

REFUGEE UPDATE

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON WOMEN'S CONCERNS

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"HAWA DOES IT AGAIN AND AGAIN" CHALLENGING AND CHANGING THE LEGACY OF WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH IN SOMALIA.

Hawa Aden Mohamed is a woman who refuses to surrender to warlords and fights not with guns but with **the weapon of development**. Hawa has the determination, the courage, hope and conviction that she and the women who have joined her, are catalysts for change to the legacy of war and its aftermath.

In Somali tradition and universally Hawa, (English meaning "Eve") has carried much of the blame for mankind's errors, transgressions and omissions. Hawa Aden possesses the inner drive, strength and social consciousness to challenge women's universal oppression, socially, culturally, and economically.

The early 70's, a time of peace and development in Somalia saw Hawa establishing the first Women's Adult Education Development Centre in Mogadishu. During this time Hawa strove for women's



emancipation and fought to break the silence and cycle of violence against women and for the prevention and eradication of female genital mutilation.

In the 80's war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Somalia received hundreds of thousands of refugees. Hawa spearheaded refugee women's relief and development and worked tirelessly in their cause, not knowing so many years later she too would be a "Refugee". Towards the end of 1989, Somalia was engulfed in civil war. Hawa was forced to flee for her life from Mogadishu, Somalia in 1990. The first stop in her flight was Kenya and eventually Canada in 1992, where she stayed until 1995.

In Canada, Hawa continued

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK AND CONFERENCE ON REFUGEE WOMEN FLEEING GENDER-BASED PERSECUTION: A CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES INITIATIVE

Background

Seeking refugee status is one important way in which women fleeing gender-related violence can protect themselves. Thus, making refugee determination systems gender-sensitive is a crucial contribution to the international efforts to combat gender-based violence.

Over the past decade an increasing number of countries have been developing individual refugee determination mechanisms and in this arena, more and more

contributions are being made by various NGOs to incorporate specific needs of refugee women into the existing or emerging refugee determination systems.

As a result of pressure from domestic Canadian groups and international law and institution, in 1993 Canada became the first country to issue guidelines on refugee women claimants fleeing gender-related persecution. In

1995 and 1996 the US and Australia followed suit in adopting their own guidelines. In 1997, Sweden introduced a new paragraph into the law, aiming to offer protection to women who face gender-related persecution. Other countries such as the UK have advanced the issue through jurisprudence.

NGOs play a crucial role in advocating changes in this area and have made significant contributions in many countries, namely through developing gender guidelines, in the hope that they will be used by those dealing with women asylum seekers. There are, in addition, numerous advances made by individual activists and experts in the



form of policy position papers, background documents, and research papers - all revealing the dire need for recognition of claims based on gender related violence. Perhaps it has never been as timely as it is today to connect these efforts, to promote their cause and to evoke more awareness about them.

To work toward this goal, the Canadian Council for Refugees is in the process of organizing a network of people interested in gender-related persecution. We are working towards an international conference on the subject to be held in Montreal, spring 2001.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE PROJECT

Five months into the project, the CCR's initiative has attracted the support of 117 individual and groups from 30 countries in all continents.

While the number of network participants from Northern countries outnumber that of the South, many organizations located in North are concerned with issues facing women in particular regions in Southern countries (e.g. Coalition of Women from Asian and the Middle East - CWAME, in the US). The network participants consist of refugee rights, human rights and women rights NGOs and NGOs as well as individual scholars and activists interested in this field.

In May 2000, three months after the initiation of the project, we published a newsletter in which we outlined some basic background information about the project, along with legislation and initiatives related to gender-based persecution in six countries and summaries of a selected number of relevant resources.

All along during the development of network, we have been informed of invaluable input, updates and insights from participants. To cite only a few instances, shortly after our initial announcement, we received, with great enthusiasm, a message from two women working with the National Consortium on Refugee Affairs in Cape Town, South Africa, who had created a 38-page background document on gender-related persecution along with a set of guidelines to be utilized by determination offices in

South Africa. Likewise, it was with great excitement that we followed up the development of gender guidelines which the (ICCL) was in the process of drafting when they first contacted us. We eventually receive the booklet in the mail.

We have received inputs from pioneering advocates of refugee right groups; as well as printed materials regarding Afghan refugee women in Iran; news on the UNIFEM's African Women in Crisis Programme in Nairobi; updates on publication of scholarly works, and reports of the most recent court cases in the US. We have also heard from a great number of students from Karachi to New Haven, who are working on their theses and dissertations on the very same topic.

No doubt the information we have gathered and the people we have been able to reach so far are but a small portion of the efforts in the making - and it is our goal to invite as broad a participation as possible from all regions of the world. Nevertheless, we can confidently assert that the project has met its objective in so far as establishing a functional network which has great potential to effect meaningful change.

OUTLOOK

If the establishment of the network is a step already taken, its maintenance and the undertaking of the conference itself remain a challenge.

For one thing, we hope to see a more active participation and support from the Canadian government. The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) has already a representative on our international advisory committee and Ms. Nurjehan Mawani has strongly supported our initiative. However, our efforts for obtaining the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have unfortunately failed and those directed to the Canada International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Status

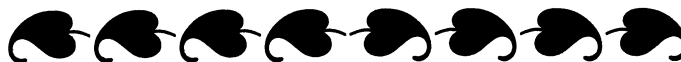
of Women Canada remain not so promising.

Between now and the actual conference - May 4-6, 2001- we will use all our available resources to nurture the network and keep it as functional as possible. This will ideally be done through creating a mailing list where each network member will have simultaneous and direct connection to all other members. In addition, we are working towards putting together a bibliography of relevant manuscripts and internet resources on the CCR website. We will in the meantime publish further issues of the newsletter as we progress .

As previously noted, we seek as broad a participation as possible of all interested bodies from all regions of the world - particularly from Southern countries. This includes the contribution of people who are working around the substantial issues that form the basis of gender claims (e.g. domestic violence, honor killing, etc.) in sending countries. An informed knowledge of what violence against women constitutes and entails from the perspectives of those working "on the ground" is essential to asylum advocates. Through a truly "international" dialogue among NGOs and other interested bodies, we hope to learn from each other's experiences: exchange information, review together the effectiveness of measures adopted; strategize about next steps; and strengthen awareness and commitment.

* To receive more information about this initiative and to join the network and be a part of this collective effort, please contact us via email at ahojabri@totalnet.or or ccr@web.net or via mail to:

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THE WOMEN IN CONFLICT ZONES

BY VANESSA FARR

reminded us that conflicts are maintained at multiple spatial scales: local, national, and international. Her observations have helped us to analyse the capitalist underpinnings of most forms of nationalism and to recognise that, while it is important to look at material inequalities, transnational practices are crucial because they challenge the dichotomization of difference (i.e. into an insider-outsider paradigm that "fixes" people and risks essentializing their identities).

The Network's main aim has been to explore the gender dimensions of ethnic-nationalism, a currently dominant form of social change, and our discussions have focused on its nature, meaning and impact on women and gender relations in different cultural and political contexts. As an international Network, we have focused on contextualizing ethnic-nationalism and exploring its various forms and meanings in different societies. Network participants have assessed the various ways in which women are positioned by ethnic-nationalist movements, and made cross-cultural comparisons of women's status and role in these movements. Throughout, we have carefully addressed the issue of difference and simultaneously explored the contradictory positioning of women and their varied and complex social realities.

This consideration of difference also allows us to address the ways in which the culture and histories of international institutions lead to particular ways of defining difference and commonalities in ethnic conflict zones. Our purpose in the Network and the comparative project has been to find ways of reaching across institutional-academic boundaries to develop "spaces" that will allow for discussions of theory, empirical research and policy development. From the beginning of the Network a central question was whether it is possible to discuss gender, marked and sharpened by differing particularities, without losing a feminist and humanist

"The Women in Conflict Zones Network" (WICZNET), was established by Professor Wenona Giles at the Centre for Feminist Research, York University, Toronto in 1996. It brings together an international group of feminist scholars, activists and policy-makers working in humanitarian and human rights

agencies who are interested in ethnic-nationalism and gender relations, violence and women's rights, women's empowerment in war, and gender and citizenship.[1] Comparative research lies at the heart of our work and throughout, we have tried to understand both the usefulness of such an approach to feminists, and the limitations and even dangers of comparison.

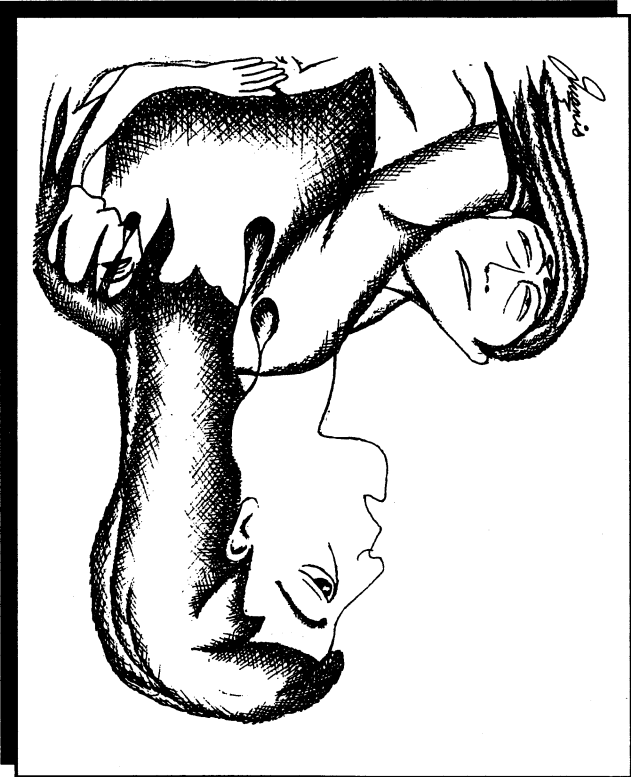
WICZNET members conduct research on areas as diverse as Afghanistān, Northern Ireland, Guatemala and South Africa, but our biggest joint project to date has been "A Comparative Study of the Issues Faced by Women as a Result of Armed Conflict: Sri Lanka and the Post Yugoslav States." The findings of this project are currently being published: a special issue of The Canadian Women's Studies Journal (Spring, 2000) was devoted to the topic of women in conflict zones and included many submissions from WICZNET members. In addition, two edited collections are in preparation: the first originates from the meetings of the WICZNET,[2] and the second from the comparative project.[3]

II. Purpose of the Project

Early on, one of our members proposed defining a conflict zone as "a series of relative locations"[1] that are subject to redefinition:

"Dislocated by acts of violence, unable to return to their previous homes, women's relative locations change. As a result, locations that were nearby become far away, i.e. a place where help is available can become a location where acts of violence occur."

She argued that "place" is crucial in enabling women to move past their experiences in conflict zones and



edge. To address this concern, our debates have paid specific attention to how ethnic-nationalism as a gendered social phenomenon is both general and always already concretely specific.

Another central concern of WICZNET members has been the issue of women's solidarity. We understand women's identities as fluid and open to change, and so we recognize that solidarity is a complex and sometimes contradictory political position for women to maintain. Our debates on the situation of women have tried to recognize differences among women without fixing the boundaries between them. This conceptual approach, we believe, is the best means to open up space for dialogue across differences, and also provides an avenue to define politics and policies that will appropriately address the situation and needs of women in ethnic-national conflict zones.

Leading on from this, our discussions on women in ethnic-national conflict zones have motivated us to consider the question of what has been referred to a "universality in diversity." This has allowed us to examine areas of commonality which are particularly found in the material, historic and political realities of women in ethnic-national conflict zones, including state and class relations and systems of production and culture. We believe that this type of discussion can provide a basis for an empowered understanding that not only leads to the uncovering of commonalities in women's roles and status in ethnic-national conflict zones, but helps researchers avoid the pitfall of uncritical universalism.

III. Responses of Network Members

Participating in the WICZNET has enriched us in a number of ways. We agree that our work has allowed us to develop an analysis of what we mean by the designation "conflict zones," and raised the question of what is to be done in the face of a transformation away from the political processes of democratization managed not by the

state, but by the market. Speaking from difference, we have become vividly aware of the effects on individuals of globalization and have more clearly understood the ways in which we inevitably become influenced by political trends, including the presentation of certain conflicts.

In particular, we value the personal effects of working together in the Network. We have gained insights into the functioning of women's organizations that operate in conflict zones. We have also enjoyed the chance to meet feminists working in other countries and contexts, and have valued the opportunity to work across the activist/academic divide that sometimes cripples feminist work. An important learning experience has been to see how we've dealt with the boundaries between us in order to understand the "other" among us. Finally, we have enjoyed our ongoing work in a space which validates and enhances the further development of feminist research.

[1] For more detailed information on the WICZNET and its members, please consult our website <http://www.yorku.ca/research/cfr/wicz/> or Wenona Giles at the Centre for Feminist Research, York University. The project has been generously supported by funding from York University (Toronto), the Social Science and Humanities Council of Canada, The Ford Foundation, Oxfam (Sri Lanka), Open Society (Budapest).

[2] The book is tentatively entitled *Sites of Violence: Gender and Identity in Conflict Zones* (University of California Press 2001) and is co-edited by Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman.

[3] The book is tentatively entitled: *Women in Conflict Zones: Sri Lanka and the Former Yugoslav States Compared* and is co-edited by Wenona Giles, Malathi de Alwis, Maja Korac, Djurdja Knezevic, Zarana Papić and Neluka Silva.

BILLS AND ELECTIONS

For anyone interested in the fate of Bill C-31, the proposed new legislation on Refugee Protection, now that an election has been called: Once an election is called all bills that have not been passed die. If after the election the new government wants to re-introduce them, they must start again at the beginning. A very similar bill would likely be brought in by a new Liberal government, especially if the Minister stays the same. If there is a change of Minister, there is likely to be a longer wait while the new Minister gets briefed and decides what kind of a bill he or she wants.

Bill C-16, the citizenship bill, also died in the Senate.

HUNGER STRIKE DECLARATION

We are the women from Fujian province who came to Canada to seek refuge. In China, we were persecuted under the one-child policy. Since the day we arrived in Canada, we have been locked up in prison. It has already been one year and two months, and we don't know how much longer we will be kept in jail. Therefore, all of the women incarcerated at the Prince

George Regional Correctional Centre have decided to start a hunger strike today, in order to protest our continued imprisonment.

We hope that our hunger strike will raise Canadian people's awareness of how it feels to lose one's freedom. In prison, we cannot see the blue sky, cannot breathe fresh air, cannot eat food that fits our diets, cannot freely communicate with the outside world, and we are subjected to unreasonable punishment. We often get sick. Some women have become seriously ill, and our illnesses seem to be getting worse. A few days ago, one woman fainted and hit her head. Her head was cut and she had to get stitches. Actually, many of us experience dizziness and are afraid of fainting. Painkillers have become a routine part of our diet. This reflects how imprisonment is damaging our health.

This long imprisonment is tormenting us mentally and psychologically. We often burst out into hysterical laughter or tears. We are on the verge of mental breakdown. We are being treated like criminals and inferiors. Meanwhile, we are afraid of being sent back to China as we know we will be imprisoned and subjected to torture and fines. We are caught between imprisonment imposed by the Canadian government and persecution from the

Chinese government. Either way, we feel miserable

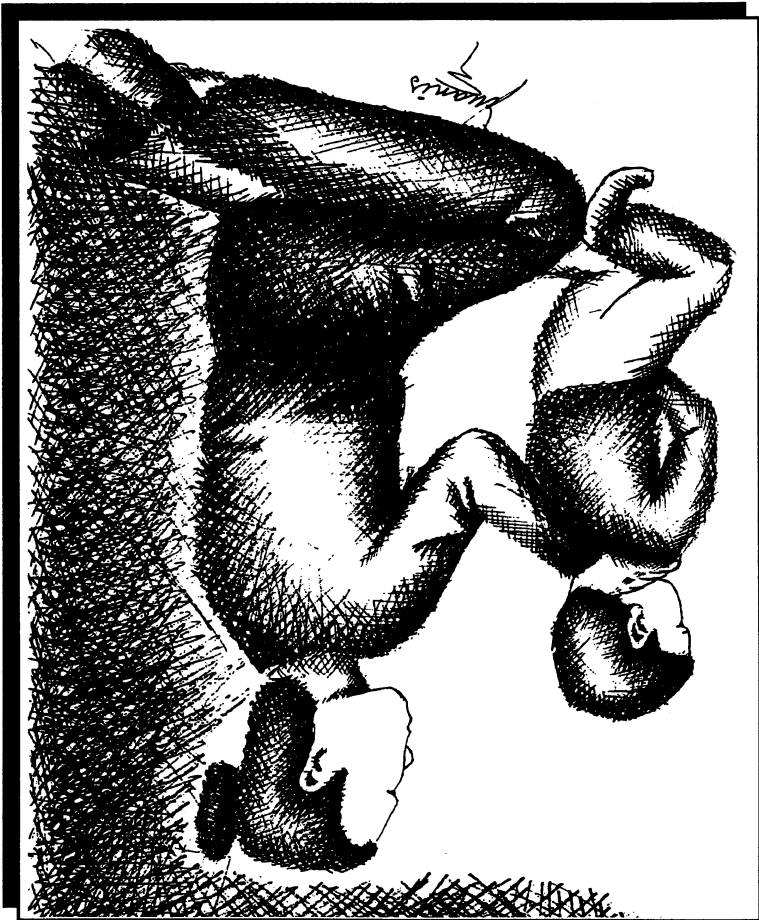
and hopeless. We call on Canadian people to open your sympathetic hearts and offer a warm hand to rescue us from this suffering. We believe that if you were in our shoes you would not think that seeking asylum and freedom was a

crime. Canada has a reputation for upholding human rights. However, we would like to ask if 14 months of imprisonment is upholding human rights? Should a refugee applicant not have human rights? Should seeking refuge make us lose our human rights? Should you allow your government to conduct these activities that violate human rights? Like you, we are women who love culture and freedom. We can contribute to Canadian society. We hope that you will accept our desire to live among you in safety and in freedom.

All we have is our lives to risk for freedom. We request that the Canadian government release us from jail as soon as possible. We hope that you will understand and accept us.

We want freedom!

A statement from the Chinese women who are incarcerated in the Prince George Regional Correctional Centre. Dated October 2, 2000.



WOMEN AND GENOCIDE IN RWANDA

BY EZAT MOSSALLANEJAD

Rwanda is a densely populated tiny country in central east Africa. Rwandan population of 8 million people is composed of the following 3 ethnic groups: Hutus (80%), Tutsis (19%) and the Twas (1%). Women who constitute 68% of population are involved in almost 70% of agricultural activities.

Before its colonization by Germans and later Belgians, Rwanda was ruled by Tutsi kings who continued ruling the country during the colonial period. In 1959, extremist Hutus overthrew the Tutsi government, leading to the first of horrendous genocide committed in recent Rwandan history. This was followed by one of the bitterest hostilities between Tutsis and Hutus. In early 1990s, with the help of some African countries, both parties tried to reach a reconciliation plan through Arusha Agreement in Tanzania.

While peace negotiations were continuing, extremist Hutus made a huge preparation for a total cleansing of Tutsis. Shooting down the plane carrying Rwandan president and other dignitaries in Kigali airport in the evening of April 6, 1994, provided extremist Hutus with an excuse to unleash an orchestrated genocide, which continued for more than 100 days. Over 800,000 civilians were massacred before Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) - a Tutsi rebel army in exile — took control in July 1994. An estimated 2 million Hutus fled to neighboring countries.

As the then Coordinator of the Jesuit Refugee Service-Canada (JRS), I traveled to Rwanda in August 1996, to participate in a seminar organized by JRS-International. I stayed there for almost 3 weeks, visited 7 citizens and some sites of Genocide. I was told about women and their double victimization in the course of 1994 genocide. I came to know that rape was systematically used as one of the weapons of genocide. Many women were raped and killed immediately and many survivors chose to hide their stories rather than being detested by their community. It was, therefore, difficult for anybody to guess the number of victims. .

According to an estimate, between 250,000 to 500,000

women - including girls as young as 5 - experienced systemic torture, gender-related crimes and rapes. Women were raped individually by outrageous gangs or with sharp objects or gun barrels. In many cases women were raped or sexually mutilated after being forced to witness the torture and the brutal murders of their nears and dears.

Tutsi women (sometimes Hutu women who had married Tutsis) were regarded as the "spoils" of the cleansing operations and were forced to sexual slavery by their victimizers. In some cases, the Tutsi husbands as well as the children of Hutu women were brutally killed by their closest relatives. A Hutu woman in Kigali recounted a ghoulish story to the author, through which her brother

killed her husband and children. "He took them," she said "to the local commune one by one pretending to transfer them to a safe place. He came back the next day and killed the baby I had in my back by machete."



It should be acknowledged that many women (and men) risked their lives by refusing to shed blood or through their attempts to help others. However, one has to face the participation of many Hutu women in the crime of genocide. Similar to holocaust designers, the architects of genocide in Rwanda converted the cross-section of the population - women, men, and even young girls - into genocide perpetrators. They tore every skin of shame to build a chauvinistic society based on

hate and bound together by the blood of genocide. Some women perpetrators committed this sordid crime in the company of their children. Notorious genocide perpetrators like Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and Rose Karushara used their young children as their escorts and drivers.

The sinister after-effects of genocide discredited the belief that the traditional respect for women spared them from gender-related tortures. Apart from the symptoms of PostTraumatic Stress Disorders and severe retraumatization of the women survivors of genocide, hundreds of survivors gave birth to the babies of their

Appeal for Sponsorship Assistance

The Sierra Leone community in Canada needs your support to help them sponsor their relatives who have fled the conflict in Sierra Leone, and who are now living in dangerous conditions in neighbouring countries in West Africa. The resettlement need of these refugees has been recognized, and Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) has made a commitment to expedite the processing of the Sierra Leone cases. Sponsorship Agreement Holders and sponsoring groups are urgently needed to partner with the Sierra Leone community. For further information, please contact the National Coordinator of the Sierra Leone Refugee Sponsorship Project at (416) 530-1307 or tkamara@on.aibn.com

I was disturbed by the fact that even today Rwandan women do not enjoy their fundamental civil and political as well as their social, economic and cultural rights. "We are," a woman activist called Susana told me in Kigali,

Despite all difficulties, I found Rwandan women highly determined. I was inspired by their strong will to promote their coping capacities in overcoming the physical and psychological sequelae of rape, torture, and trauma. I found them the main force behind rebuilding their communities and their smooth functioning. It was interesting that they were doing this gigantic task single-handedly.

I was told that in spite of abject poverty, the government had asked every household to adopt few orphans. I was given a wonderful opportunity to visit some families in various towns and villages. I realized that the main burden of care for separated orphans was in the shoulders of women — especially young girls who had become widows as a result of genocide.

While some women chose to keep their "babies of bad memory", others abandoned them or went to the extreme of committing infanticide. I visited Rwandan orphanages overcrowded with unwanted children. In a visit to the Centre for Unaccompanied Minors in Chengungu, I learned that at least 100,000 children had become orphans as a result of genocide. The Centre could accommodate less than 300 children. "It is unfortunate that," one of the instructors remarked, "we have to close our eyes to the broad picture and provide our protection only to minors with no relatives whatsoever, even then selectively."

cruel rapists. More than 5,000 pregnancies happened as a result of rape. Thousands of women are still suffering from vaginal infections, gynecological difficulties and venereal diseases including AIDS. It is widely reported that during the crime of genocide, HIV-positive Hutu men were specifically ordered to rape as many Tutsi women as possible. The rape victims of genocide are dying today of AIDS at the unprecedented rate of 50%.

We need to lobby the government of Canada to pay special attention to the resettlement of vulnerable women from Rwanda and accelerate the process family reunification for Rwandan refugees in Canada. Our government should also collaborate with international organizations as well as the Rwandan government and NGOs to overcome existing barriers with regards to women's rights and protection. Women should be guaranteed equal rights especially in terms of inheritance. It is necessary that the international relief agencies include women's needs in their programs, especially in the areas of health care, trauma counseling, criminal justice, housing, credit, technical assistance, education and professional training. Special programs should be organized for or rape survivors of genocide with the intention to promote their coping capacity and to stop their further stigmatization and re-traumatization.

"Far behind the world, even some African countries. I am pleased that the International War Tribunal for Rwanda has established a sexual assault committee to investigate gender-related crimes of genocide. It has taken a step further to charge and even convict some of the most notorious rapists. I am, however, upset that the world has not gone far enough to understand the multi-faceted victimization of Rwandan women during and after genocide. The Tribunal has failed to address the sensitivity of women who are reluctant to reveal their experiences due to shame, disrespect and reprisal. Hundreds of women still live in the same community as their victimizers and are panicky to raise their voices. There are still many rapists who live in Rwanda and the neighbouring countries with total impunity.

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GENDER, RACE AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SETTLEMENT WORK

BY JO-ANNE LEE

Introduction

Helping new Canadians settle in Canada is a labor of love for immigrant women working in the immigrant integration and settlement sector. But this labor of love comes at a high cost. Although there has been some research on the immigrant integration and settlement sector, we know little about the work experiences of racialized minority immigrant women as providers of welfare services, not merely as needy consumers (see Creese, Owen, Mwarigha, Richmond).¹

A study undertaken in 1999 for the BC Ministry of Immigration revealed widespread dissatisfaction among immigrant women workers in the immigrant settlement sector.² This study found that working conditions for immigrant and visible minority women in this sector is characterized by part-time, low waged, term-limited and unstable employment. There is also limited career advancement and job segregation not only on the basis of skills and training, but also by race, citizenship, and gender.

Occupational Segregation and Government Funding

Government programs play an important role in structuring the conditions of work for immigrant women workers. For example, ESL instruction and employment training jobs, which are more stable, better paid, and funded by Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC), tend to be held by white and/or Canadian-born women. These programs do not rely on volunteers to

provide key services. In contrast, key settlement services, such as front line counseling and community development, rely heavily on immigrant and refugee women as volunteers, or as very low-paid, part-time workers. In the words of one respondent,

If you look at job training programs, most of these [teaching] jobs are taken up by white women, there are some minorities, but most of them are white women. That sector gets paid a lot better than the settlement services sector. So even though workers might have equivalent education and training, the people who work in the training sector at _____ and _____ are a lot better paid and unfortunately most of those jobs are taken up by white women. The ones who work in the settlement sector, the ones who work for ten or fifteen years are getting low pay. Those inequities are there. . . .*

The funding from employment will allow you to pay a decent wage, while funding from the settlement sector is always more restricted. The pay is very low. If you try to pay more money, the project officer will question you. So it is institutional oppression. It is created by government in the way that they give out funding. The immigrant settlement funding doesn't give out very much.

Source Card No. 6920

Boards of agencies have had to meet the needs of immigrants and refugees, by cobbling together funding from different government programs. However, by failing to challenge government policies that provide the framework which confines the majority of immigrant women workers to ethno-specific, front-line settlement and counseling jobs, settlement agencies often ignore and even promote occupational segregation and wage inequality. Moreover, many agencies are managed in a segmented way so that wage discrepancies and working conditions are accepted as normal and unavoidable. Employees are offered short term service contracts that offer different rates of pay for similar work and few benefits. It is not surprising that there is a high rate of turnover and low morale among front line workers.

Institutionalized Volunteerism

Institutionalized volunteerism contributes to exploitative working conditions by confusing the distinction between paid and unpaid work for immigrant women in the settlement sector. Some respondents reported that they are often expected to volunteer without pay so that programs can continue during times of

¹ In the early 1990s, a BC study found that women constituted an estimated 80% of the labor force, 75% were first generation immigrants, and approximately 70% were visible minority men and women..

² This essay draws on a study conducted on behalf of the BC Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration (BCMRMI) during the winter of 1998 to 1999 that examined the impact of funding programs on projects for immigrant women (Lee). Ten sponsoring organizations and their projects for immigrant women were selected on the basis of a number of criteria, and approximately 50 individuals were interviewed. It was not the purpose of the government sponsored study to examine working conditions for immigrant women workers in the multicultural and immigrant serving sector. Nevertheless, in the process of conducting semi-structured interviews, immigrant women respondents talked openly about their experiences of working in the sector.

transitional funding, or to volunteer to do community fund raising or community development and outreach work to their own ethnic community on behalf of the agency. In some ESL, life skills and leadership training programs, immigrant and refugee women are often used as "assistants" to white Canadian facilitators. As one interviewee stated, the use of immigrant women as volunteers or "assistants" is a double edged sword. On the one hand, they gain experience and confidence but on the other hand, they are not able to earn a living wage. In addition, the present system screens out working class women who cannot afford to work part-time. Women who need a full time wage cannot avail themselves of these "opportunities".

Immigrant women volunteerism is one of the key mechanisms for racializing and feminizing settlement work as low-paid and undervalued. It provides the structural underpinning to support the sector. In BC, immigrant women support groups, offering ESL, child care, life skills and leadership training, receive the greatest proportion of community grant funding designated for immigrant and refugee women. This program model is designed to recruit, train and place immigrant women in volunteer positions within the sponsoring agency or in other community-based social service agencies. While these placements give immigrant women a chance to develop work skills, they also delimit and channel these skills into front-line, clerical work regardless of their qualifications and previous work experience. As one agency reported, immigrant women stuff envelopes, send faxes, type letters and act as volunteer receptionists in order to have one line on their resume stating they have "Canadian" work experience. While some do move on to take full-time work in the wider community, many respondents reported that immigrant and refugee women move out of volunteer positions into part-time paid positions either at the sponsoring agency or at other community-based agencies. This program model, at best, provides opportunities for lateral movement, but very little formal support for upward or orthogonal movement out of the quasi-volunteer immigrant settlement sector. The present volunteer training model offers the means for reproducing the volunteer base of settlement work in the sector.

Marginalization, Lack of Voice and Representation

A lack of representation of racialized women in decision making positions contributes to feelings of low self-esteem and self doubt. As one person stated, it leads to "internalized oppression." "We are not in those higher paid jobs because we believe we are not good enough".

A lack of professional development and cross-skill training opportunities for front-line workers means that when the need for front-line counseling and settlement

services declines for a particular ethno-linguistic group, workers who are perceived to have only language and cultural skills are easily dismissed and replaced by workers who have the language and cultural skills needed to work with newer immigrant groups. When immigration slows and their language skills are no longer in demand, such as the situation with Portuguese and Italian groups in Vancouver, these older workers find themselves without employment and without possibilities for equivalent turnover in staff in front-line counseling work due to burnout and isolation. There is also a sense of not being able to make any significant changes, consequently they express intense feelings of powerlessness.

Tension, Ambivalence and Contradiction

Many immigrant women workers expressed profound ambivalence about their work. They are extremely dedicated, committed and passionate, yet they also feel isolated, exploited and devalued. On the one hand, they feel loyalty to the agency, a commitment to the work and to helping their ethnic community, yet on the other hand, they feel unhappy that the core work of settlement services is being supported only by their willingness to work for low wages and unstable employment. They also described a "code of silence" operating within the sector around issues of racism and sexism. Ideological policing also exists. Because they lack job security, respondents reported feeling fearful of expressing views not in keeping with the agency's official line.

Summary and Conclusion

Current practices and policies have created a sector wherein parallel proto-institutions deliver a limited set of welfare benefits of citizenship to immigrants and refugees. Under government restructuring, downsizing and devolution, the financial costs of providing even these narrow and truncated welfare rights of democratic citizenship to newly arrived Canadians are transferred onto immigrant communities themselves, and within these communities, to women. It is time that decision makers, in government and local community-based agencies, acknowledge and remedy racist and sexist institutional practices that exploit the labor of racialized immigrant and refugee women settlement workers.

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VISIT OF UN SPECIAL RAPPOREUR ON RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

Ms Gabriella Rodriguez, UN Special Rapporteur on Rights of Migrants, and her team visited Canada from 18-30 September. The purpose of the visit was to investigate the rights of migrants in Canada. This was her first country visit in her three year mandate. In her report to the UN Human Commission on Human Rights 56th session, Ms Rodriguez has defined "migrants" within her mandate as follows:

- (a) persons who are outside the territory of the State to which they are nationals or citizens, as not subject to its legal protection and are in the territory of another State.
- (b) Persons who do not enjoy the general legal recognition of rights which is inherent in the granting by the host State of the status of refugee, permanent resident or naturalized persons or of similar status; and
- (c) Persons who do not enjoy either the legal protection of their fundamental rights by virtue of diplomatic agreements, visas or other agreements. (E/CN.4/2000/82)

In Canada, Ms Rodriguez met with federal and provincial officials, MPs, national and community-based NGOs and church groups, unions leaders, academic and she listened to migrants: farm workers, domestic workers, migrant sex workers, undocumented migrants and asylum seekers whose claims were rejected. Ms Rodriguez and her team were in Ottawa, Quebec, Toronto and Vancouver. The report of her visit will be presented at the spring meeting of the Human Rights Commission, Geneva, 2001.

Canada is not a signatory the *International Convention of the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families*. To date 14 countries have signed/ratified this convention - all are migrant "sending" countries. Twenty countries must sign a convention before it becomes international law.

MIGRANT WOMEN AND CHILDREN: AN ALTERNATIVE VISION FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

BY FRANCISCO RICO MARTINEZ,

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PHENOMENON, ITS CAUSES AND EFFECTS

* This document is based on the various national reports which responded to a questionnaire regarding the migration of women and children in their area. The common profiles found in the reports can be described as follows:

❖ Automatic assumptions about migration, such as believing that women and children leave for purposes of family reunification.

❖ Statistical invisibility and lack of information.

❖ Both groups are highly sensitive

to any type of economic adjustment, and

to policies of economic or fiscal austerity.

Similarly, women and children are the

social groups most affected by increasing

poverty.

❖ The two groups have the least

access to information. Generic

information is not designed to be broken

down by either of these two groups.

❖ Women and children are

migrating at an ever earlier age.

❖ Both groups suffer from the lack

of identity papers and they tend to be

"very slow in their mobility".

❖ There are a growing number of

victims of sexual abuse of different types.

❖ There is an increase in

xenophobia and racism against migrants

in general and this has a particularly severe effect on

migrant women and children.

❖ The shifting family role both of women and of

children. Such changes are caused, in the first

place, by both passive and active migration, and

more recently by surging globalization.

❖ The deprivations that afflict poor people in the

countries of destination are felt even more

severely by migrant women and children.

A. WHY WOMEN MIGRATE

According to national reports dealing with these causes, the feminization of poverty in their countries of origin, which is no more than a manifestation of the different types of violence referred to above, and in particular



B. MIGRANT WOMEN

facilitates migration.

mechanism that in some cases

destination, is nothing more than a

the family network in the country of

reunification, or to put it another way

this demonstrates that so-called family

"no work" and hence deserves no pay,

that "woman's traditional work" is still

countries, and the patriarchal notion

rates of female unemployment in these

protection. If to this we add the high

perpetuated by the lack of official

above, and it is aggravated and

a clear expression of all the types of violence referred to

poorer sectors of society than among other sectors. This is

women in the position of heads of family among the

that in their countries of origin there are increasingly more

To explain the foregoing point more clearly, we may note

migration.

to be, if it ever was, the basic factor explaining female

an option pursued by a fair number of women, has ceased

reunification, which is a human right and continues to be

behind female migration. In other words, family

domestic or family violence, are the fundamental factors

of achieving the immigration status they long for.

The second idea recognizes that the sharp increase in

single women as heads of family reveals a long-term trend

whereby women are resorting less to marriage as a means

of achieving the immigration status they long for.

The third idea holds that coercive measures in the law and

in immigration procedures have a more severe impact on women than on men. These reports suggest, as a reason for this fact, that many enforcement measures are directed at men, and that the number of women affected by them is very small. [This means], for example, that detention centers for migrant women tend to have less funding and lower quality standards than those where men are held. The number of women subjected to coercive measures is now on the rise, however, reflecting the growing illegal traffic in women for purposes of prostitution.

C. THE EFFECTS OF FEMALE MIGRATION ON THE HOME COMMUNITY

The analysis entails two aspects. The first relates to the effects generated by the massive migration of men from their home communities. This logically calls for measures to make it possible to demand and collect maintenance support from fathers residing abroad. The second aspect has to do with the impact when women return (nearly always under duress) to their home communities. Here we may note the lack of any procedure for monitoring them after they come back, and hence for diagnosing the effects that their return may cause.

If we look more closely at migration by female heads of family, we may say that such migration transforms family roles. When a woman migrates, the family [left behind] will consist of grandparents and grandchildren. The generational gap between the supposed head of the family and the children under his or her care becomes much wider. Forms of family education and discipline break down. The child who remains behind has access to more money, thanks to remittances received from the mother residing abroad. Children will tend to become more demanding, will increase their levels of consumption and change their consumption habits. This disintegration of the "new traditional family" of which the mother was the head, together with the feelings of alienation caused by the mother's migration, encourages the proliferation of youth gangs and may therefore be one factor explaining the rise in juvenile delinquency.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

The national reports contain recommendations that apply to the region as a whole, as well as many highly specific recommendations of a national or bilateral thrust.

1. The Regional Conference for Migrations should seek to harmonize immigration policies and procedures among member countries by improving the application of the framework of values set forth in the various international instruments and world and regional conventions. Proper application of these international frameworks implies signature, ratification and incorporation into domestic legislation, by all member countries of the relevant conventions, in order to give migrants, and migrant women and children in particular, access to protection,

health, education, housing, labor, justice, and the services offered by NGOs.

2. Strengthen the joint efforts of governments and NGOs in the region relating to migrant women and children. Within this logic, we propose multidisciplinary/integral programs/campaigns of awareness and training, if possible on a joint basis, for policymakers, officials and immigration personnel of member countries of the Conference, as well as for NGO staff, on due process and the values enshrined in these conventions, with a view to achieving an immediate and significant improvement in the treatment of migrant women and children. An awareness campaign for migrant women and children should also be directed at the general public, both at migrants and at the non-migrant population.

Following are some practical ideas that might be taken as points of departure for cooperation between governments and NGOs.

- A. An indispensable component for both groups of migrants under study refers to reproductive health.
 - B. With respect to minors, educational curricula should be amended so as to deal directly and objectively with the problems of migration.
 - C. With respect to migrant women, it would be helpful to increase the number of trained female staff dealing with migrant women, and with minors.
 - D. Participatory definition and implementation by governments and NGOs of programs to attack the causes, effects and barriers relating to migration by women and children.
 - E. Investing in a constant documentation and study of this particular phenomenon by the responsible authorities and by interested NGOs.
 - F. Diagnostic research of the situation of migrant women and children.
 - G. Create mechanisms for increasing remittances and putting them to useful service in the migrants' home communities.
3. Strengthen coordination among NGOs with a long-standing interest in the process of the Regional Conference on Migration, and help other national NGOs to join in this process. This will require greater funding by the Conference's member governments in support of the activities of various national NGOs at the regional level. To strengthen coordination between NGOs includes:

1st, formalizing NGO participation in the Regional

Conference for Migrations.

2nd, holding broadly based seminars, with specific government grants to facilitate and strengthen coordination between NGOs, and to open the door to this (selective) Puebla process to countless local NGOs in the places where such seminars are held.

4. Strengthen national coordination mechanisms (forums/round tables) for monitoring human rights, standardizing surveillance criteria and mechanisms and preparing regular reports and seek the cooperation in international organizations.



BOOK REVIEWS

BY HELENE MOUSSA

World Refugee Survey 2000
An Annual Assessment of Conditions Affecting
Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Internally Displaced
Persons. pp. 328
U.S. Committee for Refugees, Washington D.C.

Roger Winter, Executive Director of the US Committee for Refugees, reviews 1999 and assesses the international communities' emergency responses in Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone, and Chechnya among others. While Winter clearly states that his critique must not suggest that one humanitarian crisis is greater or lesser than the other, he asks the hard questions about the clear discrepancy in humanitarian responses, and more particularly "the second class position" Africa plays in international emergency responses. This he supports with a number of equally hard data, such as "...one estimate, the international

World Refugee Survey 2000 is once again an invaluable resource of information, global and country specific statistical data and analysis - 328 pages. Regional and country essays are preceded by six focusing on pertinent global issues.

5. Adopting a comprehensive regional vision in which migration responds to human and socioeconomic interests relating both to family reunification and to labor factors, and one that will overcome the current obstacles posed by national frontiers, restrictive legislation and the glaring imbalance in levels of social and economic development.

* Editor's note: This is a summary of the paper that was presented. As this issue of RU is on women, the sections referring specifically to children have been omitted.

Francisco Rico-Martinez is President of the Canadian Council for Refugees.

community spent \$1.50 per day per Kosovar refugee.. [whereas] with respect to Sierra Leone the equivalent figure was 11 cents." Winter concludes that it is the task NGOs to hold their governments accountable so that the mix of factors are clearly examined when emergency responses are taken.

The second essay is Guy Goodwin-Gill's, Oxford University Professor of International Refugee Law, response to U.S. Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrook's address to the UN Security Council calling for an expansion of the UNHCR's mandate to include internally displaced persons (21 million persons) and the UNHCR response to this challenge. Goodwin-Gill argues that the "...UNHCR's considerable skills and experience in international protection of refugees [cannot] be automatically transferred to the internationally displaced."

Furthermore he points out that international protection is a reaction to a symptom. Focus must be placed on addressing root causes of forced displacement.

The third essay is titled Humanitarian Evacuation from Kosovo: A model for the Future?". Bill Frelich, Director of Policy with the US Committee, compares this evacuation process with those that took place in Northern Iraq (1991 and 1996), Haiti as an example of interdiction and offshore safe havens and the erosion of Africa's traditional welcome. His long list of questions are essential for any critical assessment of past and future response to humanitarian crises.

Mark R. von Sternberg, Senior Attorney with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (U.K.), compares the U.S experience of "failed" applications with similar refugee asylum responses in the UK. In this respect he argues that international refugee protection "has an interest in upholding contemporary human rights instruments, including CEDAW and the Declaration on Violence Against Women - the Canadian IRB experience is used as an example of this.

Binaiffer Nowroje, Counsel for Human Rights Watch/Africa examines why Tanzania and Kenya have become less hospitable to refugees -both countries host 855,000 of the 3 million refugees in Africa and are among the economically poorest countries in Africa. On the one hand, it is clear that resettlement is not a solution for the larger majority of these refugees and on the other hand the international community's neglect and decreasing

funding to emergency situations and their aftermath in Africa, as compared to Kosovo which received ten times the amount of an African refugee, cannot be overlooked. One cannot help but wonder whose understanding of "hospitality" is this situation being measured against?! Nowroje recommends that the international community adopt a two-fold approach: "1) provide greater assistance to African host governments and 2) condemn abuses and advocate forcefully for policies and practices that uphold refugees' fundamental rights.

The final essay by Steven Edminster, US Committee for Refugees' policy analyst, examined the recent efforts to "harmonize" European asylum and immigrant practices. He concludes by pointing out that asylum seekers will continue to arrive in Europe regardless of restrictive policies - 366,000 asylum seekers in fact managed to file applications in 1999 and 90% of these asylum seekers arrived "illegally." The inherent contradictions between the EU's commitment to grant asylum and its policies that aim to prevent refugees from taking advantage of that commitment still has to be recognised. A not unfamiliar situation in the Canadian scene! Of course addressing root causes of forced migration and Western industrial nations' accountability (e.g., economic and military) in this respect are not considered in their strategies to prevent migrants from arriving at their borders.

Immigrant and Refugee Women

Canadian Women Studies/les cahiers de la femme

Volume 19, Number 3, Fall 1999

**Canadian Women Studies, 212 Founders College, York University,
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3 CANADA**

Canadian Women Studies journal published a special issue in 1989 focused on women refugees. At the time the concern of activists and academics was

mainly to raise the awareness about the gendered experience of being and becoming a refugee woman. Ten years later, this special issue of Canadian

Women's Studies is a reflection of the distance we have traveled in research, as well as the long way we have to go in eradicating gender, class and race discrimination in immigration and refugee policies and every day practices. Thirty-one articles in this issue are grouped under four headings: Gendering Policy, Reconstruction of Lives; Working and Learning and Gendered Violence. A number of poems are interspersed in the volume.

Several articles in the section on Gendering Policy highlight the failure to address existing biases against women in immigration and refugee policies of the 1999 documents released by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration: "Building a Strong Foundation for the 21st Century" and the documentation on public debates "Not Just Numbers": As long as women are allowed to enter Canada on unequal terms under the family class and sponsored categories, immigration policy racialises and genders at the outset - women are perceived as a "burden" When integration is understood as almost solely the responsibility of the immigrant (as in previous immigration policies) but not that of Canadian society and the state, refugees and immigrants, and women in particular, will be perceived as a threat to national and social cohesiveness. Policies also reinforce the belief that women of colour and Black women are "naturally" suitable for house work in middle class homes.

One of the articles discusses the silence that prevails around the fact that the international sex trade meets the demands of men for sex is discussed. The final article in this section argues that the Immigration and Refugee Board Gender Persecution Guidelines have challenged certain myths about women have but have also created others. For example, "pity" prevails when emphasising helplessness of women refugees rather than the unequal power relations between the asylum state and the claimant. This example could have been more solidly argued had the writer drawn on the evidence and analysis of Shereene Razack colonialist-racism framework.³

The way refugee and immigrant women have

³ Shereene Razack, "Policing the Borders of Nations: The Imperial Gaze in Gender Persecution Cases," *In Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. University of Toronto Press, 1998.

reconstructed their lives in Canada is the focus of the second section. Diversity between and within refugee populations is underlined. Examples are drawn from Somali, Chinese, Eritrean and Croatian refugees specifically and more broadly on the wider population of refugee and immigrant women. Women are described as agents in their lives, shaping their personal lives and identities in papers on Eritrean, Palestinian and Somali women. These actions are also perceived as acts of resistance rather than stereotyping women as passive recipients of Canadian and their own cultures.

In contrast two other papers point out that Chinese women are likely to internalize sexism when they find that existing Canadian policies and practices give priority to men; and for Somali refugees the lack of documents that will enable them to find employment not only has a detrimental economic effect but their lives are on hold. Racism stands out as a major barrier and hurdle to face in seeking work and in the work place even in the typically gendered immigrant work sector (see abridged version in this issue of *RU* by Jo-Anne Lee). Two articles take a different stance regarding the seeming choice of refugees and immigrants take when choosing where to live: writing about the Croatian refugees/immigrants who came to Ontario during the 1930's and 40's, Mary Valentich, believes that it is not ghettoization but rather a way in which immigrants' needs for continuity with their culture is created. In contrast, Sylvia Novac concludes that as long as black communities are themselves subservient, it is "making the best of segregation imposed by a dominant social group with its many messages of exclusion and social distance."

The intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and class issues in the employment market and in educational institutions is the focus of the third section on "Working and Learning": the realities of women in the home working in the garment industry who have to juggle the demands of paid work and family responsibilities is discussed in the context of the current global economy; visa students are unable to support themselves while they study because of cutbacks; the struggle of a Black woman who learns the hard way that academia is a site for the struggle against racism and resistance to find the space where she can belong on her own terms - even in a feminist milieu. A study on Eritrean refugee and immigrant women concludes that Canadian policies related to them must address the system of oppression they

encounter in their daily lives.

While Canada's selective immigration policies indicate that immigrants are better educated than the average Canadian, one study points out that Chinese women experience discrimination because of their gender and when they become "Chinese immigrant women;" another study argues that immigrants are not only de-skilled but whatever their national origin, immigrants with financial resources at their disposal are more likely to be able to afford the Canadianization of their experience or to acquire new skills. Learning English will free them of discrimination. A study comparing the employment situation of Caribbean women to their male counterparts and the Canadian born of European origin, concludes that both Black and female respondents experience significantly more discrimination than their counterparts. Fewer Black women held managements and professional positions and less than their counterparts.

The section on Gendered Violence exposes the intersection of oppressions in a range of settings: One study argues that women asylum seekers are re-victimised when the Gender Persecution Guidelines are applied inconsistently and when judges give great weight to translators rather than responses of women asylum seekers. The importance of story telling for social change is discussed with the illustration that refugee and immigrant women would rather talk about work and social relationships rather than mental health *per se*. A woman's story of domestic violence highlights her courage perseverance despite all the odds against her. Survival in a hostile racist culture leads sub-cultures (Black and visible minorities) to create conditions where disclosure of incest cannot occur is discussed in another study.

The last paper is titled "Erasing Race: The Story of Reena Virk" The writer illustrates how the judicial system and the media framed the murder of Reena Virk, a 14 year old South Asian in a suburb of Victoria as a "girl-on-girl" violence (i.e. women and girls can be violent) and the victim's physical appearance and need for acceptance. Racism in this act of murder did not even surface - was "erased" - even though one witness brought it up. An editorial slip (?) must be noted with the title of this article in the table of contents: "Erasing Violence: The Story of

Reena Virk."?

While a distinction is not made between the reality of the lives and histories of refugee and immigrant women (if/where there is a difference), this volume is rich with data and raises many questions for the work of activists, community workers, educators, lawyers, policy makers, researchers. Readers should make a point to engage with the entire issue and not select those texts that appear to relate to their immediate work.

RECOMMENDED READING:

Documenting Human Rights Violations - Sexual Violence- by State Agents

By Agnès Callamard

Published by Amnesty International and the International Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Montreal, Quebec (1999)

A very practical handbook to assist in monitoring and documenting the adherence of governments and the international community to treaties and on the integration of women's rights as human rights.

Agnès Callamard works with Amnesty International-London, UK.

Human Smuggling: Chinese Immigrant Trafficking and Challenges to America's Immigration Tradition.

Paul, J. Smith, editor

The Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington D.C. (1997)

This book provides many facts and insights to understanding the historical contexts both "in" and "out" migration in China, the social and economic complexity of the issues that compel people to leave their homes and how trafficking of people adapts and changes as restraining policies are created in "receiving" countries. Very useful for advocacy and policy development.

Helene Moussa is a former staff person of the World Council of Churches Refugee and Migration Service. She is now retired and living in Toronto.

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REFUGEE UPDATE

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