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Illinois State University

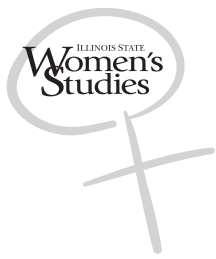
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Women's Voice

Illinois State University

Volume 8, Issue 1, September/October 2002

From the Director:

Feminist Reflections on September 11

The events of September 11 compel us to think seriously about the causes of religious terrorism, the broad implications of violence and militarism, the nature of Islamic fundamentalist movements, and the gender dynamics of political violence. Pertinent questions are: What are the religious, ethnic, political, social, and economic factors behind the deployment of terrorism as a political strategy? Why do some Muslim countries produce movements that seek religio-political objectives through violent means? What link, if any, is there between terrorism as a political strategy and militarism as a state strategy? How might the violence of political movements and the violence of states reflect not only dysfunction in domestic and international relations but also highly problematical concepts of masculinity? And what are some urgent alternatives to terrorism and militarism? Here I will focus briefly on some feminist responses and alternatives to terrorism and violence – whether of the state or of non-state actors.

Feminist Responses and Alternatives

Feminists and women's groups have long been involved in peace work, and their analyses and activities have contributed much to our understanding of the roots of conflict and the conditions for conflict resolution, human security, and human development. The activities of anti-militarist groups such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Women Strike for Peace, and the Women of Greenham Common are legendary, and their legacy lies in ongoing efforts to "feminize" peace, human rights, and development. The third UN conference on women, in Nairobi in 1985, took place in the midst of the crisis of Third World indebtedness and the implementation of austerity policies recommended by the World Bank and the IMF. Feminists were quick to see the links between economic distress, political instability, and violence against women.

Since the 1980s, when women activists formed networks to more effectively work on local and global issues, transnational feminist networks have engaged in dialogues and alliances with other organizations in order to make an impact on peace, security, conflict resolution, and social justice. The expansion of the population of educated, employed, mobile, and politically-aware women has led to increased activism by women in the areas of peace, conflict resolution, and human rights. Around the world, women have been insisting that their voices be heard, on the streets, in civil society organizations, and in the meeting halls of the multilateral organizations. An important proposal is the institutionalization of peace education.

Prominent women's peace and human rights organizations include the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, in Argentina, who are credited with helping to bring down the dictatorship in a non-violent manner, and Women in Black, which began as an Israeli campaign against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and has spread to other countries (e.g., Italy, Germany, Serbia). In Muslim countries, women have fought on another front, the struggle against fundamentalism, forming transnational women's rights networks such as Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLWML). At the national level, Algerian women's groups have been strongly anti-fundamentalist, while the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) has drawn attention to the violence and misogyny of both the *jihadis* (their term for the Mujahidin remnants in the Northern Alliance) and the Taleban.

Examples of women's peace and conflict resolution initiatives abound. The historic women's peace petition presented to the UN in October 1997, demanded that all governments of the world transfer a minimum of five percent of their military budgets over the next five years to health, education, and employment programs. South Asian feminist networks and the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy created linkages in civil society across the region's most divisive and dangerous frontier. In Northern Ireland, women activists calmed tensions during the "marching seasons", and Continued on Page 2

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FEMINIST REFLECTIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

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on very short notice formed the Women's Coalition and mobilized enough support to ensure feminist representation in the parliament. In Israel/Palestine, despite the continuing violence on both sides, the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace carries on with its work. In Jerusalem in late December 2001, it bravely held a March of Mourning and led with a large banner that read, "The Occupation is Killing Us All".

Many women's groups draw on motherhood, maternity, and femininity as discursive resources discursive strategies. Maternalist politics – the political use of motherhood and feminine values of nurturing and care – has a very long history, but it is not the only model of women's activism, for women have also take part in armed struggles, in liberation movements, and in revolutions.

Feminists distinguish between legitimate resistance movements and terrorist organizations or movements that rely on terrorist action such as the targeting of innocent civilians. For example, even though Palestinian aspirations for nationhood and dignity are just and legitimate and the Israeli occupation has been brutal, a feminist perspective cannot condone the killing of Israeli civilians by Palestinian organizations or individuals. Whether carried out by Tamil Tigers or Palestinians, suicide bombings cannot be justified as a political tactic. And even though some of the stated grievances of Osama bin Laden echo those of legitimate movements and organizations, the atrocities of September 11 reveal the man and his network for what they are: violent and criminal.

For this reason, feminists and women's groups around the world condemned September 11, while also warning against any unilateral militarist responses that would result in civilian deaths – as in fact happened when the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan began – and drawing attention to the repressive policies of Arab governments and certain U.S. foreign policies that are partly to blame for the rise of militant and terrorist groups. For example, a representative of RAWA said, "Say you get the Taleban out, then what? Who's going to be responsible for rebuilding? Those who've waged proxy wars for foreigners on Afghan soil for 20 years? Those who've committed atrocities against their own people in the past?" An Egyptian woman journalist now living in the U.S. pointed out: "Through censorship and intimidation, [the Egyptian government] has silenced the voices of the intellectuals and activists who could have acted as a much-needed counterforce to the hard-line and extremist version of religion the militants propagated. The government and the militants, almost in tandem, have succeeded in stunting the growth of civil society."

WILPF wrote: "Once again our deepest beliefs hold that true security can only be rooted in social justice and strengthening the domestic and international rule of law." The statement by WLUML similarly expressed sincere condolences, adding that "We are particularly aware of the human cost of terrorism and war frequently perpetrated in the name of religion or belief systems." But "vengeance is not justice", they stressed, "misguided retaliation" is not the way forward, and "ending terrorism requires addressing the roots of global inequality." WLUML has been warning of an "Islamist international" since at least 1990, pointing out the financial role played by U.S. ally Saudi Arabia.

In India, women's groups joined a coalition called Jang Roko Abhiyan (Anti-War Campaign) that condemned the massacre of American civilians on September 11 but called on the U.S. to accept responsibility for the fallout from past foreign policies and to refrain from military retaliation in Afghanistan which would very likely cause considerable civilian death and suffering. In Pakistan, women's groups held a protest rally on 25 September 2001 against terrorism, religious fundamentalism, and war. The U.S. Feminist Majority issued a very measured statement on September 11 that pointed out the U.S. role in the 1980s in supplying "billions of dollars to fund, train, and arm the mujahideen, which gave rise to the Taliban." The statement continued: "Just as we must not condemn the Afghan people for the acts of terrorists, we also should not condemn Arabs and Muslims, the vast majority of whom do not support this so-called religious fanaticism. This extremism, which has now taken the lives of so

many American citizens, Afghans, and others, is not about Islam, but is about the use of violence to achieve a political end."

Despite the long existence of women's groups that have worked to enable women to be considered legitimate participants and to provide women's perspectives on peace and human security, very few of the norms that guide this area reflect their contributions. As many feminist scholars have noted, approaches to security and conflict-resolution remain masculinist, guided by patriarchal, capitalistic, and state-centered interests.

At a time when conflicts continue to rage around the world, militarism shows no sign of abatement, inequalities widen across the globe, and terrorist actions fuel insecurity but also misguided responses, it is time for women's perspectives and their actions to be recognized. Clearly, feminist scholars and women's organizations have much to say about the cycle of violence, war, peace, and change. Their voices and their activities, analyses and proposed solutions need to be publicized and disseminated. ■

Take Back the Night

By Megan Volpert, Vice President of FMLA, and Women's Studies Minor

On **October 3, 2002**, at 7:00 p.m., the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA) student organization at Illinois State University will host a rally in the Bowling and Billiards Center's Activities Room. While initially Take Back the Night aimed to protest conditions causing women to feel unsafe while alone on the streets at night, "night" has also become a metaphor for fear, isolation, coercion and cruelty that women experience daily in a rape culture. Take Back the Night offers women an opportunity to take what might otherwise be private experiences of injustice, and break the silence by publicly naming these wrongs. The event is a symbolic reclamation of our bodies, our homes, our workplaces, our streets and our lives.

Violence against women encompasses much more than individual acts of physical brutality. Women have historically been, and continue to be, subjected to a systemic violence which denies us access to resources and decision-making power. Domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, racism, homophobia, class-based injustice, denial of reproductive freedom, inadequate access to safe and affordable health care, and discrimination against disabled persons all impinge upon the lives of women in ways that are distinct from men's experiences of these injustices. Thus, Take Back the Night is not solely about sexual assault. Rather, it is an act of solidarity against the predominantly masculine systemic violence that shapes our lives.

The planning of the event, as well as participation in the march itself, is limited to women and transgender persons only. This is in no way meant to trivialize violence against men or men's efforts to end violence against women. Rather, Take back the Night is a time for women to stand in solidarity to reclaim our streets and our bodies without the help or protection of men. By joining together in protest, we defy the roles that society forces upon us and we are demanding an end to the limitations placed on women's lives. As women stand together in solidarity to struggle against the sexism and violence in our lives, we empower ourselves to create change within our environments.

YWCA WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE

On **October 18, 2002**, the YWCA will host a luncheon and speakers panel titled "Eliminate Racism and Hate Crimes in Our Community" from 12 noon to 2 p.m. at Eastland Suites Conference Center, Bloomington, Illinois. The speakers' panel are: Dave Bentin of Advocacy Council for Human Rights of Bloomington/Normal; Dr. Jyl J. Josephson (Politics and Government), and Dr. Sessa Kethanini (Criminal Justice), with Dr. Alison Bailey as facilitator and moderator. Awards will be presented to high school students. To make reservations by October 11, contact the YWCA at 309-662-0461.

WOMEN'S STUDIES FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

Women's Studies Minors

Twenty-five returning Women's Studies minors are joined by eight newly declared minors this fall. They are enrolled in majors in thirteen different departments spread over all five colleges of the University.

Debbie Armstrong—Family and Consumer Sciences
Nicole Berg—Mass Com.
Christiny Bouback—Entrepreneurship and Small Bus. Mgmt.
Rita Bourell—Sociology
Michelle Bowker—Chemistry Teacher Education
Nicole Brooks—General Student
Alyssa Bursott—Psychology
Sarah Clark—Pre-Nursing
Stacey Concannon—Social Work
Talia Cruz—General Student
Julie Dawson—Speech Com.
Angela Delauz—Political Science
Jennifer Egert—Mass Com.
Laura Elliff—Anthropology
Gwen Givens—General Student
Erin Hale—Social Work
Sarah Henschel—Psychology
Arshia Ilyas—Family and Consumer Sciences

Amanda Karvelaitis—English
Melanie Manego—Political Science
Dana Matsko—Nursing—Prelicensure/BSN Sequence
Ann Mizwicki—Social Work
Ryan Radmacher—English
Sarah Rhoads—Biological Sciences Teacher Education
Ashley Rowden—Political Science
Lavita Scott—Political Science
Tangela Taylor—Political Science
Samantha Turrentine—Sociology
Megan Volpert—English
Erin Whitworth—Social Work
Katherine Wilkerson—Early Childhood Education
Winter Wren—General Art
Amy Wyatt—Social Work

Arts and Sciences Sequence Major

Marilyn Kammler is pursuing an Arts and Sciences Sequence major in the General Studies Program. Her program is centered on Women's Studies with additional course work from Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies so that she can address feminist peace/political issues. She is a staff secretary in the Department of Psychology working with the department's graduate students.

Graduate Certificate Students

Nine students have begun work on the new Women's Studies Graduate Certificate that was implemented last spring. They are

Farahnaz Amirkha—Masters program in History
Aisha Ibrahim—Ph.D. program English Studies
Jude Geiger—Masters program in Political Science
Delois Gibson—Masters program in Sociology
Elizabeth Gilhouse—Masters program in English
Grace Foote Johns—Graduate Student at Large
Narry Kim—Graduate Student at Large
Susan Larkin—Ph.D. program in English Studies
Teryn Robinson—Masters program in Educational Administration and Foundations

Student News

Megan Volpert's essay "Pax This: Diffusing Bush's Rhetoric Bomb," appears in the fall 2002 issue of *Polyglossia: The Journal of Illinois State University's Lambda Delta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society*.

Did you know that Women's Studies is now offering a Graduate Certificate in addition to an undergraduate minor?

Faculty and Staff News

María E. Canabal (Family and Consumer Sciences) and Klaus Schmidt (Technology) visited the European School for Consumers (Escuela Europea de Consumidores) in Santander (Cantabria), Spain this summer where Erin Lausch, undergraduate student from Family and Consumer Sciences, was doing her Professional Practice. Canabal's article "Decision making styles among young south Indian consumers: an exploratory study" appears in *College Student Journal* Vol 36 (1):12-19.

The anthology *Community Diversity, and Difference: Implications for Peace*, edited by **Alison Bailey** (Philosophy) and Paula J. Smithka has just been published by Rodopi. Bailey will present a paper "Engendering Whiteness" at the Midwest Society for Women in Philosophy in October.

"The Intersectionality of Domestic Violence and Welfare in the Lives of Poor Women," by **Jyl Josephson** (Politics and Government) appears in *The Journal Of Poverty*, Vol. 6 No. 1, 1-20.

Shang-Fen Ren (Physics) became the second Illinois State University Physics Faculty inducted as an American Physical Society Fellow in 2001. Nominated by the Forum on International Physics, her award citation praises both her research work in semi-conductors and her exemplary activities in the promotion of international collaboration and exchange. Dr. Ren is a Founding Member and President of the Heart of Illinois Chapter of the *Association for Women in Science* at Illinois State University in 1994.

Grace Foote Johns serves as administrative assistant to the chairperson of the Physics Department. Encouraging gender and multi-cultural equity in science career advising is a special focus of Ms. Johns' work. She has served as a Board Member for the *Expanding Your Horizons Through Science and Mathematics Conference (EYH)* since 1991 and also works with the Association for Women in Science—Heart of Illinois Chapter (AWIS-HOI). She has also assembled an extensive collection of diversity career resource materials for the Physics Department that she uses and shares in exhibits and presentations in her work with school and university students and teachers.

Cynthia Kukla (Art) was invited to interpret the Spurlock Museum of World Culture collection for the dedication of the new museum on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. Her five paintings were reproduced for the dedication materials and the originals will be on view beginning with the dedication on September 25. Her paintings interpret the five geographic/historic areas included in the collection: the Ancient Mediterranean, Africa and West Asia, East Asia and Oceania, Europe and North/South America. Her solo show of recent paintings opens September 29 at the Behrunger-Crawford Museum in Covington, Kentucky and runs through November 17.

Perle Besserman (English) received the Illinois State University Lambda Delta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta English Honors Society Outstanding Teaching Award in the spring of 2002. Her short documentary fiction based on the narrative of her 85-year old aunt, Ida Scherl, called "A Siberian Story," appears in the Spring 2002 issue of *Southern Humanities Review*. Two more short stories have been accepted for publication: "The Woman in Red" to be published in *Other Voices*, Winter 2003 and "Death by Drowning" in the *Nebraska Review*, Winter 2002. This summer she worked as an editorial advisor with a group of Hawaiian and Pacific Island scholars who are translating and creating a variorum edition of "The Tumulipo" (sometimes referred to as the Hawaiian Beowulf), a momentous scholarly project involving a collective led by Hawaiian folklore and myth scholar Leialoha Apo Perkins.

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Understanding the Status of Women in Muslim Societies:

A Seminar and Video Series, 2002-2003

The Women's Studies Program is the recipient of a federally-supported grant of \$4,100 from the Cooperative Grants Program (COOP), which is implemented by NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Women's Studies Director Valentine Moghadam wrote the proposal last spring in order to present seminars and videos to enhance understanding of Muslim societies and cultures, particularly the status and roles of women. Guest speakers and ISU faculty, including those born in Muslim countries, will share their expertise on women and gender in Muslim societies and their personal experiences. The seminars will meet academic standards and diversity goals, and provide a forum for intercultural exchange and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Part of the Muslim women seminars will be integrated into the existing International and Global Seminars series, which will be held on Wednesdays, 12-1 in Stevenson 401. Indeed, that seminar series will be launched on September 25 by one of the Muslim women seminars, to be given by Dr. Moghadam on the subject of women in Afghanistan. Other seminars that will address the questions of the status and roles of women in Muslim societies include presentations by Dr. Ali Riaz (ISU), who will discuss gender and politics in Bangladesh and Pakistan; Dr. Azza Karam, the Director of the Women's Program of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, in New York; Emine Evered (ISU), who will speak on nation-building, modernity, and women in Turkey; Dr. Shahla Haeri, who will discuss women and politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran; and Dr. Janet Afary (Purdue University), who will discuss feminism and Islamic fundamentalism in the Muslim world.

Understanding the Status of Women in Muslim Societies will also involve the showing of videos at the Women's Studies conference room in Rachel Cooper 234. Each screening will begin with an introduction and be followed by discussion. See the schedule for details.

Women's Studies Fall 2002 Video Series

Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 PM
Rachel Cooper 234

- Sept. 24 **Behind the Veil:**
Afghan Women Under Fundamentalism
(2001, 26 minutes)
- Oct. 8 **Beyond the Veil: Are Iranian Women Rebellious?**
Concerns women's everyday acts of resistance and their efforts to empower themselves.
(Canada, 1997, 22 minutes)
- Oct. 15 **Honorable Murder**
Concerns honor killings in Jordan
(Sweden, 1998, 55 minutes)
- Oct. 22 **Jordan: Democracy for our Children**
On Toujan Faisal, journalist, activist, and former senator
(New York, 1996, 25 minutes)
- Oct. 29 **Daughter of the Nile**
How Egyptian women's lives are shaped by Islam, tradition, and social class (1994, 46 minutes)

Partial support for this project has been provided by the United States Department of State grant for the Cooperative Grants Program of NAFSA: Association of International Educators.