, Crescent Beach. Sliding fee $150-$250 including catered meals and accomodation. For information and registration call Penny Sidor at (604)251-4715.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER

Joan Robillard, MD, Obstetrics and General Practitioner for all kinds of families has moved to 203-1750 E 10th Ave, Vancouver. Phone 872-1454 or fax 872-3510.

SALT SPRING VACATION

Vacation on Salt Spring Island, BC. Renters wanted for 10 days between Oct 23 and Nov 5. Fully furnished cedar home with fireplaces. Two cats in residence, so don't bring pets. Quiet, surrounded by trees, ocean glimpses. Sleeps 4-6. Women only. $500, utilities included. Phone (604) 537-5701.

GUEST HOUSE FOR WOMEN

the back hills. Come retreat to 10 private hillside acres. Enjoy delicious breakfast and cozy wood fires. We are only one half hour from Victoria, minutes from ocean beaches and a short hike to a spectacular view from the Strait of Juan de Fuca starts at our back

CLASSIFIEDS

door. So now that you've heard of us...Why not come see us? Very reasonable rates. Call us soon. (604) 478-9648.

SPINSTERVALE

Are you travelling on Vancouver Island or need a country retreat? Rustic cabin for rent; sleeps two. $7.50 per person/night. Also, work exchange offered; food and accomodation for three hours/day. Workshop space available. Call Sunshine or Liberty at (604) 248-8809.

LYDIA KWA, PSYCHOLOGIST

I'm pleased to announce the opening of my private practice in clinical psychology (Granville Island office). I'm a feminist therapist and I work with clients on a variety of issues. I welcome new clients, especially survivors, gays and lesbians, women of colour, artists and writers. Call (604)255-1709.

FAIR WARES FAIRE

The Penticton and Area Women's Centre is hosting a *Fair Wares Faire*--promoting social justice through the sale of ethically produced goods--**Sat Nov 18**. The Centre is accepting applications from groups who support social justice--including women's rights. Excellent opportunity for fundraising and consciousness raising. Daycare and billeting are available. For more info call Laurel Burnham, the Centre's coordinator at (604) 493-6822.

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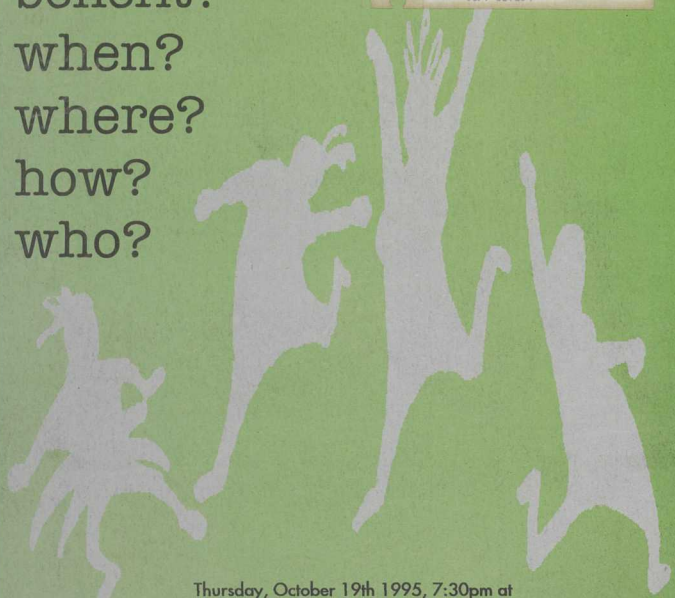

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