



from Vienna to Beijing:

the **Copenhagen**
Hearing
on **economic justice**
and **women's human rights**

at the United Nations World
Summit on Social Development

Copenhagen, March 1995

Center for Women's Global Leadership

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Coordinated by

Center for Women's Global Leadership and **DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women For a New Era)** in collaboration with **American Friends Service Committee, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, Asian Women's Human Rights Council, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (New Patriotic Alliance), Black Hills Steering Committee, Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Burlington Women's Council, Church World Service and Witness, Comité Fronterizo de Obreras, Committee for Women, Population and the Environment, Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, Foundation for a Compassionate Society, GABRIELA, Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, International Centre for Law & Development, International Women's Health Coalition, NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada, National Black Women's Health Project, National Congress of Neighborhood Women/GROOTS, Network of East-West Women, New Jersey YWCA, Tanzania Media Women's Association, Vermont Women's Union, and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO).**

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preface

The Center for Women's Global Leadership is pleased to present the complete transcript of the *Copenhagen Hearing on Economic Justice and Women's Human Rights*¹. This Hearing, which was co-convened by DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) and the Global Center in collaboration with the organizations listed on the title page, was held at the UN **World Summit on Social Development** in Copenhagen, March 7, 1995. The Social Summit was a particularly important site at which to present women's experiences of violations of their social and economic rights because of its focus on poverty, unemployment and social disintegration.

The Copenhagen Hearing is the third in a series of International Hearings and Tribunals that the Global Center has convened as part of the *Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights*. The series began with the *Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights* at the UN **World Conference on Human Rights** (Vienna, 1993). This Tribunal gave a public face to violations of women's human rights and helped gain recognition of gender-based violence as a human rights violation. In addition, it galvanized the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. At the **International Conference on Population and Development** (Cairo, 1994), women sought recognition of health as a human right, and the *Cairo Hearing on Reproductive Health and Human Rights* underscored this demand. The *Copenhagen Hearing on Economic Justice and Women's Human Rights* broke new ground by highlighting US complicity in violations of socio-economic rights both within the country and internationally. This series will culminate with the *Beijing Tribunal on Accountability for Women's Human Rights* to be held at the UN **IV World Conference on Women** on September 1, 1995.

The Copenhagen Hearing was a watershed which challenged the world's governments to incorporate a holistic understanding of women's human rights into their economic and social policies — an understanding which underscored the indivisibility of all human rights. The Hearing built solidarity across geographic boundaries by bringing together women from the South and the North to address the impact of United States policies on their lives. In holding the United States accountable for policies which directly or indirectly violate a wide range of economic, social and cultural rights along with civil and political rights, women advanced strategies toward a more just world order. The Hearing provided a highly visible public space for women who are often not heard at UN conferences to claim their human rights and to demand that governments promote and protect these rights rather than treat them as elements of intergovernmental negotiations.

The coordinating committee for the Hearing, comprised of women from women's, economic justice, and human rights groups throughout the world, worked intensively over several months to develop the issues to be highlighted. They identified testifiers, shaped the themes and format of the Hearing, and focused the testimonies on common concerns without losing the specific conditions that women confront in their own cultural, political and geographic contexts. Testimonies were developed to reflect women's resistance and activism, rather than victimization and resignation. A set of specific demands were also developed and publicly presented to the US delegation at the Social Summit.

The Hearing testimonies covered a broad range of issues, but are linked through four categories, giving tangible meaning to the indivisibility of women's human rights across geographic, political and cultural boundaries. The first category, Economic Adjustment and Marginalization, included three testifiers: *Cora Lee Johnson* (US) who spoke about her struggles to obtain better housing, health care and jobs in her low-income, rural, African-American community; *Mahfoudha Alley Hamid* (Tanzania), a farmer and a poet, who described the adverse impact of structural adjustment policies on her farm and her family's health and

1 For clarity, some of the transcripts have been edited in conjunction with participants' written testimony.

education; and **Carol Langlais** (US), a mother participating in the welfare program, who called on the United States to account for the punitive aspects of welfare reform. The second section, Sexual Exploitation and Violence, began with **Carolina Araullo** (Philippines), a medical doctor, who spoke of violence against women, particularly in the form of military prostitution, resulting from the presence of US military bases in the Philippines. **Shannon Booker** (US), who suffered years of domestic abuse before killing her abuser in self-defense, testified about the connections between domestic violence, poverty and the criminal justice system.

The next section, Trade Policy, linked testimonies from the US, Canada and Mexico and described the consequences of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other economic policies on women's social and economic rights. **Julia Quiñones de González** (Mexico) addressed the environmental and health impact of NAFTA on women workers as well as violations of their civil and political rights. She was followed by **Miche Hill** (Canada), a community organizer who spoke of the destructive consequences of NAFTA in the form of increasingly restrictive social and economic policies in Canada. **Cal Fen Lin** (US) concluded this section by recounting the exploitative conditions she faced as an immigrant garment worker in the US, along with her involvement with Asian Women Immigrant Advocates and their Garment Worker's Justice Campaign.

The final section addressed Economic Policy, Health and the Environment. **Rita Pereira** (Cuba) detailed the way that the increasingly harsh conditions which have resulted from US economic sanctions affect health care and health care workers in Cuba. **Charlotte Black Elk** (US/Sioux Nation) concluded the Hearing by illustrating the destruction of the environment and damage done to the culture of indigenous peoples in the US by government policies.

The testimonies provided a powerful indictment of global economic forces. They offered concrete evidence of how women in the South and the North have been devastated by the recent processes of economic restructuring and structural adjustment. The stories showed how the globalization of the world economy, while facilitating increased profits for transnational corporations and financial institutions, has increased poverty and unemployment for women. With contingent and insecure employment, unemployment, dangerous working conditions and lowered wages on the rise, governments are cutting social services, health and education programs and food subsidies.

The explicit focus of the Hearing on the accountability of the United States arose from an acknowledgement of its powerful position in the world economy, as well as its self-proclaimed role as a worldwide proponent of women's human rights. The Hearing's intent was to prompt the US to take leadership in reaffirming that human rights are universal and indivisible, including the right to development and to a safe environment. However, women who testified articulated standards and recommendations which were not restricted to the United States but also spoke to UN policy, the policies of international financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and national trade and economic policies of other governments as well.

The Copenhagen Hearing took place in conjunction with many activities by non-governmental organizations which challenged the presumption by governments that solutions to poverty, unemployment and marginalization reside in profit and market-centered economic expansion. Rather, groups from around the world proposed a global economic model based on gender-sensitive and people-centered sustainable development, with fundamental respect for human rights at its core. Although women did not transform the Social Summit agenda as much as we had hoped, the final Programme of Action² does reflect many advances for women's human rights. Among other things, the document recognizes the importance of NGOs, civil society, and women as major actors in social development. Other positive outcomes included

² World Summit on Social Development, *Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action*, March 1995.

- A reaffirmation of the importance of core human rights standards — civil, political, economic, social and cultural — including the right to development;
- Language about the importance of women’s role in social development and the need for gender specific approaches to policy and programming. One of the ten commitments in the Declaration calls for promoting gender equality and improving the status of women (Commitment 5);
- A recognition of the increased burden on women created by poverty and social disintegration, along with the acceptance of a broad definition of the family, and a call for the quantitative consideration of the value of unremunerated work;
- The advancement of basic workers’ rights and the rights of migrant workers, as well as a commitment to respect the right of indigenous people to maintain their identity, culture and interests; and,
- Acknowledgement that structural adjustment programs must be reviewed so as to reduce their negative impact, and a request to the World Bank, the IMF and other regional development banks to give higher priority to social sector lending.

The *Copenhagen Hearing on Economic Justice and Women's Human Rights* represents an important step forward in the articulation of a vision of human rights which deepens solidarity among women around the world through demanding accountability from global and national institutions. Women can utilize the opening created by this event and by women’s organizing throughout the world, to continue to build international networks, while insisting that the policies of governments and international institutions be based upon a new paradigm of social and economic development in which a holistic and indivisible conception of the social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights of all women is central.

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Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights

from Vienna to Beijing:
the **Copenhagen Hearing**
on **Economic Justice** and
Women's Human Rights

World Summit on Social Development
Copenhagen, March 7, 1995

program

Welcome

Mallika Dutt, Center for Women's Global Leadership

Peggy Antrobus, DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)

Opening Remarks

Noeleen Heyser, UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women)

Testimony

Moderators: Sonia de Souza, DAWN

Mariama Williams, Network of East-West Women

Economic Adjustment and Marginalization

Cora Lee Johnson (Georgia, USA)

The struggle to obtain better housing, health care and nutrition

Mahfoudha Alley Hamid (Tanzania)

Adverse impact of structural adjustment programs on women and their families

Carol Langlais (Vermont, USA)

Punitive aspects of welfare policies

Sexual Exploitation and Violence

Carolina P. Araullo (Philippines)

Consequences of U.S. bases and military prostitution on women

Shannon Booker (Massachusetts, USA)

Connection between domestic violence, poverty and the criminal justice system

Trade Policy

Julia Quiñones de González (Mexico)

Impact of NAFTA and unhealthy working conditions on women workers

Miche Hill (Canada)

Impact of NAFTA and cutbacks of social spending on women

Cai Fen Lin (California, USA)

Impact of NAFTA and the Garment Worker's Justice Campaign

Economic Policy, Health and Environment

Rita Pereira (Cuba)

Devastating consequences of US economic sanctions on women in Cuba

Charlotte Black Elk (South Dakota, USA)

Environmental impact of US policies on indigenous peoples

Commentary

Chair: Susana Fried, Center for Women's Global Leadership

Commentators

Julia Häusermann, Executive Chair of Rights and Humanity and member of Global Commission on Women's Health of the World Health Organization

Dr. Clovis Maksoud, Former Ambassador of the League of Arab States at the United Nations and Director of the Center for the Study of the Global South at American University

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Endorsed by

Alt-WID (Alternative Women in Development), Atlantic Women's Fishnet, CAFRA, Caribbean Policy Development Organization, CLACSO, Center for Constitutional Rights, CRIAW/Global Feminisms Committee, La Fuerza Unidad, Health Care: We Gotta Have It, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Institute for Policy Studies, International Women's Human Rights Project of the Center for Law and Public Policy at St. John's University School of Law, International Young Women and Health Coalition, MADRE, Ms. Foundation for Women, Organizing Committee for the Decade for Human Rights Education, Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, SWOP (Southwest Organizing Project), UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), WAND, and WIDE.

opening remarks

Mallika Dutt

Center for Women's Global Leadership

Greetings. Welcome to the *Copenhagen Hearing on Economic Justice and Women's Human Rights*. This Hearing, which is third in a series of Hearings and Tribunals, focuses on violations of women's economic and social rights, committed primarily by the policies and practices of the United States. It is part of the *Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights*, a campaign comprised of over one thousand organizations around the world that have mobilized at world conferences and other events to insist that women's fundamental humanity be recognized in all policies of all governments and institutions.

The Global Campaign was launched at the **World Conference on Human Rights** held in Vienna in 1993. Using the *Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights* and other mechanisms, women won the recognition first, of women's rights as human rights, and second, of violence against women as a violation of women's human integrity. At that Conference, a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women was appointed, and a call for the integration of gender into all United Nations human rights mechanisms was made in the Vienna Declaration¹. Women won these victories after massive mobilizing and we took the gains that we made in Vienna to the **International Conference on Population and Development**, where at the *Cairo Hearing on Reproductive Health and Human Rights*, women insisted that their health was a fundamental human right that could not be compromised by population policies, by religious fundamentalism, or by organizations that had interests other than women's dignity and human rights at their center. The success of our organizing at Cairo has led us to focus on violations of social and economic rights because we believe that women's experiences demonstrate that human rights must be understood as integrated, indivisible and holistic, and must address what happens to people in all aspects of their lives: civil, political, social, economic, cultural and environmental. All of these aspects of human rights must be ensured and respected in order to fulfill the ideals of the United Nations which was formed 50 years ago.

We have gathered at the **World Summit on Social Development** to demonstrate that the extent of human rights violations perpetrated by the United States government or with its complicity, apply to women in the North and in the South. What is unique about this gathering is the dynamic networking and building of alliances that has happened between women of the North and South in highlighting the range of human rights violations around the world. As members of households, families, communities and nations, we bring a vision and wealth of knowledge to the global dialogue about the nature of the world order we are constructing for the new millennium.

Our focus on the United States is not accidental. Because of the power the US wields in the world economy, and because it has great influence over macro-economic policies, it should be held accountable for the consequences of its policies. As a world leader that claims to stand for "liberty and justice for all," the US has a particular responsibility in stopping its own violations. By the US, we mean all levels of government at the federal and state level. However, in specifically naming the United States we do not want to exonerate any government. All governments are complicit in these violations, and we want to underscore that as women we hold them all accountable.

The values and commitments to women's human rights expressed in the programmes of action arising from the **United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development**, the **World Conference on Human Rights**, the **International Conference on Population and Development** and the **World Summit on Social Development** are meaningless without an honest recognition that the macroeconomic

¹ World Conference on Human Rights, *The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, June 1993.

policies pursued by many of the world's governments do not respect or promote human rights. In fact, these policies are responsible for gross violations of human rights, as is apparent in the growing gap between rich and poor and among nations, the increasing impoverishment of people, the denial of workers' rights, and punitive social service cutbacks through economic restructuring and structural adjustment programs.

At the Social Summit, our human rights are being played off against one another at the bargaining table as governments negotiate the *Declaration and Programme of Action*. We want to underscore that women's human rights and the right to development are intertwined and inseparable issues. We will not allow any government to evade responsibility for promoting and protecting all human rights by creating false dichotomies. In addition, we insist that our human rights cannot be made bargaining chips in governments' political games. We have just heard that at meetings that are being held in Geneva at this time, the Chinese government is trying to prevent the gains of Vienna by creating obstacles to the integration of gender into all levels of UN Human Rights mechanisms.

We are here to say that as we move forward into the 21st century, we will not allow our bodies and our lives to be the playing fields for governments, and that we will not allow the gains that we have made to be reversed anywhere. At the **IV World Conference on Women**² in Beijing, we will strengthen our call for the accountability of the United Nations and the world's governments to promote and protect women's human rights through the final Tribunal of this series.

Women's activism at the local, national and international level demonstrates that our experiences in building and sustaining ourselves and our communities in the face of systematic violations offers vision and direction for the creation of a new world order. We call upon the United States and all governments to exercise their power in the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights. It is only through the recognition of the inherent value and dignity of each and every human being that the lofty ideals of the **World Summit on Social Development** can be made a reality.

I would now like to turn over the floor to Peggy Antrobus of DAWN, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, the co-convenor of this event. We are very pleased to be in solidarity, South and North, in bringing the *Copenhagen Hearing on Economic Justice and Women's Human Rights* to you. Thank you.



2 To be held in Beijing, China; August 30-September 15, 1995.

Peggy Antrobus

DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)

On behalf of DAWN, I would like to join the Center for Women's Global Leadership in welcoming you to these hearings. DAWN is a network of women from the economic South promoting approaches to development, based on the perspectives, visions and strengths of women from the South. The network was an outcome of the work we did in preparation for the NGO Forum at the **III World Conference on Women** held in Nairobi in 1985, and reflects the increasing concern of women from the South about the devastating impact on people and the environment of an economic model which focuses on economic growth as the measure of development. Our main purpose is to produce an analysis of key development issues from the perspective of women in our regions.

Our collaboration with the Center for Women's Global Leadership in these Hearings marks a new phase in our work, reflecting initiatives to build alliances with networks based in the North, which share our concerns and our vision. We are particularly happy to be working with the Center which has demonstrated its commitment to the advancement of women's rights as human rights through its work leading up to the **World Conference on Human Rights** in Vienna in 1993, and its support for the on-going *Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights*.

The violations of women's socio-economic rights that you will hear in these testimonies this afternoon are not acts of God, or the "natural order" of things. They take place within, and are a consequence of, a particular set of macro-economic policies - calculated and deliberate policy choices of people in authority - mostly men. These policies are formulated and/or adopted by governments and institutions at national, regional and international levels. They go by different names — structural adjustment policies, supply side economics, neo-liberalism, export and market oriented policies, Reaganomics — but they constitute a framework which places the interests of capital before those of people. They reflect a set of values which makes the creation of wealth an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

This framework affects every aspect of people's lives — the wages they earn, the cost of goods and services and their access to health, education, welfare and even to jobs, where they live and the air they breathe. It also sets up a situation within which people can or cannot express certain attitudes towards women, children, the elderly, the poor, indigenous people and people who are different from those in power according to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or physical ability. The policy framework determines who is included or excluded from the process of policy making itself. By this process of exclusion, we who are dispossessed do not even have the opportunities to shape those policies.

At the center of this process is Washington, DC and the national and international institutions it controls. I will explain this with a story. In the last years of the 1980's, at an international conference in Amsterdam, I was attending a workshop on the role of the United Nations. One of the speakers, a very senior official of the UNDP and a Jamaican by birth, made the following statement:

There can only be one macro-economic policy. That policy is set in Washington, and the role of the UN is to ensure that governments of developing countries follow that policy...and the role of specialized agencies (WHO, FAO, UNESCO, etc) is to ensure that the various departments of governments develop programmes that are consistent with this policy.

"And," he added — just in case people thought he was joking — "the UN is wrong to encourage governments to think otherwise".

Today the economic systems of countries, rich and poor, are even more integrated. Globalization is a fact of life and the consequences for people and the natural environment have indeed been devastating. Unfortunately, people are increasingly inclined to say "There is no alternative". But there can be another way.

People can help to bring this about if they understand the link between many of the social ills of today's world and the socio-economic, political and cultural structures that underlie that framework.

Listening to these testimonies may help you to understand the links, and lead you to question the structures in a way that none of our leaders seem to willing to do at the Bella Centre (site of the governmental conference of the **World Summit on Social Development**) today.

I would now like to introduce the next speaker. She is Noeleen Heyser, the new Director of UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women). More importantly, I would like to introduce Noeleen as one of us, one of the network of women from the South who was involved in the formation of DAWN in 1985. She was also the Director of the Asia and Pacific Centre for Women and Development, based in Malaysia, and DAWN's Regional Coordinator for South East Asia. Noeleen has challenged women to take leadership in setting the development agenda for the 21st Century. It gives me the greatest pleasure to invite her to speak at this session in which some of the issues that have and will continue to propel women to leadership will be presented.



Noeleen Heyser UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women)

It is an honor to address this meeting. I would like to thank the conveners for inviting me as the keynote speaker. UNIFEM is the women's voice and conscience of the United Nations system. It was borne out of an international women's movement and it continues to be accountable to that movement. Therefore, when the efforts of the 1993 **World Conference on Human Rights** in Vienna focused on human rights, UNIFEM worked extremely hard to ensure that women's rights were seen as human rights.

It is no accident that all of the posters you see here are UNIFEM posters. We are not ashamed to say, loud and clear, that women's economic, social and cultural rights have to be reaffirmed as human rights. Human rights are not just political and civil rights. We keep stressing that we have to look at the linkages between how people live, work, consume and reproduce. That is extremely important in emphasizing the issue of human rights.

What UNIFEM has said is that women's reality and concerns have to be made central to the whole development concept. We have to invest in women, on their own terms and in their own right. We have to empathize with their right to their own person. Therefore we have a vision of integrating women's rights as human rights into larger development reforms.

What is important in the testimonies that will be presented is that they are only the tip of the iceberg in showing the individual courage and commitment which is symbolic of millions of women each day, in every country, who struggle for a better quality of life. And how, in fact, macro-economic policies and the globalization that is taking place undermine the sustainable livelihoods that many women fought to put together.

As we enter into the 21st century, we have to be very concerned that women still make up 70% of the world's poor. Women who live in poor countries and communities are more impoverished than men. Women bear an unfortunate share of poverty worldwide. Women also shoulder an unequal burden in coping with poverty at local and household levels. It is very sad that women who make up the rural poor have doubled in the last twenty years. We need to put this picture side by side with the creation and concentration of new wealth, and the fact that capital exchange on the global level accumulates to something like \$1 trillion a day with no accountability to countries and women for generating sustainable livelihood.

We need to emphasize women's empowerment and women's rights to question that type of globalization and that type of development. We need to ensure that employment generation is accountable to women as human beings. For many women, unemployment and underemployment have little meaning. For women employed in the formal sector, the creation of a job is not enough, because a job has to provide equal pay for equal work. It has to offer human dignity and security. Very often this does not happen. In the informal sector, you find a direct casualization of women's work. Increasingly, there is very little protection of women's well-being.

We also need to look at issues of social integration. What does it mean from the perspective of women? For instance, there are those whose lives are personally disrupted by war. War is an activity of men in which there is never any victory for women. The collective rape of women in war has re-emerged as a war-crime. The challenge of security is fundamental to issues of social integration.

Therefore, there are five key challenges that we must emphasize as we enter into the 21st century. First, we have to ensure that the type of globalization and economic reform that is taking place empowers women. Second, we have to ensure sustainable livelihoods at the community level. Third, in the atmosphere of instability that we are experiencing at the international level, we have to support the building of stable and healthy communities, especially in situations of transnational violence such as rape in war. Fourth, it is

extremely important to build peace and learn how to resolve conflict on a long term basis. That means emphasizing the diversity of rights. Finally, we have to return once more to the discussion of ethics and morality of development within governments and civil society. All of this is a tall order, but without holding governments accountable, we may lose our human rights.





Testimonies

Economic Adjustment and Marginalization

Cora Lee Johnson

Good afternoon. My name is Cora Lee Johnson. I am from a small town of just about three thousand people in America named Soperton, Georgia, where my parents grew up and raised ten children on sharecropping. I am the baby of the ten that they raised. My grandparents was slaves. So I am descended from slaves. You can imagine the little town where I came from. One or two peoples own the town, and own everybody in the town, and you only do what they tell you to if you take their word. I did this.

I went up to the fourth grade (but that does not mean I have a fourth grade education). I began to work in the cotton field when I was tall enough to see the cotton (and that is since I could walk) and all of my life I have gone from one field to the next wondering what I had done so that I worked so hard and so long and still went hungry. My family married me off at 14. But marriage for me meant going from one corn field to the next and I worked so hard that my womb would not hold a child.

I was away from Georgia for a while. My mother got sick, and when I first came back I did not want to come back to what I had left, "yes, sir; no sir," doing what everybody told me to do. I wanted to know when I was ever going to be a woman and do what I want to do. I had to do what my parents told me to do, I had to do what the folks I worked for told me to do. I got married and had to do what my husband told me to do. So when was I ever going to get to the place where I was going to be the woman I needed to be to do what I wanted to do? So I had to stop letting everybody tell me what to do.

Black people in America's South have never controlled our ability to work; therefore, we have never been able to use our right to work to improve our lot. Rural Black folks in the US have never been out of slavery, we went from slavery to sharecropping to workfare.

In slavery, you owned nothing, and they owned you. In sharecropping, you worked their land, called them "massa" and were supposed to get a share of the profit. Only there was never any profit, therefore you owned nothing, and they owned you. On workfare you get a welfare check from the government, but you have to do at least 40 hours of community service for it. This is supposed to mean you work for an institution, school, church, doing anything they tell you to do. In Soperton, because the Whites sit on all of the Boards, they too are an institution. If they tell you to clean their stables and you do not, they report you to the authorities and they cut you off welfare. Therefore on workfare, you own nothing and they own you. This is against our human rights.

I want to tell you about Black people and work in America. Black people do nothing but work in America, but we do not get paid, so they do not call it work. There is this myth that Black people are lazy, do not like to work, and only want to have babies and live on welfare. Black people cannot find jobs in the United States. It is hard to get a job even if you have an education. And there are no jobs for uneducated people.

There are two factories in Soperton. That is where most women work. The men go out of town for jobs. These factories work with contracts. If they get a big contract, they hire experienced operators. A week later when they meet the contract deadline, they lay you off so that they do not have to pay unemployment insurance. After one week of work you have to wait 30 days before you can go back to food stamps, and 45 days for welfare, Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

There is a sign at the factory that states "Help Wanted: Experienced Operators Only." Where are Black people going to get experience? Of course White folks do not need experience. Poor White women can

always find a job if there is a job. This is why I started a sewing shop as a place where I could create a job not just for myself, but to give women experience. I got tired of folks telling me I was underqualified or overqualified. I set out to learn the system, and the shop gave me a place to pass this information on to women because it is hard to organize in Soperton. Somebody is always watching. You have to get real crazy and give them back some of what they give you.

I once was a welfare mother and I need to be on welfare now but they won't give me any, so I learned how to do without it. But even after teaching welfare mothers how to sew and how to get a job, there are still no jobs to get. You hear that all welfare mothers do is get babies. I don't think nobody is crazy enough to have a baby for \$45 when you know you can't feed them. But that is a myth that the government has about us women. So we have to let them know that we don't get no babies for \$45. And I don't think that there is no woman in here who got a baby by herself. There is a man somewhere out there that's not done what he was supposed to in the first place.

But they always say "That old welfare mother, all she do is get babies so she can get money. And that husband, he's never been there once." You got to take all of this stuff that the government says. We have a governor of Georgia who is really crazy. He want to take everybody's children who is not able to be on welfare and put them in a "Boystown".

You get all of these mixed-up kids and let the governor of Georgia spend the first day with them. I think he would change his mind and give them back to whoever they belong to. Nobody cares and has ever cared for the poor Black woman in America. Government policies have always made it impossible for Black families to stay together in the USA.

Not everybody learn how to be a slave. You just is a slave if you is a woman. You are going to slave over this and slave over that, trying to live with the little bit of money the husband and the government gives you. You have to slave over it and stretch it further and further so that your kids and your family can eat. So you learn real young and real well how to slave over whatever you done to do what you have to do.

I want to talk about the woman. Number one, women got to be what you want to be. I am a woman. Number two, I'm a Black woman. Number three, I'm an old Black woman and I been struggling all my days. Number four, I'm a sick Black woman. And number five, I am an uneducated Black woman. Do you know what I want? Do you know who got it? Go over there and don't leave until you got it. That is what women are going to have to learn to do.

I have learned to fight and to get information nobody intended for me to have. I have learned how to use that information and share it with other people in my community. I have also learned that I have to make connections with people outside my community, because we have known people to disappear when they make too much trouble. My sewing shop is a place where people know they can come when they do not know what else to do. We make answers.

We have sit back and let the men tell us when to go, where to go, and what to do. I told a man the other day, "I don't mind following you, but you got to be going somewhere." There are too many men telling us which way to go without telling us how to get there. We got to take care of their children. We got to clean their house. We got to do all of this stuff. It is time to stand up for what we want. You need to know what you want. You need to know who got it. You need to go after it, and you don't leave until you get it. Thank you.

Cora Lee Johnson is a social activist from the state of Georgia in the United States. She chaired the Treulian County Client Council and the Rural Black Women's Leadership Project. Cora Lee's championship of housing, health and additional needs of poor women has earned her recognition by a national magazine as a "Hero for Hard Times."

Mahfoudha Alley Hamid

I was born on the island of Zanzibar. I have come here to testify about structural adjustment programs. I come from a farming family, and since my childhood it has been emphasized that farming is a great form of economy and the future of our country.

I had a dream that I would become a modern farmer. After years of working and toiling, I managed to set back a few coins and buy some undeveloped land. I wanted to do farming as well as poultry.

I took a loan from an insurance company with the farm as security, because I had no other immovable property. Unfortunately, when I started this project, I had no idea of any financial deals between my country, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and I did not know what a structural adjustment program was.

When things did not go so well, my country, as much as it had resisted, yielded to the superpowers and adopted a structural adjustment program (SAP). In doing so, Tanzania had to devalue its currency more than 200% within a very short period. The rate of the dollar, which was equivalent to 40 T. Shillings then, is now 560 T. Shillings, 14 times more. The superpowers are twisting our arms and have put a yoke on our shoulders which we cannot bear, especially women.

I find that I cannot repay the loan I took, as it accrues in interest and I have not yet been able to get use out of my farm. This is a problem.

Likewise, the cost of other services has skyrocketed. My country, in trying to salvage its shattered economy, has adopted the system of its people contributing to the basic necessary services like health and education. Before, the government provided subsidized social services and they were free. Now I have to bear this yoke as well, as both health and education are imperative to the future of myself and my family.

When there was no SAP to twist the government's arm, we enjoyed free services in these sectors. Now I have to pay the fees for my children to go to school. They have to sit on bare floors with no desks. I have to pay school fees and books, which I cannot afford. I have to buy medicine which is the most expensive. Food, which was also subsidized by the government, is now left in the hands of traders who are free to keep their own bread. A kilo of sugar which used to sell for about one dollar is now almost 20 dollars. The minimum wage is less than 20 dollars a month.

I have become pressed for sustenance. I feel that the SAP has widened the gap between those who "have" and those who "have-not". Unless other measures are taken, and the superpowers stop twisting us, my country which has yielded to this economic blackmail, is heading for a downfall and doom.

I would like to read you a poem about SAPS. My poem was written in Swahili. Though English is not my mother-tongue, I have tried to compile an English version.

***Mahfoudha Alley Hamid
is a journalist, a poet
and a farmer. She is also
a mother of four and a
member of the Tanzania
Media Women's
Association. She spoke
about the adverse impact
of structural adjustment
programs on women and
families in Tanzania.***



Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)

By Mahfoudha Alley Hamid

It's disastrous, what can we do
Us, the developing world, are involved too
Tanzania, my country, has been ensnared
We cannot run, we cannot hide, truly we are trapped.

The World Bank has lured us to this
The IMF has fooled us, surely it has
Plunging us to the depth of poverty
Now it hurts, it hurts, they have robbed our liberty

They fooled us with the programme of SAP
Tricking us to devalue our noble currency
Like lambs to the slaughter we did believe
Now we find we have nothing to save.

Oh Lord we sank to the bottom of the bottom
Diseases engulf us, medicines are out of reach
Schools have no books for teachers to teach
How can we contribute when we are not rich

Where can I get food, I am confused
SAP has made sure that I can't afford
Adding fuel to the fire for more devaluation
They sit back and smile to their satisfaction.

Commodities have flooded shops overflow
The prices are high with no hope of going low
My staple food, maize meal, to me has become
A luxury, a luxury, unaffordable to many and not some

My friends, sisters and brothers
I have a question which does not me bother
What is SAP may I ask - pitiless, shameless, murder is their task
Vampires sucking us, adding to the misery

Let us avoid it with all our might
Let it go back, let us all fight
Let them adopt it if it is right
Let us unite and chase it out of sight.

I'm fed up with SAP, I feel like throwing
It has messed my life I am in a cocoon
I can neither feed, nor dress myself
Educating my children is a dream far off

Please, please, please SAP, leave us alone
Please untie the cuffs you have put on
These are our cries, the world hear our plight
Free us from this burden you are squeezing us tight
Please stop sucking us dry.

Carol Langlais

My name is Carol Langlais. I am 35 years old. I am a white woman living in the state of Vermont in the United States of America. I was born and raised in poverty. At the age of 18 I left my mother's home and worked for the next 10 years. When I became a mother at age 28, I vowed not to let poverty take my power away from me like it did my mother. My mother grew up in an orphanage because her family was not financially able to care for her. She was treated poorly at this orphanage and I vowed I would be a different kind of mother than she was. United States Congressman Newt Gingrich thinks orphanages are good homes for poor children. He should ask my mother's opinion.

My main focus is to keep my happy, healthy, self-confident daughter off the welfare system by keeping control over our lives even though we must depend on social welfare benefits for now. Three years ago I joined the Vermont Women's Union when I saw a poster about welfare reforms.

I am here today to tell you that mothers on welfare living in the richest nation in the world, the United States, are experiencing the violence of poverty and the violation of our human rights. Our government gives us very little. We do not have enough income to buy the necessities of life. We can not get enough food stamps and must beg at the food shelf. Many nights mothers must sit and watch their children eat and then they eat what is left. Mothers are the last in line to get boots or warm clothing for winter. Women often give all they have to their children. Some women cannot even afford to buy sanitary napkins, but must use rags for feminine hygiene. Although we are considered the richest nation in the world, our country ignores its poor women and children.

It is hard for low-income women to get high quality child care because child care in America really does not exist for low-income women.

In Vermont and in other parts of the country, decent housing is scarce. If you manage to get housing assistance, which entitles you to subsidized housing outside of large housing developments, you probably will get good housing. If not, you may be forced to live in housing which no human being should live in. Our government seems to think it is acceptable to be without heat, a working toilet or water to wash with. In Vermont, only 21% of families on welfare live in subsidized housing.

My government is violating my human rights by discriminating against me because I am poor and without a husband. It is treating me and many other women like children. I will be rewarded for my correct choices if I do as I am told by my government. We are being told when to take a job, when to work outside the home, and when to leave our children. A job, they say, will teach us responsibility. The message we hear from our government is that being a mother does not count, but one of our inherent rights as a mother is to stay at home with our children and nurture them if we feel that this is the most important thing.

Our fundamental freedom to control our own lives, our human dignity and our personal power is being violated. The government of the United States is saying we are women who are not capable of controlling our own destiny and we must develop personal responsibility. To me, and to all women, personal responsibility means making choices that are right for the individual and her child. Dependency is not the problem. At times, when life is such a struggle, we often feel overwhelmed making choices alone. But my country does not understand. Instead, my country is chastizing me and many other women in poverty. My country does not see the value we have as mothers and what that is worth. My daughter is growing and developing into a caring human being who, one day, will be a full, productive person in society. She will not be a lazy, unproductive, unmotivated woman like the stereotype my government is feeding society.

The President of the United States, the United States Congress, and almost all state and local elected officials in our country are guilty of these acts of discrimination against women and children in poverty. This type of thinking spreads through all parts of society. It shows up in federal and state government welfare

reform policies. It shows up in the behavior of employees of social service agencies and schools. It shows up in the attitudes of the general public who "buy" the negative publicity about welfare mothers.

Federal and state government control welfare mothers through policies and rules which punish us instead of helping us. For example, child support from absent fathers is used as bribery to women who receive welfare. The government says, "You tell us what we want to know and we will give you \$50 more a month in child support." The government makes it sound as if it will be the end of all our problems if we do as we are told. But the government does not give the child the whole amount of child support which is collected from the father. What is collected from the father does not increase the living standard of the family. Instead it goes back to the State for the welfare payments it has given the family.

Our government is not meeting our human needs because it is cutting welfare payments. For instance, in Vermont, our Governor thought nothing at all about lopping off \$70 per month from welfare mothers living in subsidized housing. As it is, welfare mothers in Vermont receive only 58.6% of what the state says is necessary to live decently. We are being penalized for being poor.

Now our federal government is even closing its mind to teenage women. If a girl has no future because school has no expectation of her, she drops out. If she becomes pregnant and has no supportive family, she has no education, no help, and no welfare. She has very few options. Our government wants to regulate her behavior by eliminating aid to her and her child.

Government should be accountable for its property which happens to be a welfare woman's home. HUD (US Department of Housing and Urban Development) should be made accountable for monitoring and caring for apartments it subsidizes. In some apartments, toilets back up through common halls, and because of poor insulation, heating bills can be as high as \$200 to \$300 a month. Yet fuel assistance is \$12 a month for a family of two in Vermont.

Social service workers and teachers are often disrespectful. They have no understanding of our lives and no compassion. They think nothing of intruding on our privacy. For instance, a friend of mine on welfare was diagnosed by an employment counselor as having a "self-defeating attitude." He never took into account that she was struggling to put food on the table for her baby and herself after a difficult pregnancy.

Instead of encouraging people to help each other, our government pushes people away from each other by stigmatizing them. People believe the government's stereotypes about us, even our own relatives. My Aunt used to call us "white trash." She said my mother was put on this earth to clean houses. My cousins could never play with us because we were on welfare.

We, as welfare mothers and as members of the Women's Union, are trying to stop these human rights violations. We are claiming our own power. We are taking risks and speaking up. For instance, a woman on welfare was at first denied housing in the housing cooperative where I live because she was paying over 30% of her income for housing, which was higher than the rules allowed. But we protested and pressured the people in power to let her in. We are taking the risk that she will be able to continue her rent payments because we have faith that she is a responsible person. We are not stereotyping her because she is on welfare.

We are putting pressure on the welfare system and also trying to help the public understand that it is okay if a woman chooses to raise her own children. That is an important job.

During the welfare reform fight in our state legislature, we sent people to the capital to present reports and talk with law makers about the fact that poor women need to be respected. We need jobs which pay a wage that can support our families. We want to work in jobs where we are valued as people and give something valuable to society. We need quality, affordable child care. We need decent housing, adequate food, and affordable, reliable transportation. We and our children need education and training so we can become the best we can be. The most important thing is that we and our children are able to make choices

about our lives. It is okay if a woman chooses to raise her own children. That is an important and responsible job. It is making these choices that gives us power, not working for the almighty dollar.

I am here to ask the United Nations to bring to my country's attention the fact that we, women and children living in the richest nation in the world, are on the bottom. Individual states should be moving forward not backward when it comes to poverty. To force women to work outside the home at whatever low wage they can find, leave their children, and give them little or no welfare help is criminal. It is inhumane to deny women and children food and shelter.

My government should be trying to end poverty and all of its burdens on people. Poverty is being unable to provide for yourself and your child and living a life of meager existence. Everyone needs a decent quality of life and that should be a human right. Ways of ending poverty, in my country, would be for my government to raise the minimum wage, create decent jobs for all, and provide a guaranteed income when circumstances do not allow everyone to be employed or when a parent chooses to be a mother.

This is a photo of my daughter Jaime. She is seven and a half years old. She has lots of confidence and self-esteem. My government is afraid that because I am a second generation welfare recipient, she will be a third generation welfare recipient. I, even more than the government, do not want her to be on welfare when she grows up. I do not want her to experience a life of disempowerment. I do not want her to suffer the way her grandmother did, who had no power because poverty took it from her. I do not want her to suffer or exist the way I did, bouncing from one low wage job to another because of a lack of an education, and the inability to know how to find the right educational system which could help me.

My government does not want my daughter to follow in my footsteps. She needs the best damn education and access to that education without going through political "red tape". Then, and only then, will I feel secure that she will not become just another statistic of poverty. So, again, I ask, please find my country's welfare reform inhumane and call it to the attention of the United Nations for the sake of all the future Jaime's, Elena's, Katie's, Kimberlie's and Joshua's. The list could go on forever. They are all our children — they are our future. A future in the United States without poverty I pray for. Thank you.



Carol Langlais, a welfare recipient, is with the Vermont Women's Union in the United States. She organizes around welfare reform issues in the US.

Sexual Exploitation and Violence

Carolina P. Araullo

I am Maria Carolina Araullo, a medical doctor from the Philippines and a political activist for the past 24 years. Under the Marcos dictatorship, I was a political prisoner, and upon my release, I decided to go to medical school. The more I saw poverty and sickness, the more I became convinced that I had to remain a political activist foremost because not all the medicine in the world could cure the mass misery that I had seen.

I am now proud to say that I am part of the more than two decades of struggle of my people against neo-colonialism, authoritarianism and feudal exploitation. We have ended the US-backed Marcos dictatorship and caused the dismantling of the largest military base installations outside the US mainland.

I am testifying today to share the stories of the thousands of Filipino women who worked as bar girls and prostitutes in conditions of extreme violence and exploitation.

Let me share with you the story of Rosario Baluyot, a 12-year old child prostitute. Orphaned at six years old with the death of her much abused mother, the youngest of eight children and abandoned by her father, she grew up unloved and unlovable, unruly and stealing indiscriminately. An early brush with the police led her to run away from her harsh situation only to end up in Olongapo City, then host to the former Subic Naval Base. She met Violeta who gave shelter to street children, but before long Rosario was put to work conning US servicemen and turning over her daily earnings to Violeta.

Then came the day that Jimmy, Violeta's husband, raped 10-year old Rosario and another girl. From then on she began to sell herself to anyone willing to pay, especially foreign pedophiles who paid more than usual. In the environs of Olongapo City, her decision was not unusual.

She met John, a former naval officer in his late fifties who decided to retire in the Philippines where he could indulge his pedophilia without too much trouble from the law. He paid Rosario US \$20 for her services.

After John there were many more. One day a tourist invited Rosario and her friend Joe to his hotel room. The man began to play with the two, but finally concentrated his attention to Rosario. According to Joe, the man poked "something grey which looked like a Vicks inhaler" into Rosario's vagina. The next day, she awoke with much pain in her lower abdomen. She endured the pain because she was afraid the doctor might send her to prison after removing the object.

After five months, she was found in a vacant lot with green bile coming out of her mouth, and was rushed to the hospital. She died of a systemic infection even after doctors removed from her uterus a broken vibrator about nine centimeters long and as large as a battery. It was 1987, four years before the Subic Naval Base in Olongapo City was closed down.

In the "rest and recreation" cities of Olongapo and Angeles, host to US military bases, there were many others like Rosario Baluyot. Some 25,000 women were engaged in the sex industry in Olongapo alone; that number doubled when a large US naval vessel entered the port.

There was so much poverty in the areas surrounding the bases. Far from making the land productive as farmlands or factories, they were used instead as military training grounds.

With no jobs and no productive land, people became desperate. Unemployed women and out-of-school, starving children sold their sexual services to survive. But many more were taken from the poor barrios in faraway rural areas, lured by the belief that they were to be given jobs in the cities.

Filipino men pimped and US servicemen supplied drugs which helped to numb the physical and psychological pain. It was a cycle of structural, well-entrenched violence that dates back to 1898 when the US invaded the Philippines and stole its hard won independence from Spain. The Filipinos resisted and the

bloody Philippine-American War lasted until 1902, taking the lives of some 500,000 Filipinos and 10,000 Americans.

Even after the granting of independence in 1945, the US imposed trade and military agreements guaranteeing its interests in the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific. Through the IMF (International Monetary Fund), World Bank and the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs), the US continues to impose economic policies and programs which favor foreign capital at the expense of our country and our people. Successive US-backed governments, including that of Fidel Ramos, have pursued the debt-driven, export-oriented, import-dependent model of "development."

This system has mired the Philippine economy in poverty and underdevelopment. Many Filipinos, particularly women and children like Rosario, live lives of want, misery and quiet desperation. To escape, our women go abroad as domestic help, entertainers, and mail-order brides. Too many end up as victims of sexual trafficking and violence.

The US also established military bases from the beginning of its colonial rule. These played a critical role as communications centers and logistics supply depots serving the US involvement in the Korean War, the Vietnam War and, later, the Persian Gulf War. It also served as a premier "rest and recreation" center for the military.

By the late 1960's, the Philippines was hosting approximately 10,000 servicemen daily. Some 55,000 women working as bar workers or prostitutes served their needs. There were 500 clubs in Olongapo City alone. Many were owned by US Navy retirees.

The US Navy set up clinics where the women were licensed and monitored for sexually transmitted diseases. After they were checked, they were issued "sexual health ID's" that had to be produced on demand by the US military police and the women's customers. They offered almost no birth control information or supplies.

Indeed, the bar system attained almost complete control over women.

In September 1991, the Philippine Senate rejected a new RP-US Military Bases Agreement, after decades of sustained struggle for their dismantling by the bases-free people's movement in the country. Grandiose plans were then made for the economic conversion of the former US military baselands. Foreign investors are enticed by profitable visions of the "special economic zone" hosting their multi-million dollar enterprises.

After the bases closed shop, some women opted to remain in the few bars which continued operating, this time catering to a largely Filipino clientele composed of local businessmen and professionals. Some moved to Okinawa, still working in bars. Some still walk the streets. Still others have retired from sexual labor and work as domestic help. Some who bore Amerasian children filed suit for support from the American government in 1993.

We share the dream to transform lands formerly used in aggressive military pursuits into peaceful and productive endeavors. However, we feel that a crucial element has been left out in the government and big business' plans: the women entertainers as well as the host communities in Olongapo and Angeles displaced by the pull-out of US troops from these bases.

The US government has also left a legacy of waste. We are particularly concerned that the US government has lately prepared a draft for an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) which would allow the presence of US military forces, weapons and facilities in the country through executive agreement, as a way of going around the Philippine Senate's rejection of the Military Bases Agreement.

Should ACSA be approved, the implication is the revival of the once booming "rest and recreation" industry which caters to US forces, transitory though they may be. President Ramos' "Philippines 2000," an ambitious program to turn the Philippines into a newly industrialized country promoting tourism, especially sex-tourism, should provide the friendly environment for such a revival.

In this **World Summit for Social Development**, the poorest of the poor — women — are largely ignored. It is not so much because gender is not mentioned in the official documents, but that US policies which violate the socio-economic rights of women around the world have remained unchanged.

It has been said that Rosario Baluyot was born into a hopeless situation. It was only a matter of time before her cruel "fate" would catch up with her. But we in BAYAN and GABRIELA, and scores of other militant people's organizations and advocacy groups, refuse to be paralyzed by hopelessness and resignation. We are firmly resolved to name the crimes of the US military under US policies, and to call for a complete end to the US military's presence in my country and in countries other than its own.

Thank you for your attention, and for listening closely to what we have to say.



Carolina Araullo is the Vice-Chair of BAYAN, a multi-sector alliance of working professionals for human rights in the Philippines. She is also a member of GABRIELA, the largest women's federation in the country, and dedicates her life to the liberation of Philippine women from all forms of oppression. She spoke about the impact and consequences of the presence of American military bases in the Philippines, especially on the lives of women.

Shannon Booker

My name is Shannon Booker. I am 29 years old and the mother of two. I come from Boston, Massachusetts in the United States of America. I was adopted by a "system" that failed me. The "system" I speak of is the US criminal justice system that allowed me to be raped repeatedly as a child and to be unjustly imprisoned for defending my life against my abusive partner.

I stand here as a woman who has experienced and survived drugs, homelessness, prostitution, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and having my children taken away from me and put into the system that raped me. My children now are also part of the system. I stand here as a Black woman who has learned to love myself with the spirit of my creator, and to give my testimony to you as a young woman who has survived these injuries and injustices and who has defended my life against my abusive boyfriend.

I was in a relationship with this man who claimed to love me. A man I loved dearly. A man that rescued me from my last abusive partner. He told me that he was going to take care of me and my child, and that nothing like this would ever happen again. Six months into the relationship, the beatings started. He beat me with bottles, billy clubs, crow bars, and had grease poured over my body. He beat me to the point where my face was unrecognizable. He beat me to the point where I was hospitalized on several occasions during pregnancy and when I was not pregnant. This went on for two and a half years. I never called the police, because where I come from, the heart of Boston, you don't turn to the police. This man, that I was in a relationship with, who claimed to love me, told me that next time it would not happen. Things would get better. He would get some type of help. And I believed him. You know that song, "Stand By Your Man?" That was me. I stood by him through everything. I had no means of escape.

I was told I neglected my children. I not only neglected my children, I neglected myself because of the situation I was in. I was being beaten. I was strung out on drugs. I no longer took the drugs to get high. I took the drugs to alleviate the pain so I did not have to feel beaten up. I became a prisoner in my own home.

People often ask why women in abusive relationships stay. They often blame the women themselves. Many of us stay because we fear for the safety of our children. We often have no place to go. We are often beat down to the point that we have no self-esteem. We are often beat down to the point that we neglect ourselves, our children, our family, and our friends.

According to reports from the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), a woman is beaten every 15 seconds in the US. One out of every two women will be in a violent relationship in her lifetime. This is not to say that all men are batterers but that the criminal justice system has failed to hold these men accountable for what they have done to women like myself.

I need to emphasize to you the lack of resources for women who need battered women's shelters. Let me tell you that in 1991 there were roughly 1200 battered women's shelters in the US. Listen to me. 1200! And in comparison, there are about 3800 shelters for homeless animals. Something is wrong here.

In the US, the police often do not take this crime seriously. In the state of Massachusetts in 1993, over 20 women and children were murdered at the hands of their abusers. Many of these women had court ordered restraints against the men who beat them. At the Framingham Correctional Institution in Massachusetts, where I spent most of my time, 95% of the women have been in violent relationships or their crimes are related to violence.

On the evening of the last beating I took from my batterer, he had threatened me constantly. This night my boyfriend had beaten me to the point where I was unrecognizable. I had been hospitalized. I had managed to get away from him. But, this was my man. Nobody could tell me anything about him. I went back to him because he told me he loved me. Because I am part of the system, I believed he loved me. I wanted somebody to love me. I believed everything he said.

Remember when I told you I was a product of the system? When I was part of the system, I was repeatedly raped by people who claimed to love me. I was abused by the foster care system. I went back to

this man because he said he loved me. But I had no knowledge. I was uneducated. I had no type of resources. I did not know anything. I had no sense of direction. And I went back to this man.

When I went back to him, I knocked on the door. He opened the door and punched me full force in my face and he said "I got you." I ran upstairs hysterically trying to get my clothes, telling him I was leaving, and that I would never come back. He said, "Before you leave me, I will kill you." And I believed him. He came upstairs with his B-57 Magnum, threatened me, pistol-whipped me, beat me down, strangled me, you name it he did it. He put the gun in a drawer and walked away.

When he came back in I had already taken the gun out of the drawer and put it under the mattress, with the intention of keeping the gun away from him. But when he came back he started beating me all over again. I pulled the gun out and I shot him. And when I first shot him he said to me "I will kill you." From that point I went into the street to try to call for the police. And guess what? Nobody would stop. These are the injustices in the US.

I went to a friend's house and told her what happened. I asked her to please call the police, that I had just shot Jose. I then put the gun to my head and pulled the trigger but the gun was empty. My friend called the police and they came. At that point I was taken down to the police station. I was charged with First Degree Murder and taken to MCI Framingham — the women's prison system in the state of Massachusetts - where I was refused because of my physical condition. I was rushed to the Framingham hospital, patched up and brought back to the prison. I was sedated with all types of medication. You name it I was on it. I continued to have nightmares of my boyfriend beating on me. Given that I could not afford a good attorney, the court appointed an attorney who was overworked and unfamiliar with the Battered Women's Syndrome. Most of the time I felt like I was representing myself. I learned how to cite law cases and tried to provide my attorney with readings on Battered Women's Syndrome. He didn't understand and asked me to plead guilty. I pled guilty and was initially sentenced to 18-20 years. I refused to take it because I tried to explain that I was defending my life. The court then offered a sentence of 8-15 years which I accepted. I was afraid and scared. I come from a background of poverty and didn't feel like I had any assistance or choice. Once again I had been beaten.

I went back to prison and spent most of my six years in isolation and maximum security. I was beaten many times and drugged. In the women's prison system this is often the case. As a woman in prison, I didn't have access to adequate health care, counseling, nor support systems. We, as women, were treated like shit!

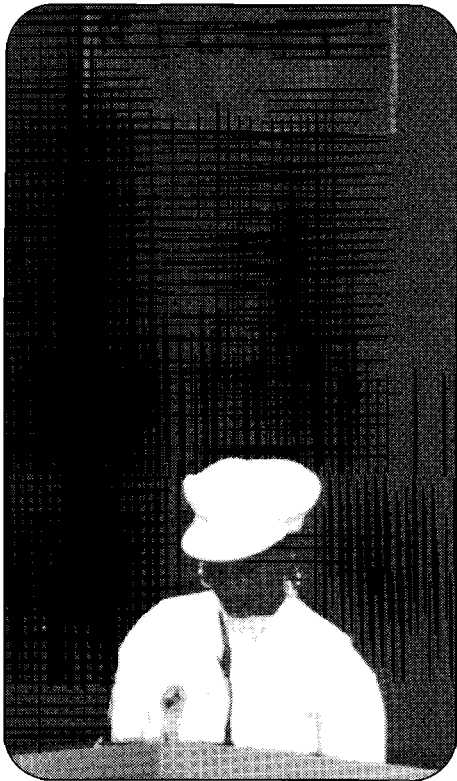
I want to talk about the prison system and its injustices against women and women of color, and how poorly we are treated. I have seen women die in front of my eyes because they were HIV infected and not given health services. I have seen women being beaten by three or four police officers in the prison system.

There is a lack of resources and social services for women who come into the prison with their children and they end up losing them within thirty days.

I would now like to tell you about where I am today and how I got out of prison. While in prison, we formed a group, Battered Women Fighting Back, composed of eight women. We started sharing our stories among ourselves and we started tallying the numbers of women and children who were being killed in the state of Massachusetts by their batterers. We were eight women whose lives were somewhat the same. We were eight women who could relate to the same type of pain — domestic violence. We came from all walks of life. There was a woman in the prison system who believed that our stories needed to be told. We started writing our stories down on paper. She took our stories to the ***Boston Globe***. Our stories went public and we are now known as the "Framingham Eight." We petitioned the governor of Massachusetts for our freedom.

As of today, some of the laws have been changed. Of the eight of us, seven women have been released. I have only been out of prison for seven months.

I need to talk about what it has been like being out of prison. Sometimes it seems like it is the same war I was up against before I was in prison. I am living in a shelter, fighting to get my children back, by any means necessary. I am self employed right now, but I am trying now to not feel alienated. People say that I must be happy now that I am free. But I do not feel free at times. Sometimes I feel like I still have shackles on my feet. But I know, by any means necessary, I must continue to persevere, continue to go on, and not let anything get in my way. I must continue to educate the world on violations of human rights against women and children. Thank you.



Shannon Booker, a survivor of domestic violence, spoke about her experience of imprisonment for defending herself against her batterer. She is self-employed and works as a consultant and advocate for women confronting acts of violence. Her work includes workshops on domestic violence and HIV education. Shannon's story was presented in the award-winning film, "Defending our Lives".

Trade Policy

Julia Quiñones de González

Mi nombre es Julia Quiñones y estoy representando a una organización que se llama Comité Fronterizo de Obreras. Vengo de la ciudad de Piedras Negras, Coahuila, que es frontera norte con los Estados Unidos. Las maquiladoras llegaron para invadir nuestras fronteras, todo el país, especialmente la frontera norte, hace 30 años. Las corporaciones que han llegado son muy reconocidas como Ford, Zenith, Sony y otras. A esas compañías les llamamos maquiladoras porque, únicamente en Méjico, ensamblan y terminan productos que serán llevados nuevamente a los Estados Unidos y vendidos allá.

Para iniciar mi testimonio, yo quisiera dar a conocer a ustedes parte de mi vida. Yo he trabajado por cinco años en una maquiladora y he podido vivir la situación tan difícil por la que atraviesan ahora miles de mujeres. Yo estaba trabajando en una maquiladora de costura donde hacían gazas quirúrgicas para hospitales. Mi experiencia ahí fue muy difícil. Cuando empecé a trabajar en la maquiladora solamente tenía 15 años. Cuando niña yo tenía ilusiones y tenía sueños. Yo quería estudiar leyes porque aun siendo niña podía vivir las injusticias, podía ver la desigualdad que había. Yo quería hacer algo. Cuando estaba en el momento de hacerlo, no hubo manera, en mi familia no era posible. Así mis ilusiones se troncaron. Yo no podía estudiar. Tenía que trabajar para ayudar en los gastos. Si quería estudiar tenía que buscar otra opción, por ejemplo, estudiar de noche y así lo hice. Estaba trabajando por largas horas en el día y por la noche estaba estudiando. Sólo logré la carrera de trabajo social pero que era muy afín con el trabajo que yo quería hacer.

Las mujeres somos sometidas, humilladas. Cuando una empieza a trabajar en una maquiladora pues atentan contra la integridad de nosotras las mujeres. Siempre están haciendo pruebas de embarazo para darle empleo a una mujer. Si una mujer está embarazada no puede trabajar. No le dan el trabajo. Ahora en la solicitud de empleo ponen una pregunta, "que pongan por favor la fecha de su última regla." En mi experiencia por ejemplo, cuando yo entré a trabajar todavía no tenía mi primera regla y tuve que mentir. Me dije, "si digo que todavía no soy señorita tal vez no me van a dar el trabajo," y puse otra fecha. Siempre las corporaciones buscan obreras jovencitas y si viene del interior del país o de otros estados dicen que es mejor pues podrán manipularlas más fácilmente. Estas son más sumisas, más obedientes. Es muy triste, es realmente triste ver como las maquiladoras quitaron mis ilusiones y lo van haciendo con muchas obreras jovencitas que hoy en día tienen que trabajar.

En un tiempo pensamos que las maquiladoras venían a Méjico para solucionar problemas graves que tenemos de desempleo y de pobreza, pero no fue así. A causa del sistema actual y por las presiones que exige el Fondo Monetario Internacional, las políticas han debilitado mucho al sistema mejicano y especialmente a los sindicatos. No exigen, no presionan a los inversionistas para dar pago justo a los obreros. Los obreros regularmente tienen que trabajar muchas horas extras y a veces hasta doblar turnos. No es posible vivir con lo que pagan y esto ha ocasionado que muchas obreras no puedan atender a los hijos y por ser el sueldo tan poco no puedan darle la alimentación necesaria.

Las trabajadoras en las maquiladoras sólo están ganando ahora como US \$20 dólares a la semana. Actualmente, las trabajadoras están sintiendo las repercusiones de la devaluación del peso que acabamos de tener en el mes de diciembre. Nuestra moneda se devaluó y casi perdimos como \$17 dólares. Ahora el sueldo de una obrera es de \$20 dólares a la semana. Es imposible! Yo quiero quitarle la idea a quienes piensan que, "si ganan US \$20 dólares en Méjico eso rinde mucho." Es mentira! Por estar muy cerca de la frontera los productos llegan a ser mucho más altos. Por ejemplo, un galón de leche que en Estados Unidos cuesta US \$2 dólares al llegar a Méjico cuesta US \$3 dólares. Esto significa como 18 pesos mejicanos que es más de lo que una obrera gana en un día. El pago en un día es de 16 pesos y el galón cuesta 18.

Las maquiladoras aparte de estos sueldos bajísimos no observan medidas ecológicas, de seguridad e higiene. Mas bien están exponiendo a las obreras a trabajar con sustancias tóxicas y máquinas sin protección. Nunca ponen los avisos en español, siempre vienen en inglés entonces no podemos entender las protecciones o como podemos utilizar ciertos solventes.

Una obrera por ejemplo, llamada Dora Elia, trabajó por 10 años con soldadura. En los últimos tiempos ella siente mucha tos, se agita fácilmente y está siempre cansada. Ella fue al médico y le dijo lo que le estaba pasando. El médico la examinó y dijo que en la sangre había plomo y en los pulmones también. Ella tenía que dejar de fumar. Y ella le contestó, "¡yo nunca he fumado, no se fumar!" Esta es una evidencia verbal de que ella estaba enferma a causa del trabajo. Y es así como están ahora muchas trabajadoras mejicanas.

Ante toda esta situación, el Comité Fronterizo de Obreras reconoce pero no acepta ver como las maquiladoras van dañando tanto a las mujeres. Han habido niños que han nacido de bajo peso, otros con deficiencias físicas y mentales. El caso específico de una maquiladora en Matamoros llamada Malory que se fue dejando a muchos niños enfermos, dejando una deuda social muy grande. Pero es un gusto para mí haber tenido acciones y haber ayudado para que estas familias pusieran una demanda. Quiero informarles que hace un mes acaban de ganar como US \$15 millones de dólares para indemnizar a estas familias.

Nosotras del Comité Fronterizo de Obreras vamos a las colonias desarrollando nuestros métodos y nuestras estrategias de trabajo, ayudando para que las obreras puedan tener más respeto por sus derechos humanos. Es importante que la mujer en el sistema productivo, que es tan importante, esté bien capacitada para enfrentar los problemas y para defender sus derechos. Hay preguntas que las obreras se hacen. ¿Quién se está beneficiando de este sistema? ¿Dónde está la justicia? ¿Cómo es posible hablar de ella cuando existen acuerdos internacionales que no toman en cuenta los derechos de las obreras? Estamos esperando impacientes la respuesta a estas preguntas. Queremos decir que si queremos paz hay que trabajar en la justicia. Basadas en nuestra experiencia queremos añadir, que si queremos justicia para las mujeres debemos organizarlas. Muchas gracias.



Julia Quiñones, de Méjico, habló sobre el impacto de las corporaciones transnacionales en su país, particularmente en las áreas que Méjico comparte con los Estados Unidos. Julia es una organizadora de mujeres que trabajan en las factorías conocidas como maquiladoras.

Julia Quiñones González (Translated from Spanish)

My name is Julia Quiñones and I represent an organization called the Border Committee of Women Workers (Comité de Fronterizero de Obreras). I am from the town of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, which is on the Mexico-US Border. Thirty years ago the maquiladoras invaded Mexico — they invaded all of Mexico, but especially the country's northern border. The corporations which have come are well known — like Ford, Zenith, Sony and others. These companies are called maquiladoras because of the unique process in which products are assembled and finished in Mexico and then sent to the United States to be sold.

To begin my testimony, I would like you to know a little bit about my life. I worked in a maquiladora for five years and I was able to live firsthand the difficult situation which thousands of women continue to face. I worked in a maquiladora as a seamstress where I made surgical bandages for hospitals. My experience there was very difficult. When I started working in the maquiladoras I was only fifteen years old. When I was a girl I had expectations and I had dreams. I wanted to study law because, although I was just a child, I could see the injustices, the inequality that existed. I wanted to do something. But when I was ready to go there was no way I could. In my family, it was not possible. Thus my expectations were cut down. I could not study. I had to help with my family's expenses. If I wanted to study I had to find another option, for example, studying at night. And so I did. I was working long hours by day and at night I was studying. I was only able to earn a social work degree but it was very similar to the work that I wanted to do as a lawyer.

As women, we are made to be submissive, we are subjected to humiliation. When a woman works in a maquiladora, her integrity as a woman is attacked. Women are constantly given pregnancy tests before they are offered employment. If a woman is pregnant she cannot work. The maquiladoras won't hire her. Employment applications have the question, "Put the date of your last menstruation." In my own experience, when I started to work I had not yet had my first period and I had to lie. I said to myself, "If I say that I am not yet a woman then perhaps they won't hire me," so I put down a false date.

The corporations always look for very young women workers and if you are from the interior of Mexico or from another state, the maquiladoras say it is better because they can manipulate you better. They say, "These are my submissive ones, these are my obedient ones."

It is so sad, it is really very sad, to see how the maquiladoras robbed me of my hopes, and how they go on doing the same thing to so many young women who continue to have to work in the multinational factories.

At one time we thought that the maquiladoras had come to Mexico to solve the serious problem that we have with unemployment and poverty, but this was not so. Because of the way the system actually works, and because of the pressures which the International Monetary Fund exerts on Mexico, policies exist which have debilitated much of the Mexican system and have especially weakened unions. The unions do not exist, or if they do exist, they do not put pressure on the owners and bosses in the maquiladoras to pay workers just wages. Workers regularly have to work many extra hours and occasionally must work double shifts. It is not possible to live on what the maquiladoras pay and this has made it so many women workers cannot take care of their own children. With such little pay, they are not able to provide the food which their children need.

Maquiladora workers only earn about US \$20 dollars a week. And now, workers are dealing with the repercussions of the peso devaluation that occurred in December. Our money was devalued and we lost almost \$17 a week in pay. This is impossible. I want to rid you all of the idea that if you earn US \$20 in Mexico it is worth a lot. That is not true. When you live in the northern part of Mexico, at the Mexico-US border, the prices of products are much higher. For example, a gallon of milk on the US side of the border costs US \$2. In Mexico, a gallon of milk costs US \$3. This is equal to about 18 Mexican pesos which is more than a maquiladora worker makes in a day. A day's pay is 16 pesos and a gallon of milk costs US 18.

In addition to paying terribly low wages, the maquiladoras do not follow sound safety and health procedures. Moreover, they are exposing women workers to toxic substances and to machines without providing adequate protection. The maquiladoras never translate chemical warning labels into Spanish. They always come in English and so we cannot understand how to protect ourselves, or the correct way of handling certain solvents. One worker, for example, named Dora Elia, worked with a lead solder for ten years. Over the course of her last few years of work she coughed frequently, was easily agitated, and always felt tired. She went to a doctor and explained to him how she was feeling. The doctor examined her and said that her blood had lead in it and that there was lead in her lungs as well. He told her that she had to quit smoking. But she answered, "I have never smoked. I don't even know how to smoke!" This is a clear example of a woman who was made sick because of her work. This is an example of how it is for countless Mexican maquiladora workers.

In the face of this entire situation, my organization, the Border Committee of Women Workers, recognizes, but does not accept, what the maquiladoras are doing to so many women. Women maquiladora workers have given birth to low birth-weight children, others have given birth to children with physical and mental deficiencies. In the specific case of one maquiladora in Matamoros called Mallory Capacitors, where many of the women who worked there gave birth to deformed children, the company closed down, leaving behind a huge social debt.

But I am happy that the Border Committee of Women Workers was able to help these families to take action. The families of these deformed children filed a lawsuit against the company, and I would like to announce that just a month ago the company settled with the families, paying them a total of US\$ one million in compensation.

Those of us involved in the Border Committee of Women Workers go to the neighborhood in which women maquiladora workers live to develop our methods and strategies, making it possible for women workers to have a greater understanding of their human and labor rights. It is very important right now that women in the formal system of production become empowered to confront problems in the maquiladoras, and empowered to defend their rights as workers and women.

Women maquiladora workers are asking questions: Who is benefiting from this system? Where is justice? How can we speak of justice when international free trade agreements do not include the rights of women workers? We are waiting impatiently for an answer to these questions. We believe that if you want peace, work for justice. Based on our experience as women maquiladora workers, we like to say if we want justice for women, we have to organize ourselves! Thank you very much.

Julia Quiñones, from Mexico, is an organizer among women workers in factories known as maquilas. She spoke about the impact of transnational corporations in her country, particularly in the areas that Mexico shares with the United States.

Miche Hill

My name is Miche Hill. I am 37 years old. I work at a women's center in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. I want to start by saying a little bit about myself. I left home when I was 15 years old. When I left home I had no money, no resources, no connections. I slept anywhere I could — wherever it was warm. I had no housing, no shelter. I ate out of garbage cans, like a lot of people who are living on the streets. But I was a lot luckier than many women I knew on the street. Things did not happen to me that I saw happen to others. I am not saying that I got away with not being abused, but I certainly managed to get away with being a little bit more protected than other people.

There were things I did that I am not proud of, but I did what I had to do to survive. You have to steal. You have to do a lot of things that you are not too happy about, but you are forced to. After two years of being on the street, and not being able to get a job — because I certainly did try to get work, but when you are living on the street and you do not have any money to take care of yourself or to clean yourself up, nobody is going to give you a job — I tried to join the army. Luckily for me, I did not weigh enough, so they would not accept me.

I spent a lot of time hanging out at bars even though I was under age. Since I am a lesbian, I hung out at the gay bars. Getting picked up by women was an easy way to get a good night's sleep and a warm meal. One night I met a woman who took me home to a cooperative household, where a lot of other women lived. That was the first time that I had ever been introduced to women who call themselves feminists or feminist activists. I had no concept of this, I had never even heard the word. These women brought me into their home, accepted me for who I was. They gave me food and told me things I had never heard before. One of the most important things they told me was that the situation I was in was not my fault. It had nothing to do with who I was. I was not to blame for this. And that is one of the reasons that today I call myself a feminist and I will always call myself a feminist.

I am telling you this about myself today, and I do not usually like to tell my history, because I want you to understand that in Canada, there are a lot of homeless people. And today, many more of the homeless are children. They do not have access to the services that these women had introduced me to or the support networks that existed and were growing at that time. And I do not think that that will be available to anybody in Canada anymore. They are being cut back. The main reason for that is the NAFTA Agreement (North American Free Trade Agreement) and the free trade agreements that we signed with the United States. This is Canada's way of restructuring. Most of the policies that our government is implementing today, and has been for the last few years, are because of free trade agreements. When we signed that agreement we said that services like unemployment, welfare or health care — things that Canada considers the fabric of our society, the social safety net that we are so proud of, that women fought for — are being eliminated because they are considered "unfair trade barriers." They want to develop a "level playing field," which is an interesting term. For us, a "level playing field" in terms of NAFTA and free trade agreements with Mexico, means that rather than raising the standards of living, wages, environmental conditions and protection for US and Mexican women, we are supposed to lower ours to meet the standards of living that women and children face in those countries.

Who does this benefit? It certainly is not benefiting women living in poverty and immigrant and First Nations women and children in Canada. The only ones benefiting from such rules and policy changes are the transnational and multinational corporations that are going to be able to use cheap Canadian labor, because we will not have a choice. We will not have welfare to protect us, unless you want to work for your welfare. This subsidizes the transnational and multinational corporations, so they will be able to steal our resources,

because Canada has resources. We are a very rich country. They will steal our resources, put us into a place where we are fighting for minimum wage and less-than-minimum wage jobs and keep us so poor and so desperate that we will fight with each other rather than see who the common enemy is.

Just last week before I came here, we had a federal budget come down. Even though activists and feminists have been working hard for the past two years to make sure that women in Canada knew the effects of NAFTA and how it would reflect on their lives, we are all still pretty shocked at some of the things that are in that federal budget. They removed any standards or principles based on protection for people on welfare. Those principles and standards which used to exist in the Canada Assistance Plan to protect people on welfare from abuse, and guarantee them the right to money whether they were employed or not, are now gone. This is because they are "unfair trade barriers," and because we have to pay for the deficit.

The deficit hysteria in Canada has gone crazy. All of those programs and services, like women's centers and transitional houses, daycare, education, unemployment insurance, are being cut in order to pay for a deficit that we never created, and are not responsible for. It was the NAFTA agreement and the free trade agreements, and the economic policies that were implemented because of those, that have literally pulled the rug from underneath us. The whole idea in Canada is to blame the poor and create an atmosphere of hysteria. The right wing agenda is growing everyday in Canada to the point where we have skinheads in the downtown of Vancouver murdering, abusing and killing native women, lesbian women and poor women. And no one cares.

We have an annual march through the downtown eastside to honor the lives of the native women who have been killed in this area in the last four years. And every year, the march gets longer. And every year we wonder when people are going to open their eyes and do something about it.

But people are opening their eyes. I am not here today to tell you that it is all bad. One of the most important things that our struggles around these issues have pointed out to us is for the absolutely critical need not only for us to work together — immigrant women, refugee women, First Nations women, White middle-class women — locally, but internationally as well. We understand the importance of working internationally and knowing what our sisters all over the world are doing to fight economic restructuring and the removal of our human rights. This is the most important lesson we have learned. This is not just a local struggle anymore. This is a global struggle, and that is how we are going to fight it.



Miche Hill is a First Nations woman and an executive of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada. She is a program coordinator and community organizer with the Vancouver Status of Women.

Cai Fen Lin (Translated from Mandarin Chinese)

Dear friends. Thank you so much for inviting me to share my story and talk about immigrant women worker's issues. I was born in Gwangdong Province in southern China, where I grew up and was, by 18 years old, teaching elementary school children. In the late 1980's, I immigrated to the United States in search of a better life and to join my husband's family. Not speaking English, the only job I could get was sewing in a sweatshop. All the Chinese immigrant women seemed to work in garments. I sewed at piece-rates and could only make one dollar per hour. The job was terrible and the pay was too little for me to support my family.

I found a job as a homecare worker paid by the government. That job paid minimum wage without any paid sick or vacation leave. Then I heard about Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA). They used to have a job training program before the economy got so bad. They helped me get a better job as a housekeeper at a convalescent care home for the elderly. A lot of minority women like me also worked there.

I am on AIWA's membership board. AIWA is a community organization for immigrant women workers in the garment, electronic, hotel, restaurant, nursing home and janitorial industries. These industries depend on paying us immigrant women low wages. If we complain, the manufacturers threaten to close down and send our jobs overseas.

At present, we are helping garment workers to fight for justice through the Garment Workers Justice Campaign and national boycott against manufacturer Jessica McClintock for abuses committed against immigrant seamstresses. We have done a lot. But more immigrant women need to be reached. For over one hundred years, for a whole century, garment workers used their intelligence and their hands to create so much wealth in society. But we work in such awful conditions. We get no benefits. We do not even get the minimum wage mandated by law. Lots of women do not know English. They just endure whatever hardship and exploitation to go on living and feeding their families.

For the new immigrants who know very little English, men work in restaurants and women in the garment industry. This is the reality that new immigrants face. Chinese culture says it is better not to make trouble. A small garment factory has only around 10 workers, a narrow circle. They have no knowledge of the American community and no one to organize them together to understand the value of their labor. One hundred years passed silently and the workers got exploited without a voice.

Through the Campaign we discovered that the lace dresses sewn by garment workers sell for \$175 each while our workers only get \$5. Please answer me: Is this called justice? How many workers can afford to buy a dress for \$100 or \$1000? The sign in the shop where McClintock's dresses were sewn said "No loud talking," and workers had to ask for permission to go to the bathroom. If they talked too loud, the boss would throw boxes at them. When the shop closed down, workers lost their jobs and were owed back-wages. We learned at the same time that McClintock was contracting our work to women workers in Matamoros, Mexico. The Mexican women worked at piece rates and averaged \$1 per hour.

What we workers ask is nothing luxurious. These are basic rights that everyone should have: a job with a decent wage, a safe working environment, paid vacation, overtime pay, and health insurance. We want what is only normal, to work with dignity, without exploitation.

Despite our hard work, we immigrants are now being blamed for all the problems in the economy. In California, where I live, voters just passed Proposition 187 which denies public education and health services to the children and families of undocumented workers. Politicians are also trying to pass bills to cut off all social services to all immigrants who are not citizens. A Korean immigrant woman in our area died from burns because Proposition 187 made her too afraid to go to a hospital to get help.

The objective of the Garment Workers Justice Campaign is to defend the rights and dignity of immigrant women workers. The campaign has lasted for two and a half years. We work together with our

supporters to call for all kinds of meetings and actions. We picketed Jessica McClintock's boutiques and organized a national boycott of her products demanding that she sit down and meet with the workers and show corporate responsibility for sweatshop abuses. We got wide media coverage and support from community and student organizations, churches and elected officials.

To change a problem that has built up for over a century is not easy. Let us stand up and speak up before it is too late. Let us come together and fight for what we are entitled. We want corporations to show responsibility and compassion for the workers who made them rich, whether or not those workers are directly employed by the company, or indirectly employed through subcontractors. We want protection for the workers and the environment in trade agreements so that corporate profits do not come at the expense of workers' lives and the environment. We want the government and the politicians to stop blaming and attacking immigrant workers and their families.

If we do not fight for our human rights, we can never change our fate. But the most important thing is that we, as immigrant women workers, should stand up for our human rights and link our arms with other workers, immigrants, women, poor people, minorities, the homeless and everyone else that is fighting for a decent life. So women must stand up now! Join us and please support our campaign. Thank you.



Cai Fen Lin is on the membership board of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) in Oakland, California, USA. Cai Fen used to work as a seamstress in California where her average wage was \$1 per hour. She now works for the Garment Workers for Justice Campaign which has been organizing a boycott against the US garment manufacturer Jessica McClintock.

Economic Policy, Health and the Environment

Rita Pereira

Me llamo Rita María Pereira. Trabajo en la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas. Desde que me invitaron a formar parte de esta tribuna, hecho que me honra y agradezco, he pensado mucho en este momento y la gran responsabilidad que siento ante mi pueblo, ante sus mujeres y ante ustedes que están aquí en el día de hoy escuchándonos. Pienso en el difícil pero imprescindible arte de la comunicación. Pienso en esto porque se trata de abordar un tema tan controvertido o simplemente desconocido como es el del bloqueo económico, financiero y comercial impuesto por Estados Unidos a Cuba desde hace 35 años. En ello estriba el reto, en poder transmitirles algunos hechos y vivencias que contribuyan a entender la realidad de mi pueblo y de sus mujeres.

Vivo en un país que realiza ingentes esfuerzos por la subsistencia y el desarrollo, por mantener los logros alcanzados en los ámbitos de la salud, la educación, la seguridad nacional y hacerlo manteniendo su derecho de soberanía e independencia nacional. Es un país que no pretende ser un paradigma. Es un país que simplemente quiere ser digno y respetado en la construcción de su proyecto social. Por ello se le castiga a través de un bloqueo económico que ha tenido consecuencias adversas para el disfrute de los derechos humanos de su pueblo.

Soy testigo de esta realidad, de las consecuencias económicas y sociales de este "síndrome cubano" padecido por todas las administraciones de Estados Unidos desde 1960 hasta la fecha su más reciente e irracional expresión, llamada la "Enmienda Torricelli". Su objetivo es forzar al pueblo cubano a cambiar su sistema político — de ahí su nombre eufemístico "The Cuban Democracy Act", un addendum al presupuesto de gastos militares.

¿Qué significa esto para nuestro país, para nuestras vidas y nuestro desarrollo normal como seres humanos? Significa el agravamiento de la crisis económica por la que atraviesa el país como consecuencia de la pérdida de su mercado al desaparece nuestros principales socios comerciales concentrados en los ex-países socialistas. En tanto, no solo se trata de que no podemos comerciar con una nación que representa un gran mercado sólo a 90 millas de nuestras costas, sino además implica, entre otras restricciones, que los productos producidos por terceros utilizando materia prima cubana no pueden ser exportados a Estados Unidos. Significa que tenemos que obligatoriamente comerciar y transportar mercancía de lugares distantes como Asia y Europa elevándose los precios por costo de transportación. Por otro lado, los costos de importación se elevan porque los barcos que tocan puertos cubanos no pueden tocar puertos estadounidenses hasta seis meses después. Es así que los mandatarios de estas empresas navieras nos cobran mucho más por transportar mercancía. Significa que no tenemos acceso a financiamiento externo debido a las presiones de los Estados Unidos sobre las instituciones financieras. Estas son sólo algunas de las medidas implícitas en dicha sanción económica que se traducen en un impacto negativo en el nivel de vida de la población y que indiscutiblemente dañan uno de los sectores más sensibles, la salud.

Ordenando mis ideas para dirigirme a ustedes en el día de hoy, recordaba la epidemia de dengue hemorrágico que se desató en el país hace ya algunos años. 344,230 personas enfermaron y fallecieron 158. De ellos, 101 eran niños. No pude dejar de pensar en el dolor de esos familiares y de esas madres. Como contraste, no pude dejar de pensar y recordar la negativa de Departamento de Estado de los Estados Unidos de Norte América de vender y enviar a Cuba el insecticida que era de gran necesidad para enfrentar la epidemia. Este tuvo que ser adquirido en otros países a un mayor precio y por supuesto, el arribo demoró, creando dificultades para el tratamiento efectivo del vector.

Es así que decidí traer el testimonio de una médica cubana que por razones de trabajo no puede estar hoy aquí y que bien pudiera ser las vivencias de cualquiera de las profesionales de la salud que día a día padecen el dolor de no tener a mano - en ocasiones - el mejor medicamento para aliviar las dolencias de sus pacientes.

La Dra. Alba Abela Lazo, médica especialista en Anestesiología y Reanimación de un hospital de medicina general en sus testimonio expresó, "en mi hospital se realiza el mayor número de intervenciones quirúrgicas, de gran envergadura, de más riesgo, que no se efectúan en ninguna otra parte de Cuba. Esta cirugía que llamamos de envergadura o de alto riesgo, como su nombre lo indica, precisa de una cantidad de recursos extraordinarios para poder llevarla a cabo con éxito y brindar una asistencia médica con calidad.

En muchísimas ocasiones, estos recursos están limitados, escaséan los medicamentos, básicamente los de mi especialidad. Por lo general, todos los medicamentos de uso en anestesia en el mercado internacional son muy caros y a nosotros no nos venden directamente. Tenemos que comprarlos a través de terceros países y eso hace que se duplique el costo del medicamento, lo que se hace difícil la gestión de venta.

Tengo la obligación diaria de distribuir con absoluta equidad todos los recursos disponibles para la buena marcha del trabajo; porque sí quiero dejar bien claro que la divisa fundamental de nuestro empeño es desarrollar las operaciones con absoluta seguridad y calidad. Preferimos posponer una cirugía si no disponemos de todos los recursos necesarios para que sea exitosa.

En muchos lugares de Cuba se han puesto en práctica alternativas para solucionar problemas de carencias básicas dentro de la salud pública; sobre todo en nuestro sistema de atención primaria, sector verdaderamente fuerte, porque aquí los médicos de familia, conjuntamente con la comunidad, han desarrollado soluciones muy valiosas para sustituir importaciones, como el uso de la medicina verde y la acupuntura.

También confrontamos serias dificultades con materiales o piezas de repuesto para reparar equipos. En ocasiones estas roturas e imprevistos, pueden afectar el desarrollo de un programa quirúrgico de 60 casos e incluso suspenderse.

Hacemos todo lo posible porque estos programas quirúrgicos se cumplan en tiempo, pero a veces el trabajo que pudiéramos realizar en seis horas, se prolonga a ocho, diez o doce horas. Esto además conlleva a que se prolongue la jornada laboral. Por lo anteriormente expuesto, muchas veces llegamos tarde a la casa y entonces tenemos que encarar una jornada tan o más dura que la laboral. Se trata entonces de, "¿qué cocino hoy?", — porque hay una escasez de alimentos. Tenemos que atender a los niños, sus necesidades escolares. Se tiene que tener relación de pareja para tratar de tener una familia en la mayor armonía posible .

"A veces", decía ella, "no tenemos tiempo, o estamos extenuadas. También pesan sobre nosotros las dificultades de adquirir determinados productos para el hogar. Escaséan muchísimo los de higiene personal y del hogar. Sentimos gran pena y dolor por no disponer de la ropa y zapatos, adecuados para todos los integrantes de la familia, pero en particular," decía ella, "para los niños. Ellos son los que crecen y a los que de un año para otro se les queda la ropa y los zapatos." Decía que en ocasiones, tenía que enviar a sus hijos con un par de zapatos rotos a la escuela. Porque eso sí está claro, todos los niños en Cuba van, aunque tengan los zapatos rotos. Y esto es algo muy duro. ¿Para qué madre no será doloroso, más en un país que ha tenido tantos logros? A veces acudimos a la confección de zapatillas para paliar esta situación, los uniformes pasan muchas veces de los más grandes a los más pequeños, buscamos vías para resolver las necesidades básicas.

Por último, la Dra. Alba Abela Lazo hizo referencia a un aspecto de especial importancia para mí y es por ello que en estos momentos no hablo a nombre de ella solamente, sino a nombre de las millones de mujeres cubanos. Se trata de las diversas expresiones de solidaridad que recibimos de personas y amigos en todas partes del mundo que son relevantes no sólo por su valor material sino por su gran valor moral. Quiero que

sepan que luchamos con el objetivo de triunfar cada día ante cada problema. Nuestras mujeres se enfrentan a la cotidianidad concientes de lo que significa la revolución. Estamos decididas a resistir y a defenderla. A pesar del bloqueo venceremos.



***Rita María Pereira
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de todo el mundo.***

Rita María Pereira (Translated from Spanish)

My name is Rita María Pereira. I work at the Federation of Cuban Women. From the moment that I was invited to be part of this tribunal, a gesture which honors me and which I am thankful for, I have thought a lot about this moment and the great responsibility I feel before my people, our women, and you all who are here today listening. I think about the difficult but necessary art of communication. I reflect on this because this is a matter of focusing on an issue very controversial or simply unknown like the economic, financial and trade blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba for more than 35 years. There lies the challenge; being able to communicate some facts and experiences which will contribute to understanding the reality of my people, our women.

I live in a country which carries out great efforts to survive and develop, to maintain the advancements made in the fields of health, education, and social security while maintaining its right to sovereignty and national independence. It is a country which does not pretend to be a paradigm. It is a country which simply wants to be dignified and respected in the construction of its social project. Because of this, it is punished through an economic blockade which has had adverse consequences on the enjoyment of the human rights of its people.

I am a witness to this reality, of the economic and social consequences of the "Cuban Syndrome" plaguing US Administrations since 1960 to date — its most recent and irrational expression called the "Torricelli Amendment." Its objective is to force the Cuban people to change their political system — hence its euphemistic name, "The Cuban Democracy Act," — as an addendum to the US Military expenditure budget.

What does this mean for our country, for our lives and our normal development as human beings? It means the aggravation of the country's economic crisis due to the loss of its markets when its main trade partners, mainly located in the ex-socialist countries, disappeared. It is not only a matter of not being able to trade with a nation which represents a great market only 90 miles away from our coast, but it also implies, among other restrictions, that the products manufactured by third countries using Cuban raw materials cannot be exported to the United States. It means that we are obligated to trade and transport merchandise from distant places like Asia and Europe which makes prices higher due to transportation costs. Also, the costs of imports increase because the ships which touch Cuban ports cannot touch US ports until six months later. This is why the ship owners of naval enterprises charge us much more for merchandise transportation. It means that we do not have access to external financing due to the pressure that the US exerts upon financial institutions. These are only some of the implicit measures in the economic sanctions which have a very negative impact on the standard of living of the population and which unquestionably affect one of the most vulnerable sectors, health.

While organizing my ideas to address you today, I recalled the epidemic of "Dengue" hemorrhagic fever that developed in the country a few years ago. 344,230 people became ill and 158 died. Of those, 101 were children. I could not stop thinking about the pain of those families, of those mothers. I could also not stop thinking and remembering the refusal of the US Department of State to sell and send to Cuba the insecticide needed to tackle the epidemic. It had to be purchased in other countries. We bought it in Asia at a higher price and, of course, its arrival was delayed, creating difficulties in the effective treatment of the vector.

This is why I decided to present the testimony of a Cuban woman physician who could not be here today due to her work, but whose personal experience reflects the reality of many health professionals that day by day suffer the pain of often not having at hand the best medicine to alleviate the ailments of their patients.

Dr. Abela Lazo, a specialist in anesthesiology and reanimation at a hospital of internal medicine, expresses in her testimony that

"In my hospital, we carry out a great number of surgical interventions of high risk, which do not take place in any other part of Cuba. This surgery, requires an extraordinary amount of resources in order to carry it out with success and offer quality medical assistance. On many occasions, these resources are limited, the medicines are scarce, and generally, the anesthetic medicines are very expensive on the international market. They are not sold to us directly, so we have to buy them through third countries. This doubles the cost of the medicine and makes the sales transaction difficult.

I have the daily obligation to distribute with absolute equity all the available resources to enable the good development of work. I want to clarify that the fundamental principle of our endeavor is to do the operations with absolute security and quality. We prefer to postpone a surgery if we cannot count on all the necessary resources for its success.

In many places in Cuba, alternatives are practiced to solve problems of basic scarcity within public health, mainly in our system of primary care, a truly strong sector, because here the family doctors, jointly with the community, have developed many valuable solutions to substitute imports like the use of green medicine and acupuncture.

We also confront serious difficulties with materials or spare parts to repair equipment when it breaks down. On occasion, these unexpected breakdowns of necessary pieces of equipment affect or even suspend the development of a surgical program. We do all that is possible to fulfill these surgical programs as planned, but sometimes the work that we may be able to accomplish in six hours extends to eight, to ten, or to twelve hours. This also results in an extension of the work shift.

Often times, we arrive home late and then must face responsibilities which are as, or more, demanding than our jobs. It is — what do I cook? —, because there is a scarcity of food. We have to care for the children and their school needs. We have to have a good relationship with our partners in order to have a harmonious family life."

"Sometimes," she said, "we don't have time, or are exhausted. The challenge of acquiring certain products for the home also falls upon us. Products for personal hygiene and the home are very scarce. We feel great pain and sorrow for not having adequate clothing and shoes for all members of the family, particularly for the children. They outgrow their clothing and shoes every year."

She stated that on occasions she has to send her children to school with a pair of broken shoes. But one thing is clear: all children in Cuba go to school even if their shoes are broken. And this is something very hard. For what mother is this not painful, more so in a country that has had so many achievements? We sometimes create a sort of slipper to alleviate this situation. Many times we pass on to the little ones the school uniforms of the older ones. We search for ways to solve the basic needs.

Lastly, Dr. Abela Lazo referred to an aspect of special importance to me and this is why now I do not only speak on her behalf, but on behalf of millions of Cuban women. It has to do with the diverse expressions of solidarity that we receive from people and friends from all parts of the world which are relevant not only because of their material value, but for their great moral value. We want you all to know that we struggle with the objective of overcoming each day, facing each problem. Our women face their daily life aware of what the revolution means and we have decided to resist and defend it. In spite of the blockade, we shall overcome.

Rita Pereira was born in Havana, Cuba. She is a women's activist and lawyer at the Federation of Cuban Women, an organization committed to the struggle for women's equality in the political, economic and social life in that country. For the last 16 years, she has dedicated most of her efforts to create and strengthen linkages and solidarity with women from all over the world.

Charlotte Black Elk Oglala Lakota

I am happy to be with you here today. You have all read the story of Columbus. It tells you that Columbus arrived and he found this new land that was empty, except for some savages. I am one of those savages. And we are still here today.

While there is a history of 500 years of exploitation in the United States of America, North America and South America, the governments that operate in those countries today, by and large, are living on occupied lands. They have never settled the question of dealing with the natives of those lands.

I want to concentrate on the Black Hills area that is central to our people. The great Sioux Nation is a confederacy of seven nations: Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people. Currently we live on 28 reserves and reservations in Canada and the United States of America. We are at the geographic center of the United States and the geological center of North America. We say that the Black Hills are at the heart of everything that is. It is the heart of our home, and the home of our heart.

The history of the American Indian in the United States of America is very much concentrated in the relationship with the Sioux Nation. While many tribes were decimated by diseases and many others were peaceful farmers who were killed on first contact, Lakota people have always been warriors and we fought back. Finally, in 1868, the United States government realized that it was in their own best interest to enter into a treaty of peace with us. They did this, and they had to burn their forts as they left.

But Europeans have a short memory, particularly those who emigrated to the United States. And so, eight years later they entered the Black Hills, a place that the treaty said no White man shall enter and that the government soldiers kept White people out of until gold was discovered in the area. We were told to sell the Black Hills. We said no. All of the universe possesses a song. When the earth was created, and the universe was created, each piece of the universe was given a piece of that song. But all of the song is in the Black Hills. We said, "We cannot do this to all of creation, to damage the song." So the United States Congress said, "Unless and until you sell the Black Hills, we will no longer allow you to have food."

Ninety percent of our population died of starvation during this time, but still we refused to sell. The Black Hills were unilaterally confiscated from us. We fought, but until 1924, Lakota people were prisoners of war in the United States of America.

In 1924, we were granted citizenship and we could enter into their courts, so we fought within their legal system. In the meantime the land had been homesteaded, because the notion in America is that only those people who embrace Western ideals have the right to live. And Indians, because they refuse to become civilized and christianized do not have the right to live, the notion in America being that only civilized people are christians. So since the highest of ideal of Western civilization is embracing christianity, we would not do that.

Our lands are being exploited. The place that America, outside of Disneyland and Disneyworld and maybe Yellowstone, portrays itself is Mount Rushmore. This place is the most violent desecration to our people. It is desecration to the earth. Crazyhorse Mountain is a beautiful place that was destroyed for tourist development. Then they have the gall to say "We are doing it for your honor. Why don't you Indians ever appreciate anything?"

We also have open-pit cyanide deep ridge gold mining in the Black Hills. Our experience is not unique to native peoples in the Americas. It is happening in Canada, it is happening throughout the United States, it is happening in Mexico, in Central America, in South America.

I think it is important to not just bring out those points. I think it is important to walk away from here with a sense of where to go in the future. We will never give up our struggle for the Black Hills. Crazyhorse said "You can kill us all and if there is only one dog who belongs to the Lakota and that dog goes home to the Black Hills, we will be there weeping."

I would like to ask you to do four things. We believe that four is a very special and sacred number. I would like for everyone to impress upon your national leaders that they take a position that the sacred Black Hills must be returned to Lakota people, and that sacred sites all over the world have to be returned. Secondly, I ask you to boycott non-reservation tourism sites in the United States that are on Indian land or on occupied and stolen Indian lands. Third, I ask you not to wear gold jewelry, particularly if it comes from the United States, because 92% of the gold that is taken out of our sacred land is used for jewelry for humans and animals. Finally, as we are on the eve of the International Day of Woman, and as we say, women's rights are human rights, I want you to remember the most important woman, Mother Earth. She has the right to live, and live with dignity and respect, so that all of her children can live well together.



***Charlotte Black Elk,
political activist,
educator, and lawyer,
is the secretary of the
Black Hills Steering
Committee which works
for the return of lands
in the Black Hills to the
Sioux Nation. She lives
on the Pine Ridge
Indian Reservation in
South Dakota, USA,
and is a member of
the Oglala Lakota.***

commentary

Susana Fried

Center for Women's Global Leadership

We would like to thank all of the testifiers for the courage they have demonstrated in recounting their experiences. Women who testify often risk their jobs, their physical security and their very lives when they tell their stories. It is imperative that all of us take responsibility for ensuring the safety of all those who take risks in exposing human rights violations.

We believe that to create economic and social policies that are based upon respect for women's human rights, we must understand in depth the violations women experience and build on the resistance and organizing in which women are engaged.

With that, I would like to introduce our two commentators. We have asked them to listen and reflect upon the testimonies and link them to the themes of the **World Summit on Social Development**.

The first commentator will be **Julia Häusermann**, who is the President of Rights and Humanity, a multi-faith, multi-cultural international NGO promoting legal protection of human rights and respect for human rights in policy making, and providing education in human rights and responsibilities. She is a lawyer and development worker, focusing particularly on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. Julia is also a member of the World Health Organization's Task Force on Health and Development Policies and the Global Commission on Women's Health.

The second commentator will be **Professor Clovis Maksoud** who is the Director of the Center for the Study of the Global South at the American University in the United States. He was the Ambassador and the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States at the United Nations and its Chief Representative in the United States until October, 1992. A lawyer, journalist and diplomat, Dr. Maksoud also served as the Arab League Ambassador to India and Southeast Asia, and was Special Envoy to the United States in 1974. As a journalist, Dr. Maksoud was Senior Editor of the daily Al-Ahram in Cairo, Egypt. In addition he is the author of several books on the Middle East and the Third World.



Julia Häusermann

Thank you very much indeed. Like all of us who have been listening this afternoon, I feel immensely privileged to be here, and really quite emotional. I particularly thank those of you who shared your testimonies with us. Meetings like this are terribly important for building solidarity. It gives those of us who are trying to work at the international level at conferences like this Summit a reminder; at the very moment when we most need reminding why it is that we are here. I thank you for that.

It is very difficult to reflect on so many relevant points. But I would like to make a few comments that seem to me to run throughout the testimonies we have had. The first words that come to my mind, again and again, are the strength and dignity of the women presenting their testimonies. Dignity is the key word here. Because whether we are listening to testimonies on the inadequacy of welfare, whether we are listening to the ways that people are treated as victims of violence and as prisoners, whether we are learning about the suffering of people at the sharp edge of the denial of land rights and cultural identity, or violations of economic rights, we learn that the solutions that are so often put forward are baseline, are bare minimum welfare rights. They are never adequate for human dignity.

What has been very clear in all the testimonies, is that it is not a question of handouts or increased money. It is a question of reforming the system — of the whole framework in which we are operating. I believe this is the thematic undercurrent throughout the Summit, particularly in the NGO Forum. We need a whole new economic paradigm, and a new paradigm of looking at social development. We certainly heard the evidence for this today. We cannot solve the problems we have heard about by attacking them as individual problems. The whole of society and the whole of the economic system needs to be restructured.

My own work in human rights is, as it is for any human rights advocate, an uphill battle. The most significant challenge we face when we look at social development issues is the insistence made so often that human rights are restricted to legal rights of a civil or political nature; and the constant denial from some quarters that economic, social and cultural rights are human rights. When economic, social and cultural rights are recognized, we face the battle of asserting that women's rights in these areas are equally important to those of men. This is something we have all experienced throughout our work and our lives.

When we learn about human rights in law school or political science, we hear about the political reforms of the 17th and 18th century which were directed against the abuse of political power. What is happening in this Forum this afternoon, is that we are stressing again and again that we must challenge abuse of economic power. When we look at women's rights as human rights, we must see them also as a challenge to the abuse of economic power.

To call the issues we have heard about today human rights issues means that they are non-negotiable. Health and safety at work should never, and can never, morally or legally, be sacrificed for profit. Many of the issues we have heard about fall within three categories of human rights which are protected by international law, under two major instruments: The Convention on Elimination Against All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Both of these instruments clearly state that there should be no discrimination on any grounds, such as sex, race or other status, in the enjoyment of human rights. And yet, in every testimony, we heard about some form of discrimination. We heard about discrimination against women because of their gender. We also heard about discrimination against immigrants. But we also heard about one of the most common forms of discrimination: discrimination against those living in poverty. Unfortunately, the international legal instruments do not at present state that discrimination on the grounds of income is a form of discrimination. Yet it clearly is.

All of the testimonies raise the issue of the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to food, clothing, housing and adequate health care. The term "adequate" has not yet been defined in legal texts. And I remind us again of the word dignity. Health is defined in the constitution of the World Health

Organization as a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. So when we refer to an adequate standard of living, we cannot mean one that barely enables us to survive, but one that is adequate for us to live in dignity with our families in the truest spirit of the human rights texts.

The right to education, health care, protection against violence and physical integrity were all referred to today. I want to highlight another right: the right to be free from inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. I was very struck when I was listening to discussion of the situation in the Philippines that the way women have been treated there is not in accordance with that right. It is not too strong to say that sexual violence goes beyond physical integrity and moves us into the question of inhumane and degrading treatment against women.

Another right that has been protected in law, but not in practice, is the right to equality before the law. What this should mean is that every person is equal in the eyes of the law. Yet we heard today from Shannon that she did not receive treatment equal to that which a man would have received. Legal textbooks and courts have been restrictive in their application of this right. We must challenge that interpretation. We must say that equality before the law applies to every manner in which women are treated, including their treatment in the context of the legal process and prisons. It also applies to the way that minorities of all color and origin are treated. This is what equality before the law should mean.

In the last presentation, we heard not only about the abuse of land rights, but about the abuse of cultural rights. I stress this because cultural rights are so frequently omitted in discussions of human rights. Even when the discussion moves on to economic and social rights, it rarely mentions cultural rights.

Finally, an area that must be examined urgently is the area of international responsibility of states — for example the responsibility of the United States for the behavior of its military personnel abroad. We must also address the responsibility of governments to respect human rights, not only in the context of their own laws and policies, but also in those related to international institutions and transnational corporations.

We so frequently hear governments in the North say that human rights are a part of their agendas. Much of the current debate about good governance and aid conditionalities¹ is based on the human rights record of the aid recipient countries. Let's turn the program around. Let's talk about good governance of those who are responsible for our international financial institutions. Let's talk about holding *them* responsible for the impact their policies are having on people throughout the world.

I believe, and I know that we share this belief, that the enrichment of a minority at the cost of the impoverishment of the majority is not only unacceptable, but it is obscene, immoral, and in my view, illegal under international law. The United States has not ratified the two Covenants that I mentioned above. We all share the great challenge to ensure that the United States does ratify those instruments. But even if that country is not a party to the covenants, it is a party to the United Nations Charter. Articles 55 and 56² quite clearly impose an obligation on every member of the United Nations to work toward economic and social justice for all people without discrimination throughout the world.

That is why I want to call this Summit a Summit of Hope. I believe it is possible that such solidarity can be created at a meeting such as this. To take these issues forward, we must build a new system of rights that

1 Aid conditionalities are those actions and policies which international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, require that countries undertake in order to receive loans. This includes reducing government social spending, privatizing governmental industries, and re-orienting national economic policies to expand exports.

2 Articles 55 and 56, of the Charter of the United Nations (1945) are concerned with international economic and social cooperation. They stipulate that the United Nations shall promote, among others: "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development," and "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."

is not limited to civil and political rights, is not limited to the rights of man, and is not limited to legal rights. We must build a system that talks about issues of dignity, that places women's economic, social and cultural rights high on the political and legal agenda, and locates women's rights firmly at the center of human rights.



Dr. Clovis Maksoud

Let me say at the outset that today I have unlearned some of the things I have learned in my life. I have learned today how patriarchal our global society is. I have learned that we have a patronizing insensitivity towards women in general, however much we might fight it. Our concept of love has not penetrated to the inner soul of women. I have learned that there are many experiences of pain that women suffer without our knowledge. Or, if we do know, we tend to ignore. Or, if we do not ignore, we tend to marginalize. I have learned that women have an inner power which is untapped, and the pain and the anger which they carry inside is now a harvest to bring hope to our view of humanity. How do we mobilize this potential? How do we organize it so that the compassion that we all have becomes public policy throughout the world? It is not sufficient to be compassionate, because in a way compassion is itself a non-recognition of fundamental equality. It is important that we transfer our compassion to a mode of thinking and acting that transcends our belief that we can give rights. We have to think of rights not as concessions but as basic human entitlements.

We have heard today that what is important is not only what we are committed to in law, but how much law services the requirements of justice. There are many instances in which laws violate justice. We have also heard today that justice is relevant and we must always seek to complete its realization. We have learned that pain and suffering are also a recognition of our inner humanity. I have learned. I never asked my mother whether my father treated her as equal. I never realized that my wife can at times be lonely, that my daughter does not have a cherished partnership. I did not enquire. I realized today that we must unlearn the dead weight of certain traditions, and that tradition can become a burden unless it is interrupted.

And so, the global community today must transform its concept of security and associate it organically with development. We must reclaim a civil society in which women's equality is an objective, and treated as an axiom and as a presumption. We can then focus on intellectual, legal and political capabilities to enquire into the reasons why that equality is incomplete. We must put those who deny women's equality on the defensive. We have come to the Social Summit in Copenhagen and realized that many in the industrial North are themselves insensitive to the global suffering of women, and I do not mean women in the physical sense only. They are insensitive to people in Cuba, Bosnia and Iraq whose women and children suffer.

Women are the healers, the articulators of hope and pain. If we are not aware of pain, we do not deserve to hope. Women are the catalysts of our social integration and the harbingers of a new global order, not the world order we were handed as a result of the financial institutions and free market which led us to the breakdown of social networks and social justice. For me, this afternoon has been a simultaneous experience of a spiritual process of learning and unlearning so that I can now be a better man.



Peggy Antrobus

Thank you very much. I know I was not supposed to speak again, but I thank you for giving me this opportunity to say this one word. I wish so much that our leaders who are now at the Bella Centre could have been here this afternoon to listen to these testimonies and stories. If they had been here, I wonder what they would do. I hope that it would have left them speechless. At the very least I hope it would stop them from using the meaningless words that they use as they talk about poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. How dare they speak of these things when they have absolutely no intention of changing any policy that is simply putting more and more people at risk and more and more people in the situation of these women. I thank the sisters, and I feel extremely privileged to be part of the organization that brought you here for injecting into this space the sense of outrage that is badly missing at the Bella Centre. My only regret is that it is not possible to physically bring those people here and force them to sit through and listen to these stories. I am sure if they were forced to do that something would change. The problem is that the people who make the policies are too well protected from these realities. The only way that this will change, ultimately, is to force our leaders to listen to these stories.



GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Copenhagen Hearing on Economic Justice and Women's Human Rights
World Summit on Social Development, NGO Forum, March 7, 1995

Statement to the United States Government¹

We, the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights, have gathered at the World Summit on Social Development to share the stories of women whose experiences demonstrate the range of human rights violations perpetrated directly by the policies of the United States government or with its complicity. As women who live in the South and the North, we come together to bear witness to the devastation of communities, nations, and environments that have occurred in the name of growth, development and free-markets. Women's activism in recent UN conferences demonstrates that our experiences in building alliances and in sustaining ourselves and our communities in the face of such violations offers a transformative vision to the global dialogue for the creation of a new world order.

Our focus on the United States arises from the recognition that it is a world power that has claimed to stand for the principle of "liberty and justice for all". Therefore, the US has a particular responsibility to be accountable for its violations of human rights and must take leadership in constructing a world order that is based on the protection and promotion of the human rights of all peoples. All nations must be accountable for their violations of human rights.

We call upon the United States to ensure that it respects and promotes fundamental human rights. It is only through the recognition of the inherent value and dignity of each and every human being that the goals of the World Summit for Social Development can be made a reality.

In this spirit, we ask that the United States of America take the following actions immediately:

- Guarantee safety for each of the women who spoke out at the Hearing and prohibit retaliation.
- Enforce all existing laws which protect workers and the environment along the US Mexican border. Insist that transnational corporations restore salary levels in the maquilas in Mexico to the level they were before the December 1994 peso devaluation.
- Address and eradicate poverty in the US and eliminate and reverse current attacks on women on welfare.
- Stop the racist exploitation of and discrimination against immigrant and undocumented women, including garment workers. Repeal Proposition 187².
- Lift the economic blockade on Cuba³
- Release Patty Hennessey, the remaining battered woman of the Framingham 8, incarcerated for self-defense, and pardon Shannon Booker⁴.

1 By the United States government we mean the executive, legislature and judiciary at both the federal and state levels.

2 Proposition 187, which was approved by voters in California during the November 1994 elections, calls upon health, police and other public sector workers to report suspected undocumented immigrants as a way to restrict their access to social and educational services.

3 The "Cuban Democracy Act", approved by Congress in 1992, tightened the economic blockade of Cuba by mandating that no US company, nor any subsidiary of a US company can conduct business with Cuba.

4 The Framingham 8 were a group of eight women incarcerated in the Massachusetts Correctional Institution located in Framingham, MA. They were imprisoned for killing their abusive spouses in self defense. Shannon Booker, one of the Framingham 8, testified at the Copenhagen hearing.

- Repeal NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement).
- Prevent re-entry of the U.S. military to the Philippines through access agreements.
- Return the stolen Black Hills to the Sioux nation.
- Stop Structural Adjustment Programs from sapping people dry.

We further demand the United States and all other governments:

- A. Recognize that the empowerment and participation of women and promotion and protection of their human rights is critical to the achievement of all development, environment and economic policies.
- B. Ensure that the universally recognized human rights to an adequate standard of living, including food, clothing, and shelter as well as the human right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including reproductive and sexual health and the valuing of unwaged work, underlie all economic, financial and trade policies.
- C. Call for corporations to adopt international human rights standards by law, including fair remuneration, equal pay for equal work, occupational safety and environmental standards, and freedom of association in all their practices.
- D. Implement all existing laws protecting workers and the environment and which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race and gender.
- E. Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women without reservations and with appropriate implementing measures. Support the creation of optional protocols for both Conventions.
- F. Call for a restructuring of all international financial and trade organizations, including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization, to ensure that all their policies protect and promote fundamental human rights.
- G. Lift economic embargoes that violate fundamental human rights.
- H. Demilitarize and transfer resources to people-centered social, cultural, political and economic development.
- I. Ensure that developments in science and technology adhere to international human rights standards and that the interests of people not be made subservient to the profits of corporations. Create participatory oversight and regulatory processes.
- J. Create aid policies that are directed at women centered development and are respectful of fundamental human rights.
- K. Halt interference in the affairs of other countries.
- L. Return all stolen sacred sites to indigenous peoples.

The Hearing was convened by the **Center for Women's Global Leadership** and **DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)** in collaboration with the following organizations: **American Friends Service Committee, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, Asian Women's Human Rights Council, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (New Patriotic Alliance), Black Hills Steering Committee, Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Burlington Women's Council, Church World Service and Witness, Comité Fronterizo de Obreras, Committee for Women, Population, and the Environment, Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, Foundation for a Compassionate Society, GABRIELA, Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, International Centre for Law & Development, International Women's Health Coalition, NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada, National Black Women's Health Project, National Congress of Neighborhood Women/GROOT, Network of East-West Women, New Jersey YWCA, Tanzania Media Women's Association, Vermont Women's Union and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO).**

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Center for Women's Global Leadership

The Center for Women's Global Leadership at Douglass College seeks to develop an understanding of the ways in which gender affects the exercise of power and the conduct of public policy internationally. The Center's goals are to build international linkages among women in local leadership that enhance their effectiveness, expand their global consciousness and develop coordinated strategies for action; to promote visibility of women and feminist perspectives in public deliberation and policy-making globally; and to increase participation of women in national and international governing bodies and processes.

The Center's activities are based on seeing women's leadership and transformative visions as crucial in every policy area from democratization and human rights, to global security and economic restructuring. Further, such global issues are interconnected and have both local and international dimensions. The creation of effective policy alternatives demands the full inclusion of gender perspectives and women in all decision-making processes, and requires an understanding of how gender relates to race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and culture

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