A tribute to Oodgeroo Noonuccal

By Arlene Griffen

The internationally acclaimed Aboriginal poet and outspoken activist, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, died in Brisbane on Seotember 16, 1993, aged 72. Oodgeroo, more widely known by her former name, Kath Walker, was buried on her beloved North Stradbroke Island in Moreton Bay east of Brisbane.

This distinguished but down-to-earth and modest woman lived a packed life: domestic servant, wife and mother, wartime member of the Women's Army, political activist, poet, artist, bridge-builder between white and black people in Australia and international ambassador for Aboriginal people.

The decade 1961-1971 was especially busy. During these years Oodgeroo was an indefatigable fighter for Aboriginal rights in Australia, at times making up to ten speeches a day for that cause. In a recent commemorative replay of an interview with her in Australia's Radio National programme, "The Search for Meaning"' she said she recalled the sixties as years of hope, not just in Australia, but evrywhere in the world. She and other political activists like Faith Bandler, she said, worked ceaselessly to help "stop Aboriginal people from reversing out the back door."

In 1971, Oodgeroo moved to Moongalba, her leased five-hectare "sitting-down" place on North Stradbroke Island. With this as a base in a modest caravan and a collection of outbuildings, she would return to live as she preferred, in the Aboriginal way. Moongalba became an important part of her work on reconciliation, stemming from her preference for "acute analysis to hatred", a place where thousands of students came for educational visits under her tutelage. In 1988, as a reaction against the Australian Bicentenial celebrations, she renounced her European name, Kath Walker, and returned her MBE.

However, it is for her poetry, largely written under the name Kath Walker, that Oodgeroo will most probably be remembered. This poetry gives full and eloquent expression to the burning questions and major preoccupations of her life, all inextricably bound up with her experience of Aboriginality. From her first anthology, We Are Going, through later works including The Dawn is at Hand, My People, and Stradbroke Dreaming, her poems are impassioned messages to the world on the subjects dearest to her heart. Her most celebrated poem , "Son of Mine", dedicated to her surviving son, Dennis, is, for example, a telling condemnation of racism:

I could tell you of heartbreak, hatred blind,
I could tell of crimes that shame mankind...
But I'll tell instead of brave and fine,
When lives of black and white entwine
And men in brotherhood combine.
This would I tell you, son of mine.

Oodgeroo's long-time friend and supporter, the poet Judith Wright, indicated the extent of the loss that Oodgeroo's death brings: "She was a legend. Among the people of the Aboriginal communities, reserves and fringes of the cities, her fame put heart into people she could never have reached without the poems and their success." The example of Oodgeroo's life and her poetry will continue to put heart into all peoples who fight to overcome man's injustice against his fellow men.

The Past

Let no one say the past is dead.
The past is all about us and within.
Haunted by tribal memories, Iknow
This little now, this accidental present
Is not the all of me, whose long making
Is so much of the past.

Tonight here in suburbia as I sit
In esay chair before electric heater,
Warmed by the red glow, I fall into dream:
I am away
At the camp fire in the bush among
My own people, sitting on the ground,
No walls about me,
The stars over me, The tall surrounding trees that stir in the wind
Making their own music,
Soft cries of the night coming ti us, there
Where we are one with all Nature's lives
Known and unknown,
In scenes where we belong but have now forsaken.
Deep chair and electric radiator
Are but since yesterday,
But a thousand thousand camp fires in the forest
Are in my blood.
Let none tell me the past is wholly gone.
Now is so small a part of time, so small a part
of all the race years that have moulded me.

Oodgeroo of the tribeNoonucaal
(formerly Kath Walker)
First published by Jacaranda Wiley, 1970

Declaration calling for change

More than 82 experts and activists from 40 countries representing diverse organisations from all regions of the world met in The Hague, 6 - 9 June 1993 at a Conference "Calling for Change; International strategies to End Violence Against Women" sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the United nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and declared.

We call for the recognition of violence against women as critical global problem that should be on the agenda of human rights and development communities.

Gender based violence is a universal phenomenon which takes many form across culture, race, class, age, mental and physical ability, sexual preference and marital status and is a daily occurrence in women's lives.

Such violence is an attack on the integrity of women and a hinderance to sustainable development. Gender based violence affects the whole society and the world community should address not only its victims but also the perpetrators of such violence.

Violence against women in both private and public spheres is a violation of human rights that constitutes the gravest form of sexual discrimination. As the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women notes, violence against women encompasses physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, in the general community and that perpetrated or condoned by the state wherever it occurs. States have a responsibility to enforce or create new measures to prevent and respond to gender specific violence in both these spheres including affirmative measures to eliminate the conditions that breed such violence. Human Rights NGO's working at the national, international and regional levels should affirm their commitment to the consideration of women's rights as human rights.

We call upon the UN Conference on Human Rights to reaffirm the universality of all human rights and their priority over cultural values and practices and to apply all international standards equally to the protection of women's human rights. We also affirm the indivisibility of the economic, social and cultural rights with political and civil rights and call for the recognition that the eradication of violence against women requires actions in all these areas.

It is a responsibility of the state to seek to eradicate gender based violence within its borders and to change its policies where they exacerbate violence against women in other countries. In particular, northern countries should examine their policies, including development and structural adjustment programs is relation to discrimination and violence against women.

Women around the world, not only as targets of violence but also as active agents for change, are fighting against violence. We join with those globally who are calling on governments and specifically the Human Rights Conference to do the following:

1. Requests all states to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and withdraw all reservations to it.

2. Call for strengthening the implementation procedures of the Women's Convention and enforcement of CEDAW's requests for country reports on violence against women.

3. Recommend to the General Assembly adoption of the draft Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, approved by the Commission on the Status of Women.

4. Call for the appointment of a special rapporteur on sex discrimination and violence against women who is responsible to the Commission on Human Rights and also reports to the Commission on the Status of Women.

5. Require that all UN working groups, rapporteurs, treaty bodies, specialised agencies, as well as all UN Human Rights programs and mechanisms pay attention to gender aspects of all abuses and proposed actions.

Various forms of violence against women breach guarantees established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and other human rights instruments, including: the rights not to be arbitrarily deprived of life, liberty and security of the person; the right not to be subject to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment; the right to just and favourable conditions of work; the right to equal protection of the law; and the right to be free of gender discrimination. All appropriate UN bodies as well as NGO's should address gender-based violence as a development and human rights issue.

* Shamima Ali attended the conference.

Women and AIDS - An open door

By Mridula Sainath

At the start of the AIDS epidemic the issue of women and AIDS was a closed door, a few years ago it was knocking on the door and today the door is wide open...

WHO estimates that 14 million people wolrldwide are now infected with HIV and even if all new infections were stopped in their tracks now, the total AIDS cases would still quadruple by the year 2000.

13 million women will have been infected by the year 2000 and 4 million of them will by then be dead.

To bring the statistics to a closer timeframe, a million women worldwide will be infected by HIV this year alone, 90 percent of them by their spouse or steady partner. This is equivalent to one woman being infected somewhere in the world every 30 seconds.

Wherever it strikes the epedemic of HIV/AIDS has an impact far beyond that of individual illness and early death. The virus affects every aspect of women's lives whether or not they themselves are infected. Women provide love, care and support to their partners, brothers, friends and relatives infected with HIV or dying of AIDS.

We need all in our power to prevent new infections in women and to develop strategies to relieve women of the burden of care. A key weapon in this battle is preventative education for young girls before they become sexually active.

75 percent of all transmissions in women is through sexual intercourse. Now let us examine some factors which further fuel the pandemic in women:

* Women are "biologically vulnerable" and more at risk from sexual intercourse, partly because HIV is more concentrated in semen than in vaginal fluid and the vagina offers a larger mucousal surface for infection to enter. The risk of infection maybe greater still in adolescent girls as their more immature genital tract maybe a less efficient barrier to HIV.

* Women also tend to marry early and to more experienced men, who are themselves more likely to be infected from past partners. It is often socially acceptable for men to seek even younger women for courtship, marriage and casual encounters. This trend is increasing as men want to secure uninfected female sexual partners.

* Women are unable to negotiate condom use and usually cannot question their husbands fidelity as this might lead to verbal even physical abuse. In enforced sex and rape the question of negotiating safer sex is unmentionable and added to it is the physical trauma to genitalia which may further contribute to easier entry of the virus.

* Women are also more vulnerable to HIV transmission through blood as many women in the developing world are anaemic and need blood transfusions in child birth or pregnancy.

* Women are "occupationally vulnerable" as HIV/AIDS care providers either professionally as nurses or doctors or as care gives at home.

* Women are more "socially vulnerable" as many cultures have different standards of sexual behaviour in men and women.

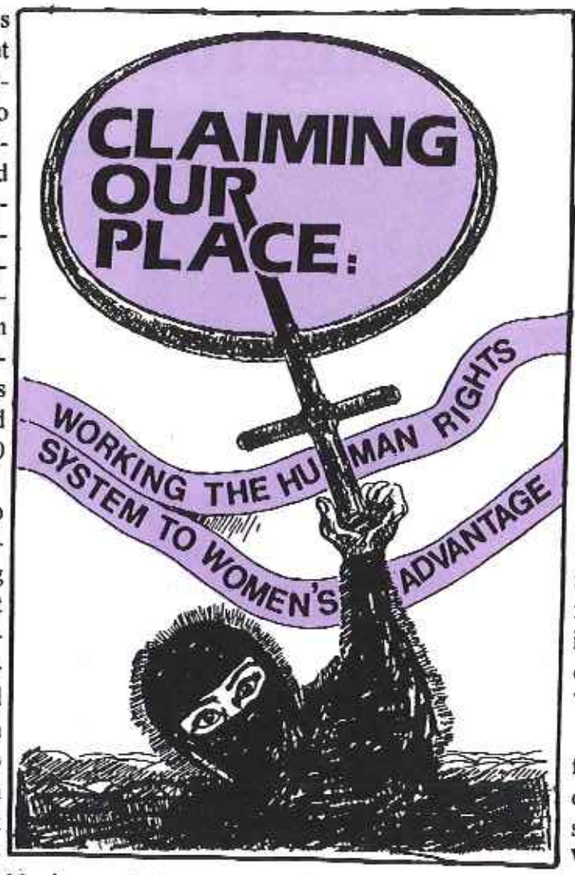
Societal factors interact for example, the decision making factors invested in men such as control of income, property, major family decisions, serve to diminish the degree of control women have over sexual matters.

* Women are more "economically vulnerable" to HIV infection then men and this itself is closely linked to women's social position. The combination and interaction of women's low socioeconomic status, poverty, illiteracy, lack of viable alternatives that enable women to become self supporting all act to limit women's ability to control the conditions in which they are sexually active.

Moreover, personal, social and economic conditions may combine to force women to exchange sex for money or goods to meet

cember, Human Rights Day. The first event launched a global petition drive for the UN to recognise women's human rights at the World Human Rights Conference. Initially co-sponsored with the International Women's Tribune Centre, the petition has since been translated into 21 languages and was circulated and sponsored by over 900 women's groups.

In India, one group gathered several hundred signatures during a demonstration against the failure of authorities to prosecute a physician who had burned his wife to death. In Turkey, women who had been building an underground network during martial law mobilised to gather 20,000 signatures in shopping areas in schools. Eventually, almost 500,000 women in 124 countries signed.



At the second Leadership Institute in 1992, activists decided to hold local and regional hearings to gather testimony on abuses of women. The idea was to flood the UN Human Rights Commission with evidence on the need for mechanisms responsive to women.

Meanwhile, women were keeping track of UN conference preparations. At regional prep-com meetings they pressed their case and drafted document language. When NGOs began to coordinate, women took part. And when governments wrote position papers, womens groups offered facts and analyses. UNIFEM brought 12 Third World activist women to join women from international NGOs in lobbying at the final meeting in Geneva in April of this year.

Moreover, it was decided to cap the campaign with a Global Tribunal on abuses of women's human rights. This way women would be lobbying for official recognition of the issue while also defining it for themselves, in their own forum. Eventually, 33 women were chosen to speak and an international panel of judges recruited to hear the women's testimony.

When the conference opened, women were ready. They took part in all five NGO working groups and the Joint NGO Statement resoundingly affirmed women's human rights. The Global Tribunal was a highlight of NGO events, and women's rights were mentioned early and often in speeches by official delegates.

By their own efforts, women succeeded in placing themselves on the international human rights agenda. The task ahead is to ensure that what has been promised is implemented.

The Sixteen Days campaign continues this year with an emphasis on violence in the family, in recognition of the 1994 UN International Year of the Family. In 1995, the UN will hold the Fourth World Conference on Women.

We want to see a major interim report in that year from the UN on its progress in implementing all the recommendations made by the Vienna conference.

We want timetables, plans for gender parity and gander-awareness training for staff in all UN operations. We also expect governments to respond seriously, promptly and honestly to a questionnaire that went out to them last year from the Secretariat of the Women's Conference asking them about the status of resident women and on national plans for guaranteeing women's rights. We are not so naive as to think full recognition of women's human rights will now occur automatically all over the world. But we are optimistic that progress will continue, and we guarantee that women will work very hard to see that it does.

Charlotte Bunch is Director of the Centre for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University.

From the Freedom Review - September/October 1993.

A Major Half-Step for Women

By Charlotte Bunch

It wasn't perfect, but it was a pretty good start.

The United Nations World Conference on Human Rights opened in chaos over threats by some countries to derail the concept of human rights by surbodinating it to national laws. That threat was overcome, and the Global campaign for Women's Human Rights is particularly glad that the conference reaffirmed that human rights should be universal and indivisible for every women, man and child on earth.

That is because women are the first to be left out if human rights can be given to some people and not to others. The section of the conference document establishing women's rights as human rights was crucial to us and we are proud that it passed with only minor controversy. It was a major half-step forward and will become a full step when the recommendations are implemented. But it would have meant much less without the affirmation of universality.

As it is, the Global Campaign is disappointed that the conference called for additional funds for the UN Human Rights Centre without setting any timetable or naming a target sum. This conference gave the Centre responsibility for implementing many of its recommendations on women and we are determined that those policies will be carried. We are pleased that the Canadian government gave the Centre a $500,000 challenge grant to begin its work on behalf of women and we hope other nations will follow Canada's example with grants of their own earmarked for women's human rights.

The Centre and the United Nations have much to do in order to fulfill the conference mandate on women's rights. As a result of years of work by women around the world, the conference explicitly recognised violence against women as an abuse of human rights. It urged the United Nations to name a Special Rapporteur to monitor violence against women worldwide. It also urged that the UN strengthen the Women's Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, approve the pending Declaration of Violence Against Women and integrate women's concerns into every facet of its operations.

How did all this happen? Women's advocates were recognised at the Human rights conference as among the most organised and successful. Our Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights drew more than a thousand people to a jammed auditorium, where women from 25 countries testified to abuses they had suffered under existing human rights laws. The world media took notice.

As Lourdes Sajor, member of the Asian Women's Human Rights Council and Chair of the NGO Women's Caucus, said: "It was no accident."

Women have always organised locally to take action on common problems. As women formed national and eventually international links, they found that one issue united them across culture, class and religion: violence against women.

Women everywhere face the common threat of rape, incest, assault, economic and sexual exploitation and forced pregnancy. This is not random violence; the risk factor is being female. These universal forms of violence - and culture-specific types such as dowry-related murder and genital mutilation - are often dismissed as tradition or religious practice. Despite the pervasive nature of abuse of women, human rights groups have generally taken little notice. Some UN human rights treaties formally bar sex discrimination, but in practice women's rights are not being protected.

A feminist perspective

In 1990, the Centre for Women's Global Leadership decided to focus on redefining human rights from a feminist perspective. The Centre, a project of Douglass College at Rutgers University in New Jersey, works to build women's leadership on global issues. At an initial leadership institute in June 1991, activists discussed ways to promote world dialogue between women's and human rights groups. They also wanted to focus local and international attention on violence against women as an abuse of human rights.

"It seemed such a logical idea - half of humanity is suffering the same kinds of abuses. If it's not a human rights issue, it means women are not even considered human," said Maria Suarez, a journalist with Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE) in Costa Rica.

The kickoff initiative, now an annual event, was the "Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender Violence", from 25 November, International Day Against Violence Against Women, to 10 De-

New projects for 1994

The Fiji Womens Rights Movement has many exciting projects planned for 1994 in addition to our continuing project on Women, Work and Economic Rights. In January 1994 we will launch our 3 month Family Law project funded by UNESCAP and the Asia Foundation. As eries of 12 articles will be published on Family Law, in three languages in all the major media outlets, both newspaper and radio. In addition 6 brochures in 3 languages on the same topic and "how to use the court system", Larry Thomas will be producing a radio play on some aspects of family law with FWRM. We will also be doing research on the possibility of setting up a women's legal aid centre. This will involve negotiations with the government, banks, lawyers, etc. During the last week of International Women's Day we will be doing a two-day paralegal training session for women and Family Law. Those interested in participating may inform Vani. There will be a "Regional Roundtable Meeting on Women and Politics" hosted by FWRM from 7-11 February 1994. During the last week in April (tentative dates 18-22 April 1994) FWRM is co-hosting with the International Commission of Jurists, at the Fijian Hotel, the first (major) regional seminar on "Women and Law in the South Pacific". The Co-ordinator for FWRM for the Seminar is Shamima Ali.

The Interim Management Committee, set up by the Collective, has things under control and will be closely working with our staff and supporting them. There appears to be a most congenial working relationship amongst the members and we all feel positive about FWRM's future directions!

So for all of our members who were concerned about our survival, worry nai karo! Happy New Year to you all!

Women and AIDS - From Page 8

their basic needs and others dependent on them.

Apart from addressing and redressing the above issues, if we want to end the epidemic of HIV, a virus which has above all taken advantage of how all of us, across the world, live our sexuality, it is our relationships that we must start to question and transform.

Having only one life partner is not necessarily possible nor even desired by all of us. Whether our experience in sexual relationships has been positive or negative, we are taught not to reveal it.

Perhaps if we begin to name our experience openly, we will help each other find the strength to value oursevles and our needs more, to take more pride in ourselves as women.

Women need to be valued sexually and to be treated with respect, integrity and care.

Perhaps as more of us are able to seek what we want, refuse what we do not want, express our sexuality, instead of hiding it, where it cannot be exposed and destroyed we may be able to understand the magnitude of the problem and underlying factors. Maybe then we can stem this rising tide of HIV infection in women.

Also unless there is an alliance of women and men, the policy makers and the common people, the rich and the poor countries, the "have" and "have nots" can an effort be made to carry forward prevention and caring strategies to meet the overwhelming challenges of HIV/AIDS.

For women in particular, if the total picture of direct and contributory factors are not realised and corrected, this vigorous tidal wave of infection which is now lashing at the hinges of our open doors will engulf our very homes and destroy us.

NEWS

Trisa Cheer has left FWRM and we wish her all the best. **Zarina** is helping out at the FWRM.

Vani is back from Manila after attending a workshop on Women, Violence and non-Violent Action, with **Salote Malo** from WCC.

FWRM Collective Meetings:
1 December, 15 December at FWRM office 1pm.

Imrana Jalal is back in practice trying to combine motherhood and career. She can be contacted on 311 911.

Women's Crisis Centre has a new home:
88 Gordon St
P O Box 12882, Suva.
Ph: 313 300
Fax: 313 650

T-shirts with non-violent messages are on sale at WCC!
Check them out!

JOIN **THE MARCH AGAINST VIOLENCE** 10 DECEMBER FROM 12 midday
For more information call 313 300
Organised by FWRM and WCC.

Translated from a Hindi song

The Girl Child

When, in a country daughters are disrespected and demeaned
Tell me truly, can that country be called free?
At the birth of a son there is joy and celebration
But shunned is the woman who gives birth to a daughter
Her own mother gives the girl less of everything
She craves for justice even in her own home
The stove the courtyard and the four walls are the limits of her world from childhood
She is drowned under the weight of innumerable burdens and responsibilities
The meaning of childhood naughtiness or innocence, the girl will never know
She never experiences spontaneous joy and fun
She cannot speak her mind or move freely
Her wings have been clipped, she cannot fly high
A girl is a young plant that gets neither light nor water
She is the flower that would have blossomed but cannot
Half fed and half heartedly educated
She gets only half her wage for her labour
The country got its freedom but she continued to be bonded

Domestic violence and the Christian faith

I was unhappy in the rigid legalistic atmosphere."

Sarah was told to "pray and believe" and to stay within the sanctity of marriage, despite constant beatings. She stopped attending church, feeling betrayed by the very people she believed could possibly have helped her.

People also wrongly assume that violence would never be practiced by a minister, pastor, Talatala, or any other male figure of importance in the church structure. Women who are the victims of such violence are even more imprisoned than others. They have few to confide in, few options to free them as divorce may be seen as a violation of church laws or, unbiblical. She, of all women, masters the art of pretense in order to survive. Her black-eye, her bruised and broken body are always the result of "an accident" She, of all women, is constantly made to feel it is her fault, she must be sinful and deserves what she gets.

Christian literature has also contributed to many unhelpful and negative attitudes toward women. For example, in Larry Christenson's book, The Christian Family, he sets out a diagram which illustrates that the husband is "head" of the wife and selectively uses Biblical passages which endorse this, such as Ephesians 5:22-24; "Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord and 1 Corinthians 11:1; "Therefore she (the wife) should be subject to his (her husband's) authority.

In reply to a woman who comes to him for help Christenson says, "The problem isn't with your husband, but with you. You're a rebellious wife. You resent your husband's authority over you. What you need is to go home and apologise to your husband, ask forgiveness..." and so on.

Fortunately, now we have such liberating Christian writers as Virginia R. Mollenkott, who speaks of human relationships in terms of "mutual submission and mutual service." Here, the emphasis is much more on passages such as Galatians 3:28; "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

In Rachel Wahlberg's book, Jesus According to a Women, she emphasises Jesus's affirmation of women throughout the New Testament. As men and women she encourages us to provide a balance to the centuries of negative attitudes concerning women which have pervaded so much of Christian literature.

Once we see that women and men are equal in the sight of God and that discrimination of any kind is contrary to the Gospel message, then it should follow that in regards to violence, "no citizen or Christian can accept violence of the type we witness today in the family." As Ennio Mantovani of P.N.G. says, "Every citizen and Christian has a duty to make sure that public opinion is created against violence and that legislation is implemented without discrimination of sex."

As children of God, as believers and followers of Christ, Christian men and women must seek and find ways of transforming "the society in which victim-violator relationships dominate, into one in which we strive to live in fairness, justice, and mutual assistance and love."

We not only need to make ourselves available but we must become active participators in educating, promoting equality, speaking out against the injustice of domestic violence, promoting non-violent conflict resolutions and non-judgmental counseling opportunities.

Let me conclude with a prayer from Breaking the Silence:

The whole generation groans.
Gentle mother God,
protect your vulnerable children.
Crucified God,
turn violent people from violence to service
as you chose peace instead of violence.
Holy Spirit,
empower us to be people of peace and grace
who reject violence whatever its form.
Grant us resurrection life.
In Jesus name
Amen.

Women's rights and democracy

Editorial comments by Imrana Jalal

Democracy is not truly democracy if it excludes women and refuses to recognise women's human rights as a universal human right. Said differently, women's human rights and democracy are intertwined and one cannot be considered without the other. As stated by human rights activists, "the practice of human rights is the practice of democracy. Both begin at home at the grass roots level".

In a democracy all citizens deserve to be treated equally and given the same opportunities. No group of persons can be given discriminatory treatment, yet in the majority of democracies women's human rights are ignored, or at best, treated indifferently. There seems to be an assumption, even by the best-intentioned human rights groups that there is an acceptance of women's human rights, but we know that this is not true. It is not possible for a state to insist that it is a democracy but at the same time deny human rights to the largest group of disadvantaged persons, women.

In Fiji, we speak of democracy yet some very basic human rights are denied to all women of all races in Fiji - nationality and citizenship rights, and gender-based violence, to mention but a few. In fact we could go so far as to say that human rights would appear to be mainly about men's human rights and NOT about women's human rights. We do not have to look very far to see that even the UN Year of the Indigenous Peoples seems to benefit indigenous men rather than indigenous people of both sexes. Witness the restrictions on registration in the Vola ni Kawa Bula to the legal children of indigenous women married to non-indigenous men, but not to the legal children of indigenous men.

This is an outrageous denial of full human rights to women and their children.

As we begin our celebrations of 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women let us think about the global struggle by women against violence and remember that there can be no democracy until women's human rights are fully recognised as human rights.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement has recently attracted much adverse publicity. It is time for all good women of all races to reflect and remember for whom we mobilised, to remember for whom we are working. The individual can never take priority over the struggle.

In the struggle for human rights for women and democracy we must be careful lest our hopes and strategies be called "Western" and therefore dismissed. This is a means of preventing women's struggle for advancement and independence. This is another reason why it is important that Fiji women should choose a liberation which is of their own making, a liberation that arises from their own experience as women from the developing world. Women from other countries living temporarily in Fiji can be enormously useful as resource people and can help us attain our freedom the way we see it, not the way they see it.

But in the final analysis our perspective must be that adopted by third world women. Our women leaders must also be women born here, raised and reared in this country, speaking the languages of our people and understanding the needs of the vast majority of poor working women. Otherwise the messenger will be shot and the message will be forgotten. Ultimately our struggle will only be valid if our leaders truly come from us.

By Nushka Kalma Lange

Many a victim of domestic violence would contemplate seeking help from church ministers and members. This is especially true here in the Pacific where there are many churches and few support groups and organisations that are available to help the victim and the family of domestic violence.

But sadly, many stories reveal that the church has not always helped women victims of domestic violence. Cultural attitudes of male superiority and the fact that many churches are still dominated by patriarchal conservative decision-making bodies, has contributed to the occurrence of and denial of violence against women, especially here in the Pacific.

Many women who have been injured, insulted, victimised, devalued and dehumanised have sought refuge and help in Christianity and the church, and many have been bitterly disappointed. Take for example the following stories.

Mere says,

"Early in our marriage I went to a clergyman, who after a few visits, told me that my husband meant no real harm, that he was just confused and felt insecure. I was encouraged to be more tolerant and understanding. Most important I was told to forgive him the beatings just as Christ has forgiven me from the cross."

The second story is that of Sarah who writes while struggling to overcome her situation of violence,

"I began attending...my husband's church. A Pentecostal assembly. This was a fundamentalist denomination and its teachings on wifely submission and discipline were interpreted by my husbands Biblical endorsement for his behavior.

the GLOBAL CAMPAIGN for WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

PETITION THE UNITED NATIONS TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

After Vienna and on to Beijing,
the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights Continues...

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects everyone "without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language...or other status" (art. 2). Further, everyone has the right to "life, liberty and security of person" (art. 3) and "no one shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" (art. 5). In addition, the 1993 VIENNA DECLARATION OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS states that the "HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND OF THE GIRL-CHILD ARE AN INALIENABLE, INTEGRAL AND INDIVISIBLE PART OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS," and declares a commitment to eliminate "VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE." Therefore, we the undersigned, call upon the United Nations to fulfill this commitment and to report on its efforts to promote and protect women's human rights at the FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (Beijing, September 1995).

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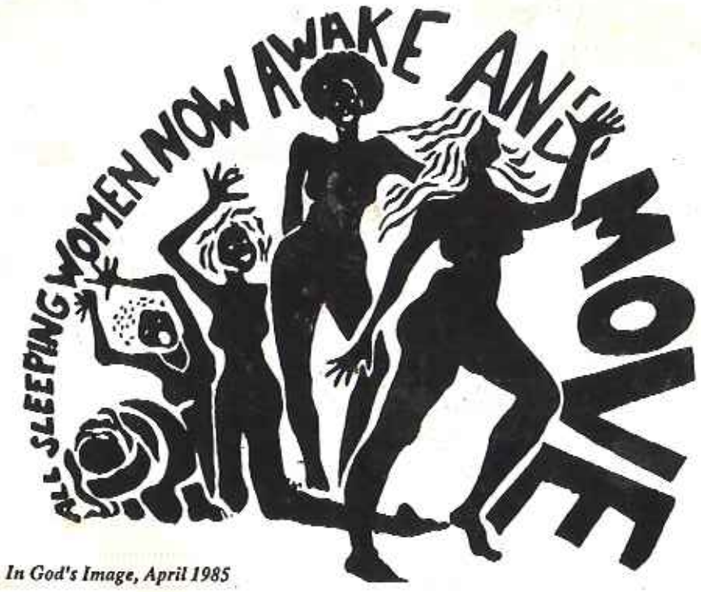
Please send signed petitions to:
Fiji Women's Rights Movement
P O Box 14194
Suva.

OR

Women's Crisis Centre
P O Box 12882
Suva.
Fax: 313 650



In God's Image, April 1985

Special thanks to:

Associated Media
Asia Foundation

SENDER:

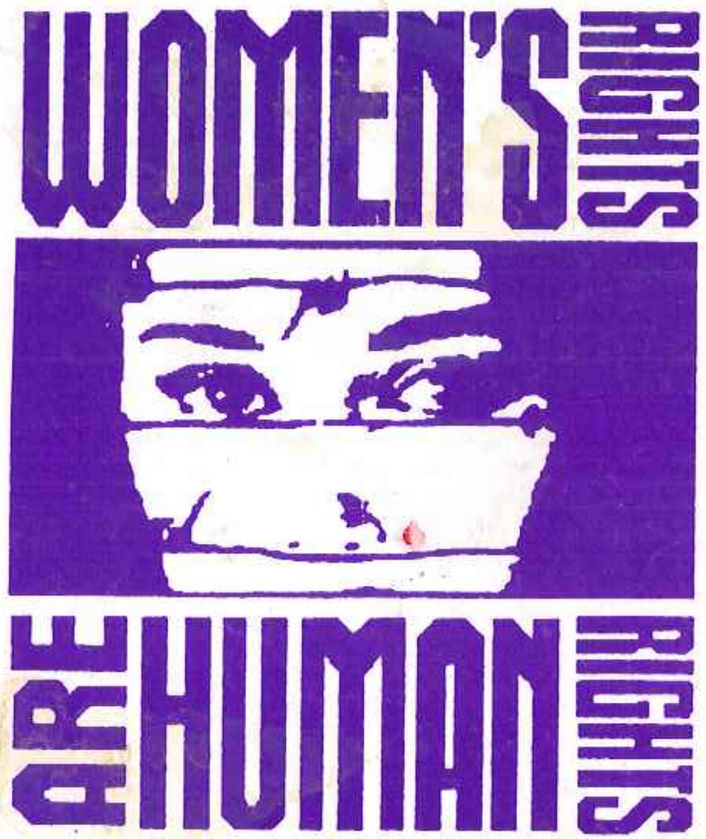
Fiji Women's Rights Movement
P.O. BOX 14194
Suva
FIJI ISLANDS.

FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT
P.O.BOX 14194, SUVA, FIJI.
TEL: (679) 313156/313466 FAX: (679) 301616

BALANCE

NOVEMBER, 1993

16 Days of Action against gender violence



For the past two years, women's groups in every region of the world have joined the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights and participated in the 16 Days of Activism against gender violence. This year from 25 November to 10 December, we once again organise for the campaign with the theme: "Democracy without Women's Human Rights is not Democracy".

In Fiji and the Pacific, the Women's Crisis Centre and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement have spearheaded the campaign and it is once again that time of the year.

The campaign begins on 25 November, the International Day of Protest Against Violence against women, ends on December 10, World Human Rights Day and includes World AIDS Day on December 1 and December 6, to mark the Montreal Massacre, when a man gunned down 14 female engineering students for being "feminists".

The 16 Days of Campaign highlights the prevalence of gender violence against women globally, creates an awareness for such violence as a violation of human rights and promotes women taking leadership on the issue. As part of the campaign a worldwide petition was begun in 1991 calling upon the 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights to comprehensively address violations of women's human rights.

The petition, translated into 21 languages, gathered close to half a million signatures in 124 countries. We in Fiji the Pacific collected nearly 7000 signatures.

This year a revised petition drive continues and a copy is included in this issue of Balance for your use. Our activities this year include a media campaign, a T-shirt campaign, culminating in a March for Peace and Non-violence on December 10.

News from Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Federated States of Micronesia inform us that women there are also organising around the 16 Days.

You can organise in your own communities around the 16 Days. If you need assistance please call us.