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Illinois State University

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Women's Voice

Illinois State University

Volume 6, Issue 2, September 2000

From the Director:

Transnational Feminism: Notes from the Field

This year I had the opportunity to attend the annual meetings of two of the six transnational feminist networks (TFNs) that I have been researching since 1995. In late May I traveled to Brussels to attend the annual meeting of the network Women in Development Europe (WIDE), and in July I went to Limassol, Cyprus, to observe the Association of Women in the Mediterranean Region (AWMR). This is the second time I have attended the annual meetings of the two networks – I was at the 1995 WIDE meetings in Brussels and the 1998 AWMR meetings in southern Italy. (This year, my research travel was supported by an ISU University Research Grant.) Attending the meetings this year gave me further insights into the operations of the two networks, their similarities and differences, and how they compare with other transnational feminist networks.

I have coined the term “transnational feminist network” to describe groups of women who are organized across national boundaries around a common agenda that includes research, lobbying, advocacy and direct action on economic policy and human rights issues. In addition to WIDE and AWMR, I have been studying Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), the Sisterhood is Global Institute (SIGI), and Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML). Of the six, three (DAWN, WIDE, WEDO) focus on economics (generally a feminist critique of neoliberal macroeconomic policy, structural adjustment policies, and trade liberalization); SIGI and WLUML focus on women's human rights, and the AWMR advocates for “justice, equality, and peace” in the Mediterranean region and elsewhere. Empirically, my research involves examining the organizational dynamics of these networks, their strategies and tactics, their achievements and frustrations, and their influence on policy. At another level of analysis, I am interested in theorizing the relationship between global feminism and globalization, and between transnational feminist networks and transnational social movements. My research undermines assumptions held by many postmodernist feminists and

theorists of new social movements that women's groups are always local and are concerned solely about identity and “personal” issues.

The WIDE Meeting

The WIDE annual meeting began with a workshop on economic literacy, facilitated by Jamaican economist Mariama Williams, which focused on macroeconomics and globalization. Mariama is currently research coordinator for gender and trade, DAWN-Caribbean. About 30 persons were in attendance during the first day's workshop – from Eastern Europe, the Philippines, Chile, Spain, Mexico, Ghana, Tanzania, Russia, Georgia. It was a very participatory and interactive workshop.

At the business meeting, President Carmen de la Cruz began by describing WIDE's origins and its work. She gave examples of “the work we do at the regional level, and the kind of cooperation and networking that WIDE does.” She explained that WIDE's current research initiative is on the impact of trade agreements on gender relations, but in fact development cooperation and trade issues have preoccupied WIDE since its inception, and gave the example of work done on the Lomé Convention. “We want to influence debates here in the [European] Commission”, she said. “WIDE was the premier group in Europe that focused on economic issues early in the 1990s. We contributed to the broadening of this interest.”

She also described WIDE's ties with other women's networks working on similar issues, and explained that WIDE's Informal Working Group on Gender and Trade prepared a paper for the Seattle meeting. WIDE wrote a joint position paper with a Caribbean feminist group that was used as a lobbying document in the EC. WIDE also works with LA feminist groups regarding EU trade agreements with Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Mexico [Mercosur]. A current objective, she said, was to “deepen our cooperation with other networks and NGOs in other regions, especially from Eastern Europe.”

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Visit our website at: <http://www.cas.ilstu.edu/womenstudies>

FROM THE DIRECTOR (Continued)

The Business meeting was followed by a Consultation on Trade Liberalization. It began with a presentation by Mariama Williams on the gender aspects of trade liberalization and how it affects women. This was another example of the kind of "economic literacy" that WIDE takes seriously. This was followed by regional reports about the impact of the macroeconomy (in an era of globalization) on women in Africa, Southeast Asia, Caribbean (Trinidad and Tobago), Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe. Each speaker used similar indicators to measure the adverse effects.

Next came a discussion entitled How Are Gender Issues Mainstreamed into EU Development Cooperation/Trade Policies? Several members of the European Parliament and the European Commission were invited to explain their positions and to listen to WIDE members. In general, members spoke very critically about the WTO and about the EP and EC position on world trade. WIDE calls for democratization of the WTO, total transparency in its deliberations and participation by NGOs. In addition, it demands that all trade agreements be bounded by already existing conventions, such as human rights and women's rights conventions. In summary, WIDE calls for "coherence" in European policies, and for priority to be placed on gender and social issues.

The AWMR Meeting

The theme of the AWMR conference, Children in the Mediterranean Region, allowed members to review the status of children in their countries in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted in 1990). Some 58 participants from 16 countries attended. At the opening ceremony, the AWMR president and general secretary made presentations in which the World Bank and the IMF were taken to task for the dire situation of children. National inequalities were also stressed. At the conference, presentations were made by AWMR members (e.g., from Israel, Italy, Palestine, Albania, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, Serbia, Macedonia, Algeria), as well as by invited experts from the Council of Europe and from the Pan Cypriot Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children. At one point, a lively discussion was held in which the two Tunisian delegates were criticized, mainly by the Algerian and Moroccan delegates, for an uncritical and overly rosy picture of the situation of children in Tunisia. This led to a discussion of the ways in which Tunisia's social welfare system does indeed tackle poverty, children's needs, and the situation of low-income or under-educated women – albeit in a dirigiste manner.



Activists from the Middle East and North Africa attend the AWMR annual meeting in Cyprus in July 2000

In fact, many more women from Arab countries attended this year's AWMR meeting than had been the case at the 1998 meeting in Italy. There was a delegation of four from Palestine, three from Egypt, two from Tunisia, one from Algeria, and one from Morocco. The Palestinians were from the Working Women's Society, a new NGO based in the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli women were from Bat Shalom and from the Communist Party (the latter included a member of the Knesset who chairs the Committee on Children's Rights).

The delegates from Albania and from Italy are members of another TFN – the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which was founded

as a feminist pacifist organization in 1915. The Yugoslav delegation – which consisted of five women involved with two feminist groups in Belgrade) – was fiercely anti-nationalist and strongly opposed to the Milosevic government. Still, among the resolutions passed at the annual meeting, one concerned the removal of all economic sanctions against Yugoslavia. The Palestinians and the Israeli CP delegates jointly prepared a resolution on the current talks regarding settlements and the status of Jerusalem. Each year, resolutions are passed and are then forwarded by the Executive to national parliaments, regional bodies, and the United Nations.



At the AWMR annual meeting in Cyprus in July 2000 ? participants from Switzerland, the United States, Palestine, and Yugoslavia.

I am a member of AWMR and was an active participant at the conference. I took part in the political discussions, and I too made a presentation. Using data and photos from UNICEF and the World Health Organization, I described and graphically showed the impact of the economic sanctions on Iraqi children. (As a result, the AWMR passed a resolution calling for an immediate end to the sanctions against Iraq.) Still, I was at the conference to conduct observations and interviews, so I had to remain focused on the internal dynamics! Indeed, AWMR's internal dynamics are quite fascinating, in my view. Of all the TFNs I study, the AWMR is the most explicitly political, and is the only one that defines itself as a political organization.

Similarities and Differences

AWMR is a voluntary association with no paid positions. All its decisions are made by consensus. As its president, Yana Mintoff-Bland said to me, "I don't think any of our decisions have been made by vote." Its meetings are very non-hierarchical, democratic, and participatory. The Executive does not impose Roberts Rules of Order, but it does provide political direction. By contrast, WIDE is more professional and centralized, with paid staff and formal deliberations. WIDE has consultative status with ECOSOC, whereas AWMR has consultative status with two Committees, those on Palestine and on the Environment. These are among the organizational differences. Another difference is that WIDE is more explicitly feminist, often using feminist theory and gender analysis in its research, whereas AWMR carries out less research but more political activities. Similarities are that both TFNs unite women from different countries around a common platform. This is an especially impressive achievement in the case of the AWMR, considering the many conflicts that exist in the Mediterranean region. Both networks are regionally-based but global in their scope; both have an anti-capitalist discourse; and both have clear ideas about social, regional, and global transformation. Along with other transnational feminist networks, they constitute the women's sector of transnational social movements and are major contributors to the emerging global civil society.

(See Valentine M. Moghadam. "Transnational Feminist Networks: Collective Action in an Era of Globalization", *International Sociology*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2000): 57-85.)□

NEWS ABOUT WOMEN'S STUDIES STUDENTS AND

Welcome to Women's Studies Minors

We begin the fall semester with thirty-two women's studies minors.

Corrie Baker-Theatre
Rhonda Bean-General Student
Jamie Bockenfeld-Sociology
Kara Brown-Philosophy
Jordan Brownlee-English
Leah Bruno-English
Kelly Christian-English/Teacher Ed
Melinda Crabill-Sociology
Julie Dawson-Speech Communication
Jennifer Day-Sociology
Avada Douglas-Social Work/Econ.
Michelle Ganschow--Psychology
Raigan Grane-Public Relations
Jennifer Guarin-Social Work
Tara Haberman-Political Science
Erin Hale-Social Work

Amanda Karvelaitis-English
Mike Keegstra-Social Work
Stephanie Kiesewetter-English
Rebecca Koehler-Finance
Hillary Prtridge-English
Audrey Rosenblatt-English
Julie Ruby-English
Katherine Ryder-Mass Com.
Lara Saba-Political Science
Anne Semlak-Political Science
Dru Shirley-Social Work
Rose Simpson-Sociology
Meghan Smith-Anthropology
Samantha Turrentine-Sociology
Diana Weekes-Sociology
Erin Whitworth-Social Work

Women's Studies Hosts Speaker

By Sandra Harmon

On September 20, Kaethe Morris Hoffer, a member of Governor Ryan's Commission on the Status of Women, spoke to an audience of around 130 students, faculty and staff about House Bill 4407, the Illinois Gender Violence Act, which is pending in the Illinois General Assembly. Hoffer, an attorney specializing in inequality issues, helped draft the bill which was introduced in the House last winter. She is making a tour of Illinois colleges and universities to help drum up support for the bill which may be called during the veto session, November 14-16. If it is not called at that time, it will be reintroduced in the next session. Hoffer's visit to the Illinois State University campus was sponsored by the Women's Studies Program.

Under the Gender Violence Act, anyone who has been sexually abused, physically attacked, or threatened with such violence on the basis of sex, gender, or sexuality, may take their attacker to court and ask that the attacker pay for damages caused by the violence. The legislation is similar to a section of the 1994 federal Violence Against Women Act which provided a federal court civil remedy. However, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down that section in May of this year, ruling that it was up to the states—not Congress—to offer legal remedies to victims of gender-based violence.

According to Hoffer, the GVA is needed to close loopholes in existing legislation and to provide judges with statutory authority to assess actual, compensatory, and punitive damages against perpetrators of gender-based violence. For example, the Illinois Domestic Violence Act provides certain legal remedies to victims, primarily orders of protection. It does not provide for civil suits for damages.

Hate-crime legislation, in theory, Hoffer said, could cover gender-based crimes. However, hate-crimes are generally understood to take place between different groups of people. Many gender-based crimes are committed within families and among acquaintances. In response to a question, Hoffer said that this included assaults against gays by their fathers, which she stressed is "not hypothetical". Since gender-based crimes are a relatively new classification of violent crimes, there is little or no case law precedent. For all of these reasons, Hoffer believes a new law is needed to provide the authority for victims to sue their attackers.

Following her presentation, a lively discussion took place about the merits of the proposed bill and reasons for its delay. One of the reasons the bill has been bottled up in the House is its inclusion of crimes based on actual, perceived, or attributed sexual orientation and actual, perceived, or attributed sex or gender role conformity or nonconformity and gender identity in addition to assault and battery such as rape and domestic violence. Hoffer

was clear in her defense of this inclusion. The law seeks to address the full range of discrimination that falls on people. Victims of assaults based on sex, gender, or sexuality should all have the same legal options available to them.

Hoffer urged people in the audience who support HB 4407 to contact their representative by phone, mail, or in person to urge passage of the bill. The Governor's Commission is sponsoring a Young Women's Lobby Day in Springfield on November 16. People (men as well as women) interested in attending may contact Erika Goodman, Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, Office of the Governor, JRTC, 100 W. Randolph, Suite 16-100, Chicago, IL 60601. Telephone: 312-814-3940, Fax: 312-814-3823. □

Faculty and Staff News

Dr. Valentine M. Moghadam attended the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association (APSA), held in Washington DC over the Labor Day weekend. She took part in a roundtable discussion on the state of gender research in political science, and her own presentation was on feminist scholarship and gender research in comparative politics.

In mid-September, **Dr. Moghadam** participated in an expert group meeting in Tunisia organized by CAWTAR (Center for Arab Women's Training and Research) and funded by the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) on the subject of globalization and its impact on the economic conditions of Arab women.

On 22 September, **Dr. Moghadam** gave a guest lecture at Macalester College in Minneapolis-St. Paul, on globalization, inequalities, and transnational feminism.

Dr. Moghadam's work on global feminism is mentioned in a new publication, "Internationalizing the Study of Women and Gender: Selected Topics", by Janice Monk and Deborah Rosenfelt. This is part of the Women in the Curriculum Series published by the National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women, 2000.

This summer, **Dr. Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix**, Theatre, had a new book published by St. Martin's Press. Her book, *Wearing the Breeches: Gender on the Antebellum Stage* is a study of gender ideology in antebellum culture and particularly considers, from a feminist perspective, the popular nineteenth-century performance convention of female transvestism. There will be a book talk and signing at the Bloomington Barnes and Noble on Monday, October 2 at 7:00.

Dr. Maria Canabal, Family and Consumer Sciences, attended the American Association for Family and Consumer Science (AAFCS) Annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on June 23-25. As chair of the American Council on Consumer Interest International Affairs Committee, **Dr. Canabal** was invited to participate in the Direct Selling Education Foundation (DSEF) International Consumer Conference: On-Line Transactions and Dispute Resolution. Over ten countries were represented in this meeting on June 15-27, in Chicago, Illinois.

Dr. Canabal, as the Director of the ISU-Avinashilingam Faculty Exchange Program, sponsored by the U. S. State Department, organized a program and travelled to Coimbatore, South India during the month of July. The following faculty from ISU also travelled to India as participants of this program: Dr. Nancy Ridenoir, Dean, College of Nursing, Dr. Alison Bailey from Philosophy and Women Studies, Dr. Eileen Fowles, College of Nursing, and Ms. Nicole Dino, Graduate Student from Political Sciences and Peace Corps Fellow. Dr. Bill Semlak, Director OISP, also joined the group for a few days.

On July 24-29, **Dr. Canabal** attended the Nineteenth World Congress of the International Federation for Home Economics held in Ghana, Africa, where she presented a paper: "Decision Making Styles of Young South Indian Consumers". During that trip to Ghana she also participated in the study tour "Crafts, Traditions and Family Life in Ghana" organized by Michigan State University from July 29-August 4, 2000.

Kerri Calvert, Coordinator of ISU Student Health Service Health Promotion Program, has joined the Women's Studies Programming Committee. One of her goals as Coordinator of the Health Promotion Program is to work actively with other campus/community units to facilitate the development of coordinated programs. □

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Women Employed Schedules Local Meeting

Women Employed is a 26-year old membership organization dedicated to improving women's economic status. The organization conducts advocacy and public education programs on issues such as equal opportunity policy and enforcement, fair workplace practices, access to education and training, and welfare reform, as well as providing a range of direct services. Services provided include career development and employment preparation for adults, career exploration and life planning for teen girls, and development of model programs designed to enable women to pursue non-traditional employment options.

Women Employed is initiating the Women Employed Women's Informational Network, WE-WIN, in communities around the state of Illinois. The network will enable women across the state to learn more about and act on issues of importance to them.

On October 19, 2000, Women Employed will hold two informational meetings at the YWCA of McLean County, 1201 N. Hershey Road, Bloomington, from 12-2, and 5:30-7, regarding WE-WIN. For information regarding the availability of childcare during the meetings, telephone the YWCA at 309-662-0461. Visit WE-WIN's website at www.womenemployed.org for further information. □

World March of Women in the Year 2000

On October 15, 2000, the World March of Women 2000 will take place in Washington, D.C. The National Organization for Women has organized the march with the purpose of uniting with women around the world to demand that leaders of the United States, the United Nations and its member States, and other institutions of power work to eliminate poverty and ensure a fair distribution of the planet's wealth between rich and poor, and between women and men; eliminate violence against women, and ensure equality between women and men. For further information, contact the National NOW Action Center, 733 15th Street, N.W., 2nd Floor, Washington, DC 20005. Telephone 202-628-8669 (extension 0). Visit their website at www.worldmarch.org. □

ISU Alumni Featured in Women's Art Exhibit

Two ISU Master of Fine Art alumni, **Devita Schulman** and **Sigrid Wonsil**, have been selected for the prestigious exhibit *Illinois Women Artists: The New Millennium*. The exhibit opens with a reception for the artists on Saturday, September 23, in the University Galleries, and will run through October 29. Both alumni took courses in Women's Studies during their MFA Program studies at ISU.

These are the only ISU alumni in the show of 50 Illinois artists chosen by the international juror, Clare Henry of Scotland, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and art critic for the Glasgow Herald. Dr. Cynthia Kukla, Associate Professor, Art Department, was the major professor to both artists, so it gives her great pleasure to witness their success.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. The exhibit opened at the J. Thompson Center in Chicago, Illinois and then immediately traveled to the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington. It will be circulating throughout the state for two years, including this stop at the University Galleries. □

Volunteers Needed for Crisis Line

Providing Access to Help (PATH), needs volunteers. It is through volunteers that PATH is able to provide continuous 23-hour crisis, information and referral services to McLean County. PATH provides senior services, referral seminars, and human services directory for members of the community. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Karen Zangerle, Associate Executive Director, PATH, 201 E. Grove Street, Bloomington, IL 61701, for information regarding their training schedule. Telephone: 309-828-1022, Fax: 309-827-7485. □

Take Back the Night Rally

The Women's Coalition has scheduled **November 2, 2000**, to host the annual rally, which will be held at Illinois State University, Bone Student Center Ballroom. Email womynsco@hotmail.com for further information.