

# OUT Voice



*A magazine for immigrant,  
refugee &  
racialized women*



Vol. 1 Issue 3

Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan Inc.

July 1994

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Unity In Action  
1983-1993

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Lots Mackie  
Jo-Anne Lee  
Gleeta Wasylowich  
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Shandhya Dursun  
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Farha Akhtar







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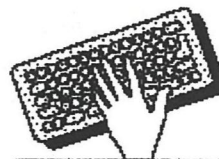
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**From the  
Editor's Desk**

We are now about halfway through 1994, a year designated by the United Nations to be International Year of the Family, reasoning that the family makes up the basic unit of society and deserves special attention and care. The theme of this special year is "Family: Resources and Responsibilities in a Changing World."

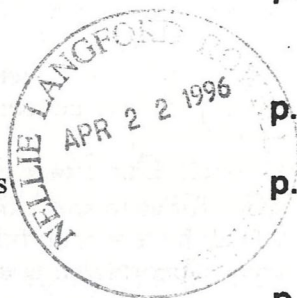
Nothing could be more true, nor closer to my heart. Yes, the role of the family is definitely changing as we see more and more single parent families, more blended families, more problems caused by high unemployment, economic difficulties, lack of quality child care, lack of quality care for the elderly and a growing discontent with one's lifestyle.

But, what about our global family? Around the world there are families struggling to survive the daily hardships of war, dislocation, poverty, persecution, starvation, sickness...the list is endless. These families are not concerned with dual income. They are not concerned with the number of divorces and remarriages in their community. They are concerned about whether or not their children will make it through one more night; they are concerned about drinking tainted water; they are concerned with issues far more immediate and life-threatening.

What of the many orphans in countries such as Rwanda and Bosnia, and others not making it to the top ten on the news?

Perhaps it is time our government made concessions and reevaluated its international adoption program, making the qualifications easier to handle for those yearning to adopt an orphaned child from a country in distress. Children are our future—they are the ones deserving special attention and care because they are the basic unit of society, the families of the future.

*-Julie Fleming Juárez*





# Your voice needed in Our Voice!

... a message from Nayyar Javed,  
President, Immigrant Women of  
Saskatchewan

Here is another issue of *Our Voice*. Reclaiming our voice has deep meaning in our lives because by moving to Canada, we lost our voice. This has occurred in many ways. Many of us never had an opportunity to learn English. We invested ourselves in helping our families to set roots in Canada. We are proud of our role in

this process but it did confine us to our homes and ethnic communities. Our new country did not do very much to facilitate language learning. So, our life imposed silence on us. Similarly, the oppressive social context we are placed in does not allow us space to speak for our rights and express our concerns.

Well, *Our Voice* is intended to provide space for us to speak out. I am confident that you all have wonderful ideas. I always derive great support from your creativity and I hope that you will express it through *Our Voice*. I assure you that you have enormous capacity to enrich Canadian culture as well as the immigrant community. We need your voice in *Our Voice* for this enrichment.

Please note that our staff is now unionized. When they applied for unionization we were a little apprehensive, not because we did not want them to unionize, but because we thought that the tenuous and inadequate funding we receive from the government may pose a problem.

Hopefully this staff unionization will strengthen our organization. I am proud of their work and commitment. I hope we will continue working together to achieve equality.

I hope you have a wonderful summer.

*In sisterhood,  
Nayyar Javed*

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## Our Voice

*A magazine for immigrant, refugee and  
racialized women*

### Editor

Julie Fleming Juárez

*Our Voice* is published quarterly by Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan. Submissions are subject to editing and will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Opinions expressed within the publication are not necessarily the opinions of the organization. Please send submissions—fiction, prose, news articles, photographs, drawings, letters—to: The Editor, Julie Fleming Juárez, 318 Johnson Crescent, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7L 5P9.







# CHAPTER NEWS

## Moose Jaw Chapter stays active despite transient problems

- by Thara Maharaj, President, Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan, Moose Jaw Chapter

Although our chapter suffers from a transient membership, we have managed to participate in many community activities this year. Our members represented the chapter in the following ways:

1. *Race Relations*: we helped to set up and operate a booth at the local mall. The booth was designed to

make the public more aware of racial problems which exist in schools and public places. We distributed brochures and pins to the public. We also participated in a tea organized for dignitaries.

2. We participated in the Traveller's Day parade held June 23rd.

3. Some of our children will be performing multicultural dances during Moose Jaw's Canada Day celebration, July 1.



4. *Fundraising*: We will have a booth to sell food during Motif, July 8 to 10th, and our dancers and others from Regina will be part of the entertainment. Motif is organized by the Moose Jaw Multicultural Council.

## "Family" important part of Prince Albert chapter

The United Nations has declared this year, 1994, as the Year of the Family.

"We at Immigrant Women," says Anne Moola, president of the Prince Albert chapter, "are very aware that in order to enrich the lives of women, we must also include families in our activities. In order to integrate fully into Canadian society, the whole family must be involved in the "settling-in" process." She adds that the Prince Albert Chapter does hold many family-oriented activities, such as potlucks and picnics, and welcomes men at workshops.

Anne says the April elections in South Africa were viewed by many with excitement. She hopes that the lives of women, who often have to leave their children with relatives in tribal homelands for long periods of time to work as housekeepers or nannies in the cities, will now be over.



"Women all over the world face many different forms of injustice. We who represent women and women's issues should recognize that such injustices have no place in today's society."

The Prince Albert chapter has had a busy spring, says Chapter Coordinator Lois Mackie. Carla Borges, a member of the chapter, spoke of her work with street children in Brazil. The chapter has also had presentation on Cross-

Cultural Parenting, began a Cross Cultural Sisters' Program and catered to a UNICEF luncheon.

The chapter office is now operating on a "volunteer help" basis, but it is hoped that regular hours will resume in the fall.

"I have enjoyed my time here and have worked with, and met, many interesting people. Truly Canada is a unique country and all races contribute to its diversity and tolerance," says Lois.

The highlight of our activities was a March workshop, "Intergenerational Communication" which we linked with the "Year of the Family" theme. We had a very good turnout and it was suggested that we should continue with similar workshops because the discussions helped participants to see that their problems as immigrant parents are shared by others. Lunch was prepared by our members. The Popular Theatre group and our facilitator from Regina, Mirtha Sepulveda, captivated the interest of the audience. We are really very grateful for their support.

The disintegration of the wicked "Apartheid System" in South Africa has been a great joy to me. I couldn't miss the opportunity to make that "X" on the ballot paper for the first time in my life!

### IWS ADDRESS BOOK

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# CHAPTER NEWS

## Saskatoon chapter celebrates 10 year anniversary

The Saskatoon chapter celebrates its 10th anniversary this year! Jo-Anne Lee, outgoing president, wonders what the founding members of the chapter would think of its first decade.

“Would they be proud of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Chapter? I think they would be very happy to see how much we have been able to achieve, not only for our members and participants but in raising our issues and concerns in the larger community.

We have struggled very hard to reach this point and I know there will be struggles ahead. The dangers are both from within our organization and outside. But I know that this organization and its members are strong. There is no turning back now, there is only the path ahead.

One thing is clear. IWS is a member-run organization and this is our strength. We do not have any ongoing government funding. We are not a social service agency, but

we help ourselves through the wisdom of our members.”

After serving as president of the Saskatoon chapter for three years, Jo-Anne has stepped down. She is succeeded by **May Cummings**. May teaches Grades 7 and 8 French Immersion at Brownell School.

Born in Iran and raised in Sweden, May came to Canada 16 years ago and lived in British Columbia before moving to Saskatoon in 1983. May and her husband have three daughters, a 14-year-old and 11-year-old twins!

Also elected during the chapter's annual meeting in May to serve on the 1994/95 Board of Directors are: **Madeleine George**, Vice-President External; **Chun Lei**, Vice-President Internal; **Vinod Khanna**, Treasurer; **Urszula Dworaczek**, Secretary. Members-at-large are: **Juanita Matamala**, **Iptisam Halim**, **Rajesh Saxena**, **Foroghi Yazdani**, **Keo Simpraseuth**, **Gladys Herrera**, **Firoozeh Bahraini**.

Five bilingual Community Outreach Workers have been hired for a three month Community Development pilot project. They will be working with the Arabic/Persian, Chinese, Laotian, Tigrinia/Amharic and Spanish speaking communities.

The goal of the workers is to reach immigrant and racialized women and provide friendship, interpretation services and information about Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan and other community and public services.

The 1993-94 Job Re-entry Project ended in May. Twenty-four women participated in two sessions. Participants improved their English skills, learned about Canadian cultural and social norms and also job finding skills through class work and on-site job training.

The success of the project, based on the Canada Employment Centre standards — number of participants securing employment or actively pursuing educational upgrading — was 86 per cent. Based on employment only, the success rate was 59 per cent.

The Prince Albert chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan is compiling a list of women who will act as volunteer interpreters and translators in a variety of situations such as doctors' offices, hospitals, social service agencies, the police and justice departments, schools and other public and non-government organizations. The service is for anyone who is unable to communicate effectively in English, and will be offered free of charge. Confidentiality is highly important, and volunteers can not be implicated or involved in the affairs or problems of those they are helping. Those interested can contact Elizabeth Benson at 763-6494.

### IWS ADDRESS BOOK

**SASKATOON**  
614B 10th Street E.  
Ph. 244-5707





# CHAPTER NEWS

## Cornerstone laid in history of Yorkton chapter: Wasylowich

The Yorkton chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan held its Annual General Meeting in April, at which time a final vote on the proposed chapter bylaws was held. The adoption of these bylaws is considered an important cornerstone in the history of the chapter, says **Gisela Wasylowich**, chapter president. The Yorkton chapter has been in operation for 15 months. Kathy Hamre, of Heritage Canada, and Erika Cancino, Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan Provincial Coordinator, attended the meeting.

The chapter had a busy spring, keeping its members informed, fundraising, offering workshops to members and lobbying for language classes.

Two newsletters, featuring articles by members of the chapter, as well as a list of upcoming events, were published. The group set up an ethnic food booth during Yorkton's Cinerama, an event held in conjunction with the annual Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival. Gisela wishes to thank **Shandhya Dursun**, who worked especially hard coordinating this fundraising effort. (Shandhya is featured in the *Profile* section of this issue of *Our Voice*.)

The chapter also made a special presentation to the Parkland Community College in Yorkton. Members spoke of the importance of establishing new English As a Second Language classes for all levels of learners. Access to such classes is a major issue for chapter members and their families.

"We hope that our constant efforts in this area will soon show some results," says Gisela.

The chapter also wishes to express its pride in **Camille Adams**, who received an award from the Saskatchewan Branch of the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors for her presentation on tattooing at a recent conference held in Saskatoon. Camille is the secretary of the Yorkton chapter.

A workshop on health issues for immigrant women was held earlier in the year. A bowling social and supper in a local Chinese restaurant run by a member's family, followed the workshop.



The Yorkton Chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan held a workshop earlier this year which dealt with health issues and concerns.

I am not afraid of storms for  
I am learning how to sail my ship."

-Louisa May Alcott

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83 North Street  
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# Volunteers needed as demand for services increases

(Regina)

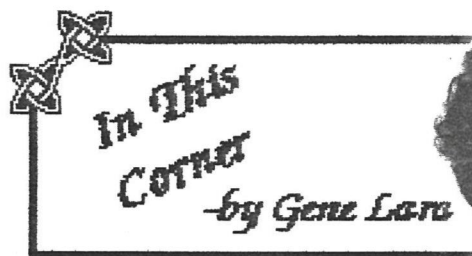
The Carpentry Diploma Course for Men, the formation of the Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan (IWS) Victims Services group in cooperation with the Regina City Police, and the Immigrant Youth Workshops, are just a few of the accomplishments which the Regina Chapter of IWS has to be proud of, says Edie Finkeldey, Regina chapter president.

The Regina chapter also welcomes 15 Eritrean women who have taken out memberships with the IWS. The drama group, Popular Theatre, has also recruited new members whose cultural diversity and life experiences in Canada have inspired innovative and thought-provoking presentations, says Edie.

"We congratulate the group on their dedication and hard work."

The Regina chapter, like other IWS chapters throughout Saskatchewan, is looking for volunteers to sit on several committees. These committees include social, membership, fundraising and programming.

"IWS will continue to respond to the changing needs of our members. Our staff have coped excellently with the increased demands," says Edie.



"We remind ourselves that you are what you do, not what you say you are."

-David Clark, "Values, Behaviour and Philosophies"

The Canadian government has made some attempts to help us integrate into Canadian society. Nevertheless, there are still many barriers that we must face, and we may create internal barriers that only add to the ones existing in society. For instance, in our own organizations which intend to fight for equality and justice, we may sometimes engage in unfair practices. I think its time that we explore the solutions to the problems existing within our organizations. In my opinion, we need to work cautiously towards examining our biases and work collaboratively.

At the Annual General Meeting of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan, which was held June 25-26 in Saskatoon, there was much discussion about this issue. As Jo-anne Lee said during her workshop entitled "Building the Community", the problems faced by Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan are different than those of mainstream women's groups, which in turn are different than those faced by mainstream groups. This is due to the multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic diversity of the organization.

Trust and honesty are two key issues which play a vital role in the success and growth of any organization, especially an organization such as ours which is supposed to create a "safe" place for immigrant women. Just how safe that place really is depends on the level of

communication we can achieve by respecting each other, listening to each other and when necessary, agreeing to disagree.

It has been a busy time for us at the office here in Regina. We have had many clients, including women, men, youth and families, coming in for support, information and help. They come with a wide variety of problems, ranging from difficulties with immigration matters, depression, abuse, legal problems and loneliness. Our approach to these clients also varies depending on the circumstances. For example, on one occasion, a fellow was upset because we couldn't offer him the help he needed. He felt he had wasted his time by coming to our office. But, after talking to him over a cup of coffee, he felt much better and left with a smile and a ray of hope. That is what makes it all worth while.

## *Bouquets:*

**To: Monique Beneteau Beneteau** of the Women's Mental Health Agenda project for sponsoring our health workshop. It was a fruitful activity.

**To: The United Way** for accepting us as one of their member agencies.

**To: Tony Coughlan** of Social Services. I admire him because even though I have not met him, I have referred several cases to him and he has acted on them immediately.

**To: The Cultural Department of the Regina City Police, Rod McKendrick and Karen Pelletier** also act quickly on our referrals regarding female victims of violence, and also with our young offenders.



Gene Lara is a staff member of the Regina chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan, as well as the Public Relations Officer for the provincial board of directors. In This Corner is a regular column in Our Voice.



# New Domestic Violence Act addresses direct needs of victims

Focusing on the needs of victims of domestic violence at the time of the crisis, is the main thrust of new provincial legislation

The new **Victims of Domestic Violence Act**, will provide assistance in terms of compensation for monetary loss, property issues and restraining orders.

Often, women and children victims of domestic violence are the ones forced to leave their home and belongings. They leave the support of family, friends and familiar surroundings. Under the new Act, victims won't have to flee their homes. They will be able to obtain a legal order to have the attacker removed.

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*Emergency intervention orders provide for immediate action to protect victims of domestic violence.*

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Domestic violence is not isolated. It is not sporadic. Any woman can be a victim. One in four women in Saskatchewan is a victim of domestic violence, and on average, a battered woman takes 35 beatings before she calls the police. Only one-quarter of all wife assaults are reported to the police; only 28 percent result in the arrest and charging of the abuser.

Domestic violence has many faces—physical, sexual or emotional—each devastating to the victim. When children are involved, it is sometimes more difficult for the woman to leave, especially when she is forced to “escape” from her home. The new legislation provides three methods to assist victims of domestic violence: emergency intervention orders; victims assistance orders and warrants of entry.

Emergency intervention orders provide for immediate action to protect victims of domestic violence. The orders will be available 24 hours a day from a select number of justices of the peace. The orders can restrain an abuser from having any contact with the victim or victim's family and give the victim exclusive possession of the home. An emergency intervention order will allow an officer of the peace to remove the abuser from the home, and also to accompany the victim or the abuser to the home to supervise the removal of personal belongings.

Victims assistance orders can be issued by a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench to order the abuser to pay the victim compensation for monetary losses incurred as a result of the abuse, including costs of accommodation or legal expenses; grant the victim temporary possession of personal property, such as children's clothing, identification papers or a vehicle; order the abuser to stay away from any place regularly attended by the victim or the victim's family and also to restrain the abuser from contacting the victim or basically any one who has contact with the victim. Violation of an emergency order or an assistance order is a criminal offense and offenders will be arrested.

A warrant of entry can be issued by a justice of the peace in situations where there is fear that a person is unable to act on his or her own and is a victim of domestic violence. Authorities will be able to enter a building to check on a person, and remove him or her from the situation if necessary.

Women and children in abusive situations need help. They need support. Women can access emergency shelters, support groups, crisis counselling and second stage housing—safe and affordable housing for women and their children who have permanently left an abusive relationship. Assistance may be given to help the woman find permanent housing.

Following is a list of emergency shelters in the province which are open 24 hours a day. They provide short-term accommodation.

- Saskatoon Interval House . . . . . 244-0185
- Prince Albert Emergency Shelter . . . . . 922-2800
- Moose Jaw Transition House . . . . . 693-6511
- Shelwin House, Yorkton . . . . . 783-7233
- Isabel Johnson Shelter, Regina YWCA 525-2141
- Sask. Treaty Indian Women's Safe Shelter, Regina . . . . . 543-0493
- Regina Transition House . . . . . 569-2292
- Battleford Interval House, North Battleford . . . . . 445-2750
- Southwest Safe Shelter, Swift Current 778-3683
- LaRonge Family Service Centre . . . . . 425-3900
- Qu'Appelle Haven, Fort Qu'Appelle . . 332-6882
- Waskoosis Safe Shelter, Meadow Lake 236-5570
- Lloydminster Interval House . . . (403) 875-0966

(-J. Fleming Juárez)



# The chicken and the egg story: No experience, no employment

Securing employment in Canada is difficult, even if your resume is excellent, you have a university degree and several years of experience.

But, if your resume, degree and experience are from another country, that search for employment automatically becomes more difficult.

Many people who immigrate to Canada bring skills and knowledge, and just want the opportunity to work, says Jacquie Browne, who was the Community Worker for a seven-month Professional Certification and Career Planning Project conducted by the Saskatoon Chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan. The project was completed in March of this year.

She adds that many immigrants have five to seven years training, training that people in Canada don't have to pay for.

**Some people actually volunteer to work for the experience but they are usually turned down.**

The project looked at professional certification and career planning among immigrants. More than 50 professionals and technically skilled immigrants were interviewed about professional certification and accreditation, barriers to getting jobs and other issues relating to finding a job in the Canadian labour market.

The majority of those interviewed were women. Their experiences indicate that immigrants face many barriers as they attempt to enter the Canadian labour force, including language skills, and the lack of "Canadian experience".

Browne says immigrants want to work and are looking for work, but getting that chance is difficult. Language training, beyond basic English As A Second Language (ESL) classes, is minimal. Participants expressed a need for more ESL training, and preparation for Test of English as A Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Test of Spoken English (TSE). Many professionals are told they must have experience working in Canada before they will be hired.

"It's the chicken and the egg story. Where do you get the experience?" says Browne, adding that some people actually volunteer to work for the experience but are usually turned down.

Aside from interviewing project participants, Jacquie provided assistance in preparing resumes, writing covering letters and developing interviewing skills. Employer contacts were made on behalf of some of the participants, and two of the participants were successful in finding employment.

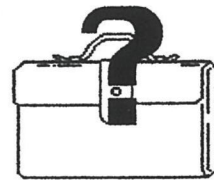
A workshop entitled "The Reality of the Canadian Labour Market and Job Searching" was held.

Situations differ across the country. In Manitoba, the government pays half of the immigrants' examination fees for certification in Canada in their fields, guarantees employment for a year in their fields and pays \$9,000 of their salaries for that year. In Alberta, there is a "one-stop" shopping idea where immigrants can have their papers assessed in one office, rather than going to several government departments.

Studies have shown that there is widespread downward mobility for semi-professionals and professionals in employment situations in Canada, when compared to previous employment in their countries of origin. A study conducted in Saskatchewan in the 1980's showed many immigrant women, regardless of their education or experience in their country of origin, were employed, in the lower-paid areas of the service industry, in temporary jobs with no benefits or opportunities for advancement.

The provincial Minister of Education, Training and Employment, Pat Atkinson, says her department is looking at ways to make it less difficult for immigrants to find employment.

Funding is being sought by the Saskatoon chapter to continue research on the issues, and special emphasis will be placed on the establishment of a Provincial Advisory Council. The council will consist of representatives from such factions as the federal and provincial governments, educational institutions, professional associations, career counsellors and immigrant serving networks. Its purpose will be to review the issues and present recommendations regarding the professional certification and accreditation of professionally trained immigrants.



(-J. Fleming Juárez)



# Courtship of a Kind

by Sophia Mustafa

**M**y nephew Zaffer, educated in Kenya and England, had just got married to my husband's niece Shella, a medical doctor from Pakistan. The marriage was arranged by their parents. They met for the first time on the eve of their wedding. Zaffer works in Kenya so Shella accompanied him to Nairobi and later to Mombasa where Zaffer's parents gave a big reception to welcome Shella, and in celebration of their son's marriage.

**I** flew to Mombasa from Dar-es-Salaam to represent my husband who is Shella's father's elder brother, and who could not go to Mombasa because he was busy at an Appeal Court session in Dar-es-Salaam.

**S**hella looked stunning in her pink, green and silver Gharara—the flared trousers suit. Her long black hair was done up on her head in a coil in an intricate design. With a beautiful complexion, Shella has black eyes and the most winning smile. She is also tall and slim.

**Z**affer, normally in a suit, had to wear a brocade achkan, the long coat and white churidar trousers with a stiff turban over a pointed cap. Tall, fair and looking every inch the Pathan that he is, he was more than handsome.

**A**fter the party and reception when we were at home, both Zaffer and Shella came up to my room. We sat in the balcony facing the sea to cool ourselves and enjoy the sea air from the Indian Ocean.

"Auntie, did you and uncle have a courtship?" Zaffer suddenly asked me.

"Courtship!" I was surprised. Then I smiled and said, "No, not in the Western sense; no necking, petting, mooching or smooching, if that's what you mean. But, I did know your uncle."

"It was a love marriage." Shella was definite.

"Was it, Auntie?" Zaffer seemed doubtful. He had married according to the traditional arrangement, and like many arranged marriages seemed to have fallen in love with his bride at first sight.

**A** love marriage in some Indian and Pakistani circles is frowned upon. The words 'love marriage' have a ring round them!

"Why do you ask, Zaffer?" I asked.

"I wondered how you married a person so different from you and have remained married for nearly fifty years!" Zaffer exclaimed.

I smiled again. "Well, to tell you the truth, I've never thought about it."

"Oh, please tell us, Auntie," Zaffer insisted.

"It's such a long time ago. I've forgotten." I tried to wheedle my way out of it.

"I have told you. It was a romantic love marriage," Shella repeated again.

"Was it Auntie? Is Shella right? Do tell us about it."

The way Shella said it made me wonder what she had been told. "It's such a long time ago, I'll have to go back a long way," I smiled.

"Never mind. It's not late. And tomorrow is a holiday." Zaffer got up, pulled the leather pouf and put it as a foot rest for me. Then he moved back to his seat next to his bride.

"I'd have to go back into memory lane for four decades."

"Do Auntie. Please," Zaffer coaxed. "We'll count and you can slowly close your eyes and slip back."

They both laughed and started counting: "One... two... three... and four... Stop."

**A**s they counted I really began slipping back, decade after decade after decade, through the long memory lane and time...

"Having grown up with Eastern traditions and values and in the Muslim religion, I naturally thought I would eventually marry someone chosen by my mother, brothers and other family elders—I had no father. He died when I was eight.

I was exposed to an English type of education in Nairobi, Kenya, a British Colony, and studied with girls of other races. European teachers and Catholic nuns taught us in the school I went to. As I reached adolescence, girls talked about boyfriends, some even went out with them. I and girls like me watched them



with interest. We heard about their tremendous successes with envy. We were sorry for their failures and even heartaches. It was a sort of education. But even though we could envy the girls with boyfriends at times, we knew that was not for us. In our society that would **never** be accepted as dignified, at least in those days. We had a certain satisfaction though, that parents and elders would do most of the ground work for finding a husband for girls like us. They would seriously consider good family, education, economic background and the ability of the man to support a wife. They would carefully scrutinize him for compatibility before making a selection.

Generally it is a man who proposes, but in Islam a woman can also propose.

“Several proposals came for me after I reached thirteen years of age.

Some of them were not worth considering, my mother said. But one concerned a medical student studying abroad. He was the son of a good friend of my late father. When his parents asked for my hand, my mother and brother said his case would be considered favourably after he completed his medical studies. They showed me his photograph; gave me all the particulars about him. I could not meet him or see him as he was overseas at a college.

I could find no fault with his looks. He was handsome and presentable. I could find no fault with his profession. Not many girls could hope to marry doctors. There weren't many of them. I awaited his arrival and in the meantime carried on with my studies.

He had hardly finished his studies when his father put his name down with the Red Cross in Nairobi as a volunteer doctor for the war in Abyssinia. I met him once in the presence of elders. We did not even talk to one another. He had stopped briefly in Kenya before he left reluctantly for Ethiopia. I had already accepted him as my intended. Seeing him reinforced my feelings.

He went to war. And I waited, worrying and thinking about him; praying for his safety every night. There was a rumour that he was missing. But it transpired later that he was alive but shell-shocked and in hospital. I had no idea what shell-shock was. I hoped and believed he would recover and return to Nairobi one day.

He returned after a year and started working far away at a government job in a rural hospital. His parents and my mother and elders had many meetings while I waited with bated breath. The verdict came at last. My mother told me we could not be married. He had become an alcoholic, a heinous crime in Muslim eyes. No one would marry such a person.

“Forget him,” she told me. With no amount of reasoning and pleading on my part, could I convince my mother and brother that he could be cured. Elopement or marrying without parent's consent was not known or the thing done among respectable people.

I was unhappy for a long time, then the pain subsided. I was also two years older. My mother began receiving other proposals for me.

***“I'll not be able to face my friends if my only sister were married to a bicycle seller!” he said, taking a big bite of the ripe red peach he was eating...***

Two proposals came this time. One from a man holding a good position in the Police Department in Dar-es-Salaam. The other was from a graduate from some University in India. He was a manager of his own business in Kampala, Uganda.

My elder brother Aslam, eight years my senior and head of the family, said he could never trust people working for the Police. The second man was being considered. My younger brother Mahmood, three and a half years younger than me, but a sharp and brilliant boy who was ready to sit for his London Matric before he was thirteen, threatened to go on a hunger strike if I married the man being considered. This I knew was an empty threat. My young brother Mahmood was far too fond of his food. When I asked him why he was against him so passionately, “I'll not be able to face my friends if my only sister were married to a bicycle seller!” he said, taking a big bite of the ripe red peach he was eating with the juice trickling down his round fair chin. He was the shortest and roundest of my five brothers.

“What's wrong with selling bicycles, you snob?” I laughed.

A few days later my elder brother Aslam brought a friend home for tea. He had lived in Kampala. My mother inquired about the prospective suitor. At first I was quite indifferent to the whole thing. Then I realized it was my life they were discussing. Did I want another decision without my consent? I asked for, and got, permission from my elder brother Aslam to talk to his friend. I was in purdah as all Muslim adolescent girls were meant to be, so I could not talk face to face with the visitor. I stood behind a curtain and listened to the questions my mother asked, and the



replies of the visitor. Then my brother surprised the visitor by asking him to reply to some questions for me.

***"But surely a Muslim woman has the right to see her future husband if she likes. Islam allows that..."***

"Mr. X, I ...I'm the piece of furniture whose future my mother and brother are discussing with you. I have listened to the questions and your answers. I'd like to know a few things, too." I said.

"I shall be happy to answer your questions if I can," a slow and very English accented voice replied.

"Thank-you. Well... my mother is satisfied to learn that the gentleman from Kampala hails from Kashmir, and belongs to the same Muslim sect as we do. My brother on the other hand, is satisfied the man has adequate means to support me and is well educated. I'd first like to know what kind of a man is he?"

"Oh, he is a decent chap, pleasant and well-to-do," the visitor replied

"I hear he runs a bicycle business. Is it a bicycle repair shop?"

My brother Aslam later told me Mr. X smiled widely then said, "No, he sells brand new bicycles." "What does he look like?"

"What does he look like?" asked the visitor in surprise. "Well, he is tall and thin. He is fair and has regular features and has a small beard, a goatee." Then he asked somewhat quickly, "Haven't you seen his photograph?"

"Unfortunately, no." I replied. "You say he has a beard?" I was sharp.

"Yes, he looks distinguished, even dignified. But he might shave it off if you disapprove. It can't be that important." The visitor remarked. My brother Aslam laughed loudly. My mother glared at me from the door.

"Is he broadminded as a Muslim or fanatic?" I asked knowing my mother would be horrified.

"As broadminded as a Muslim is allowed to be!" Mr. X said. "I don't know him that much. I can only talk about him generally."

"I understand and appreciate. It's not fair to ask such questions. I am sorry to be difficult. But, marriage is a religious obligation. If I agree to marry him, I have to pass my whole life with him. I like to be sure of some things."

"I think you are right. I also think you should meet him," said the visitor.

"My family tells me that's not possible. He and his people would consider me too forward and reject me."

"But surely a Muslim woman has the right to see her future husband if she likes. Islam allows that."

"Islam allows a lot of things that custom, culture and traditions don't," I said slowly, "but anyway, that is beside the point. Thank you very much for bearing with me."

"I am sorry. I do not know more."

"Thanks."

My mother was very angry and embarrassed at my boldness. My brother, a cheerful person, seemed only amused. In fact, he later said Mr. X was somewhat taken aback. Before leaving he told my brother quietly to allow me to see and meet the man before accepting his suit.

Whether it was because of the threat of my brother Mahmood or the advice given by Mr. X to my elder brother Aslam, my family dropped the matter.

I breathed a sigh of relief.

After a few months I persuaded my brother and mother to allow me to join the Teacher Training College to train as a teacher after finishing my secondary school. It was a co-educational college and the only college for Asiatics. We did practical teaching during the day and attended lectures in the afternoons given by different teachers. I was the only girl in a class of ten. The course was a two-year course. We had finished nine months training when one day our Psychology teacher, Mr. Travedi, announced that an outsider was coming to lecture us on the topic of "Nature and Nurture" the following week. He said the lecturer was a Muslim from the Far East with an honours degree in English and other subjects. He was studying law, too.

We expected an elderly person. We had never met a learned lecturer before. When the gentleman arrived, he was fairly young, not particularly handsome, I thought, but quite striking and intelligent looking. He certainly looked as if he had some Mongolian blood in him. He was very fair but pale, too.

His talk lasted exactly twenty minutes and held our attention. It was clear and to the point.

Afterwards he mingled with us during tea. His voice sounded familiar. Had I heard it before? After talking to some students he came up to me. I was standing next to our Psychology teacher, an elderly, dark and fat man.

"May I join you? And talk to the young lady?" he asked.

"Of course," said Mr. Travedi and looked at me. "Perhaps you don't remember, but we met across a curtain once." The lecturer said and smiled. "You asked a barrage of questions."

I was thoughtful for a moment, then, "You are...not...Mr. X? You came to our house with my brother Aslam, didn't you?"



"The same. I recognized you immediately."

"But, you didn't see me. We spoke as you have rightly said, across a curtain."

"You have a twin brother, haven't you?" he said, "and I well remember your voice."

"That's clever of you," was all I could say and felt rather silly. "People say my younger brother is my carbon copy," I added nervously.

Other students then joined us and started talking about the lecture.

He came to give us lectures a couple of times again. Once he walked with me to the bus stop, through the Jacaranda Avenue walking over the carpet of blue petals leading out of the school at Nagara.

"So, my friend the bicycle seller and graduate from India did not succeed?" he asked.

"He hadn't the ghost of a chance. My younger brother threatened a hunger strike. We couldn't afford that."

He laughed loudly. Then he said, "Interesting. How interesting."

Two weeks later, Mr. X asked my brother Aslam for my hand in marriage. My brother was delighted. My mother agreed reluctantly. I don't know why, but I didn't say 'no'.

"Oh, how romantic, Auntie," both Zaffer and Shella said in unison.

*This is the second story Sophia Mustafa has published in Our Voice. Mrs. Mustafa has published her work in other publications, including Grain. Mrs. Mustafa was born in India and educated in Kenya, and was an elected member of the Legislative Council of Tanganyika before retiring and moving to Saskatoon with her husband. She now concentrates on her writing and other hobbies.*

## Twenty years later women present report cards: Beijing

Almost 20 years ago, the United Nations declared 1975 to be the International Year of Women.

To commemorate the year, a number of events were organized by women and the United Nations to provide a forum for a women's agenda, including a conference in Mexico City. The United Nations also proclaimed 1976-1985 as Decade for Women. In 1980 a world conference was held in Copenhagen, followed by a Nairobi conference in 1985.

Women from all over the world got together in Nairobi to celebrate a decade following the International Year of Women. At this time, they developed "Forward Looking Strategies" for making improvements in the lives of women. This document was adopted by governments attending the conference. It contained action strategies in a wide variety of issues including health, education, employment and militarization.

Unfortunately, these strategies have not been implemented effectively. In early September of 1995, thousands of women from many countries will gather in Beijing, China, to share stories of their lives—the successes and the struggles, plans of actions and the results, at a

non-governmental forum. Governments will meet at the Fourth World Conference on Women shortly after, to review and assess what they have done to bring about change in women's situations since the Nairobi conference. They will be called upon to account for their actions, or lack of actions, in response to the document.

For the past 20 years, women in Canada have been involved in global efforts to improve the quality of life for women. In order to best represent the diversity of women in Canada at the Beijing conference, 15 representatives of national, provincial, regional and local women's groups have been elected to coordinate non-governmental women's preparations for the Beijing conference. This committee needs help to "bring Beijing to Canada". If you are interested in helping, contact the Beijing Coordinating Committee, 408-151 Slater Street, Ottawa, Ont., K1P 5H3.

"We hope that immigrant women participate in this important event. Our agenda ought to be in the centre of this conference because we represent many countries as well as Canada," says Nayyar Javed, President of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan.



(-Nayyar Javed & J. Fleming Juárez)



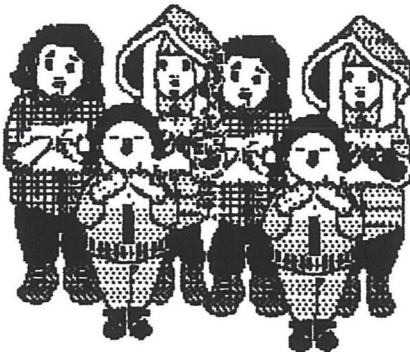
# Intergenerational communication sets stage for workshop: Moose Jaw

*“Treat your children the same way you would want to be treated.”*

This was the message carried throughout a one day inter-generational communication workshop, hosted by the Moose Jaw Chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan (IWS) in March. The workshop, attended by about 50 people, featured small group discussions, a popular theatre performance by the Regina IWS drama group and a panel discussion facilitated by Mirtha Sepulveda of Regina.

The many aspects of intergenerational communication—communication between parents and children—were examined. Culture was defined as a set of values, relationships, traditions, beliefs, customs, food, morals, language and music, which together create one’s identity, allowing a person to feel comfortable and accepted. This self-identification is determined by experimentation as children, and children will experiment many times with many ideas and concepts.

When children experiment in a new culture, conflict may develop



between them and their parents. Some cultures do not want their children to be “Canadian” at home; they don’t expect them to speak English and they don’t expect them to behave the same way as other children in the Canadian society. Sometimes culture is imposed on children, creating discord, tension and stress on both parents and children.

Most workshop participants felt discipline and respect are lacking in Canadian culture, and that too

*When children experiment in a new culture, conflict may develop between them and their parents.*

much emphasis is placed on monetary values. They felt that the authority of the parent is not respected and that either children do not respect rules, or the rules are too lenient or often absent.

When exposed to Canadian culture, parents said they feel threatened and worry that their children will leave them and lose their culture completely.

To avoid this and any tension created within the family, there are three important factors to remember: teach children your values; know your own culture as well as Canadian culture and remember that trust is very important—know when to give up control; allow children to assume responsibility.

An issue of concern to many workshop participants was discipline, which varies from

culture to culture. In many cultures, physical punishment is not seen as being wrong. However in Canada, there are laws which do not allow physical punishment. Children who are suspected of being physically abused are investigated and removed from the family. Parents attending the workshop agree that it is important to find a middle point so as not to risk losing a child, yet not sacrifice their culture. Retaining one’s own culture is very important.

Canada has many educational resources which, according to the parents taking part in the session, are not being used effectively in the school system. They find the system too

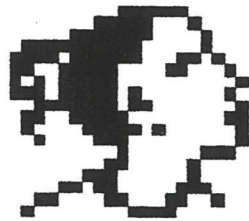
limited—it doesn’t devote enough time to teaching life skills, rather it teaches how to be competitive, how to do better than others or how to have more than others. It does not provide the knowledge necessary to become a respectful, considerate person.

Workshop participants expressed their appreciation for the ideas and suggestions presented during the workshop. It was recommended that a video be produced based on the topic of intergenerational communication, a subject of which there is little audiovisual material.

“The opinions were really valuable and full of life experiences. This powerful material should not be limited to a one-day workshop,” says Thara Maharaj, president of the Moose Jaw chapter.

(J. Fleming Juárez)





Shandhya Dursun, who lives in Yorkton, is a firm believer in community involvement. She talked about her "finish what you start" philosophy with Gisela Wasyłowich, president of the Yorkton chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan. Shandhya is the treasurer of the Yorkton chapter.

Shandhya Dursun was born in Long Mountain, Mauritius, an island republic south east of Africa.

Dursun is Shandhya's married name. In her homeland, she was registered under the name Phoonam (Shandhya) Beharry Panray. She finished high school and received a Grade 12 Diploma in Mauritius, and lived there until she married Sharm Dursun.

Shandhya's native language is Patoit. (Until recently, the official language in Mauritius was French. It is now English.)

In October of 1982, Shandhya joined her husband in Canada and settled in Yorkton. Soon after arriving here, they started a family. They now have three children, two girls and one boy.

Shandhya left her mother and sister in her homeland, and even though the family is separated by a great distance, they maintain a close relationship through phone calls and letters.

Shandhya spends most of her time with her children and is involved in their school activities.

**...teacher's aide, treasurer,  
inventory clerk, cooking,  
gardening, collector...**

Besides her many housekeeping duties, she has taken the time to upgrade her education. She enrolled in the Parkland Community College to complete English As A Second Language classes at a Grade 12 level, and she also took some accounting and bookkeeping classes.

She worked as a teacher's aide in the French Immersion Program in Yorkton's public school system from 1988 to 1990. She enjoyed her duties and the interaction with the children very much, but her job was eliminated because of cutbacks in funding.

In 1993, Shandhya joined the Yorkton Chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan and was soon elected treasurer. She has fulfilled her duties in this position very faithfully. Her other volunteer work includes a position as an inventory clerk and board member of a local nursery school cooperative.

Among Shandhya's many interests and hobbies are cooking, gardening and reading. Shandhya would also like to do some more travelling; and, she collects brassware of all types.



Mauritius is an island republic south east of Africa. Shandhya left her homeland in 1982 and settled in Yorkton.

**There are many very special women living in Saskatchewan—they are our neighbours, our colleagues, our friends, our mentors. They are our sisters! But, often we take them for granted. Its time to give these special women the recognition they so richly deserve. Would you like to introduce Our Voice readers to someone in your community? We are interested! See page 2 for submission information or contact your local chapter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan.**





Shandhya Dursun and her children standing in front of the Provincial Legislative Building in Regina.

Shandhya is looking for more opportunities to study, and eventually she wants to obtain a university degree in accounting and computer science. But because of the current economic conditions, these types of courses are very limited in Yorkton.

For the immediate future, Shandhya hopes to find employment in order to be able to contribute toward her children's education.

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*...give your personal best in every situation, and become involved in the community...*

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As an immigrant woman, she feels there are more barriers in finding employment for her than those faced by mainstream Canadian women. But, due to hard work and perseverance, she has been successful in everything else she has started. She attributes her success to her mother, who has always been her role model, and to her husband who has been very supportive.

"I think I can get along with anybody," she says, "and I'm willing to listen to others."

Shandhya's motto is "Finish what you have started!" She advises other immigrant women to just

give their personal best in every situation, and to get involved within the community.

She admits that her involvement with Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan has given her a renewed purpose to stand up for herself as a woman.

She enjoys the interaction with other women in the organization, and hopes to see more workshops focusing around leadership training. She feels there is some lack of commitment from members generally, and wishes that everyone would take more interest in the activities of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan, even newcomers.

"To build a strong organization, we need every immigrant woman's input and support," she says.



**"Reach high, for stars lie hidden  
in your soul. Dream deep, for  
every dream precedes the goal."**

**-Pamela Vaull Star**



# Young Immigrant

by Mabel Munoz

Mabel Munoz is a former student of Balfour High School in Regina. She organized an immigrant youth group in the Queen City and was elected as president. Mabel has since moved Toronto. The following article is a true story— YI stands for Young Immigrant.

YI came to Canada when she was 15. She learned English quickly, but she felt uneasy speaking it. As she grew older, her ethnic appearance and lack of spending money bothered her as well. She wanted to be like the people she saw on TV. Her parents complained that she studied catalogues and magazines more than school work.

When she got a student loan at the age of 18, YI dyed her hair, wore lots of makeup, and bought new clothes in the latest styles. This, she hoped, would make her more popular among her classmates. To her surprise, she made new friends and started going out to bars with them at night. She stopped seeing her old friends who didn't go out much.

Fashions changed quickly and YI tried to keep up with the newest trends. It was expensive, but she had to look "cool". Her biggest problem was not having a car. She often made desperate arrangements to be with her new friends. When they gave her a ride, or helped her out of difficult situations, she felt obligated to them. Not wanting to be left out, she was under pressure to do things that she wouldn't normally do.

YI's new friends boasted profanely about alcohol, drugs, sex, and fights. In her homeland, such open conduct was unthinkable. At first she tried not to get too involved, but she feared rejection.

The first thing YI tried was beer. It tasted awful but she pretended to like it. Smoking was next. It tasted bad and it made her dizzy, but her friends said she would get used to it. Before long, the new Canadian was trying different drugs. She doesn't remember the first time she had sexual intercourse very well because she was stoned and drunk at the time.

When YI started failing school, her father tried to enforce more discipline on her. He was afraid, however, that she would leave him. He knew she could get her own apartment with the aid of Social Services, or she could move in with one of her new friends. After many arguments, her entire family began to suffer terrible stress.

YI then began dating a man she had met at a party. Her family was outraged and helpless as she made plans to move in with him. She was tired of being dominated by her father. She wanted to be self-confident and independent like the young women she admired on TV. Like them, and like her father, she was strong-willed and determined, but she was also irresponsible and open to the influence of strangers.

The man convinced YI to spend a lot of money on things he wanted. When she moved in with him, he began to treat her bad. This surprised her because he was so nice when they dated. When he tried to get her to open a joint bank account with him, she refused. He then beat her and locked her up in a small room, but she escaped and went back to her family.

For the next several days the man called YI repeatedly and followed her everywhere. He constantly apologized and promised he would never hurt her again. She tried to end the relationship anyway, but he insisted that she belonged to him. He attacked her and beat her again, then persistently apologized like before. When she went to the police for help, they told her there was little they could do.

After reconciling matters with her family, YI discovered that she was pregnant. Her doctor told her not to drink alcohol or take narcotics because the baby's health could be seriously affected. She was unaware of her pregnancy for nearly two months, however, and she was intoxicated and stoned on several occasions during that time.

YI also discovered that she had contracted a sexually transmitted disease. Her doctor informed her that she would have medical complications for the rest of her life.

The man who was stalking YI eventually went into hiding from the police. They were after him for drug trafficking. Before he left, however, he vowed to come back and kill the young immigrant. She told this to the police, but they only wanted to investigate her for possible drug dealing charges as well.

All of YI's friends abandoned her. It was painful for her to realize that they weren't really her friends at all. As well, she was too ashamed to call any of her old friends. She had, after all, rejected them and disgraced her own reputation.

(continued on page 17)



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# Immigrant women's problems universal

The following article has been adapted from the January/February 1994 newsletter of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan, Prince Albert Chapter. Claudette Bouman is the secretary of the Prince Albert chapter.

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- by Claudette Bouman

The reasons why people immigrate to Canada are long and diverse. In my case, I came to Canada in 1986 as an international student. After completion of a Masters Degree in Educational Administration at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, I returned to Barbados for a short time. Then I took up doctoral studies at the University of British Columbia in September of 1988.

*"I learned then that women are the backbone of society but they are often taken for granted, mistreated, violated and exploited."*

It was always my dream to return to Barbados and make a contribution in the field of education. However, that dream changed when I got married in 1990 to a man of German ancestry. We were faced with the challenges of balancing student life, financial demands and parenting, pragmatic decisions had to be made. Canada appeared to be a reasonable place to live.

My involvement with Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan is the first step in following through on a dream I have had for a long time: to work with women and be an advocate for improvement in our lives. This desire was born out of the appalling conditions under which a large segment of Barbadian women lived and worked and which I witnessed daily.

I learned then that women are the backbone of society but they are often taken for granted, mistreated, violated and exploited. I noticed two class divisions among women. The gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" widened perceptibly in the 1980s and continues to this day.

I have already learned that many of the issues that negatively affect women are universal: poverty and economic dependence, domestic violence, lack of education and inadequate job skills. At the same time, social expectations and pressures still force young women into the traditional roles of former generations

long before they have determined, as sovereign individuals, what they would like to do with their own lives.

Immigrant women face the same difficulties; challenges intensified by the uncertainties and problems associated with moving to a new country and leaving supportive, extended family systems. In addition, immigrant women's vulnerability to male dominance can be compounded by immigration policies. The role of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan is to assist and support such women.

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## Young Immigrant

(continued from page 17)

YI's entire family felt dishonored and disgraced. The news of her condition spread rapidly to friends and relatives in their homeland. Her father was devastated with shame. He couldn't face his neighbors or co-workers so he gave up his job and moved the family to a less comfortable house in another province. Her brothers and sisters despised her for all the trouble she had caused and for forcing them away from their schools and friends.

YI gave birth to a physically and mentally disabled child. While her struggling family babysits for her, she works hard at a minimum-wage cleaning job. She hopes to go back to school some day, but she knows it won't be easy. The money from her student loan is gone and her family has less income. She currently receives psychiatric counselling and medication for clinical depression.

Her strong will and determination are vital now as she strives toward a more positive future.

(-M. Munoz)

**The deadline for the next issue of Our Voice is Wed., Aug. 31, 1994. Please see page 2 for details.**



# Refugee Women: dislocated and ignored

In the past few decades, we have witnessed enormous turmoil in the world. This turmoil seems to be an outcome of tension arising out of international politics. Greed for expanding markets for the industrialized west and consolidating the power base of this region has caused many countries of the so-called Third World to fight with each other and to get entangled in bloody civil wars. Consequently, millions of people have been killed, resources of these countries are destroyed and more than 20 million people are forced to dislocate and live under horrifying conditions.

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**by Nayyar Javed**

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Ironically, most of the countries which give refuge to the dislocated people are themselves over populated and under resourced, while Western countries have managed to take a very small number as refugees. Thus, the poorer countries end up absorbing the dislocated population despite their meagre resources, while the richer countries who have been instrumental in causing the disruption escape burdening themselves. Yet in news media, it is always the West that is lauded for humanitarian pursuit including helping refugees.

The West has used the United Nation's criterion of determining who is and who is not a refugee. According to this criterion, political persecution is a precondition for refugee status. The narrow definition of political persecution is derived from the politics of the Cold War, when portrayal of the violation of human rights in the

former Soviet Union invoked a spirit of crusade in the West. Resistance to totalitarian regimes in the Communist Block was edified, while those who also had the courage to oppose repressive regimes in countries friendly to the West were discounted. In fact, the United States helped many repressive dictators in atrocious acts of reprisal.

In politicizing human rights violations, the definition that emerged for political persecution excluded women's resistance to totalitarian regimes and oppressive practices. Therefore, even though more than sixty percent of dislocated individuals are women and children, Canada and other western countries accept more men than women as refugees. Most refugee women enter Canada as "family" or "dependent". Gender plays a significant role in defining resistance, persecution and refugee.

In 1991, an Iranian woman refused to follow the Islamic dress code women are forced to adopt. This woman was terrorized by a Militia Force that monitors women's behaviour, including Hijab. To escape execution, she managed to leave Iran and came to Canada and was refused refugee status. Canadian women's groups launched a campaign to fight on her behalf. As the National Action Committee's International Solidarity Co-Chair, I phoned the Minister of Immigration and tried to explain how this woman was persecuted. Despite our government's aversion for Islamic Fundamentalism, the Minister failed to see that refusal to wear Hijab can be a political statement.

Gender discrimination in determining refugee status is grounded in a sexist ideology that assumes women as passive and unable to have political beliefs and fight for them.

In 1993, the United Nations sponsored a Conference on Human Rights. The International Feminist Community exerted enormous pressure to include issues of women's rights on the agenda. Violence against women and gender based persecution as a valid criterion for refugee status were discussed. To date, gender persecution is not seen as a valid consideration for refugee status.

This issue was recently discussed at the Liberal Party's Policy convention. However, the Minister of Immigration, despite his liberalism and compassion, did not make a commitment for defining gender-based persecution as "real persecution".

Gender-based discrimination is not restricted to determining refugee status. Women who are forced to dislocate undergo a continuous process of victimization. Onslaught on women through sexual violence has been an important part of war throughout history. This type of violence goes on during their travel to escape to a safer country, in refugee camps and also in the countries that finally take them as refugees.

Similarly, the physical violence that we endure even during peaceful times, may get worse when life becomes tough. Our partners and other family members do become more violent because of



# Refugee Women

their own stress.

One young woman who was raped in a refugee camp but never had an opportunity to deal with it, was not allowed to reveal her experience even though she was experiencing tremendous distress. Her family's need for protection from "shame" took precedence over her own need. Instead, her father frequently beat her up after moving to Canada.

Horrible psychological effects of traumatizing experiences are seldom seen as important life changes that require intervention.

Refugee women, like refugee men, endure trauma, witness loved ones killed, their homes destroyed, their countries shattered, and their people abused. On top of it all, refugee women are faced with gender-based victimization. The psychological effects of these

experiences require enormous strength to endure them; as well, refugee women need support and psychological help to put their shattered lives together.

Unfortunately, in Saskatchewan we do not have integrated services to meet this need. We do not have any comprehensive and meaningful programs to help refugee women grieve their losses, overcome trauma and re-root themselves.

Instead, language barriers, isolation by racism and sexism in the broader context and sexism within home and ethnic community, make their life quite difficult. However, they endure through this struggle with dignity and courage.

In fact, women's capacity to provide emotional support seems to be a vital force in maintaining a sense of coherence in refugee camps.

During an international conference on refugee women I attended in Toronto in 1993, many presenters who have worked in refugee camps, gave an impressive account of the role of women in rebuilding the shattered lives of their families. Women undertake all kinds of income generating projects in the refugee camps, participate in children's schooling and partake in literary projects.

Women's creativity and coping capacity are fundamental in enabling refugee families to learn to reconstruct their lives which were destroyed by the horror of war.

*Nayyar Javed is the president of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan and a counsellor with Saskatchewan Mental Health.*



## LONG TIME COMIN' 9193 045

**Director:** Dionne Brand  
**Producer:** Nicole Hubert

Faith Nolan and Grace Channer, two African-Canadian lesbian artists, are on the leading edge of Canada's cultural revolution. *Long Time Comin'* captures their work, their urgency, and their friendship in intimate conversations, large and sensuous canvasses and the sound of gritty and joyous blues. Part of the series *Women at the Well*. A Studio D production.



The National Film Board of Canada has many films and videos of interest available to preview, rent or purchase. Contact your local NFB library or call toll-free from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday: 1-800-267-7710.

## RETURN HOME 9192 1129

**Director:** Michelle Wong  
**Producers:** Margaret Wong, Michelle Wong

First-generation Chinese-Canadian filmmaker Michelle Wong takes an emotional journey into the past when she returns to her birthplace, St. Paul, Alberta, to get reacquainted with her aging grandparents. *Return Home* explores intergenerational relations while capturing the spirit and of early Chinese-Canadian immigrants and their role in Canadian history. Chinese subtitled version available. A Studio D co-production with Fortune Films.

## A SLEEPING TREE DREAMS OF ITS ROOTS

0191 1228

**Director:** Michka Saäl  
**Producer:** Josée Beaudet

Filmmaker Michka Saäl and her friend, writer Nadine Ltaif, journey from childhoods in the Middle East to their chosen home of Montreal. Saäl is Jewish, Ltaif is Arab. Together, they overcome the divisive prejudices of their upbringing and embark on an engaging search for clarity, familiarity and historical significance among the immigrant communities of Montreal.



# Set Apart

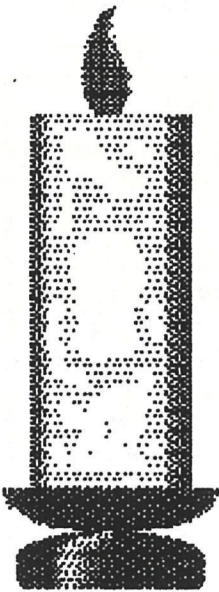
by Farha Akhtar  
Saskatoon

She fell too fast for me to catch  
The bleak nightmare before my eyes  
I felt the pain and anger, too  
No chance to say our last good-bye.

How I wish the bullet would miss  
Wanting the pain for me instead  
Left only the taste of her sweet kiss  
And thoughts of her inside my head.

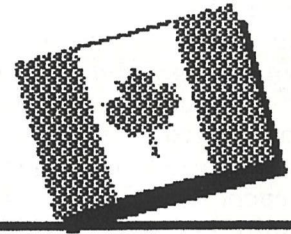
What of the times we spent apart  
When we, together, should have been  
And now she lies with punctured heart  
I've lost my way, I've lost my dreams.

I know the face won't be erased  
I say with tear-filled eyes  
The shot fell, hit me as well  
The day she left, was when I died.



**"I had the chance** to meet some Bosnian Muslims who were arriving in Canada from their former homes in Yugoslavia. They told me about the horrifying injustices being committed on the innocent, including the placement of people in concentration camps where loved ones are sacrificed before your own eyes. A person is left so helpless. This poem (Set Apart) was to express my concern for those still there, and to perhaps let people realize a reenactment of the Second World War taking place before our blind eyes."

-the author, Farha Akhtar



## In the Spirit of Unity

- by Gisela Wasylowich, Yorkton

"Oh Canada, Oh Canada"  
I truly love this land.  
You, who embraced a multitude,  
who gives you now a hand?

The Lord has blessed you with much wealth  
of iron, gold and oil.  
Your forests green, your golden fields  
all we have done, is spoil.

We still have freedom in our lives  
to turn our woes around.  
Gainst poverty and injustice  
we still could hold our ground.

Don't argue about the economy  
and how one best get rich.  
The cart, that's driven by such greed  
is nearly in the ditch.

We need strong hearts and active minds  
this country to preserve.  
The memory of our pioneers  
an effort well deserve.

Let's put away all selfishness  
all malice and false pride,  
and put our shoulders to the wheel.  
Then we'll together ride.

To Unity, to Peace and Joy  
in our beloved land.  
The "True North Strong and Free"  
will then again be grand.

(written in 1992)







