Volume 1 Issue 3 $2.95

TIGER LILY

THE MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN OF COLOUR

VOICES OF CHINESE CANADIAN WOMEN
May Yee

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CARIBANA©

20th Anniversary Celebration

✦87

Caribana, North America's largest International Summer Festival is now enjoying its twentieth consecutive year of celebration and sponsor satisfaction. Estimates by Toronto Dailies indicate that four to five hundred thousand people take part in the week long celebrations; while 1.7 million people watch the main parade on Television.

Caribana was recognized by the Metro Toronto Convention and Visitors Bureau as one of the leading contributors to a banner tourism year in Metro in 1986.

Caribana is a celebration of song, dance, costumes, music, theatre, fun times, and leisure, all in the ambiance of North America's most acclaimed city – Toronto.

Tourism surveys indicate that tens of thousands of foreign visitiors are attracted to the city because of Caribana, and each year more and more Canadians relive the joys of their Caribbean vacation during Caribana. The week long Caribana celebrations offer attractions for the entire family from the family Picnic on the island, to the Carnival Parade, Beauty Pageant, and Children's Costume Parade. Discover Caribana, investigate the marketing opportunities. Open up a new profit opportunity.

Schedule of Events

☐ Monday, July 20
Official Festival Launching at City Hall:
The official kick off to the 20th Anniversary Caribana Festival will take place at Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square (City Hall). The Mayor of Toronto is expected to proclaim the festival period **Caribana Days**. In attendance will be the Chairperson of the Caribbean Cultural Committee, Caribana's organizing body and other Board members. A two-hour cultural show, featuring steelband music, folk-dancers, and calypsonians will take place. One can also sample Caribbean/African cuisine.
Place: **City Hall**

☐ Saturday, July 25
Miss Caribana Pageant and Ball:
This Pageant, one of the most popular shows of the festival, takes place one week earlier this year at the Royal York Hotel. It is an opportunity for the young women in the community to show off their many and varied talents. The festival queen is crowned, then everyone dances into the night at the Ball.
Place: **Royal York Hotel**

☐ Saturday, July 25 — Sunday, July 26
Arts and Craft, Trade Exhibition, Food Pavilion:
As an added attraction for its 20th Anniversary celebrations, the Caribbean Cultural Committee and the St. Lawrence Market Complex will jointly present an Arts and Craft Exhibition; Caribbean and African food pavilion; strolling musicians and dancers; costume making demonstrations.
Place: **St. Lawrence Market**

☐ Sunday, July 26
Caribana Junior Carnival:
A spectacular Costume Parade, presented by a variety of talented children. Especially appealing to parents and children from all cultural backgrounds. A family show.
Place: **Varsity Arena** (St. George and Bloor Streets)

☐ Monday, July 27 — Friday, July 31
Ferry Cruises:
A nightly moonlit cruise, (three hours) on Lake Ontario with 450 festival revellers, dancing to hot calypso, soca, reggae and African High Life. Tasty Caribbean foods and a Cash Bar are available.
Place: **Ferry Dock**

☐ Thursday, July 30
King and Queen of the Band Competition:
This show is a riveting close-up view of the individual costumes of masqueraders in competition. It is the pride and joy of the Bandleaders and masqueraders alike. Its main feature is the crowning of the King and Queen of the Bands, which will later appear in the festival's street parade.
Place: **Varsity Arena** (St. George and Bloor Streets)

☐ Saturday, August 1
Caribana '87 Carnival Parade:
The crown jewel of the festival, this street extravaganza features more than twenty-five Mas' (masquerade) Bands and floats. A visually stunning spectacle as more than 6,000 participants parade on **University Avenue** (downtown Toronto) in a scintillating display of colour, costumes, pageantry and creativity. Big band calypso and soca compel more than 400,000 onlookers to jump-up and have a good time.
Place: **University Avenue**

☐ Sunday, August 2—Monday, August 3
Olympic Island Picnic:
A two-day cultural and musical village on an island with a Caribbean ambiance. An ideal family outing on a hot long week-end in the Summer, with Trade exhibits, arts, and crafts. A variety of traditional foods, music, fun and games for the children.
Place: **Olympic Island**

CARIBANA

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON EVENTS AND TICKETS CONTACT:

The Caribbean Cultural Committee
2 Gloucester Street, Suite 213, Toronto, ONT M4Y 1L5
Telephone: (416) 925-5435/1107

A Salute to Chinese Women

Mirta Aguirre, the Cuban poet, wrote "Let me, myself be. Even if I am less than what I might have been. And marked but in clay, let the fingerprints be mine."

The Chinese women who are featured in this issue of *Tiger Lily* have certainly made their "fingerprints" be felt. They have started on the path of irrevocable change — they have decided to take control of their lives and of their images. Though change can be very disturbing and sometimes frightening, it can also be challenging and refreshing.

Chinese people have been living in the new world for a long, long time yet like all people of colour they are rarely mentioned in history books and the women have been completely ignored. Their presence can be seen and felt in most urban centres of the country. They have brought a rich and ancient culture which has made a valuable contribution to the new and innovative world to which they now belong.

There can be no doubt that all things Chinese are appreciated. Their food is common fare to the North Americans palate, their family lives are envied and they have contributed to the economic and social fabric of the Americas.

But the writers, composers, poets, historians, economists — their names are not familiar — and their contributions have not been well documented. We hope that the words of these women will change this.

We invite you to visit Chinatown for the Lion Dance festival and dance to the rhythms of the drums, bite into a slice of mooncake and make a wish. When you feel the need to read some literature try the works of a fifteenth century poet Hung O or read Toronto's Susan Peng — their words are illuminating.

I have enjoyed working on this issue — for it was one way to learn more about my own family — my Po would have been delighted to have been a part of it, for she, like so many other Chinese women at the turn of the century, were never given credit for carving out new lives in alien countries.

MAKE THE DREAM A REALITY

Tiger Lily is a contemporary magazine that focusses on issues of culture, the arts, literature and social concerns. How can you help *Tiger Lily* remain viable and strong?

- Become a subscriber. (Only $14.75 a year!)
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- If you are in business or manage a business, place an ad with us.
- Donate your talents. We need women writers, artists, illustrators.
- We are happy to consider original fiction, poetry and non-fiction articles by or about women of colour.
- For manuscript submission or more information contact our office at 85 King St. East, Suite 304,Toronto, Ontario M5C 1G3 Canada.

Ann Wallace

TIGER LILY
MAGAZINE

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
Ann Wallace

Guest Editor
Dora Nipp

Editors
Marjorie Agosin, Zanana Akande, Ayanna Black, Margaret Chen, Leah Creque-Harris, Marva Jackson, Victoria Lee, Leslie Sanders

Contributing Editors
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Voices of Chinese Canadian Women

In this issue of *Tiger Lily*, Chinese women speak adamantly and passionately of what it means to be not only a woman, but an Asian woman in a non-Asian society. Their thoughts, ideas and feelings are expressed through their stories and poetry, recounted in memory and articulated in literature. More significantly, these stories are self-portrayals shaped from personal experience. Their stories are told as they wish them to be heard, and the cadence of their collective voices resounds with increasing richness and force.

The effect is penetrating, especially when one appreciates that Chinese women have been muffled for so long. Certainly in the Canadian context, Chinese women have historically been ignored and forgotten, or at best lost amidst copious academic notes which may grant them vague reference as a prominent someone's wife or mother.

In the Overseas Chinese communities, a woman's presence was always expected. It was merely a question of time before they were sent to South East Asia, the West Indies, to North and South America as prostitutes, wives and brides. It is barely acknowledged that Chinese women, despite their fewness in number, like their emigré sisters, formed the core around which these settlements established and eventually prospered.

Given the length of our history here — over 125 years — there are decades of neglect yet to be rectified. Our traditionally myopic approach to women's and ethnic history has left a serious void in the chapters of Canadian history. As a result our knowledge of the contemporary Chinese community has suffered. It is sad to think that generations of Chinese Canadians have and are continuing to grow up without realizing just how deep their roots are. There seems to be only a tacit realization that we no longer have to continue justifying our presence here. Canadians are shamelessly unfamiliar with the Chinese community and this is evident in the way they speak in generalities of our food and media characterizations. Although Chinese women are beginning to break through the socio-economic hierarchy, it is all too difficult to shake the exotic and mysterious image conferred upon us. Witness the examples of Susie Wong and Cherry Blossoms Magazine, which have not only been embraced by the larger society, but has also, to an extent, carried over into the eyes of our sisters.

We have reached a point where there is a recognized urgency to stave the decay of our past. Through efforts such as the "Voices of Chinese Canadian Women" project, a feverish attempt is being made to capture and reconstruct the history of Chinese women through oral testimonies. But this is only the beginning.

We cannot underscore the importance of speaking out and writing of our experiences in order to shatter imposed stereotypes. There must be acknowledgement that as women we do share common experiences. And as "women of colour" we have at heart many of the same concerns and issues. The message is simple, we can all learn to read each other with greater understanding and sensitivity through our writings.

Dora Nipp

"Voices of Chinese Canadian Women": One Woman Speaks

by May Yee

Nancy Li: Translator & Christina Chu: Interviewer

"Voices of Chinese Canadian Women" is an oral history project and a photostory book in the making. It was initiated by the Women's Issues Committee of the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) to give voice to the silenced history of Chinese Canadian women. History will be recorded in the words of the women — over 130 — who were interviewed for the book project. The following is the story of an older Chinese Canadian immigrant women, translated from Chinese and with a brief introduction. The woman's name and the town where she lived are fictitious, since this particular interviewee requested confidentiality — but her words and her experience are very real.

Kim was born in 1937 in a village in Southern China. She was one of a relatively small number of Chinese women who immigrated to Canada before the 1960s. The 1923 Chinese Immigration Act that halted Chinese immigration to Canada was repealed in 1947, but, until the 1960s, restrictions still made family reunion difficult for those with children. But Kim, after marrying a Chinese Canadian who had returned to Hong Kong to find a wife in 1957, was one of the many Chinese brides without children who were able to immigrate to Canada.

Kim was more privileged than most Chinese women because of her class background: "My

father ran a school, and our family was educated, so the girls were allowed to attend school. I went to Guangzhou to study, after my grandmother died." Yet, Kim's childhood in a Chinese village illustrates the experience and status of women who come from a traditional Chinese background:

> "Our family was very feudal. My father was third-born in his family — but he was the only son, so he was considered the eldest. My father was so feudal in his thinking, so he was very filial.* Since my grandfather wasn't there, my grandmother had all the say. Oh, Grandmother was so fierce!
>
> Grandmother had boundfeet. Her feet were so small, like the size of my palm — just like tops. She couldn't walk fast. Her toes were all curled up, like they were braided. The cloth she bound her feet with was long — yuck, so smelly! She would take off the cloth at night for washing. My father was so filial that he made us young ones kneel down to help her take off the cloth, wash and then rub her feet. Then you give her a clean cloth, and she'd bind the feet herself — others didn't know how to do it."

Like many Chinese girls of that era who grew up in an extended family household, Kim spent a restrictive childhood under the watchful eye of her tradition-bound grandmother:

> "Grandmother wouldn't let us out to play. She said that girls shouldn't go out. Everyday when we finished school, we had to go and tell her, "Grandmother, we are back." And she would say, "That's a girl, go do your calligraphy, recite your books." That would make her happy. If you take a rope and skip at the door, play ball — *oh*, you're in trouble! She'd say to my father, "Those girls, their feet are so big, they don't bind their feet, such a disgrace," and so on. But it wasn't fashion-

able anymore to bind feet after Liberation* (1949). After we were grown-up and Grandmother had died, it was like being discharged from prison!"

Footbinding and confinement within the household were the more obvious social restrictions placed on upper-class women in traditional China. But even the ritual of eating that Kim describes reveals how traditional patriarchal and hierarchical principles were embedded in the culture of everyday:

"Our family was very strict. We were not allowed to talk during meals. When you finished your rice, you had to hold up the bowl, and say to everyone: 'Please continue, everyone.' My father ate with my grandfather in a separate room. My mother and older sisters ate together in another. One table for the men and one table for the women. My mother never ate with my father at the same table! No, my father never brought my mother out.

The rationale for the devaluation of women was perceived to be the traditional practice of patrilocality. It generally held true in rural China that, because women joined their husband's family in another village upon marriage, bringing up a girl was seen as 'watering another's garden':

"My mother had over 10 children, but only 8 survived — 4 boys and 4 girls. The boys are, of course, number one and the girls nothing special. The girls don't get anything, be it inheritance — anything. They said this is because girls would marry out to others. The boys carry on the family name, the ancestral line. Anyways, girls were disadvantaged.

On the wedding day, as the bride is stepping out the door of her parents' house to go to her new home with the in-laws, she had to sing some songs, crying as she sang — real tears. It was bitter — because when you were by your mother's side you were more free. After you are married, you have a mother-in-law that watches over you like you are a servant girl. You suffer. In the old days, when you want to go back to your mother's home you have to ask for your mother-in-law's approval."

Kim left Southern China for Hong Kong in 1954 after the Communists came to power. Her journey from her girlhood family to join her husband's family was even a longer and more traumatic one than it would have been traditionally — across an ocean and huge cultural gap, from a Chinese village to a small town in Canada.

* See *Glossary*.

KIM'S STORY:

I met my husband in my teens when he studied at my father's school back in the village. He was a very good friend of one of my brothers. After his father took him to Canada we kept in contact by writing. Later, when I went to Hong Kong, he came to Hong Kong. He came back to get married because his family didn't want him to marry a white girl ('gui-nui').

Before coming in 1957, I sometimes read about Canada in magazines and newspapers. And from what my husband told me, I knew that language would be a problem, and that there were no Chinese in Acton, a small town in the Maritimes. We arrived in Vancouver,

then took a plane to Halifax, and we had to take a train to Acton. There were only four of us Chinese women in Acton, including my mother-in-law and myself.

Those days, I was so naive — didn't know a thing. Others talk about 'honeymoon — enjoy.' I didn't know what it was — I was too young and inexperienced, a real greenhorn. I had no feelings when I arrived in Acton — it was like being imprisoned. My husband came to Hong Kong during a school holiday to marry me. He studied chemical engineering. One week after we came to Canada he had to go back to school in another city. So, I just got here, and I'm alone with in-laws I'd never met before — I didn't know what they were like or what the situation was.

Before I got married, I never had to do anything. I went to school, I had the grandmother to wash clothes for me, the servants to do things for me. Coming over here, it was miserable — I had to do everything myself. I didn't know how to wash the clothes — I just kept rubbing them, until my skin came off! I was crying while washing. But I had to do it — the overseas Chinese here were so thrifty, nobody would pay others to wash clothes. All of a sudden, I had things piled up for me to do. If I had my family in Hong Kong, I would have flown back.

We ate in my father-in-law's restaurant — the table and chairs were wooden. Those days, restaurants were not like they are now. The year we came here, my husband's father had already been here for 43 years. We already had a home when we came. When my father-in-law came, they had no homes.

In the small towns around us the racial discrimination was severe. Where my cousin was, the people there wanted to form a group to build houses. At the beginning, everyone was quite enthusiastic. But when my cousin went, they started to withdraw, one after another, because there was a Chinese there. Once he withdrew himself, they all started to join again. That's discrimination.

Many Chinese who came to Canada in the old days were "paper sons"* who had to falsely claim someone as father. In Vancouver, they formed an association, so that if any Chinese came, someone would go and claim the person. They didn't know any of them. But the overseas Chinese had feelings of fellowship. Once the newcomers paid the head tax* to the 'gui lau'* (caucasian) at Immigration and someone came to claim them, they were let go. Sometimes, if it happened that none of the volunteers from the association were free that day, some of the newcomers had to stand there and wait for a day or two until someone went to get them. When you arrived in Canada at the Immigration Office you had to have medical check-up. Sometimes, it could take a long time. You may have to wait until the next day, depending on the number of immigrants arriving that day.

My father-in-law used to talk at mealtimes about the "pig-house" where immigrants were detained — it was exactly like a prisoner being locked up. When you went to the toilet there would be somebody following you because they were afraid you would run away. When my father-law came, it was at the end of the year. He didn't have enough clothes on. There was no rice, just bread — he couldn't eat that, so he had to suffer from hunger for 2 days until someone came to get him.

If a woman came, she'd have to disguise herself as a man. I knew an old woman — if she's alive she is over 100 years old — she told us that she had disguised herself as a man. The men in those days also braided their hair, so she braided her hair and wore the black cap Chinese men wore then. They didn't check — you just pay the head tax and you can come.

Not many Chinese women were here. There were some whores — you know, for those overseas Chinese, because they didn't know the language . . . since, you know, they must satisfy physical needs. So some people in the business would go back to Hong Kong and buy the women there, have them disguised, and pay their head tax to come. I heard those people say they made a lot of money.

Later, my father-in-law sponsored a lot of the overseas Chinese here. None of them knew English, and they couldn't work for the 'gui lau'. So we had to open up a restaurant, and had them work in the kitchen. My husband began to help out at the restaurant. Before, when the students came in to the restaurant in Acton, my father-in-law never took their money because they were Chinese, and he felt the students didn't have much money.

In the restaurant I mostly waited on tables and did the cash. Working in the restaurant was very busy — I could leave only when the customers leave, I had to come early in the morning. Of course the customers were 'gui lau'. There were very few Chinese here in those days. The Chinese all ran restaurants — only one was in laundry.

Many of the Chinese were actually illiterate. My father-in-law was considered very smart

since he could speak some English and knew how to do business, although he couldn't read or write. Those days, people called out orders, instead of writing orders. One time, someone mute came in and wrote down the order. It was early in the morning, the waitress hadn't come in yet, so my father-in-law took the piece of paper and stood outside of the restaurant, until a 'gui lau' passed by. He asked him to read it out: "bacon and eggs sunnyside up". One's 'blind' and one's mute — what can you do?! So it was like this, life was so hard, so funny. So I always tell my children, you'd better work hard, grandfather worked so hard.

We hired cooks, but we ran the restaurant by ourselves. My mother-in-law also helped out in the restaurant. Of course, she didn't like the work. But her husband brought her here....Especially for my mother-in-law's generation, at home in China before they came to Canada, those 'gum-sahn'* old women lived in luxury. They didn't know how hard the old men worked here. A hundred Canadian dollars could be exchanged for several hundreds in the home village. Wah, they thought they had so much to spend. But who knew that after coming here, you'd be in front of a wok all day, in front of a pile of clothes all day — to make just a few dollars to send home.

You know, the old-timers — our lives were as monotonous as could be. There was no such thing as a day-off for us — we really worked 365 days. No one questionned how much they got paid. I talked to an old man yesterday who never bought himself any clothes — always wearing the few pieces until they were worn-out. Women were the same — you should have seen us, brought the few pieces from Hong Kong and still wearing them. In those days there was no such thing as fashion — not like now. The new immigrants talk about going back to Hong Kong for a visit or going travelling. We never went anywhere. Stooping in those restaurants — what kind of social activities were there? For us old-timers, we only gambled as entertainment.

I liked to play 'mah-jong'.* But after playing I couldn't go to sleep — I had to go to work. I felt it took a lot out of me, so I'd better stop playing. But it gets addictive! I don't know, it's mysterious. When I first came I didn't know how to play. But if you didn't play mah-jong, you didn't have many other opportunities to see any Chinese people. Several people get together, you talk, you laugh — it's very enjoyable. But, once you start playing mah-jong, like, you forget things. We play big — one round, several hundred dollars. In one night you can lose $600 or $700 — it's nothing, you don't even blink. Chei! If I didn't play mah-jong I don't know how much money I would have. I lost my money playing mah-jong. But, sometimes I felt it was worthwhile — after playing mah-jong I kind of felt relaxed.

Living conditions were not very good. Those days, the buildings were very run-down. Life was very simple — there was electricity and water, but the water was just like a thread. I didn't really want to go out. The weather was cold, and my husband was home. The whole day, I stayed at home. Upstairs was our residence and downstairs was the restaurant, so sometimes I would go down. That was all. It's depressing talking about these things.

I still feel imprisoned here, even now. What's so good about it here? We've lost our traditions and customs. But you can't do anything — your family is here. Now, I can speak and read some English. And it seems like I can mix together with the 'gui lau' — but actually, it's just superficial. No friends. But when we were in the restaurant business, some westerners were quite nice. They came often, so I knew them as customers — that's all.

I have a Chinese friend who said that she gave birth at home. She said that all the time that she was here, she had not seen a single person. She was confined because the husband didn't allow her to go out — and she didn't want to either, since she didn't know the language. So when her husband washed clothes in the front, she had to wash them in the back.

Of course the women were taken advantage of. When the husbands came home, the women had to cook for them. Suppose both of you worked, or wherever you have been to — you come home and you have to take care of the children; the husband comes home and sits down for dinner. The men can't take care of the family, so the women are of course taken advantage of.

I don't know when I started getting used to it. We were not as smart as the girls nowadays who can say when they want or don't want to have babies. The year after we got married I gave birth. How miserable, when you don't know how to take care of babies. Of course, you know, after the first one and the second, I didn't want any more. My father-in-law had only one son — so they always nagged that two boys and two girls weren't too many. I gave birth in the hospital. No, I didn't use birth control. After the first two, for a long time, they

were waiting for another — my mother-in-law always pushed my husband to go see a doctor. He was too embarassed to argue with me, and I was to embarassed to talk to him about it. But he was always ill-tempered and making a fuss. So, when I became pregnant, he was so happy. My husband was the only son — he was spoiled. He just did whatever the mother told him.

Umm, when my mother-in-law was at home in China, they sent money home for her to hire others to take care of the babies for her. Now, she's the mother-in-law, so, of course, it's us young girls who do the work. She had just come over from China, so she was used to being served. I had to serve her as a daughter-in-law.

Whatever she wanted to eat, you had to cook for her. I helped wash her clothes, the floor, was at her beck and call, and all that. Of course, I followed tradition — because I was from a feudal family. Before I was married, my father had already instilled all these ideas into my head. My father still wrote here after I got married: "...to be filial to your father-in-law and mother-in-law, even if you are treated as a servant girl."

No, I didn't experience discrimination outside the home environment. In this small town, with our name and status, if we are not the first, we are the second. They know who we are and our restaurant. And the Chinese usually give a good impression to the westerners. The Chinese are mostly law-abiding and polite. We weren't sneaky. We weren't like the 'gui-lau' with no dimes in their pockets. We may have looked shabby working in the kitchen, but we always had tens of dollars in our pockets.

Here, the t'o-sang (native-born), if you talk about the old times, they can't even accept it, because they had no such environment. They were raised here, they were close to the environment here, everything is western. The talk of old times is too abstract for them — you know, like Chinese New Year, and how festive and good it is in the home village. Yes, with the old people here, we still carry out the traditions, like New Year and the festivals.

The children here are much stronger and bigger than those in China. Of course, there's a bit of a communication problem with the children. We already had all the old thinking in us, to respect the old and to be polite to others. The t'o-sang here talk back to you with a why, and say "I can make my own decisions." They argue with you to the end. Their customs are all western. That's the communication problem.

No, I wouldn't live with my children — the children wouldn't want me to live with them, the generations are different. I have lived with my mother-in-law, so I know. It's the thinking that is different. You like something and they like something else. If you live apart, you visit each other like friends — that would be much better. That's how I see it.

This story was taken from an interview in the VCCW's collection, March 30, 1985, in eastern Canada. The VCCW collection of tapes and transcripts will be available for researchers at the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, in Toronto. For further information on the "Voices of Chinese Canadian Women" book project, please contact: VCCW Committee, CCNC National Office, 386 Bathurst St., Toronto, (416) 868-1777.
VCCW Editorial Committee: Joan Huang, Winnie Ng, Dora Nipp, Julia Tao, Val Thoo, Terry Woo.

May Yee graduated from Carleton University and is a researcher/editor for the "Voices of Chinese Canadian Women" Book Project.

GLOSSARY

1. filial: refers to the Confucian principle of due respect for one's elders, based on kinship, age and sex.
2. gui-lau: refers to white people or caucasians.
3. gum-sahn: translates as "Gold Mountain", what the Chinese called North America.
4. head tax: Prior to the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, there was an entry tax which only applied to Chinese immigrants. In 1886, just after the completion of the western portion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which Chinese immigrant labour helped to complete, each Chinese immigrant had to pay a $50 head tax on entry. This tax was progressively raised in 1900 to $100 and after 1904 it was $500.
5. Liberation: refers to the establishment in 1949 of the People's Republic of China.
6. mah-jong: a Chinese game using plastic blocks instead of playing cards, similar to gin-rummy and poker.
7. paper sons: Because of the stringent Canadian immigration restrictions placed on the Chinese, many Chinese immigrants prior to the 1960s purchased the identification of those who returned to China and had no intention of going back to Canada. It was often the case that sons, who could not otherwise immigrate because they were over 18, obtained these papers.
8. t'o sang: translates as "native-born", refers to Canadian-born Chinese, or 'Canadian-ized' Chinese youth.

The Women's Issues Committee of the Chinese Canadian National Council

When you are pushed into a corner, you naturally come out fighting. This is probably the best analogy to describe the emergence of the Women's Issues Committee. For years we had concerned ourselves with community, social and political issues, but we operated in various capacities as individuals or members of other organizations. It was not until approximately two years ago that we found ourselves dialoguing about our concerns as Chinese women. We decided we could not continue working in a vacuum.

This was not a sudden awakening. There were essentially two factors which precipitated the formal recognization of the Committee. First, the women of the Chinese Canadian National Council in Toronto, were fed up with hitting their heads against the community's brick walls. Those who speak the loudest are inevitably the ones who are best heard. And in most cases, this means the male members. It is terribly ironic that the Council embraces a mandate to promote equality. Yet, when it comes to applying it to your own home, and where women are concerned, the tables are suddenly turned. Concerns raised about women were swept aside as less important or even trivial. In some instances, women's issues were met with stern opposition. The level of consciousness among the male directors was, and still is, shockingly low.

The second factor deals with the mainstream women's groups. One can only knock on a door for just so long before the knuckles become raw. We realized that these groups could not and would not meet our needs or concerns. There was no benefit to be gained from joining with them, because they failed to consider the premise of colour and race. Moreover, their concerns were class bound and therefore were incapable of accommodating us.

In 1985 the Committee began meeting on a regular basis. In the spring of that year, it applied for and received a government grant to begin work on a Chinese Canadian Women's photo

history. Over 150 women from across the country were interviewed, and their photos collected. From these materials the Committee will be publishing a book on the history of Chinese women in Canada. Members of the Committee are also presently involved in preparing a North American Chinese Women's historical photo exhibit scheduled for this fall in Toronto.

The Committee's role is not just "academic." Networking with women from the CCNC's 22 chapters across the country is a high priority. At the 1985 national conference held in Montreal, there was a record number of women delegates. This was a considerable improvement from the previous year which registered only two women participants. The increase was a result of the Committee encouraging women to attend a Women's workshop. For some of the delegates, it was their first opportunity to discuss with other women their role and position in the community. The results of the workshop were very positive . . . a future conference for Chinese women was suggested. Resolutions included a newsletter, the formation of women's committees in the local chapters, a mandate to encourage more women to run for the board of directors and contacting other women's organizations.

All the resolutions of the Montreal conference have been met. A Chinese Canadian women's conference is being planned in conjunction with the 1987 National Conference to be held in Toronto this autumn. The Committee is also discussing plans for a "Women and the Law" radio programme to be aired in Chinese.

For further information on the Committee or its projects please direct correspondence to: The Women's Issues Committee, Chinese Canadian National Council, 386 Bathurst Street, Toronto Canada (416) 878-1777.

Winnie Ng

by Dora Nipp

It is unfortunate that the contributions of Chinese Canadian women are seldom recognized by the community. Ironically, much of the community's strength is drawn from its female members. One of its very active people, described as a maverick by many, and a "radical/feminist/revolutionary" by others is Winnie Ng.

When Ng arrived from Hong Kong in 1968, she left behind what she describes as a 'protected childhood'. Concerned with the colony's future, her parents sent their eldest child to Victoria, B.C. where she finished her high school education. After spending two years in this 'artificial environment' she moved to Montreal and studied at McGill University.

She laughingly recalls that she had plans of entering medical school, but after one year transferred into the social sciences. It was an exciting period to be in Montreal — she was in the midst of the FLQ crisis, and more immediately, Ng was exposed to a strike on campus that found strong support among the student population. It was during this time that her level of political consciousness began to perk.

To this was then added the responsibility of finding her own way in Canada. To cover tuition and living expenses she found work as a chambermaid and she waitressed. This was Ng's first taste of 'work' and of the conditions that workers faced everyday.

Her involvement in political activities were largely confined to the university setting. In 1970, Ng joined in protest with thousands of overseas Chinese students across North America over the Japanese claim to sovereignity of a Chinese island, *Diao Yu Tai*, south of Taiwan. The *Diao Yu Tai* incident was a political awakening for many of the students. It prompted them to look critically at the status of China in the realm of international politics and drove home cultural pride.

This, and China's stand against the Vietnam war had a powerful impact on the Hong Kong students. "For most of us from Hong Kong we were whitewashed. When we left we were basically clueless ... we weren't trained to think critically ... I was politically naive."

Ng was caught up in the movement at McGill, and saw herself developing the political framework which she still maintains. From the campus, she gravitated outward to Montreal's Chinese community. In 1974, with the assistance of a federal government summer youth programe, Ng and a few friends set up a day camp for Chinese children whose parents worked during the day. The response was fabulous. It was through the project that she got to know the parents and this initiated her into community work.

In September, 1975, Ng was hired by the University Settlement House in Toronto as a community worker/counsellor. The Settlement House was one of the earlier agencies to provide the Chinese community with social services. Still in its nascent stages, Ng began to organize English programmes, provide family crisis counselling and set up senior citizens pro-

grammes. During the day she was on the payroll and in the evenings she continued her work as a volunteer.

At that time the whole area of social services was in its infancy, and there was a glaring need in such areas as interpreting and information services. Ng recounted incidents of seniors who were victimized by members of their community, and of horrendous stories of exploitation in the workplace. She was among a group of community workers who pushed for Chinese-speaking social workers who could deal with the problems.

Ng lived and worked in Chinatown and was in tune with the pulse of the community. In 1976, when investors threatened to disrupt the community by developing the south-east Spadina area into a business and luxury residential sector, community social workers and university students joined together in protest. Under the umbrella of the newly formed "Chinese Canadians for Mutual Advancement" they literally took to the streets. The proposed plans would have driven up rents and land prices. And more significantly, they would have eroded the garment industry upon which so many Chinese depended for their livelihood.

The campaign was intense and factioned the community into two camps. For the first time, city politicians were made aware that the Chinese community was not as homogenous as they had previously assumed. The community activists were branded traitors because they were seen as opposing the growth of Chinatown, which new buildings and wealth symbolized. The C.C.M.A.'s tactics were ad hoc and consisted mainly of leafletting, and door-knocking. The group had no models to follow and experience had not yet taught them how to use existing channels and resources. At the end of the day, however, the buildings were erected, albeit not as high rises. It was a partial victory. The most positive outcome was that the greater society began to take notice of the Chinese community. In response to, or perhaps to appease the residents, the city purchased a former synagogue and converted it into a community centre, and street signs became bilingual.

Ng was responsible for the backbone organizing efforts. Many of her clients at the Settlement House were directly affected by the development. The following year in 1977, it was the group with whom she worked with who established the Chinese Garment Workers Association. Ng was asked to teach English as a Second Language in the evenings at the Association House. It was from this programme, that the concept for English in the Workplace was developed. Ng prepared the blueprints for materials which are presently used in programmes today. Following this, she introduced, at the urging of her students, Citizenship classes which are now funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture.

Her work with the Association caught the attention of the International Ladies Garment Union, and Ng was recruited as a union organizer. She set a precedent as the first Chinese Canadian women to hold the position. During the day she did advocacy work and at night she organized. The work was emotionally draining. At 7 a.m. she would be plant gating, handing out leaflets to unorganized shops. More difficult though, was convincing the workers, of whom a considerable percentage were first generation Canadians, that what she was doing would benefit them in the long run.

As intellectuals, Ng felt that she and other organizers tended to romanticize about the workers. She quickly realized that there is a false sense of workers' solidarity because solidarity was a concept that had to be nurtured. Ng was a good organizer, perhaps too good to have stayed long. Two years later she resigned. She was realistic about what could be accomplished, for whom and why.

Ng then assumed the position of counsellor at the Immigrant Women's Centre, a collective that provides counselling on abortion, birth control and cancer prevention. She developed the idea of a mobile health unit, and fought for funding to make it a reality.

In 1978, Canada responded to the refugee crisis of the Vietnamese Boat people, and the Chinese community, spearheaded by the C.C.M.A., mounted a campaign in their support. Once again, Ng did the organizing, and of course, once again, it was the women who initiated the demonstrations and lobbying efforts. In one week, over 10,000 signatures were collected on the petition. Organizing skills were becoming more professional, and strategies were increasingly sophisticated. Those who were involved in this issue, were ultimately the same people who faced future crises which arose later in the community.

Thus, with the foundation set, when the racist programme, "Campus Giveaway" which portrayed all Chinese as 'foreigners', was aired on W5 in 1979, the Chinese communities across Canada responded in an unprecedented manner.

For Ng, the grassroots training she received over the years helped forge her into the main-

stream. In 1985, just three weeks before the aldermanic nominations closed, she ran for the New Democratic Party nomination. She felt that perhaps it was time to have someone who was not just Chinese Canadian, but who shared progressive politics as a viable alternative. Ng was tired of politicians who tried to speak on behalf of the community but refused to address what she considered were the real concerns. Ng wanted to push for issues of poverty, not land use. She was aware of the link of poverty to housing, health care and social services — themes that should be addressed by the city. An added consideration was that the community would have another role model, not the stereotypical Chinese Canadian male-type of politician. She lost the nomination by only 3 votes.

When Ng speaks of human rights, she reflects the conviction that is deeply rooted in the community. Human rights issues are not to be ghettoized for immigrant groups — they are labour and political issues. Far too pragmatic, and fun-loving to be driven to martyrdom, Ng refuses to fall into that trap. What she possesses is a powerful sense of social justice which is shared by her husband. And she credits the Chinese community with providing the training ground from which she now operates. It is always to the community that she turns for rejuvenation. She is conscious that her credibility stems from the Chinese community, and today while she is still heavily involved with the labour movement and the women's movement, Ng is consumed in setting up the Garment Workers Action Centre, based on the New York example which she visited several years ago. The city has recently granted funding for the Centre's operation.

Ng is painfully aware that women of the community contribute the hidden forces necessary for social change. They are the ones who plan logistics, smooth over tensions and carry out work "without power-tripping". It is the women, who, once they are committed to an issue, sustain the organizing and provide morale. But she also acknowledges that the recognization for their work must first come from the women themselves. "We have to recognize each other's work, tasks and the role we play in the community" before that attention can be derived from other sources.

Dora Nipp is a compliance officer with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. In 1985 she began her doctoral studies as a Commonwealth Scholar in Hong Kong on Overseas Chinese History. ➤

Pentimento

by Margaret L. Chen

The effect called *pentimento* (repentance) occurs in old paintings when "a thin coat of paint that originally sufficed to form an opaque film has become sufficiently transparent (through age) to allow underpainting or drawing to show through." (R. Mayer: *The Artist's Handbook of Materials & Techniques, page 111).*
"...the painter 'repented,' (that is,) changed his mind. Perhaps it would be as well to say that the old conception replaced by a later choice is a way of seeing and then seeing again."
(Lillian Hellman: *Pentimento, page 5).*

My work happens as a result of the mysterious interweaving of process and content, the inanimate and animate, matter and spirit. The creative process for me is an on-going and progressive one that builds up layer by layer, work after work.

Even though I had resolved to try and work in a different way, in the process of doing I quickly realized that I had fooled myself. I cannot sever the past from my present works.

Wherever I stand, whatever I do, my history is very much a part of my work, its base lying in the sum total of selected fragments from the past.

There is a fine yet tensile thread that not only links each work to the other but also links medium to medium so that writing becomes an extension of drawing and painting which in turn become an extension of sculpture.

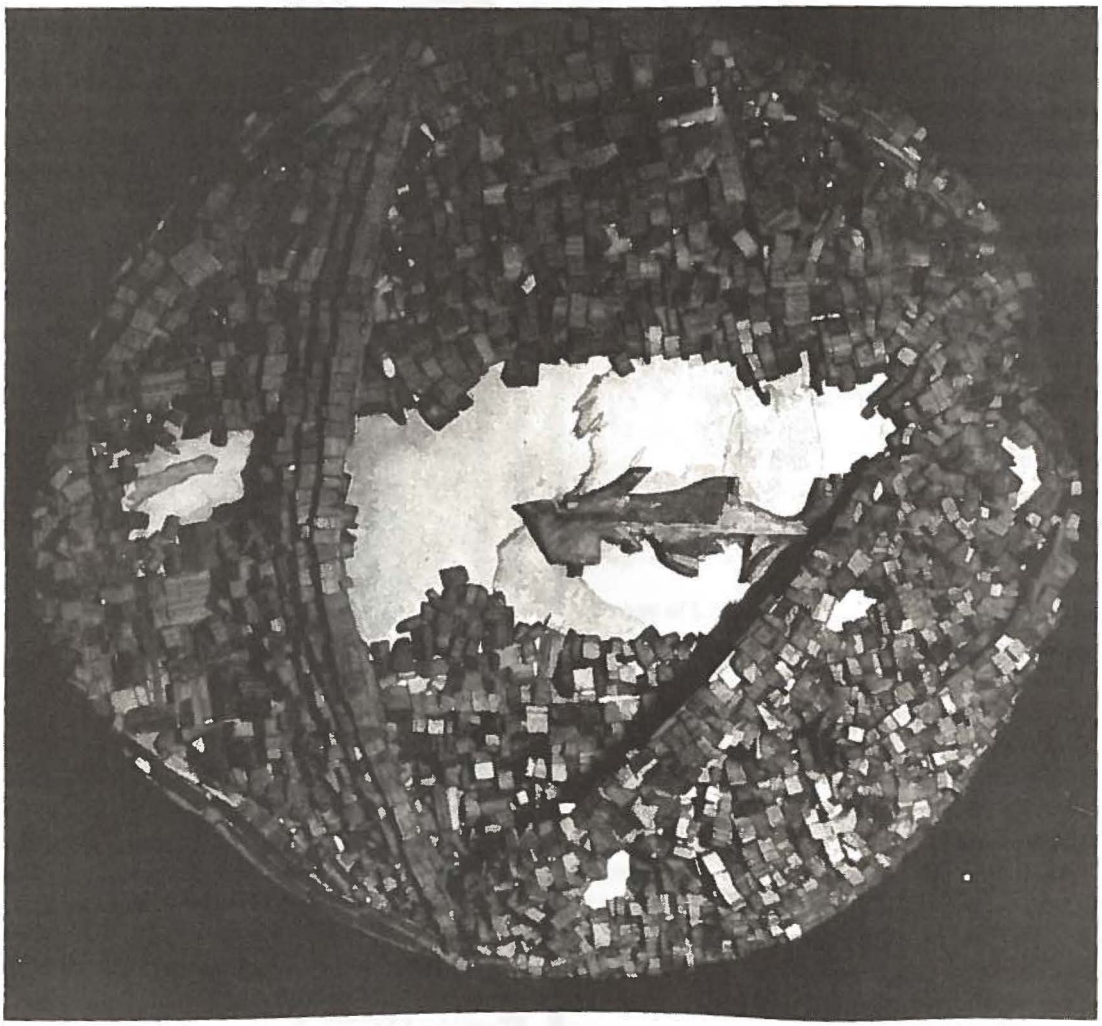
Temporal Vessel: Past 1984
approx. 6'h., casted cement fondu, steel, wood

In the west a line denotes a path
a circle in the east eternal return.
Hollowness the presence of that
which is absent. Cubes of glass
stretched over steel float above
grey asphalt wink and shimmer
and totem poles suspending
taut wires are consumed by
an opening.

Is there any difference between
what the eye perceives and what
is really there? A wave of water
resembles a wave of fire or a tongue
of fire for the tongue does
resemble a wave. I can see it.

Lying in that cavity called
the mouth it can create or
destroy. Speech is activated
by the motions of jaws,
tongue against palate and
teeth. And what is inside
comes spewing out.

Hasty scrawls journey across
an empty page. Any object
that impinges alter its shape
yet is absorbed. The hand
that follows a brush stroke
travelling swiftly across a
surface may change in
character but it still retains
that initial force.

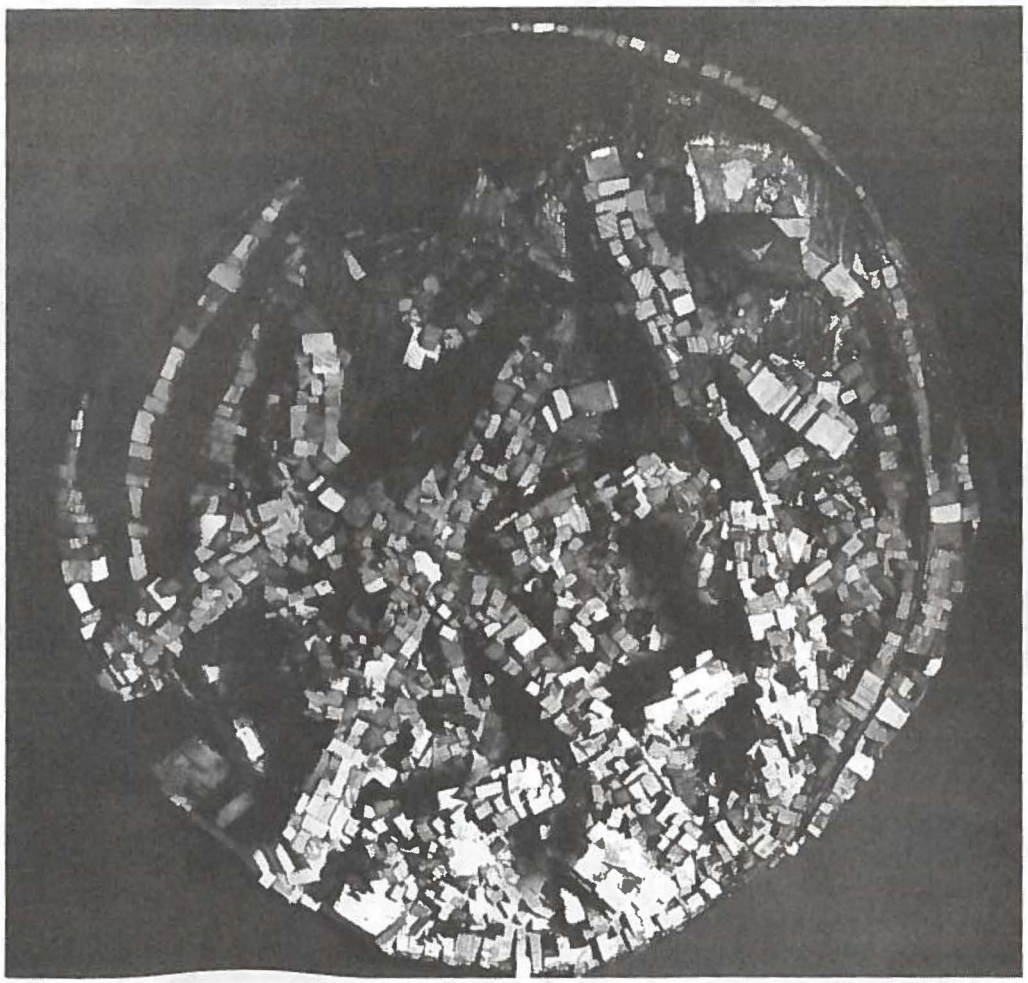


Sediment (detail of installation) 36" dia., 1986

There are vast tracts of land not far from Caymanns Parks where the water receded and the land was left barren. Only the rocks remain gaunt and riddled with holes. As far as the eye can see the earth is cracked, an enormous spider's web interrupted by scrub and meagre plants. The harsh light describes every crevice but is defeated by the deep hollows in the scores of large rocks scattered about.

An act set into motion usually continues toward its final moment.

Lunchtimes were spent at our favourite spot under the old eucalyptus tree. It was the only tall tree in sight, lean with three branches that had never been seen to bear any leaves. On Thursday afternoon as I came within sight of the old uke my feet stilled in horror. At first I thought that someone had chopped down the tree. But no, it had collapsed by itself, perhaps with age. Peering inside, I could see that for years its interior had been slowly gnawed away by albino cockroaches. They had carved intricate structures and caverns. Now the tree lay broken, its secrets open to the sky. The cockroaches were scurrying in all directions, searching for a place to hide from the all-encompassing light.



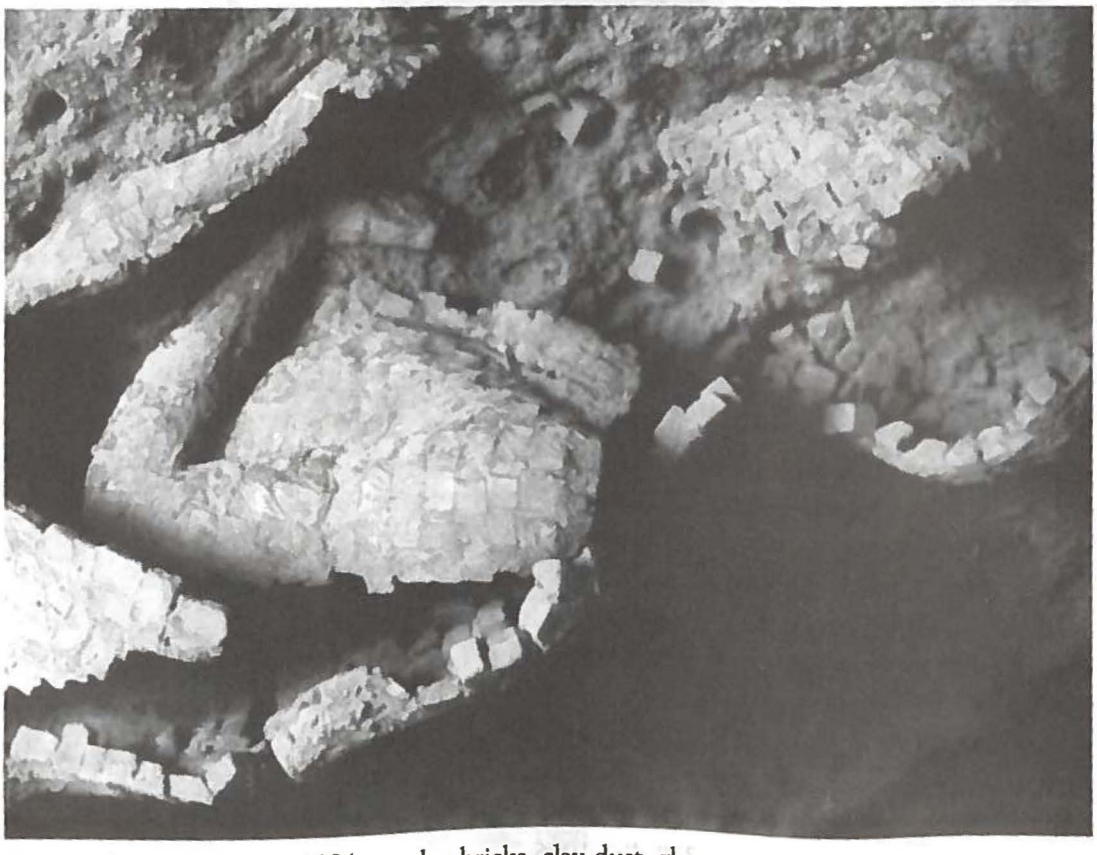
Sediment (detail of installation) 37" dia., 1986

The old ones say that whenever
there is a death in the family at
about the same time that a child
is born, the parents should not
attend the funeral. My uncle
died last Sunday. He had start-
ed the final phase a year ago.
By then the spirit had been
mangled. Only the body had
been left waiting.

To observe without being strangled
by emotions reside in that limbo
once again.

Towards midnight they came out of
the swamp onto the road foraging
for food.

We drove slowly on the ribbon
of asphalt that separated us
from the nine mile stretch of
glistening white sand border-
ing the sea. And when the
car spotlit scurrying shapes
we all leapt out, laughing and
screaming, tumbling over each
other to be the first to capture
one of those frantic shadows.
After filling our burlap bags,
we headed home to prepare
the feast. Now that the excite-
ment was over it seemed such
a shame to boil them, prise
open the shells, chomp the
legs between our teeth and pluck
out the succulent meat.
The shells would transform
from a sombre blue-grey into
firey to palest orange when
immersed in the huge cauldron
of bubbling water in which
was added a mixture of spices.
The feast went on endlessly
until one by one we all suc-
cumbed to the enticement of
sleep.



Temporal Vessel: Future 1984 clay bricks, clay dust, glue.

Temporal Vessel: Future (detail) 1984

According to the Chinese lunar calendar there is a rabbit in the moon.

One night the moon was so sated and full that it fell out of the sky. Rolling over and over it splintered into little pieces as it hurled towards the earth, showering the violet sky with gold.

I find myself beside a body of water that glistens in the moonglow. I feel impelled to wash. I half immerse myself and gazing down, see my skin peeling and falling away. I am sloughing my skin like a snake. Gradually I catch glimpses of my body's structure and become obsessed to reveal even more. My bones gleam creamy-white. My hair is the last to fall off and like shadowed islands they float out of sight. I turn towards the shore. As I emerge my bones crumple, scattering themselves among the pebbles on the beach.

Margaret L. Chen is a visual artist living in Toronto. She has recently completed a Master of Fine Arts at York University in Toronto.

The Invisible Ones

by Marjorie Agosin
translated by Cola Franzen

Marjorie Agosin is a poet and critic who was born in Santiago de Chile. She had published four collections of poems and two books of criticism.

TORTURE

For Rosa Montero and all those
who told her their stories

Slowly and in secret
the roof of my silenced mouth burning
and I already naked and
so far away
conspiring to trap
my nipples, thin wires of terror.
Their small fingers, sloughed off scales of bitter
wormwood
venture along that slow agony, through
obscured
brightness between my legs
and they, the idle hangmen
pant while
the moon's blood
howls on the sickly metal surface,
they wipe my forehead
so that later they can empty the
scattered leaves of my story
and between gaps of time
seconds of air
electric spears and tears
explode like falling leaves of unhinged warriors
fingernails spread out over the floor in flames
and menses,
teeth crushed by shocks and traitorous spittle
let go from the shore of my lips
now shorn of word, truth, light
now turned into something other,
even my hair splits, withers
among the ashes and fans out like doomed
petals
naked I am forced to face
each one of them
to confess to them
secrets I never had
uncertain living places
and before each silence,
black shrouds like those of mordant warlocks
coil round me to
consume the tongue that had nothing to tell
to strip the tongue
that once knew about birds, light and onions
in a garden
and again the torment of glowing wires
weaving me in
threads of ill omen, the soles of my feet, my
breasts shrunken by the terror of the
terrible green talons.
Now I am dead,
my name is Carmen, or Maria,
I am a woman
immersed in silence,
immersed in my nakedness,
an imprisoned
stone,
I am a dead woman who managed to survive
who told nothing
new
who in a matter of moments lost aromas, lilacs,
yellow,
while sleeping next to other bodies defecating,
dying
from pain and not from fear,
I am the woman who was blindfolded for a
second, for a month
and forever
impaled by the
eternal ceremony of
torture.

VIRGINIA

She knew that more than living
it was dying that required certain
preparations:
a walking stick such as unwary old men use
an immense stone stolen from the
earth
and the river
to sink into.

THRESHOLDS

From
  your eyes come
  multicolour threads
  swinging back and forth
at the
  threshold
    of
      my
      hair.

REMEMBERING THE MADWOMEN OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO

Written in memory of Marta Traba
(Died in the Avianca crash, Madrid, 1983)

There is nothing here,
the plaza, silent,
small, blue,
in the centre of candles that fan out
like alien shapes
circling
over the stones.

Is there anyone here?
It begins, the pilgrimage of the invisible ones
the procession,
the words of the deluded women,
they are, it is said,
the madwomen of the Plaza de Mayo
searching for eyes,
for warm hands,
searching for a body,
for your lips not to possess you
but so I can always call you
beloved.

Wrinkled, skeletal,
praying,
screaming in rage,
questioning
above the shapes
beyond the echoes,
the madwomen,
in Buenos Aires, in El Salvador,
in Treblinka
want to know,
have to know
where are their seventeen-year-old sons?
their husbands, fathers of their children?
the boyfriends of the youngest girls?
were they perhaps thrown into the fetid river of
  their judges?

They come near,
look at them how they flutter, the witches of
  truth
look at them how the rain plasters down
  their listless and demented hair
look at their feet, how small they are to bear
  the pain of abandonment,
the pain of indifference.

The madwomen,
holding fast to a photograph, tattered,
  wrinkled, faded, empty of uncertain
    memory
captive photograph
by whom? for whom?
look at the silence in the plaza
  of the madwomen, look how the earth
    scurries to hide
tires
falls back like one mortally wounded
  who only
wishes for rest,
and so it is only silence
  that comes to hear them
it is the silence
of the plaza
that listens to the
photographs
of the forgotten ones
here present.

The Well-Being of the Ageing Woman

by Victoria Lee, M.D.

INTRODUCTION

In Issue 2 of *Tiger Lily*, the article on health highlighted the factors affecting the well-being of our aged. A state of health implies not only absence of disease but a state of physical, mental and social well-being. Factors such as societal attitudes, social supports, income security and housing strongly influence one's degree of well-being. The aged may therefore encounter difficulties, but the problems faced by the ageing woman in our society are especially difficult, for she must deal with the double burden of being old *and* female. Not only must she cope with the consequences of the negative stereotyping of older women, but she must also confront the dilemnas of poverty, failing health, isolation and loneliness.

The concerns of the older woman can no longer be easily ignored, for the numbers of older women are increasing. In Canada, during the first half of this century, males over 65 slightly outnumbered females. The situation has now reversed. 1981 census figures indicated there were 124 women to every 100 men between the ages 65-79, and 184 women to every 100 men over 80. Figures for the U.S. are similar. In 1982, there were 16.6 million women over 65 compared to 10.7 million older men, a difference of 5.9 million women. By the year 2000, Statistics Canada predicts there will be 134 women to every 100 men aged 65-79, and 218 women to every 100 men over 80.

The reason for such figures is the widening gap between life expectancies for men and women. Longevity for women has increased at a greater rate over the years and women may expect to live an average of 7½ years longer than men. Because women are living longer and men are dying before women do, a large proportion of elderly women are widowed. Most will also remain widowed for the rest of their lives since men are more likely to remarry and tend to marry younger women. 1981 Canadian figures found that 3/4 of men over 65 were married while 1 out of 2 women were widowed. Many elderly single women do not live with family. Canadian census figures for 1981 found that 59% of men over 75 were living in families with their spouse or unmarried children. Women over 75 were more likely to live alone (36%) or in "collective dwellings" such as nursing homes (20%). Between 1961 and 1981, the proportion of women over 65 living alone had doubled from 16% to 32%.

To put it simply, there are increasing numbers of single elderly women living alone. What are the consequences of this?

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Elderly women are the poorest members of our society. In 1983, Statistics Canada defined the poverty level, the minimum income required to cover the basic necessities of life, as $9,538 for an individual living in an urban centre. In 1981, 62.2% of women over 65 lived below the poverty line, compared to 48.8% of men. 40% of single women over 65 had annual incomes less than $6,000, way below the poverty line. 77% of single women over 65 lived on less than $10,000 a year. Therefore, the majority of elderly women live below or very close to the poverty line. Figures in the U.S. are comparable and also indicate that the most disadvantaged group is that of older minority women.

Percentage with Income Below Poverty Line (1981)

	Age 55-64	*Over 65*
Females	*12.1*	*18.6*
White Females	*9.9*	*16.2*
Black Females	*33.7*	*43.5*
Hispanic Females	*21.2*	*27.4*

The majority of older women today have relied on their husbands for economic security and with widowhood have found themselves existing on minimal or even no personal income. Most have had to rely on governmental

supplementary programmes to bring their incomes up to survival levels. Even those who have worked have usually been financially ill-prepared for retirement; traditionally, women have been socialized to assume they will be supported by their spouses.

Worrying about economic survival can have profound effects on one's emotional health. An inadequate income can lead to less participation in social activities and consequent loneliness and isolation. Poverty also influences physical health. A nation-wide survey by Nutrition Canada in 1970-72 found older women were quite likely to have inadequate or less than adequate diets.

Medical Consequences

Old age also brings medical illness. Because women are living longer they are beginning to acquire an increased number of acute and chronic diseases. Statistics Canada in 1981 found that elderly women were more likely to be disabled: they reported an average of 38 disability days per person of which 15 were spent in bed, while men reported an average of 30 days of disability with 11 spent in bed. In people over 75, the numbers were even more drastic, with an average of 48 disability days for women and 31 days for men.

There are diseases of particular significance for women. For example, osteoporosis (thinning of bones) is more frequent in post-menopausal women and a common cause of fractures; reproductive tract malignancies peak in incidence in the 60's. However, medical research into these issues has lagged behind. As well, the anti-female bias of the medical establishment seems to intensify with age. The older woman runs the risk of overprescription of drugs, particularly minor tranquillizers. She may be subjected to surgical procedures such as hysterectomies and radical mastectomies which have not been adequately evaluated for their benefits. One of the most disturbing examples of negative medical attitudes towards women lies in the area of menopause. The menopausal woman is characterized as emotionally unstable and deteriorating medically and sexually. Yet, the majority of women pass through this process with minimal symptoms.

Emotional Consequences

Most destructive of all are the emotional consequences of being old and female. While men may be regarded as wiser, more powerful and more attractive as they grow older, women learn they are no longer physically attractive, cannot be sexual beings and, with loss of fertility, lose their usefulness in society. Self-esteem suffers and anxiety, depression, alcoholism and drug dependency can result. In our couple-oriented society, widows may find themselves particularily lost. Elderly women become invisible.

Future Directions

We cannot afford to dismiss the needs of such a significant sector of our population. Measures to ensure a healthy and secure environment for aged women must be taken on a number of different levels. At the level of social planning, adequate income and suitable housing are needed. Ideally, such women should be able to stay in their own homes. This implies adequate support services such as homemakers and visiting nurses. The medical establishment should focus on researching problems of concern to this age group, attempt to carefully evaluate the cost-benefit of particular surgical procedures and drugs and, most importantly, instill in medical personnel humane attitudes towards the aged and older women. At a more fundamental level, cultural change is necessary to eliminate the negative stereotypes directed against older women. Most of all, women themselves must learn to take political action. Younger women can participate in the process by increasing their awareness of the relevant issues affecting older women. Older women, too, can organize, define their own needs, and make themselves heard. Advocacy groups such as the Older Women's League in the U.S. have already proven successful in influencing government policy.

Women are living longer. Let us act to ensure we can also live better and happier lives.

Victoria Lee is a physician in her final year of specialty training in psychiatry in Toronto. ➤

Recommended Reading

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Native Languages Preservation: A Shared Native Dream

by Susan Daybutch Hare

"Maybe to protect ourselves we should start trying to regain those aspects of our culture that make us different." Amos Keyes, Six Nations Reserve.

The Ojibways of West Bay, the Maori's of New Zealand and the Six Nations of Ohsweken lead in efforts to retain Native languages.

Native people on many reserves, and in different parts of the world, struggle towards noble ends — such as retaining their languages and cultures. The struggle often seems in vain and the people encounter frustration from governments and sometimes from their own people.

When N'ungosuk started to evolve in 1982 through the efforts of parents, excitement and the good feeling that comes from doing something positive prevailed. N'ungosuk is an Ojibway language program for preschool-aged children. In 1982 — across the world in New Zealand the Maori's had the same idea. The Maori's wished to establish "language nests" or Native language immersion programs for preschool-aged Maori children. Their goal was the same as N'ungosuk — to preserve Native languages.

"Preschool children are cared for by Maori mothers and grandmothers, all of them experienced in the art of raising children and respected by the community as speakers of Maori". (The Politics of Aboriginal Language Preschools as Agents of Social Change, U. Of Waterloo, 1986.)

N'ungosuk itself, after four years of struggle to survive has taught 71 children, yet it has been described as: "A locally controlled Indian language immersion project at risk in a twilight zone of ill-defined government policy." (A Study in Aboriginal Language Renewal, by Dr. A. Hall, University of Sudbury, 1986.)

A First Language Academy is being instituted in the kindergarten program at Ohsweken, on the Six Nations reserve. According to Amos Keyes: "There are currently about 200 people who speak fluent Cayuga and another 200 who speak fluent Mohawk. Onondaga, Seneca and Tuscarora have less than 50 fluent speakers each."

Financial support of Native language programs are in a sort of purgatory. Each request to fund Native language programs must be finally approved by the Minister of Indian Affairs.

The Maori seem to be in a better situation — their equivalent to our Department of Indian Affairs has promoted and funded their "language nests" since 1982. Today, the Maori has 448 language nests in operation. Canada, a larger country by far, has only two that this author knows of — N'ungosuk in West Bay and the First Language Academy in Ohsweken.

The misconception by many non-native people — that of Indians sitting around the reserve waiting for a government handout — should be put to rest when one witnesses the farsighted vision of the Native people in West Bay, the Maori people in New Zealand and the Native people of Ohsweken.

Even in the midst of struggle, beams of hope appear — like when one government official is convinced of the importance of preserving Native languages, or when one hears of a similar struggle that ends in success across the world.

While Canada and its Indians seem to be light years away from the progress seen in New Zealand, coverage of programs like N'ungosuk and the First Language Academy in major Canadian newspapers is another avenue that is needed to inform the Canadian public of the importance of preserving Native languages.

Susan Daybutch Hare is an educator and lives in Northern Ontario.

A European Vacation

by Arun Mukherjee

She had never had such an insipid breakfast in her whole life of thirty odd years: cold, over-brewed tea, hardened, white toast and a cold, hard-boiled egg. The rest of the girls in the residence knew that one had to get to the dining room immediately after the bell rang and not ten minutes later. Her three roommates had thrown off their blankets, wrapped around their house coats and got into their slippers with military agility as soon as the shrillness of the bell had rudely woken them up. Kamlesh had asked her if she wasn't coming for breakfast. But she could never eat anything until she had gone to the toilet to empty her bladder and at

least rinsed her mouth, if not brushed her teeth. She had never had to.

So, by the time she had performed her essential rituals and got to the dining room, the girls were already leaving. She couldn't imagine how they did it day after day, pushing off the blankets at the sound of that shrill bell. Especially today. It was a typical, world-famous London morning. It had rained all night and hence it was awfully cold and spongy wet. And, of course, there was no sunshine. Cold, overcast, and depressingly gray. Just like Toronto!

She could have killed Sushant at this moment. Her extremely solicitous and well-meaning husband who had packed her a suitcase, bought her a ticket and a tourist guide, and literally thrown her out of the house to "enjoy" herself after a hard year of study. He had loved his magnanimity. While he was going to work all summer in the sweaty, soupy, unbearable heat of a Toronto summer, he was sending his wife off to a "well-deserved vacation." Only, she had never travelled alone and she was scared. In India, her parents used to see her off at Jhansi, and her uncle would take her off the train at Delhi. That had been the extent of her independence. Her parents were afraid and so was she. In India, if you are a woman, you get to know the limits of your freedom pretty soon. As a teenager, she used to read books like *Shangri La*, *Around the World in Eighty Days* and *Kidnapped* and dream of going on such adventures herself. But she had stopped going out in her own little town after dusk when, one day, she was absolutely taken aback by a high-speed cyclist who drove past her at great speed and hit her extremely hard on her breast. She had immediately understood then why her parents constantly worried about her. And why her friend Usha constantly switched sides with her so that she wouldn't be on the road side of the pavement. The bitch, she had thought. Using me and exposing me so that she could be safe!

And here she was, all alone in London with a travel guide because Sushant had decided that she must grow up. After all, they had been living in Toronto for three years now and had seen the freedom with which the white women carried themselves. She had envied their freedom, their lack of self-consciousness. They talked to men without blushing and without lowering their eyes. And they did not titter or laugh nervously in the company of men, the way she and her friends used to do at the university. And how she envied the freedom of their clothes. Her sari was always in her way, whether she was going up the stairs or carrying her books. The palla would constantly come off her shoulder and she had become so used to pulling it back that it had become a reflex with her to take her right hand to her left shoulder every minute or so to put her palla in place. She had hated the day she had been forced to make a transition to saris. For that had also been the day when her bicycle riding and badminton playing had come to a stop. Though some women performed the oddest feats while wearing their saris — like doing yoga exercises and driving scooters — she just felt so constrained simply having it on that she felt like doing nothing but simply sit and keep sitting, for even getting up while wrapped in six yards of material was an awful achievement for her. For you constantly have to check that the pleats are in order and the palla is back on the shoulder.

In the beginning, she had worn only saris in Toronto even though there was no need to. There were no in-laws breathing down her neck, nor the nosy women of the neighbourhood in her hometown who lost no time in coming down on her when she tried going out in her pre-marriage shalwar-kameez outfits. Their comments were so sharp that she had given up trying. The words still came back to her mind and evoked a sharp pain every now and then: "Rama, you modern girls have no modesty. We never stepped out of the house without our sari six inches down our face. And you! You behave as though you are still unmarried! Look at you, no bindi, no earrings, a naked neck! And just one bangle on your wrist! My God, it is really Kalyug we live in."

There was no point arguing with those neighbours because they were the norm. She could fight with her mother but the cutting tongues of these women not only hurt her, they knew how to hurt her by making her mother suffer. For they would leave no opportunity get past them without commenting on the audacity of "modern" girls. And so, she had adapted.

And the habit had continued in Toronto. With a new twist. Here, the sari made her exotic and her white classmates would tell her how elegant, how feminine she looked. And the women wanted to learn how to put it on. In the early days, she had liked the attention. Also, she didn't want to get spoilt because they were going to go back after their studies and it would be doubly hard to get used to the imprisonment having tasted freedom once. But, then, one day Sushant had come home with two bikes. And a pair of jeans and a T-shirt for

her. And since then she had worn nothing but jeans. And the bike! It was luxurious to go zooming down Harbord Avenue, the summer breeze blowing away your hair. Yes, soon after getting her bike and her jeans, she had clipped her hair short.

And so, it was not such a surprise, after all, that Sushant had now pushed her out to have a vacation by herself. They had changed so much in only three years. There were no old rules that they did not feel like breaking in their present exhilaration.

But this Y and its strict regimentation she hadn't bargained for. She had come in late last night and the cold dinner of mashed potatoes, boiled carrots, canned soup and a chunk of ham which she did not touch for her vegetarianism she couldn't let go had been totally insipid. She had been unable to push it down her throat, hungry as she was. But she had still thanked her stars when she found out that she would have been locked out if she had come only five minutes later. The matron had drily told her to get acquainted with the rules if she wanted to stay on.

She found out that she must be back by 10 p.m. if she wanted to get in. And that was really no hardship. She had just been wandering around the city with her tourist guide. Dutifully visiting the recommended spots. She had spent a whole day in the Tait Gallery, barely comprehending the import of all that art the West had decided to revere. It had been a depressing experience. Going in there without any training and point of view. She seemed to have walked miles on end and her back was hurting awfully.

And this morning again. She must consult her travel guide and go out and see something. For it would be such a waste to sit all day in the residence that would be empty in less than an hour. She must go "see" something and take a few pictures with the camera Sushant had bought especially for this "vacation."Oh, why couldn't he have come along and they could have had a wonderful time. But no. He just had to do it to her. Another step in the uncharted ways.

She reluctantly left the table and decided to get ready. She will just go out and follow the flow. No more Tait Gallery and British Museum. Today she will go to the famous Piccadilly Circus and Oxford Street.

It was strange, really strange to be all alone like that. No one knew where she was. Not even Sushant. The bastard. He must be gloating over his magnanimity for spending all his hard-earned money on his wife so she could "enjoy" herself. And here she was. All she wanted was to stay in her little appointed place, go where her husband would take her, do what he would tell her to do. In a funny way, that is what she was doing. He had decided and she had come. He had bought the jeans and she had worn them. He had asked her to marry him and she had married him.

But what was she herself? Had she a mind? Did she know what she wanted? Did she really love Sushant or was it that she had married him because her parents had heard of her having gone out with him to the movies? Just imagine. She hadn't thought that they would hear of this transgression of hers one hundred miles away from home, at the university. But obviously, another student from her hometown had seen her and dutifully reported it to her mother on his visit home. And even before she had made up her mind about Sushant, they had made up theirs and they said the boy was good-looking and from a good family, so why not? And so she had been married off. She had been romanticizing about a great rebellion on her part. How she would shock them with the news. How they would plead and protest and scream. How she would walk out and how she would go with Sushant to the court. Nothing like that had happened. She had been married like a good girl. And her mother had boasted to everybody that Sushant had written to her asking for her daughter's hand instead of asking her first, unlike the "modern boys." No, sir, it was no "love marriage," she had repeatedly told everybody.

She was nothing, just a piece of plasticene. She had no will, no personality. She was an expanse of flesh with some reflex actions and some urges like hunger and pain. And sex? Maybe. She was never too sure. She did like it but wasn't supposed to like it and so got all confused. What a life she had had! Do this, wear that, go there, come here. No thought of her own. No adventure. No self-respect, no self-love. She had done nothing. She had participated in nothing. She had lived in a walled circle and had got so used to it that the outside world made no sense. It was frightening.

The roar of the traffic blasted her ears. The crowds on the street intimidated her. They were all going about their business. She had none. She had not sailed on any ships, held no responsibilities, made no decisions, suffered for none. The grayness of the London sky smote her with a heaviness she had never experienced before. The people, the buses and

cars, the noise, the thin drizzle, altogether came down like lead on her soul and made her want to die, to disappear from this world altogether. For what was her life? Nothing. No one had ever expected her to "do" anything. She was expected to obey her parents, her neighbours, her in-laws, her husband. In fact, she had obeyed so much that she obeyed even strangers simply out of habit.

My God, what would Sushant think if he ever found out how little interested she was in living? For he did love her. He was the one who insisted that she study at U. of T. instead of staying home and cooking his meals. The other Commonwealth wives were doing exactly that and often commented on her jeans and her bike and her books. Going to school had been worth it, if for nothing else than for their envious looks. But every time they spoke, the wisdom of centuries spoke and cut into her resolutions: "What is the point of women studying? All they need to do is go live with in-laws and cook and raise children." And really, she couldn't tell what really was the point. What did it teach her or do for her to read James and Joyce and Shelley and Byron. She hardly understood their concerns or the complexity her professors were always talking about.

She decided she had had enough of touring that day. She turned back to go back to the Y. It would take more than an hour just to find her way on the map and get there.

When she got back, Kamlesh and Georgina had already returned from wherever they worked. Georgina was brushing her hair and Kamlesh was busy plucking her eyebrows. "So what did you do today?" They both spoke at once.

She managed to paste a smile on her face and give them a fantastic description of her walk on Oxford Street. But neither of them was very impressed. "Oh, how boring," Georgina said. "London is so boring. I don't know why you are wasting your time here," said Kamlesh. She couldn't have agreed more.

But what they both wanted to hear about was Canada. "Oh, how lucky you are to live in Canada." "Here there are no dark, tall and handsome men one could fall in love with. They are so rude and uninteresting where I work." Kamlesh wanted to know how she could come to Canada. She asked how she had come to London in the first place. "Oh, my dad is in the Indian Foreign Service, that's why I am here, you know. I don't want to go back to India if I can help it." Georgina wanted to know if Canadian men were better than the British men. "You know, I dream of a husband who will take my parcels from my hand and open the door of the car." Kamlesh, of course, wanted the same, having read the same novels. "Oh, I wish my dad can fix me a husband in the United States. I have this fantasy about travelling with a handsome man at the wheel in an open-top car." Georgina cut her off. "You are so lucky, Kamlesh. Your dad can find you a rich guy. My folks expect me to find one on my own. What a hassle." Kamlesh turned towards her this time. "And isn't she lucky! Her husband is so modern. He has sent her off just like that. What make of a car does your husband drive? Does he always open the door for you?"

She began to laugh so hard Georgina and Kamlesh couldn't figure out what was wrong. She laughed and laughed until tears came down her eyes. She didn't know if they would understand if she told them that it was more fun zooming down Harbord Avenue with or without her husband than anything else she had ever done in her life. That the only authentic sensation she had ever felt was the Toronto summer air blowing away her hair while she energetically pedalled on to get to Robarts Library and to her carrel there. They wouldn't understand and she wasn't going to tell them.

Arun Mukherjee, originally from India, has a Ph.D. and teaches English Literature at the University of Toronto.

Working With Collectives

An Interview with Larissa Cairncross and Nila Gupta from Toronto's Women's Press

by Ayanna Black

In Issue 2 of Tiger Lily *we began an interview with Toronto Women's Press. The final section of that interview is presented here — conversations with two Women of Colour: Larissa Cairncross and Nila Gupta who requested to be interviewed separately.*

TIGER LILY

Have you belonged to any collectives other than the Toronto Women's Press?

CAIRNCROSS

No — this is my first experience with working in a collective. I have done other kinds of political work that are based on collective organization but Women's Press is my first experience with a collective — Canadian style.

When I left South Africa I was still in high school so most of the political work on South Africa that I have been involved in happened in Toronto. The very nature of the ideology implied by that kind of work imposes a certain kind of collective structure, it is not *overtly* collective...it is not a self-conscious collective in the way Women's Press and feminist organizations are.

We have a different approach...it is not something that we sit down and talk through. It is simply assumed that we are working in small groups and we are working with people who are committed to the idea. It's not an area where any one person would have more expertise than any other. The criteria is the

amount of commitment you have to the cause you are opposing.

TIGER LILY

Does this type of working structure relate to an African tradition — a communal way of working together?

CAIRNCROSS

Not particularly. There is no *one* traditional culture that anyone could point to as being specifically Black South African. There isn't any *one* cultural stream that people would bring to a South African gathering since it would be made up of a myriad of backgrounds and experiences.

TIGER LILY

Are you saying that for your group working collectively was not a conscious ideology, but a way of life?

CAIRNCROSS

That's right. We don't spend too much time talking about it because our main concern is the work rather than the way in which we are going to do it.

TIGER LILY

How did you get involved with Women's Press?

CAIRNCROSS

I joined the fiction group about a year and a half ago. When I joined it was an outlet for my interests in publishing and writing and also fiction — my favourite kind of reading. It was new for me to get involved in a group that concentrated largely on women and their positions. The way the press is organized was also new for me.

I came to realize that my involvement in the collective has been largely peripheral despite their claims to having a collective process.

TIGER LILY

Can you elaborate on this?

CAIRNCROSS

My activity in the fiction group hasn't been an integral part of the collective. I also represent the only Black woman in the group and possibly the only Immigrant woman. If I had been an integral part of the group and its decision-making process then these issues would have been far more prominent in the course of my involvement with the group. I have not been called upon to present these points of view to the group as a major consideration. Instead most of my contribution has been as individual — as *one* of ten people.

TIGER LILY

Would you rather represent Black women on the collective than being a individual?

CAIRNCROSS

Oh yes...I don't see any other value to my being on this collective at all. They already have ten people who can give individual points of view or middle-class points of view. They don't need extra women. What they strongly need is a Black woman. I'm presupposing that this Black woman would be politically conscious and have a particular interest in speaking from her perspective.

TIGER LILY

How do you feel about having only one Black woman or one woman of Colour on the collective?

CAIRNCROSS

I don't agree with it. The *one* Black person or woman of Colour is reduced to a minority voice and in the collective process that means one vote...one voice. It is quite difficult for one voice to speak out as loudly as it should...there is an underminingof self-confidence and you are constantly on the other side of the discussion facing nine or ten people who have an opposing point of view. It is always a minority situation.

TIGER LILY

What kind of changes do you see in the future for Black women or women of Colour... in Women's Press and in general?

CAIRNCROSS

Women's Press needs a lot more involvement from Black women and women of Colour.

The Press and the direction of its publishing is in danger of becoming irrelevant if they don't. I would like to see *real* involvement not just a token presence.

The involvement must happen in terms of actual numbers and activities at the decision-making level. Generally speaking, I would like involvement from many other groups and people who understand the fundamental problems of our society, whether they particularly involve women or not.

We need the kind of attitudes that would analyse our society from a leftist perspective — socialist in character — and deal with problems and take action: recognize the inequities and various discriminations. A society that recognizes why and how these inequities exist...that they are not accidental but exist to serve a particular purpose. In order to take appropriate action *understanding* this is essential. I encourage and support a greater involvement in our society by people who are politically active.

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TIGER LILY

How did you become involved with Women's Press, Nila?

GUPTA

I became involved with Women's Press through the lesbian manuscript group who wanted to publish a lesbian fiction anthology. They decided they didn't have any representation from women of Colour since they weren't getting any submissions from them. They wrote to the Women of Colour group of which I was a member — a political and social organization located in Toronto — and asked us if any member of our group was interested in joining.

I am involved in women's writing and writing by women of Colour because I feel it is crucial for us to define our own lives and to break the hegemony of the existing racism in the publishing industry that either silences our images or produces or constructs racist images about us.

I'd only been involved in publishing through Fireweed, a feminist journal, and that was an entirely different structure. Women's Press was a more established press; it was larger and the mechanism of controls were more hidden, more subtle and information was extremely hard to get. It is not just women of Colour who feel that but any women who are not inside their cliqué.

TIGER LILY

Was your experience with the Press a positive one?

GUPTA

Let's just say that Women's Press was very alien to me and I really felt like the outsider. I felt I didn't know what was going on. It wasn't a question of us being naive. I was very aware that there was a potential for us to be used. It raises questions of how we were brought in.

We did not have access to information so we were forced to rely on the managing editor for information. There was no way we could go through the files.

TIGER LILY

How did things work out with the lesbian fiction anthology?

GUPTA

First of all, information about the anthology had already been sent out — letters and ads calling for short stories — to the mainstream, feminist publishing avenues. You know, to magazines and women's centres — all basically white feminist avenues which don't really circulate in other communities.

The way in which the anthology was envisioned had already been decided. Since we had come in much later we were told it would be an anthology of fiction — short stories. This decision was critical because to look at the way in which our lives are lived, we wanted to look at all the different ways of writing. For example: the diary form, short stories, poetry, a taped interview, or god knows what else: the many ways in which we create new forms of writing. I thought I would like to see all of that.

Even in my own life, I am so busy that for me it would be easier and quicker to write a poem. In fact most of the things I write are poetry. So calling upon my friends who like to write and to ask just for short stories — they don't have that. There is nothing they could give to me. They would have to sit down and write something and maybe they cannot find the time to do that.

I felt very frustrated — I felt the women at the Press had already defined what the anthology would be like and at the time they did not

tell us how flexible they could be. I asked whether there was any possibility that we could send out another call for other work. We asked if there was a possibility to send another mailout to different places and advertise through the Black women's collective newspaper, or mail out letters to our friends who are in other cities, to community newsletters and so forth. They said yes, we could do that but since the time was very short it ended up that no one really picked up on it. No one there wanted to do it so it fell upon the women of Colour to do the work with the exception of one white woman who took control and still phrased the call for work in a way which I find inaccessible.

It was a discouraging and frustrating process when information is not brought to you and if you don't know the rules of order, it's very hard to play the game. As it stands right now, they define *women* for white women and now, for working-class women.

TIGER LILY

Do you feel women of Colour will be able to work with such groups in the future? What kinds of changes would you like to see? If you had a choice in the situation how would you rather go into it?

GUPTA

I think it really depends on *where* you are talking about. It was very interesting that when we women of Colour came in together white women dropped out of the Press. White women were quite frightened and threatened and were not willing to engage in the struggle because they did not want to have to be challenged or to change or to give up power.

One thing we learned is to never go in alone — to always go in with a number of women of Colour who support you and who have politics behind them and who understand what is really going on. Try and work with women who are on your side, who are in some way showing solidarity. It is not enough just to talk about it.

White women must take the responsibility to learn about racism and to learn about their own power and how they use that power. Learning about how they use that power in oppressive ways and learning how to give us power is what it is really all about.

These women are oppressed as women but *within* that structure they have class privilege and they have race privilege.

I think that women of Colour have to consolidate; we have to come together, we have to walk in there and take over and call the shots and work with the women who remain — those who are in solidarity with us — and work with them to create new ways of working together. I am not willing to wait for white women to educate themselves about racism.

I feel it is very much like South Africa. You are not going to educate or do a little-consciousness-raising session with white people there. I mean it *is* a power struggle and individual white people may be in solidarity with you but as a class, as a group, they are not. They have to address the structures which give them power and privilege.

TIGER LILY

Do you see women of Colour taking the lead to make the change?

GUPTA

I think they will be the only ones who will do it. I don't think we can wait for white women to do it for us. I mean I think it would be politically suspect if white women did it for us. It's not in people's interest to do things for us, it is in our interest to do things for ourselves.

Women of Colour must have access to publishing. We don't yet have a place. Now *Tiger Lily* is obviously an outlet, and *Fireweed*, to a certain extent, is another place.

We chose to remain within Women's Press because we wanted to see writings by women of Colour and we felt that it would at least be a beginning.

Women of Colour have to find a way in which to come together and have consciousness-raising sessions. We need to organize instead of blaming each other.

I think the whole point to feminist publishing is to give women a voice, but white feminists have appropriated the term *women* to come to mean only certain types of women. They have excluded the voices of working-class women and women of Colour and Native women. I feel very angry that Women's Press is only presenting a certain type of women's publishing. So I want to change it, I feel that they have the resources for this. I want to work with the resources that are there. If women of Colour came together in solidarity I think we would be quite a force.

Ayanna Black is a poet whose first book of poetry, No Contingencies, *was recently published by Williams-Wallace.*

The Relevance of Pay Equity

by Zanana Akande

To say that women have always worked is only to emphasize a statement that should be redundant. Yet it must be repeated if only to remind society and ourselves.

For much of the work women did, and continue to do, is seen as an extension of their nature, and an expression of their femininity — housekeeping, child-rearing, feeding the family, and nursing the sick plus any other unlabelled and unclaimed responsibilities that are concomitant with family living and which have always been women's work; but for such "labours of love" we were never economically rewarded.

History's incidental references to women's work on the family farms and in the family businesses paint a faded picture of our supportive but subordinate labours. Even our work in the industrial sectors during times of economic strife and war is described as an offering of loyal service to support the real workers — men. Although women's takeover of male-dominated jobs during such periods ensured continued production in all spheres, in general, women were paid less, if they were paid at all, for their labours. Nor was their achievement seen as sufficient argument for granting them equal status with men in competition for traditional male jobs once countries passed the period of need. Nations returned to business as usual, men and women to their former roles.

As with every sweeping tide, there is always some residual change. Some women remained in the labour force. These women were motivated by need — their own and their families — encouraged by the advertised need for their services in the expanding industrial centres, and buoyed by their successful but temporary experiences in the workforce. They entered the labour force at the lowest rung of the occupational ladder, in clerical, sales, and service roles. And today in spite of the fact that women compose 44 percent of Canada's labour force, 58 percent of these still remain on the lowest rung of the occupational ladder.

These are the new feminine ghettos, but the old pay disparity remains. In Canada for every dollar earned by men, women earn slightly more than sixty cents. In most countries of the world the difference between men's and women's salaries is equal to or greater than that difference in Canada. Yet many of these women are single heads of households, and the sole support for themselves and their children.

Visible minority women find themselves at the base of the employment issue. Allied with their brothers to fight the oppression of racism, they too often find themselves subject to male priorities, definition, leadership, and domination. Joining the sisterhood to oppose sexism, but beginning the struggle from a different vantage point, women of colour are most often without the benefits of privilege or precedence. Having pushed for change as integral parts of both groups, they are forced to take heart in legislative gains, rewards for them of more projected significance than immediate substance, for women of colour are the last to reap the employment harvest.

Admittedly, such legislation does open doors and acknowledge the possibility of even greater advancement for ourselves and our daughters. The FEMALE EMPLOYEES FAIR REMUNERATION ACT, passed in Ontario in 1951, made it illegal to pay men and women different wages for the same job, correcting an obvious but formerly common inequity. But legislation, well intended though it may be, can be subverted and, at best, takes a long time to effect widespread change.

There are glaring inequities which must be corrected. Women's unemployment rates are higher than men's. Many require training to increase their employability, but often such training can be managed only with affordable child care. Existing as they do at the end of the

labour market, and then often spasmodically because of intermittent unemployment, they reap low pensions or no pensions, and so frequently, as old women are, dependent on subsidies or families' goodwill. Often that goodwill and charity become the responsibility of families who themselves are victims of limited employment opportunities because of the conditions previously described.

Equity employment is a cause championed by another piece of legislation, Bill 154. By the passing of this bill employers will be required to pay the same wages to men and women doing dissimilar work, if that work is of equal value to the employer. Intrinsic in the very explanation of pay equity is the need to define the value of the work to the employer. Such a relative definition, leans toward the subjective, and must be protected from the limitations and bias of such interpretation.

The development of job evaluation scales is an attempt to make objective the value to the company of a particular job. The difficulties involved in developing and implementing a job evaluation scale which equates and compares different jobs relative to skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions, are extensive. Such comparisons demand the complete analysis of each job, male-dominated and female-dominated; the categorization of jobs into groups for comparison, and pay adjustments even for union negotiated salaries. Traditionally, employers have assumed as threshold many job-related, but unspecified expectations, for which workers were not compensated. This is especially true in female dominated jobs, like the clerical.

Since many companies claim financial distress, unions fear that greater pay equity between male and female dominated jobs will result in a reduction in negotiated pay increases to accommodate the increase in cost of wages for women. Some female dominated jobs are so unique that they defy categorization and comparison to male dominated jobs.

These are valid concerns for all women, but visible minority women must monitor the implementation of the legislation and actively work to ward her inclusion in its effect LEST jobs formerly open to them, because of their relatively low status and pay, become more difficult to achieve; and LEST increased recognition of their labour value and its attendant monetary rewards delay their application for or promotion to higher status jobs.

Zanana Akande is an educator and school principal in Toronto. ➤

There's No Such Thing As Black and White:

The Story of Molly Johnson

by Marva Jackson

Illusion, panache and hard work — three constants in the many-faceted personality of Molly Johnson. Balancing her passion for art with her work on two long term music projects, Molly sings with hard-hitting funk band Alta Moda and jazz ensemble Blue Monday. The notoriety which these activities have brought her has accentuated the influence of friends and family for Molly.

"It's important for me to have a strong base, a small amount of friends who know me. It's important to keep the same friends. They keep you in line. They're my motivation."

Molly's motivation comes from many sources, not the least of which are: "Johnson women — we work. We're driven for no other reason than...I learned from my mother."

Her mother, born Suzanne Labrie-Clark, met and married W.W.II veteran John Johnson while he was attending university in Switzerland in 1949. Two years later John returned to the United States and found that jobs were scarce for a Black man, even with an honours degree in sports education. His 18 year-old wife had another problem working in the "white world" by day and slipping into the Philadelphia ghetto at night.

"In that day and age you didn't move back and forth. If you married into the black community, you were black."

Encouraged by a job offer from the Y.M.C.A., John and Suzanne moved to St. Thomas, Ontario in 1956 with their two small children, Tabby and Clark, and young adopted-cousin Ronnie.

Born a year later in Toronto, Molly describes herself as a "sickly child" because of "celiac", a disease in premature babies where the stomach lining is missing. Regardless, four years later Molly benefitted from Suzanne's discovery that her own inability to play the piano was due to a learning disorder. The disorder manifested itself in their son, Clark and Suzanne enrolled him in dance classes to improve his coordination. These classes opened doors to the theatre world for all of the Johnson children when an agent, a friend of the dance teacher, organized an audition at the Royal Alexander Theatre. Suzanne had brought Molly along to watch brother Clark, 8, and sister Tabby, 9, try out for parts in the musical South Pacific. When it was found that Tabby was too tall, Suzanne remembers that: "They put Molly on the stage and told her to sing. She had been hearing the other kids do it...she started belting out the song and we could hear her in the last row. They signed her as the understudy...." The children worked with Black actress Alice Webb, in the cast of South Pacific and later Porgy and Bess, who taught them the importance of versatility in the theatre.

Whether giving sizzling performances with

Alta Moda or developing "a living-room type of ambience" during Blue Monday shows, Molly demonstrates her versatility as a vocalist and songwriter. Still she views her real talent as her ability "to assemble the right people to get the job done." Molly's musical relationship with jazz pianist Aaron Davis (Manteca and the Aaron Davis Band) is one of the finest examples of this.

"I was more friends with Clark and Tabby because we all went to Deer Park (school)...I got to know her (Molly) better when she was performing with a band called Scarlet Clark and the Suburbs...I saw her audition for 'Ain't Misbehavin' and it was neat because she was kinda' quiet and seemed very shy. She was different from the other people auditioning. There was something seductive about the way she sang...."

In the winter of 1983 Molly asked Aaron to accompany her on Monday nights at the Cameron, the downtown club where Molly lives. Blue Monday began as a fun, informal early evening event with Aaron often rushing off to later performances at other clubs. Their renditions of a few Gershwin and Billie Holiday tunes drew enthusiastic audience response which led to "opening gigs for people like Donovan, Richard Thompson and can you believe it, Al Stewart." This popularity led to the expansion of Blue Monday with other ace Toronto jazz players such as saxophonist Bill Grove and bassist Bryant Didier, members of the jazz/funk group Whitenoise, joining regularly. In particular one of Aaron's favourite bass players David Piltch became a steady addition and the trio performed as Ruby Tuesday adding motown tunes to their repertoire.

Aside from shows at the Stage Door Cafe, where publicist/promoter Gino Empry and lawyer Bernie Feidler "clinched the deal" for the Blue Monday big band's week long debut at the prestigious Imperial Room, there is one other major highlight in the jazz group's history. Aaron tells an interesting story about Molly and the Edmonton Jazz Festival.

"We played a club called Andantes. I remember Cecil Taylor and other jazz greats coming by after they had played and saying 'Wow, man! Who is this chick?' because Molly'd be sitting reading the (song) charts before we'd start. Then she'd sing and they were going on about how great she is! She really has a way with an audience."

The transfer of Blue Monday from the gritty, smoke-filled cool of Queen St. club, the Cameron, to the glitter of the Imperial Room, " the Vegas showroom of Canada", in the fall of 1986 increased exposure for a talent that has been at least 20 years in the making. Years of theatrical performance aside, Molly began seriously developing her voice when at the age of 14, unknown to her mother, she passed an audition for the Banff School of Fine Arts. The legal entrance age was 18 and when the officials realized Molly's age, they accepted her on the condition that her older sister attend as well.

Tabby had begun her theatrical career in earnest at age 16 making a living as one of 30 chosen from 2,000 people who auditioned for the highly successful Toronto production of the rock musical Hair. She returned to school three years later attending Brock University. Molly's belief in Tabby as one of her major influences ranks with her study of the civil rights movement and the lives of Billie Holiday and Little Richard. This stems from Tabby's progress as a multi-talented performer touring with Motown funkateer Rick James, appearing in numerous TV programs and mounting her own club revues. Early in her career Tabby orchestrated sellout shows at established jazz venue Cafe des Copains.

"I was doing old standards, blues, and theatrical show tunes. Obscure tunes was what I worked on. I was working with a piano. When I did that in '79 I had all kinds of people coming down, great press...Record companies saying 'Well, I don't understand. It's not marketable'... So it's 7 years later, even 5 years later, not saying that I was the only one, but I was the only one that I knew of doing that type of thing. At that time you either did Top 40 or theatre. There was no middle ground. Now you have your Sade's, your Molly's"

Comparisons are too easily made between the sisters and Molly rarely talks about their differences. What little conversation there is indicates that room exists for growth in their relationship when Molly says, "I wish we communicated more...worked more together."

Communication is essential to Molly and she has very definite views on everything from soap operas (her favourite is 'The Young and Restless') to defining 'black music'.

"Why barriers?! 'Black music' is music. Why do we have to segregate when white play black and vice versa? And where do I fit in. I am concerned about motivating young Blacks through my lyrics. The lyrics of most 'Black music' are bad. I could see the end of the road when I was 14."

Molly's major theme is breaking down barriers. She pays attention to success stories

about Black Americans. She tells tales about her parents sheltering members of the sixties' activist group, the Black Panthers and her mother working with native Indians.

Suzanne, now a community development worker and small business consultant in Ottawa, separated from John many years ago but stayed true to her belief in the importance of her role as a mother.

"Being a mixed family (my grandmother was Metis and John's grandmother was American Indian) I had to make a choice, to give them (the children) pride in their Black heritage. As far as the world is concerned they're going to judge them as Black and so they have a responsibility to be people that the Black race will be proud of...."

She's proud of all her children's career's — Ronnie as a special education teacher, Clark as an actor, Tabby as a singer/actress, and of course Molly as a singer/songwriter.

Guitarist Norman Orenstein provides the music beds for the majority of Molly's lyrics. They are the nucleus of Alta Moda. In 1980 Molly worked as a session singer for disco kings KC and the Sunshine Band in Florida.

"Ted Nugent gave us his down time. So I called up Orenstein who came down with his girlfriend Resa, who fed us by doing odd sewing jobs...."

In pioneer drum machine days it wasn't necessarily cool to have a scantily clad girl singer (Resa designed most of Molly's costumes) front a band with a backdrop of TV monitors and tape machines. With the arrival of the video age such a sight is no longer a strange one but for Alta Moda changes include "acoustic guitars, harmonicas and mandolins." These changes will materialize on Alta Moda's debut album which is slated for midsummer release on Current/CBS Records. Producer Colin Thurston, known for his work with rock legend David Bowie and pop stars Duran Duran, became involved in the project on the strength of his first impressions of Alta Moda's demo tapes.

So far Molly's attitude concerning Alta Moda leaves no space for compromise. She and the other band members spent a year getting to know Gerry Young, the backbone of Current Records success with bands like Martha and the Muffins, M+M and the Parachute Club. Gerry's commitment to communication and financial backing impressed Molly.

"Until we know the whole picture we wait to make our decisions. He's (Gerry) really good, really aggressive. He's very busy yet accessible, doing little things like vocal classes that serving draft at the Cameron would never pay for...and be our liaison between record companies because you need a spokesperson."

Gerry's other job is to bring Alta Moda to worldwide prominence through an international distribution deal with CBS. CBS is also attracted to Blue Monday. If a record deal becomes a reality Molly wants to keep Blue Monday's unique quality by starting with "live recordings featuring special guests."

Molly believes that her jazz shows have sharpened her Alta Moda performances. This is very important because Alta Moda is her priority project. Directly translated, the name means 'high movement in art' and was inspired by designer Resa's Italian background and Molly's fascination with Italy. The name also describes Molly's interest as an art lover. She speaks excitedly about the prospect of opening a multimedia centre to interest others in becoming patrons of the arts. Her favourites are young Canadians.

"Andy Fabo...His work is big and bold and uses blue and I adore blue! Adly Gawd...what can I say? Innovative. Rae Johnson...Moody, strong. I love to look at a painting and feel it!"

A couple of years ago Molly dabbled in establishing a gallery called the Art Bar which was used in the set of David Cronenberg's sci-fi film 'The Fly'. The success of Alta Moda would make it possible to realize all her dreams of philanthropy. Molly shares some of these dreams with Norman as they would both like to produce other bands.

Surprisingly, Alta Moda's lineup has remained the same during the last four years. All members are active in outside projects such as bassist Etrick Lyon playing regularly with other groups including his own, Age Of Reason, and Norman's love is developing soundtracks. The most "stable" band member is drummer Steve Gelineau who holds down a day job at Toronto's Art Gallery of Ontario.

A woman creating a role for herself in the male-dominated music industry, Molly is used to getting what she wants. Shy about exposing herself in the domain of the "public figure", Molly draws on familiar surroundings as a necessary foundation. Most important is that the same people Molly began this journey with are still behind her.

Marva Jackson is a music programmer on Toronto's alternative community radio station CKLN-FM 88.1 and is currently compiling The Band File, a biography of the Canadian independent music scene. ➤

The Black Housewives League of South Africa

by Sally Motlana

In the 1950s a group of black housewives in South Africa realized the importance of bonding to address the economic and social problems of the racist society in which they lived. The Black Housewives League of South Africa is now a network of more than 90,000 members in 86 branches across the country, with a mandate of self-sufficiency and self-help.

FRAMEWORK IN WHICH THE PROGRAM OPERATES

The source of the poverty plaguing so many blacks in South Africa lies in the unjust racial structure that excludes individuals, families, and communities from the benefits of land, labour, and amenities. A large percentage of the population remains impoverished; some of the fundamental reasons for their poverty are these facts:

- ☐ 78% of the population is limited to 13% of the land.
- ☐ Blacks have access to ownership of only 1.9% of plants, machinery, and capital.
- ☐ Blacks earn only 40% of the national disposable income.
- ☐ Nearly one million housing units are still needed for the black population.

These circumstances ensure that poor blacks start off life with severe economic disadvantages. For most of them, the situation will not improve: spatial segregation in urban or rural settlements, severe overcrowding in insufficient housing, inadequate schools and public transportation, and high unemployment are just some of the problems that beset black people.

To break the poverty barriers in South Africa, organizations built from the grassroots and addressing issues confronting the people must be developed. History has shown that no oppressors have willingly relinquished power to the vanquished. The disadvantaged have to build a comparable power base, either through military might or through grassroots organizations with popular support, to articulate the needs of the poor and to find solutions. The Black Housewives League of South Africa has such potential as a non-violent power base, if given additional aid to formalize its nationwide support.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE LEAGUE

- ☐ To motivate black women to take an interest and active role in the social problems affecting their families.
- ☐ To encourage women to equip themselves for responsibility in the community and in national life.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The League attempts to meet its overall objectives more specifically by:

- ☐ encouraging black women to take interest in problems affecting the education of black children.
- ☐ collecting and distributing information of general concern to make expert knowledge available to all of its members and to other women's organizations.
- ☐ assisting in the formation of relief agencies whose network can be used in

times of emergency and national need.

Branches of the League are encouraged to initiate domestic agricultural schemes, such as growing and selling vegetables for their own use. Proceeds from the sale of excess produce can help to finance the schooling of children. For example, women grow beans of various varieties that are considered by nutritionists to be healthy, thus upgrading the health of their families. Selling the excess of this nutritious vegetable to other community members is a worthwhile community service.

In situations where no schools are available and children are being taught under trees, the national League executive secures donations of blackboards for the immediate use of these community schools. In the longer term, it attempts to link community teachers with resources interested in funding the building of classrooms for such children.

Local embassies and businesses are also approached to assist with the building of classrooms. The League members in a region motivate mothers whose children are attending outdoor schools to assist in collecting sand from riverbeds to make bricks. These bricks will be used to construct school classrooms. The request for funds to purchase door frames, window frames, windowpanes, and cement and to pay for construction costs is then put before potential donors for their consideration and support. Builders from the region (often unemployed) are given the contract to erect the structure.

PRODUCTION PROJECTS

The unemployment rate among black people is rising and even if the economy is maintained at a 3% growth rate per annum, it is predicted that by the year 2000 there will be 7 million unemployed blacks in South Africa. Therefore, besides involving members in projects to supplement their incomes, the League has made employment-generating projects an important future focus.

League members at branch level have begun to initiate a wide variety of projects, from sewing and knitting groups to groups set up to make traditional clay pots for sale. Workers involved in these projects need further training, equipment, and co-ordination to assist them to the next economic level of viable income-generating projects.

RESOURCE NETWORK

Many of the League branches are in rural areas and do not have access to information that can be of benefit to them. The League executive attempts to provide information on a variety of issues affecting poor communities. Examples of such information leaflets are: the availability of legal aid, scholarship information for students wishing to study further, housing loans and their conditions, job opportunities, and consumer information.

This small germ of a program to service black South Africans through a well-ordered organization of black women has at last begun to make its impact on the larger society within which the League is operating. We have taken those first vital steps towards self-reliance and know that additional financial assistance from outside resources can only consolidate our path of self-direction and control.

Contributions can be sent to:
Mrs. Sally Motlana, President
The Black Housewives League
of South Africa
1401 Dube
Soweto, Transvaal
South Africa

Sally Motlana is current president of The Black Housewives League of South Africa.

Simple & Unpretentious Voices

by Ito Peng

Chinese Women Writers:
A Collection of Short Stories by
Women Writers of the 1920s and 1930s
Translated by Jennifer Anderson
and Theresa Munford
China Books & Periodicals, Inc.
pp.180/$19.95

Anderson and Munford claim that the Chinese women writers of the 1920s and 1930s saw and portrayed the Chinese woman as a "sentimental figure, who oozes sensitivity and gentle melancholy and has an inexhaustive capacity for suffering." You would probably feel the same if you were born and bound in a culture which is hostile to women. It was not until the early 1900s that a few Chinese women were allowed to partake in higher education, loosen their foot-bindings and begin to question the wisdom of the age-old Confucianism.

While many attempts were made to overthrow the centuries-old Confucianism, after the 1911 bourgeois-democratic revolution this rigid social system continued to rule the minds and practices of many Chinese families. In this patriarchal system, women suffered under the institutionalized oppressions by their male counterparts. The Confucian code of ethics defined women's roles as pious daughters, prolific son bearers, and subservient wives; and put into practice foot-binding, arranged marriages, polygamy, and a variety of physical and emotional abuses.

The constellation of lives portrayed in this collection of short stories reflects a myriad of Chinese women during the 1920s and 1930s, a period when Confucianism became the main target of social attack. The stories range from the ageing matriarch of a wealthy feudal family in Ling Shua's *The Lucky One*, to the poor peasant women sold by her husband to another man in Luo Shu's *Wife of Another Man*, to the young girl who learns the destructiveness of polygamy in Wu Shutian's *The Mad Father*. In all of these stories there is one theme in common: the sadness of Chinese women's lives bound by the cruel and destructive social system.

In several of these stories this sadness expresses itself in a bleak and often inconclusive statement on life, leaving the readers with little sense of consolation. In *Wife of Another Man*, fate has little in store for the poor peasant woman, sold by her husband and twice married — the most miserable of combinations possible. In Feng Keng's *The Child Pedlar*, the urban single mother's only means of survival for her child and herself is denied when she learns that she has neither the right nor the choice to save her child and her own life.

In other stories the sadness is turned into a show of active defiance, and cynicism. In Bing Xin's *Miss Winter*, the young fearless peasant girl, Winter, defies all the moral and ethical constraints laid down to her and fights back, single-handed. In the end, much to the amazement and consternation of her poor mother she proves to be a much better caretaker of her family than her irresponsible father. In *A House in Quingyun Lane* by Ding Ling, the author takes a cynical view. The heroine of the story makes an almost convincing pitch for the benefits of prostitution for women as she claims, "Why should she want to get married? There was nothing in it for her. She had food, clothes, and very little to worry about at the moment....You could say she lacked a husband but she never had to spend a night alone.... There was nothing she really had to do, except sleep with men and that was not all that difficult."

Reading the simple and unpretentious voices of Chinese women from these short stories, one cannot help but question the emotional and psychological impact of the Confucian social system on their lives. While not all of the stories offer one a sense of comfort, I felt strangely strengthened by them. Perhaps in understanding the struggles of our predecessors, we begin to better understand our own lives.

Ito Peng works as a community organizer for the Native community in Toronto.

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