

# WOMEN'S EDUCATION DES FEMMES

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## Women's EDUCATION des femmes

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### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

For a critical look at the way the educational system neglects the needs of women outside the mainstream in this issue, we are much indebted to Diane Driedger and April D'Aubin who got the ball rolling with their excellent article on disabled women and literacy. Sharon Goldberg was fast enough to catch up with Charlotte Bunch and through an interview provides us with her insight into recognizing the diversity of women. Judith Grant tells us about a program for mature women wishing to return to school, Marie Letellier describes the diverse situation of women's groups in Quebec, and Judith Clayden outlines the work of a resource centre serving women in the Manitoba north. Lanie Melamed suggests we might learn ways of knowing from older, more playful women, and Liz Stimpson's Commentary rounds out the issue with a catalogue of access problems for disabled women at educational institutions. Miriam Jones and Heather Wright offer competent critiques in our Reviews. The poetry comes to us through the creativity of Betsy Struthers, di brandt, and Lorna Crozier; Sandra Gregson and Catherine O'Neill contributed graphics.

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## **CORRECTION**

The address given in the Resources of Vol.8 No.2 (Older Women and Education) for the Older Women's Network should have been:

Older Women's Network  
427 Bloor Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 1X7  
(416) 924-4188

## **COVER**

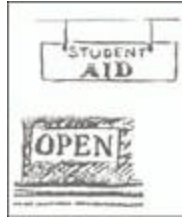
The cover drawing is a graphic by Catherine O'Neill of Ottawa, Ontario.

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**FEMMES** est une revue publiée tous les trimestres par le Congrès canadien pour la promotion des études chez la femme. Le CCPEF est un organisme national bénévole chargé de promouvoir l'éducation et le développement du plein potentiel des femmes.

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## Motherhood: One More Way to Learn

BY CHRISTINA STARR

**O**ne fine day late in spring, not long after my daughter was born, I decided to take a stroll (and the stroller) over to Robarts library at the University of Toronto to return a book. I had, in the course of recent studies, visited Robarts many times and this trip seemed no different until I arrived at the austere front entrance which I suddenly realized has about a hundred steps. My baby and I, and her stroller, would not be going in *this* door.

Other days on my maternity leave I tried going to the bank, visiting stores, meeting a friend at a restaurant, or taking the streetcar to a park. Never easy. Eventually I became adept at maneuvers like holding the door open with my backside while I pulled the stroller through, but in the process I have become acutely aware just how completely we exclude disabled people in our society. As a woman with a stroller I don't claim to experience nearly the same discrimination, but I certainly learned that, in some cases, someone who moves by way of a chair with wheels would get no further than the corner of their block. I learned, too, that these people would not be nearly so "disabled" but for the handicaps an able-bodied society puts in their way - like steps, like doors that don't stay open on their own.

Diane Driedger and April D'Aubin offer for us, in this issue, some criticism of all the recent activity around literacy and International Literacy Year. "Literacy for whom?" they ask. The needs of people with disabilities, especially women, are not adequately addressed by educational institutions nor in literacy programs or policy.

I decided to try to carry my baby and her stroller up those steps into Robarts (though, being the universally sympathetic figure of a mother and child, a man who happened along immediately assisted me and also admired my "sweet little boy"). There is a wheelchair accessible door at Robarts but it's out of the way around the other side of the block. It has a long ramp (it has to be long to reach the height of all those steps) and exits into a not very busy park-like area at the back of the library that at night is only dimly lit. I'm sure a disabled woman working at Robarts would - regrettably - curtail her study hours



Geneva Starr (lower right) sits in at P.C. part offices with Mothers and Children Against War.

at night if this is the door by which she has to leave. In our Commentary, Liz Stimpson, chair of the Disabled Women's Network in Toronto, rails against similar inconveniences and examples poor planning at other institutes of learning in the city.

As a mother I have also been surprised and enlightened by the intensity of love and commitment that has seized me since the birth of my precious little girl. That is why, when I saw the Associated Press photo of a brand new mom in combat fatigues saying good-bye to her seven-week-old baby as she prepared to obey the commands of her president and sail to the Persian Gulf, I felt sick. What kind of training is it that exacts from a woman, from any human being, the compliance to leave children and family and go off to war? Lanie Melamed writes in "Living and Learning" that if we kept more play in our education we might not get so caught up in competition, in winning and losing. And in two special issues planned for later this year, we will look at girls and women in science and technology and consider the exclusion of their concerns from these areas. That consideration might help to explain why much of science and technology has to do with making war.

My daughter and I have been very active in protesting the war in the Persian Gulf, and we intend to remain active until the message is relayed that the women and children of Canada don't support this ludicrous decimation of life. (A recent NAC pole indicated that 64% of women in Canada are opposed to the Gulf war.) I have learned through motherhood that any life is too valuable to be sacrificed to the power interests of politicians (including the life of the planet) and we as women, with our long experience of struggling to make known another point of view, need to raise one loud voice for our children and the children of the world in an unequivocal demand for peace.

*Christina Starr is the Managing Editor of Women's Education des femmes. Her daughter, Geneva Anne, is now one year old.*

## Être mère, une autre façon de s' instruire

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PAR CHRISTINA STARR

**U**ne belle après-midi de printemps, l'an dernier. Quelque temps après la naissance de ma fille. Ce jour-là, je me décidais à aller à pied jusqu'à la bibliothèque Robarts pour rendre un livre, accompagnée de ma fille dans sa poussette. Je m'étais rendue de nombreuses fois à la bibliothèque au cours de mes études et cette petite excursion, me semblait-il, ne serait guère différente des précédentes. Mais, une fois parvenue sur le parvis de l'austère bâtiment, je me rendis soudain compte qu'il fallait gravir une centaine de marches avant de pouvoir y pénétrer. Ni mon bébé, ni sa poussette, ni moi-même n'arriverions à franchir cette volée de marches.

À d'autres occasions, pendant mon congé de maternité, j'essayais d'aller à la banque, dans les magasins, de rencontrer une amie au restaurant ou de prendre le tramway pour aller me promener dans un parc. C'était toujours compliqué. Au bout d'un certain temps, je devins une grande experte de certaines manoeuvres, comme tenir une porte avec mon dos tout en tirant la poussette à l'intérieur en même temps. Mais, c'est alors que je pris conscience jusqu'à quel point les personnes handicapées sont tenues à l'écart dans notre société. Je ne prétend pas subir la même discrimination avec ma poussette, mais une chose est sûre c'est que j'ai compris que dans certains cas une personne se déplaçant dans un fauteuil roulant n'a guère de chances de dépasser le coin de sa rue. J'ai également compris que ces personnes ne seraient pas aussi handicapées si les gens bien portants ne parsemaient pas leur parcours d'obstacles, marches d'escalier ou portes qui ne restent pas ouvertes.

Dans ce numéro, Diane Driedger et April D'Aubin critiquent toutes les activités qu'ont récemment provoquées l'alphabétisation et l'Année internationale de l'alphabétisation. "L'alphabétisation, pour qui?" demandent-elles. Ni les établissements scolaires, ni les programmes d'alphabétisation, ni la politique appliquée à ce propos ne tiennent compte des besoins des personnes handicapées, en particulier de ceux des femmes.

Je décidais de porter mon bébé et la poussette jusqu'à la porte de la bibliothèque (toutefois, étant donné que je représentais l'image éternellement sympathique de la mère et de l'enfant, un homme qui passait par là m'aida immédiatement et s'extasia devant mon "joli petit garçon"). Je dois dire qu'il existe une porte accessible en fauteuil roulant à Robarts, mais elle se trouve de l'autre côté du bâtiment, hors des sentiers battus. La rampe d'accès est très longue (il le faut vu le nombre de marches à franchir) et aboutit dans une sorte de petit parc assez isolé à l'arrière de la bibliothèque. La nuit, cet endroit est mal éclairé. Je suis convaincue qu'une femme handicapée ne se risquerait jamais à étudier tard

le soir à la bibliothèque sachant que c'est la seule sortie qu'elle peut emprunter. Dans la rubrique Commentaires, Liz Stimpson, présidente du Réseau des femmes handicapées à Toronto, se plaint d'autres inconvénients du même genre et donne des exemples d'établissements d'enseignements où la planification a été mal pensée.

En tant que mère, je suis surprise et je ressens une révélation devant l'amour et le sens des responsabilités qui m'étreignent depuis la naissance de mon trésor. C'est la raison pour laquelle je ne cacherai pas le sentiment de révolte que j'ai éprouvé en voyant une photo d'une jeune mère en tenue de combat dire au revoir à son bébé âgé de sept semaines alors qu'elle s'apprêtait à obéir aux ordres de son président et à mettre le cap sur le golfe Persique. Quel genre de formation peut exiger d'une femme, ou de tout être humain, de se conformer au point de laisser ses enfants et sa famille et de partir à la guerre? Lanie Melamed affirme dans "Vivre et apprendre" que si nous accordions plus d'importance à l'amusement dans notre éducation, nous ne nous laisserions peut-être pas ces sentiments de compétition, de victoire et d'échec nous emprisonner. Vers la fin de l'année, nous consacrerons deux numéros spéciaux aux femmes et aux jeunes filles qui étudient les sciences et la technologie ou travaillent dans ce domaine et verront comment leurs préoccupations ne sont pas retenues, ce qui explique peut-être pourquoi les sciences et la technologie sont souvent axées sur l'art de la guerre.

Ma fille et moi-même avons protesté activement contre la guerre dans le golfe Persique. Nous avons la ferme intention de continuer à le faire jusqu'à ce que notre message soit entendu: les femmes et les enfants du Canada s'insurgent contre ces morts et ces souffrances absurdes. (Récemment, un sondage du Comité canadien sur le statut de la femme révélait que 64 % des Canadiennes s'opposent à cette guerre). J'ai appris en devenant mère que n'importe quelle vie humaine est trop précieuse pour qu'on la sacrifie aux politiciens avides de pouvoir (y compris la vie de notre planète) et nous, les femmes, fortes de la lutte que nous menons depuis longtemps pour faire accepter d'autres optiques, devons nous exprimer avec force, sans équivoque, au nom de nos enfants et des enfants du monde entier, pour exiger que règne la paix.

*Christina Starr est rédactrice en chef de Women's Education des femmes. Sa fille, Geneva Anne, a maintenant un an.*

## LETTERS

*Dear WEdf:*

We received several copies of the issue of Older Women and Education. Since the cover is the first element of any publication which readers notice and examine, what prompted you to picture the female senior in a stained, spotted coat? If you are attempting to highlight the value of education as a positive factor in stimulating and maintaining seniors' interest in their communities, your cover had the opposite effect.

Several of our seniors did not want to look into a magazine that pictures female seniors in such a negative way. Several also wanted to know why the male had no stain on his coat. They felt that senior women are too often depicted as helpless, powerless individuals. Your cover seems to promote that image. Our group did enjoy the magazine's contents, especially, the "Lives Full of Learning". With such worthwhile content, why the atrocious cover? Older is equivalent neither to poor not to messy, unkempt, or careless.

Sincerely,

The Recollections Group  
Ryerson Poly technical Institute  
Toronto, Ontario

***Editor's Note:** The "stains" that appear on one woman's coat are not in the original photo and are an unfortunate result of a smudge in the printing process. The photo was chosen for its composition as well as for the reality it depicts of many older women's lives. The photographer, Elaine Briere, describes it this way: "While walking in Vancouver one day I noticed two older ladies helping each other slowly make their way home. I asked if I could take their picture and afterwards I took their bags and walked them home. They told me they'd moved in together and were fending off the isolation and solitude of old age that way. The photo speaks to me of positive human values, of the way they are helping each other and the way they've defied conventional norms by deciding to live the rest of their lives together."*

*Dear WEdf:*

Thank you for your recent package continuing the Autumn 1990 issue. This particular issue focusing on education and older women is most interesting and a topic rarely given much attention. As per your resource list at the back of the book, you obviously weren't aware of our seniors' organization. Here is the address and a contact person for future reference:



N.W.T. Seniors Association Box 25  
Yellowknife, N. W. T.  
X1A 2N1 (403) 873-4745

Contact: Jack Tees

I will also be sending information to my mother in Kamloops, B.C. for their seniors' association! Best wishes with your magazine and keep in touch!

Sincerely,

Lynda Comerford  
Executive Director  
Multicultural Association of the N. W. T.  
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

*Dear WEdf:*

Hello! This is just a short note to say that we would love to have a subscription exchange with *Women's Education des femmes*. Our first issue was published in June 1989 as a project of East Coast Women and Words. In January 1991 *Waterlily* will become an independent publication but our vision as a feminist paper for the women of our province shall remain the same.

Sincerely,

Gaile Hall for the *Waterlily* Collective  
(a feminist voice in Newfoundland and Labrador)  
P.O. Box 367, Station C  
St. John's, Nfld. A1C 5J9

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## Literacy for Whom? Women with Disabilities Marginalized

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BY DIANE DRIEDGER AND APRIL D'AUBIN

***Disabled people,  
particularly  
disabled women,  
need specific  
consideration  
within the  
learner  
population.***

**A**lmost half of the people with disabilities in Canada are illiterate, and even greater numbers are illiterate in the developing regions of the world. Disabled women are less likely to be literate than disabled men.

The United Nations International Literacy Year, 1990, has spurred much discussion on literacy issues. Articles focus on topics such as: the definition of literacy, the value assumptions underlying literacy campaigns, why literacy is important, programming components, the social benefits of literacy, and enhancing literacy skills at various stages in the life cycle. These address the important questions of what, when, where, and why, but consideration also needs to be given to whom. Those with low literacy skills are not a homogeneous group. Disabled people, particularly disabled women, need specific consideration within the learner population. Literacy is both a gender issue and a disability issue.

It is readily apparent that disabled people are forgotten when literacy is examined by mainstream researchers. For example, *Broken Words*, the Southam News Report on Literacy in Canada, did not look at people in chronic care institutions or nursing homes when calculating the numbers of people who cannot read in this country (1). The *World Charter on Education for All*, the mission statement for International Literacy Year, mentions disabled people only once. Disabled activists reported that major international conferences on literacy, such as ' the UN World Conference on Education for All, also failed to address the needs of disabled people in a meaningful way.

## L'alphabétisation, pour qui? La marginalisation des femmes handicapées

PAR DIANE DRIEDGER ET APRIL D'AUBIN

En raison du sexisme et de la discrimination qu'engendre un handicap, les apprenantes handicapées se heurtent à des problèmes uniques. Très souvent, les personnes s'occupant d'alphabétisation ne tiennent pas compte des problèmes qui se posent à ces apprenantes. Ainsi, à la conférence internationale des Nations unies s'intitulant «L'éducation pour tous» on ne s'est pas penchés de façon satisfaisante sur les besoins des personnes handicapées. Les femmes handicapées se butent à une multitude d'obstacles (édifices inaccessibles, attitudes négatives, confiance aveugle au modèle médical, entre autres) qui les empêchent, en particulier dans les pays en voie de développement, d'acquérir des compétences fondamentales.

Cet article retrace les expériences de femmes handicapées vivant dans différents pays, Trinité, le Salvador, le Pakistan, l'Ouganda et les États-Unis. Dans le domaine de l'éducation, les inquiétudes sont différentes selon l'handicap. Comme d'autres groupes linguistiques, les malentendants se battent pour exercer un contrôle plus grand sur l'éducation des leurs. Les personnes éprouvant des difficultés d'apprentissage luttent pour que leur handicap ne soit pas médicalisé. Les personnes classés parmi les handicapés mentaux rejettent le legs laissé par les institutions et s'insurgent contre les maigres chances d'apprentissage existant dans ces établissements.

Si on les éduque, les femmes handicapées du monde entier peuvent s'épanouir pleinement et participer activement à la vie de la société.

International Literacy Year intersected the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983- 92). The UN's *World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons* established for all countries the goal of "equalization of opportunities" which it defines as "the process through which the general systems of society, such as the physical and cultural environment, educational and work opportunities, cultural and social life, ...are made accessible to all" (2). The concept implies a vigorous program of barrier removal.

All over the world people with various disabilities have formed their own self-help organizations to advocate with one voice for equalization of opportunities and improvements in the status of disabled persons. There are similarities between disabled people's struggle for empowerment and the feminist movement. In Canada, the Coalition of Provincial Organizations of the Handicapped (COPOH), a national cross-disability advocacy organization of disabled persons, works to ensure that the needs of disabled people are addressed by generic service delivery systems, rather than by segregation. Organizations such as COPOH and Disabled Peoples



Disabled women at the Disabled Peoples' International West African Women's Training Seminar (Zohra Rajah of Mauritius is on the far left in the middle row), April 1990 in Mauritania.

International (DPI), the international self-help organization of disabled people, work to decrease disabled people's marginalization in society.

In Canada in 1986, 39.2% of disabled persons aged 15 to 64 were employed compared to 70% of the nondisabled population in the same age group. Statistics Canada's Health and Activity Limitation Survey also indicates that 4.3% of disabled people have a university degree compared to 10.3% of the nondisabled population. Severe disability has an even greater impact on educational attainment: a Decima survey found that 45% of severely disabled respondents had eight years of education or less compared with 25% of people with mild disabilities (3). Women with disabilities experience double jeopardy: the negative effects of both sexism and disability-based discrimination. In Canada, disabled women's average take-home pay is just slightly more than half of what nondisabled women earn (\$4,810 compared to \$8,800) (4). Disabled women in all societies are the poorest of the poor.

The barriers to disabled women's learning are most acute in developing countries. Yutta Fricke of DPI claims that the vast majority of the world's 500 million disabled people are illiterate and suggests further that 350 million disabled people living in developing countries are without education. Lack of accessible transportation, the frequency of steps into schools, and the attitudes of families who want to keep their disabled daughters at home to do chores inhibit disabled women's education.

*"I'd ride the bus for two hours in the morning and two in the evening - I'd get to school and not exactly get down to hard learning. Then I'd have lunch, then an hour rest period. In between that, we were being taken out for physical therapy and speech therapy. Every once in a while some academics were taught, but nothing to strain the brain very much."*

*-Judy Heumann, disabled American activist*

Joyce Joseph, a woman from Trinidad and Tobago disabled by polio during childhood, received little schooling. Her father built a small go-cart to pull her to school but her formal schooling ended when she outgrew the cart - at age eight. She then received some lessons from a tutor, but the tutor moved away. Why couldn't Joyce just use a wheelchair, crutches, or ride the bus to school? Because a wheelchair or crutches were not available to her, her family did not have a car, and the bus seldom traveled into the area where she lived. These were her barriers to education.\*

Korisha Mohammed, also from Trinidad and also disabled by polio at four years of age, received little education. Even though her disability is not severe - she wears a leg brace - her family decided to house her in an institution after she became disabled. She lived there until she was thirteen, and received an elementary schooling during this time. When she was released from the institution she was

unable to continue her education because no transportation was available to the school and her parents could not afford a private tutor. Yet, Korisha has endeavored to complete her education. She is currently studying for her "A" levels (university entrance) in English literature, and she is working as a stenographer in one of the government ministries. Korisha says that because she was in a "special" school she was not able to interact with

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\* Joyce has since learned dress-making skills from her sister and has started her own business

nondisabled children. As a result, she says, "I feel socially handicapped as an adult still."

Eileen Giron, a DPI World Council member from El Salvador, explains that in Latin American countries families do not view education for disabled women as a priority. They continue to be very protective and do not allow women with disabilities, especially blind women, to go outside the home unaccompanied. Physical inaccessibility of the schools compounds the problem. Giron reports that the Catholic University in San Salvador is inaccessible and its administration is unreceptive to suggestions to retrofit the campus.

While more developed countries have government subsidized public education systems and a higher overall literacy rate for women, they are not immune to erecting barriers for those who are disabled. There is still a tendency in the school system to believe that disabled children do not really need an education since they will work in sheltered workshops or stay at home. Indeed, in the late 1960s those were the options. Judy Heumann, a disabled American activist, was the first student from her classroom to enter high school. Eventually she became a teacher.

Obviously, attitudes are a large barrier to the education of disabled girls. In developing countries, many are kept at home to help with household chores and rarely leave their yards to appear in public. Often, especially in developing countries, families are ashamed of their disabled children; the community views disablement as punishment for some sin the family has committed. As Fatima Shah, a founder of the disabled people's movement in Pakistan, laments, "So the blind girls leads a vegetable existence with nothing to look forward to except a dependent life as a burden on the charity of parents or relatives" (5).

Where there *are* opportunities for basic education or training, disabled boys, not girls, usually receive them. Society tends to view disabled women as less important to educate, and it maintains that they should be passive recipients of care, usually from other women. A mobility impaired activist from Mauritius and Deputy Chairperson of DPI, Zohra Rajah remarks, "In many societies it is difficult to convince people that able-bodied women need to be educated; for disabled women it is worse. Due to traditional role perceptions, disabled women are given less encouragement to continue with education" (6).

Literacy can be viewed as a cross-disability issue; that is, it affects not one but all disability groups - physical, sensory, mental. Those who have been labeled mentally handicapped have been especially denied the opportunity to obtain an education. Peter Park of People First, a Canadian organization of people labeled mentally handicapped, explains the consequences of institutionalization: "Few members of People First know how to read or write. Many of us were not educated because we were institutionalized. Many of us are afraid to speak our minds or even organize for fear of being put back into an institution. We rely on tape for information but we need not only books on tape but also notes from meetings along with reports and other information" (7).

***Where there are opportunities for basic education or training, disabled boys, not girls, usually receive them.***

The problem of education for deaf people is coloured by cultural issues. As American Sign

Language is recognized as an official language, deaf people prefer and advocate for education in separate deaf schools, just as francophone Canadians insist that French be the language of instruction for their children. Canadian deaf activists Carver and Doe write, "Education or access to education becomes possible at the earliest age and ends with death. ... For the deaf the experience of education is equally lifelong but it is also oppressive." The education of deaf people is oppressive because it is controlled primarily by upper class hearing men (8).

The problem of illiteracy affects the general population of every country, and the barriers that confront disabled women will need to be confronted by the public education system in every country as a matter of course, not as a special consideration or afterthought. A two-pronged approach is required: improved access in the generic education system and adult literacy programs that include the needs of disabled people. Like all disadvantaged groups, people with disabilities often require remedial measures to address past discrimination. Any remedial programming, such as adult literacy training, needs to recognize the concerns of women with disabilities, as these women are most likely to have experienced double discrimination. Adult literacy programs must not replicate current barriers found in education systems throughout the world: inaccessible architecture, discriminatory attitudes, or the medicalization of disability. Adult literacy programs should consult with organizations of disabled people for advice on how to best meet the learning needs of disabled people, include line items in their budgets to meet access needs of disabled students, and ensure that programs are located in areas serviced by parallel transportation.

Generic education systems all over the world must prioritize the needs of disabled students. When these needs are recognized and addressed, disabled children, particularly girls, will receive the same quality of education as the rest of the population, not a "watered down, handicapped version". The integrated approach, disabled persons argue, is perhaps the best way for disabled children to learn about how the rest of the world interacts and learns. Indeed, other children exposed to disabled peers will learn that they are the same as anyone else.

With educational opportunities and acceptance from one's peers, disabled girls will be in a better position to choose the kinds of careers they are capable of pursuing. "The abilities of disabled women are often under-estimated and channeled into vocational abilities like needlework, handicrafts, dress making, carpet weaving, etc." writes Zohra Rajah. "Very few foresee that women may have the potential to be good business people, lawyers, administrators, programmers" (9). With education, women with disabilities of the world can achieve their full potential and successfully contribute to our societies.

**"Many of us are afraid to speak our minds or organize for fear of being put back into an institution."**

**Diane Driedger** is the International Development Officer for COPOH. She is the author of *The Last Civil Rights Movement: Disabled Peoples' International* (1989) and has recently co-edited, with Susan Gray Dueck, an international disabled women's anthology which is currently seeking a publisher.

**April D'Aubin** is a Research Analyst with COPOH. She has worked with disabled people's self-help and independent living groups for the past seven years.

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## " What About the Meals and Emergencies? " Breaking the Barriers for Women Returning to School.

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BY JUDITH GRANT

**I**n March, 1989, CLOW New Brunswick began a project designed to assist mature women interested in returning to school. The project took place over six months and was funded by a grant from the Women's Program, Secretary of State, Canada.

*"If I go back to school, who will handle the meals and emergencies?"*

There were three phases: a focus group discussion workshop in which women aired their views and questions regarding their educational aspirations; a handbook, entitled *Breaking the Barriers: Women and Continuing Education*, prepared to address concerns raised in the focus group; and a resource workshop to introduce the women to the handbook, to various educational institutions, and to other mature women students with whom they could network. The project was not meant to be a feminist consciousness-raising process because it was not organized to include critical social analysis nor the impetus to collective action. However, the organizers were successful in adhering to feminist principles such as respect for women and their experiences, validation of their concerns, support, sharing, and empowerment. In this way, the project was a valuable one with much potential for implementation elsewhere.

Educational barriers exist for women. In the province of New Brunswick more women than men have a high school education, according to the 1986 census, but the participation rate of women decreases at the post-secondary level and continues to decrease into the Masters and Doctoral levels. For mature women returning to education, it is evident that part-time is preferable to full-time study. In the area where the CLOW project took place, the current distribution among all adult students is approximately 51 % female to 49% male. However, women make up 59% of the part-time students and 32% of the full-time. Women are also more likely to delay coming to university (or to other educational institutions) resulting in a broader age concentration, from twenty-five to forty-nine years of age (1).

## Éliminer les difficultés se posant aux femmes qui reprennent des études

PAR JUDITH GRANT

En mars 1989, le CCPEF du Nouveau-Brunswick a lancé un projet visant à aider les femmes d'âge mûr à reprendre des études. Le projet comprenait trois éléments: un atelier de discussion, la publication d'un manuel s'intitulant *Breaking The Barriers: Women and Continuing Education* dans lequel on se pencherait sur les préoccupations exprimées par le groupe de discussion et enfin un atelier pour lancer le manuel, parler aux femmes des établissements d'enseignement et leur présenter d'autres étudiantes d'âge mûr avec lesquelles elles pourraient établir des réseaux.

Le groupe de discussion se devait d'être extrêmement ouvert aux besoins de ces femmes de différents milieux. Il ne s'agissait pas de leur dicter ce qu'elles devaient faire pour avoir une meilleure éducation. En exprimant leurs inquiétudes (garde des enfants, manque de soutien financier, obligations familiales, etc.) et en analysant celles-ci dans le manuel, la réalité de la vie de ces femmes prenait une légitimité certaine.

Au dernier atelier, on distribua à quelque cinquante femmes un exemplaire du manuel et, à la fin du projet, toutes celles qui y avaient participé savaient ce qu'elles devaient faire pour reprendre des études et atteindre leurs buts.

CLOW New Brunswick was interested in looking specifically at the needs of mature women returning to school but also wished to target a population from a variety of backgrounds: native, rural, immigrant, those on social assistance, and disabled or elderly women. Many such "minority" women have never had the means nor the information to consider continuing education for themselves due to barriers in their work or home situations or financial arrangements.

The first stage of the CLOW project, the focus group discussion workshop, was held at a central and easily accessible location in downtown Fredericton. The aim was to receive from the participants their concerns about returning to learning and with this information a handbook would be developed for the use of mature women across New Brunswick. The workshop was advertised widely in all kinds of media: in newspapers (local and provincial), on local television stations and through women's church groups. Posters were displayed in the local YW/YMCA, in laundry mats and in grocery stores.



Eleven women participated. They varied in age from twenty-five to fifty-four years and the number of children each had ranged from none to four. (The ages of these children varied from one year to thirty-four.) The average annual income of each participant was less than \$10,000 per year. One woman was of native background, one a rural community, and two were mildly disabled.

The women did not come to the workshop to be told what they should do to further their education, but were given the opportunity to explore a future for themselves. The workshop was set up to be sensitive to the needs of the potential students, to allow them to create, or recreate, themselves out of their own experience. Such a format has been shown to be a successful vehicle for women to share reliable information about their own experiences (2). The empowerment of women is possible in such focus groups, for through these channels women can confirm their experiences and perceptions, attempt changes, and receive feedback from others like themselves. Groups provide women with the opportunity to assess their own experience against that of others and to find in this process a respect for each other's lives.

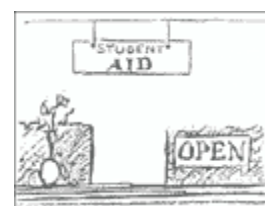
There was indeed a sense of empowerment within the group that met for the discussion workshop. Energy was high throughout the day as knowledge passed from one woman to another and, through their voices, was made real. Their values were acknowledged and the language they used in their discussions was incorporated into the handbook which further legitimized their voices and their concerns. The issues they raised ranged from doubt about being "too old to go back to school" to anxiety over leaving young children at home: "Where do I put them if I decide to go back to school?"

***"It is overwhelming and frustrating to try to make a decision about where to go first."***

In many ways, women are still defined by home and hearth and many have not enjoyed the opportunities, the ways or means, to enrich their lives through continued education. The participants understood very well the benefits to be gained from further learning. One woman said "I need self-satisfaction and to feel that I am part of today's world, so I will go back to education", while another said, "To be independent and to develop as a human being, I will turn to education." The women felt a need to enrich

themselves in some capacity and they chose educational upgrading in some form to fulfill that need.

The sharing and the richness of the interaction were felt as the women discussed what kept them from going back to school. Concerns included lack of daycare, lack of financial help, family obligations, how to manage their time once back at school, and how to balance household and school work. They were painfully aware of the need for change in their lives but they also talked about guilt in relation to doing something for themselves, at last. They wished to explore counselling for themselves, to have upgrading skills made available, and to meet other women who had returned to school. They wanted to meet resource people, to gain motivation, and learn self-esteem for themselves.



The CLOW project met a need for these women and gave them a place to be heard. It helped empower them to change and gave them tools, or information about available tools, to do so. They brought their own goals and an understanding that continuing their education might help them to gain their objectives. They were active in this changing of their lives and certainly were creating a future with a vision.

The handbook was developed and put together over the summer of 1989 by myself working with a local CLOW committee. The final phase of the project, the resource workshop, was held at the end of the summer and was attended by approximately fifty women from the surrounding community of Fredericton. They came to receive copies of the handbook and to network with personnel from eight various educational institutions who had set up displays to offer information.

The whole CLOW project provided the space and a "speaking place" for women to be heard. Their concerns were treated seriously, and the resulting handbook shows that specific questions were answered. Perhaps of most importance, the personal realities of the women were validated and documented.

Education itself is not sufficient to create necessary changes in the lives of women who desire equality, nor is it enough to say that women are free to attend educational institutions (3). We must continue to struggle for policies that make it easier for women to access education. Such policies as free and accessible daycare for all women with children, financial help, more employer support for training, better public transportation, recognition for the knowledge and skills that women bring to continuing education, and a more flexible timetabling of classes must all be implemented to accommodate mature women students (4).

The CLOW project provided one strategy of change for those who participated. But there is a pressing need for the whole social system to take the concerns, the questions and the strengths of women seriously. Such consideration would demand a different kind of educational system (5), and only through such radical social change will full liberation for all mature women be possible, and only then will all women be free from social and personal barriers to continued education.

*Judith Grant is an M.A. student in the Department of Sociology in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Her interest focuses on women and education, including feminist teaching and research, and working with women in the community and their continuing educational needs.*

***"I feel there must  
be some way to  
make a larger  
contribution to  
society."***

Breaking the Barriers: Women and Continuing Education went through a second printing in the spring of 1990; copies are available from Wynne Farr, CLOW-New Brunswick Director, Comp.1, Site 14, R.R.#6, Fredericton, N.B., E3B 4X7.

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## POETRY

### KISS

I have taught him  
to kiss me on the lips  
when I arrive for a visit  
and when I leave,  
his whiskers brush my chin.

I refuse to let his kiss  
fall on my forehead or my cheek  
but face him straight on,  
my hands on his shoulders  
hold him still.

Hardly a lover,  
more than  
a friend, Father,  
we never talk  
but our mouths meet  
like two small animals,  
blind and dumb.

They touch  
then move on,  
tunnel deep in the earth  
where they know the other's  
taste and smell

the age-old taboos  
of father and daughter,  
the bitter, inexorable  
pull of blood.

**Lorna Crozier**  
*Toronto, Ontario*

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# Bâtir et rebâtir le mouvement d'éducation des adultes au Québec

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PAR MARIE LETELLIER

*Ce texte est une version abrégée d'exposé fait au panel de la IV<sup>e</sup> assemblée mondiale du Conseil international d'éducation des adultes à Bangkok en janvier 1990.*

Le mouvement d'éducation des adultes est toujours en mouvement. Un mouvement perpétuel, nous semble-t-il parfois. Mais nous savons bien qu'à travers ce recommencement continu se développe toute la richesse de l'éducation des adultes. Il n'y a pas de cadre pré-établi, il n'y a pas de chemin en ligne droite et c'est tant mieux. Je vais vous parler de cette mouvance au Québec et en particulier de la façon dont elle est vécue dans le mouvement des femmes.



**Marie Letellier**

Le mouvement des femmes, qui regroupe quelque 1500 groupes locaux, régionaux et provinciaux, a sans doute été moins touché que d'autres par le ressac des années quatre-vingt au niveau de sa dynamique interne.

La vitalité des groupes de femmes du Québec dans les régions, souvent en-dehors des grands centres urbains, est remarquable et constitue un trait distinctif par rapport à ce qui semble se passer dans d'autres pays occidentaux. On ne parle pas tellement d'éducation des adultes dans le mouvement des femmes, même si on s'en occupe beaucoup. On parle davantage de formation, de cafés-rencontres, d'ateliers de discussion, de séances d'échanges.

Malgré toutes les différences qui peuvent exister entre les femmes, la condition féminine est notre lot à toutes. Cette condition, c'est la contrainte qui nous est faite à toutes, dans quelque société où nous vivions, de subir à divers degrés le contrôle des hommes sur nos vies et nos personnes.

L'approche féministe en éducation des adultes intègre donc plus facilement l'optique selon laquelle l'adulte forme un tout. On travaille par conséquent autant avec les sentiments qu'avec l'esprit critique. Cette approche mise avant tout sur la façon dont les personnes perçoivent individuellement et collectivement leurs situations; elle valide d'emblée leur expérience de la vie.

## **Building and Rebuilding: The adult education movement in Quebec**

**BY MARIE LETELLIER**

The women's movement in Quebec and the adult education movement within it are always in flux and motion. The activity and strength of women's groups in the province, even outside large urban centers, is remarkable and is perhaps due to the way they function, to the way "adult education" is approached-through informal learning, discussion workshops and exchange sessions.

There are approximately 1500 women's groups in Quebec servicing local, regional, or provincial areas. Like women's groups in the rest of Canada, those in Quebec suffer from both the scarcity and capriciousness of government funding. And there is another menace: the appropriation by government and other institutions of the programs and services developed by women for women. Though the ideas and formula are often adopted, the accessibility and popular character of the programs inevitably suffer.

Other social factors make the work of women's groups more difficult at this present moment, like the banalization of violence and the stereotyping of women in the media, the feminization of poverty, and the growing conservative back-lash. There are tensions within the women's movement as well. Over 70% of employees work many more hours than the normal work week and, though working in a women's group can be less competitive and less structured, there are stresses of process, of working by consensus, and of becoming experts in certain fields, a trend that tends to isolate women's groups from each other.

Despite all the obstacles, the women's groups of Quebec organized a fantastic event last April to mark the 50th anniversary of the right to vote in the province, where we celebrated our history and dreamed of success in the future.

***En 1988, le  
financement des  
groupes  
populaires ne  
représentait que  
0,18 % du  
budget du  
ministère de  
l'Éducation.***

L'autonomie, un objectif pour chaque femme, est aussi un enjeu collectif du mouvement des femmes. Au Québec, le fait que les gouvernements financent en partie nos activités représente un avantage mais aussi un inconvénient pour les groupes de femmes. Assurément, c'est un avantage, gagné non sans difficultés et toujours remis en question, d'obtenir des subventions permettant d'avoir des intervenantes payées, des locaux et du matériel. Mais cela crée aussi des problèmes. Nous passons en effet un tiers de nos heures de travail, et parfois plus, à rédiger des rapports. Il y a aussi les coupures qui surviennent brusquement et bouleversent nos projets. Il y a enfin les priorités gouvernementales qui changent: une année, c'est la situation des femmes qui est la priorité, une autre année, celle des analphabètes, par exemple. Pour les subventions accordées aux femmes, une année c'est la violence qui est prioritaire, une autre année, c'est la santé. Il devient plus difficile de maintenir un plan d'intervention dans ces conditions.

### **La récupération par les institutions**

Il y a des exemples concrets où la formation et les services développés dans les groupes sont repris par le réseau gouvernemental, réinterprétés dans un langage plus technocratique et remis en circulation avec l'aide d'un personnel professionnel deux fois mieux payé que celui des groupes. Ainsi, on se souvient dans le mouvement populaire des cliniques de santé, mises sur pied par des femmes et des hommes, qui ont été une à une intégrées au réseau gouvernemental de la santé. Il faut se réjouir que le gouvernement en ait multiplié le nombre et adapté la formule. Ce faisant, il en a aussi affaibli le caractère populaire et la portée.

Dans le mouvement des femmes, ce même phénomène se reproduit. Par exemple, le Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour les femmes victimes de violence conjugale a mis sur pied une formation pour comprendre la dynamique de la violence en milieu conjugal et intervenir adéquatement. Le réseau gouvernemental de la santé l'a reprise, l'a redonnée à ses intervenantes en embauchant des spécialistes. Ces spécialistes viennent-elles du regroupement des maisons? Évidemment pas. Vous verrez aussi maintenant des sessions organisées par un appareil gouvernemental où vous pourrez apprendre en quelques heures à dépister la victime de violence dans votre milieu. Qui dit mieux?

Un autre groupe imagine des moyens pour familiariser les femmes avec l'informatique. La première année, la formation est dispensée dans le cadre d'un collège d'enseignement du réseau scolaire, mais les années suivantes, on ne fait plus appel au groupe et on continue de dispenser la formation à des coûts moindres que ceux que le groupe peut proposer aux femmes.

En fait, ce n'est pas tant la récupération en soi qui choque, même si elle constitue souvent une perte de sens, mais plutôt la non-reconnaissance des acquis des groupes. Cette non-reconnaissance se traduit d'ailleurs en chiffres: le ministère de l'Éducation, depuis les coupures survenues au début des années quatre-vingts, a très peu augmenté les budgets des groupes populaires. On en compte plus de 600 qui se partagent à peine huit millions de dollars. En 1988, le financement des groupes populaires ne représentait que 0,18 % du budget du ministère de l'Éducation. Les groupes doivent donc se tourner vers le gouvernement canadien, mais là aussi on a sorti les ciseaux.

### **La conjoncture québécoise**

La conjoncture des années quatre-vingts est difficile. Nous ne connaissons ni la guerre ni la famine comme beaucoup d'autres pays. Nous vivons dans un régime de démocratie parlementaire, aussi la répression politique s'exerce sur nous de façon plus subtile. Parmi les éléments de la conjoncture qui influencent le mouvement d'éducation des adultes et touchent les femmes, j'en ai retenu quatre.

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**Cinq millions de Canadiens ne savent ni lire ni écrire à un niveau qui leur permette d'être autonomes dans notre société.\* Tout Canadien a le droit fondamental de savoir lire et écrire. Vous pouvez nous aider. Lisez à vos enfants. Écrivez à votre représentant du Parlement. Travaillez comme volontaire pour l'alphabétisation. Faites un don.**

**Pour en savoir davantage, écrivez ou téléphonez à:**



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Téléphone: (416) 975-9366  
Télécopieur: (416) 975-1839**

L'industrie canadienne du livre et des périodiques patronne La Fondation canadienne "Give the Gift of literacy."

\*Rapport Southam sur l'alphabétisation 1987.

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***Le désengagement de l'état.*** L'état dans les années soixante et soixante-dix a été contraint d'investir dans différents programmes. Parallèlement, il a soutenu les groupes populaires par des subventions. Depuis quelques années, l'état cherche à se retirer de plus en plus de ces programmes sociaux. Le discours politique change aussi: les besoins de l'économie et du secteur privé priment sur les objectifs d'une société plus juste ou du développement de la personne. En éducation, la perspective est de plus en plus économiste et le discours sur l'excellence qui introduit des valeurs de compétition subit une inflation sans précédent.

***La confusion semée par les médias.*** Les grands médias d'information, la télévision en tête, deviennent de plus en plus des lieux de confusion des messages et de banalisation de la violence. L'image qu'ils projettent des femmes y est le plus souvent stéréotypée. Les groupes populaires et les groupes de femmes ont bien des difficultés à y émerger.

***Le 6 décembre  
1989, un homme  
dans un délire  
anti-féministe  
abattait  
quatorze femmes.***

***La pauvreté croissante des femmes.*** On savait déjà que les femmes ne gagnaient en moyenne que 57 % des revenus des hommes. On savait que les femmes âgées étaient parmi les plus pauvres de la société. Maintenant on apprend que la pauvreté frappe des femmes beaucoup plus jeunes.

**Les résistances au féminisme.** On a parfois l'impression que les rapports femmes-hommes se durcissent. Ils ont probablement toujours été aussi tendus. Mais plus de femmes parlent et plus la violence faite aux femmes devient visible. Alors qu'on vivait dans la honte, le mépris et les coups, aujourd'hui on les dénonce. Des femmes âgées révèlent aujourd'hui qu'elles ont été victimes d'inceste et d'agressions pendant des années sans mot dire.

Tous les jours, nous apprenons par les médias qu'une femme s'est faite tuer par un ex-conjoint frustré de ne plus être au centre de sa vie. Le 6 décembre 1989, un homme, dans un délire anti-féministe, abattait quatorze femmes et en blessait treize autres dans les salles de l'Université de Montréal. Les médias et les politiciens y ont vu un cas isolé de démence, mais le mouvement des femmes y a vu le symptôme exacerbé de la volonté de casser la volonté d'autonomie des femmes. La montée du conservatisme et les réactions brutales des anti-féministes sont bien réels et font partie du monde dans lequel nous travaillons.

*Il reste peu de temps pour discuter des enjeux fondamentaux, du sens et des perspectives de notre travail.*

### **Les difficultés internes au mouvement des femmes**

Il se fait toujours du militantisme ou du bénévolat en éducation des adultes. Même au niveau des personnes salariées, l'enquête citée plus haut sur les conditions de salaire et de travail au sein des groupes populaires faisait ressortir que 72 % de ces dernières travaillaient plus que la moyenne d'heures normales par semaine.

Pas étonnant que beaucoup de femmes y laissent leurs dernières forces. Les cas d'épuisement se multiplient. Paradoxalement, on travaille pour améliorer la vie des femmes, mais la sienne devient invivable, surtout si l'on a de jeunes enfants. Rien de surprenant de voir se développer des sentiments ambigus face au militantisme. Plus de femmes qu'auparavant refusent de militer car elles se sentent exploitées.

Beaucoup de femmes trouvent agréable de travailler dans un groupe de femmes parce qu'on échappe ainsi à une partie des rapports sociaux hommes-femmes, que le style de travail y est différent, que la compétition y est moins vive. Malgré cela, il est difficile de créer de nouveaux rapports sociaux, en ce qui a trait notamment à la prise de décisions. Par exemple, une question difficile est longuement discutée au sein d'un groupe, on la retourne dans tous les sens, on évite les débats directs, on s'ouvre plus facilement dans l'informel et on remet la responsabilité finale à une personne. Si celle-ci tranche et décide seule, on lui reprochera son manque de démocratisation et on la soupçonnera de vouloir exercer son pouvoir sur les autres.

En fait, ce malaise, nous avons peine à le nommer. Écartées du pouvoir, nous en demeurons très méfiantes; culpabilisées plus souvent qu'à notre tour, nous demeurons sensibles aux sentiments de culpabilité.

Au Québec, le mouvement des femmes a connu un grand développement de pratique au détriment sans doute des développements théoriques. Pour les femmes qui vivent

quotidiennement ces pratiques et qui partagent leur vie privée avec des hommes, travaillant dans un environnement bien différent, un déchirement se produit souvent au niveau des valeurs profondes.

Comme les femmes sont parmi les plus pauvres dans la société, leurs groupes sont parmi les plus pauvres des groupes. C'est une difficulté supplémentaire dans l'édification du mouvement des adultes.

Finalement, les groupes sont de plus en plus spécialisés et ont acquis une plus grande expertise, chacun pour sa problématique. Cela favorise une plus grande efficacité, mais crée un isolement plus grand entre les groupes. Dans le feu de l'action, il reste peu de temps pour discuter des enjeux fondamentaux, du sens et des perspectives de notre travail. Nous disposons peu de temps pour discuter notamment de notre façon de concevoir et de mettre en pratique notre travail d'éducation des adultes.

Mais je veux finir sur une note plus heureuse en parlant d'un merveilleux et difficile projet. On va rassembler à Montréal l'ensemble des groupes de femmes du Québec, autour d'états généraux des femmes, à la fin d'avril prochain, à l'occasion du 50e anniversaire du droit de vote des Québécoises. Ce projet, appelé "Femmes en tête," va nous faire connaître le bilan préparé depuis plus d'un an par les groupes de femmes sur les acquis des femmes depuis 50 ans. Nous allons nous rencontrer, en-dehors des cadres habituels de travail, pour nous dire pourquoi nous sommes toujours là, ce que nous voulons célébrer avec l'ensemble des femmes que nous avons conviées et ce dont nous rêvons pour les cinquante prochaines années.

*Marie Letellier est coordonnatrice adjointe à Relais-femmes de Montréal.*

**BABY BLUES**

-1-

"If only I'd known," we say, as if joking. All those years of using pills, fitting diaphragms, inserting jellies and creams, the awkward rubber slips. All the worry when weeks went by with no period. All for nothing. Not one thing. Not the one thing we each of us would pray for now, if we could pray. Our breasts sag over empty wombs, our long hair is streaked by nature. We who choose the artificial, the art of reproduction, the needle and the petri dish. We who give ourselves up to faith in science, impotent and sterile. Each failed attempt adds one more small death. Even in daylight, even in the bright waiting room in the company of others, our arms curve, hands on elbows, make cradles for the lost, the wasted babies.

-2-

What it means to hear on the news of another one found in a trash bag in a garbage bin behind a service station. That someone should have to crouch in a locked cubicle, gasping, teeth gritting on her own arm, no one to hold her hand, no one to catch the baby's fall. What does she do with the afterbirth, will it plug the toilet, will it fit in the wastebasket wired to the door, will she have to carry it outside past the mirror and the sink? Her mouth is full of blood, her arm runs with blood from the bites, her legs, her shoes are full of blood, and the baby is all blood, red and quivering. She is alone, even when it starts to cry, even then she grabs handfuls of tissues and rubs and rubs at the spots on the floor, listening for the door handle to rattle, a man to ask what's wrong in there. Trucks sigh and wheeze and the steady rum rum of an engine warming is no louder than her own heart, the pulse of the baby turning blue on scarred tiles. Did she have any pleasure in its conception, some few minutes of kindness, love to compensate for this? What could compensate for this. Perhaps she dresses her daughter first in white wool, then wraps her carefully in plastic. The way she learned to pack her dolls, laying them tenderly in a suitcase pushed under the bed. How we learn ourselves to put away childish things.

-3-

And some of us go a little crazy, longing. The ones who dress small white dogs in plaid jackets, bows in their hair. The ones who nurse bottles, who nap all the long afternoon. The ones who are always telling stories. We look at infants in supermarkets, contemplate the stroller deserted for just five minutes by a mother who doesn't care, who is too busy, who would never notice. Who might be relieved. We carry our nieces and nephews awkwardly. When they cry, we give them up quickly, afraid of holding on too long, too tightly. Our breasts always ache.

There is a woman in our town we laugh about, though we fear her and when we see her coming, we will cross the street, stare in shop windows at chocolates and stationery. She has a big belly, walks flat footed, pushes a carriage. And if a stranger stoops to coo at her baby, she will shout when she starts back, if she reads on that face distaste for the dolly

dressed for the weather in sun bonnet or snow suit. We say she is really crazy, we say she is retarded, we mime pity and pleased offense. She cuddles it on the park bench while we walk by, empty-handed. Our fists curl, as if around the pink pram handles.

-4-

This is not to say that we are preoccupied by our bodies, in spite of constant betrayal. Whole days go by without thought, that nagging desire. We are so busy, we can talk only about politics and earthquakes, such commonplace disasters. We can notice the weather now, the season changing, leaves falling yellow in a high wind, birds flocking. What turns the tide? You might say it's the ache in our thighs, the need to justify lust, the current phase of the moon. Whatever, we begin to count those days, we sleep with one hand on our wombs, we practice names.

-5-

This is the comfort of the childless: to lie late in bed on winter mornings, the wide room full of grey light, the duvet a nest for naked bodies that curl, that turn into each other. This is for breakfast before the fire, good coffee, croissants, cognac-flavored jam, the newspaper in sections on the floor. This is also possible, long walks in the afternoon along the river, black water grumbling to itself, tree shadows pointing out the clarity of snow. Quiet occurs, pages whisper as they turn, ice cubes settle in the glass. And the nights, the nights, let me tell you about the nights, when our eyes are open and our mouths filled, knees bent and spread wide, hands gripping hands in fists of effort. The pelvis thrusts for the push, we can't help it, we grunt out loud, we cry out for Jesus, we want it to stop and last forever, we breathe heavily and in unison, we mourn when the cock slips out, so small now, leaving us emptied, our nipples hard, his lips so tender on this breast.

**by Betsy Struthers**  
***Peterborough Ontario***

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# Let Women Speak Their Diversity!

## An Interview with Charlotte Bunch

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BY SHARON GOLDBERG

*"All the issues  
we address in  
our lives have  
global  
dimensions."*

**C**harlotte Bunch, U.S. feminist activist and author, has played an important role in developing a politics which places women's oppression and resistance central in the fight against all oppression and which recognizes the diversity of women while affirming and strengthening our potential to make a common struggle. She is currently employed as the Director of the recently established Center for Global Issues and Women's Leadership at Douglass College, Rutgers University, New Jersey. Her most recent work, *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action* (1987), is a collection of her writings over the past two decades. Last April she spoke in Toronto at a session entitled "Global Perspectives on Diversity in Feminist Practices", I interviewed her following the talk.

**Sharon:** *Can you tell me about the work you are doing at the Center for Global Issues and Women's Leadership?*

**Charlotte:** We are a center to facilitate organizations and programs for women. We have chosen the term "global issues" not "women's issues" because we want to indicate the importance of women speaking to and taking leadership on all the issues of the globe, on all issues that affect us. There is also a recognition that all the issues we address in our lives have global dimensions. We want to look at questions from their local to their global manifestations and see the global interaction in all of our lives, today. The other part of our title is "Women's Leadership". We will be working specifically with women who are taking leadership on different issues at the local level, but issues that we think are very important globally.

For example, every summer we will have a leadership training institute to bring together twenty-five to thirty women from around the world, who will then get a chance to exchange their skills and experiences. As well, they will have the opportunity to talk about what any particular issue means globally and how we might begin to change that at a conceptual level. So it will be both a very practical and a conceptual exchange taking place.

## **Donner aux femmes la possibilité de parler de leur diversité: une entrevue avec Charlotte Bunch**

**PAR SHARON GOLDBERG**

Charlotte Bunch est une féministe et une auteure américaine qui dirige à l'heure actuelle le nouveau Centre for Global Issues and Women's Leadership de l'Université Rutgers au New Jersey. Elle affirme avec force qu'il faut reconnaître la diversité des femmes, tout en consolidant leur pouvoir pour que celles-ci mènent une lutte commune.

Charlotte Bunch estime que ce n'est seulement lorsque nous prendrons au sérieux les différences existant entre les femmes et les diverses formes de leur oppression que nous commencerons à éprouver un sentiment de solidarité qui ne se fondera pas sur le rejet de l'expérience de chacune. Elle suggère fortement à celles qui donnent des cours sur la condition féminine de ne pas traiter au départ des expériences des blanches, dans un milieu occidental, mais de parler d'autres expériences, ailleurs, de façon que les étudiantes soient obligées d'envisager le féminisme d'un point de vue différent de celui qui prévaut dans la culture occidentale. La diversité s'applique aussi à l'éducation et à l'accès qu'on y a. Mme Bunch insiste sur l'importance qu'il y a de se pencher sur l'accès à l'éducation d'après le contexte culturel dans lequel évolue la femme. Ainsi, les féministes musulmanes remettent en question la solitude des femmes dans leur société, mais ne veulent pas d'un autre côté saper le pouvoir que cette solitude leur octroie. Il faut adopter la même approche avec les femmes qui embrassent les idéologies anti-féministes et de droite. Selon Mme Bunch, vaut mieux étudier le genre de besoins auxquels ces idéologies ont répondu dans la vie de ces femmes plutôt que d'affirmer que celles-ci agissent de manière irrationnelle et ne comprennent pas leur situation. À son avis, ce qu'il y a de mieux dans le féminisme c'est qu'il permet aux femmes d'être à l'écoute de leurs consœurs, de s'instruire mutuellement et de s'exprimer.

*"A global perspective means recognizing the diversity of women's lives,"*

**Sharon:** *You spoke earlier about "training" not being the kind of word that you want to use to describe this type of work. What is the problem that you see with it? What do you think we could use instead?*

**Charlotte:** It's an interesting point, because I think the problem with the word "training", as with so much of our language, is that it implies a hierarchical process in which one group of people has the skills and another group of people receives the skills. What we as feminists are always struggling with is that, though we do train each other, it's not always such a linear process. When possible, I use the term "empowerment", but it also has problems. Empowerment implies that power is some sort of quantity that you either have or don't have. I don't know any word that really gets around it.

One of my hesitations about using "training" in relation to leadership is the very static notion of leadership then implied: that there are skills to being a leader that you can give somebody to become a leader. We're looking at women who are already taking leadership. Not so much focusing on being individual leaders, but on the fact that they are taking leadership in their organizing, writing, or conceptualizing about an issue.

We really want more of a leadership *exchange* than a training in that regard. I think that we need words that imply the ongoing process of learning *and* exchanging that takes place for all of us in the learning environment.



Charlotte Bunch (left) and Roxanna Carrillo (from Peru) at an international planning meeting, the Centre for Global Studies and Women's Leadership.

***"And whatever you see in common, from the diverse descriptions, is much stronger than starting from one class or race or geographic definition."***

The other aspect of the Centre that's important to me is what we call our global education program. This is aimed at bringing a global perspective to the North American women's movement and to women's studies. The education component recognizes that we live in a " global universe and we need to look at problems from a global perspective. For me, incorporating a global perspective into Women's Studies means recognizing the diversity of women's lives-not assuming that all women share a common experience.

***Sharon:*** *You spoke last night about how we have to learn to understand our diversity. Will you expand on that now?*

**Charlotte:** First of all, I am very conscious of the comment made by a woman last night about the problem of even using the word "we". When we speak as we, which "we" are we speaking of? Usually it's "we" as North Americans or Europeans. For a number of years it's been a major complaint of mine that conferences of essentially white, western, industrialized countries are called "International". There's no other region in the world that holds events across two regions and calls them international. There's nothing wrong with regional events. In fact, I think there's a lot to be learned from the relationship between North America and Europe. But it should be understood as a bi-regional activity, or North Atlantic, not international.

I think that the broader issue is beginning" to take into account, at a deep level, the diversity of women's experience. Understanding that diversity is something that will bring strength to our movement and is not a threat to it.

Much of the reaction among white women to the questions of diversity, the raising of issues of racism and classism within the women's movement, has been fearful. The fear is that such questioning will destroy the movement, will destroy our unity, and we won't see ourselves as having something in common as women. But I believe the contrary to that fear. I believe that only as we take seriously the differences among women, the different forms that our oppression manifests itself in, will we begin to feel a solidarity not based

on denying anyone's experiences, but that fully embraces all women.

That is what the work of the 80s has been about. It has been giving us material and information about the diversity of women's lives and the many varieties of ways that we are subordinated and oppressed.

The real task in the 1990s is to incorporate that diversity in a fundamental way, to rethink every issue with the diversity of women at the core. For example, I've encouraged people who are teaching courses on women to start the course from a non-traditional place. Whether the course is about women and health or about women and education or even on the history of women's movements, it should not start from the experience of white, western women but start from the experience of a group not usually thought of as at the centre of that discussion. For example, when I teach feminist theory now, I often start with a pamphlet from South Asia, *Some Questions on Feminism and Its Relevance in South Asia*, written by women from India and Pakistan, and we consider what feminism means from a different point of reference than the one that's dominant in our culture.

Start there and you begin to see how other feminisms are defined in different locations, and you build a notion of feminist theory or of women's experience as a multiple variety of things. As you look at all the different diversities, you can then ask, "What seems to be common to all these different writings?" or, "What are the ways in which all of these different women talk about some common experience?"

You arrive at the commonality after seeing diversity, rather than with the traditional approach which may start with a white, western, heterosexual mother in a married family and then include, as an afterthought, lesbian mothers, black mothers, disabled mothers, teenage mothers, etc., which supports the notion that there is one central experience and all these others are deviations. If you start from the idea that there are many different experiences, then you can talk about motherhood with all of these experiences taken into account. And whatever you begin to see in common, from the diverse descriptions, is much stronger than starting from one class or race or geographic definition.

<p><i>"The personal is political."</i></p>	<p>In teaching, in particular, I have found this to be very exciting. Initially students are a bit thrown off, but they become more alert than when you start with something they're used to. Students don't expect there to be Muslim feminists, so if you start with the writing of a Muslim feminist they begin to realize that they have to think about these issues in a different fashion.</p>
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I think that dealing with the question of diversity is not so hard in the educational world. Not to do it in women's studies and in an educational setting is to miss a really important opportunity. But it means applying diversity to every aspect of teaching. It means applying it to the content of what's being discussed, to the process by which it is discussed, to the question of access, to who's present and has access to the classroom, to the project, or to the group that's doing the work. Diversity is not just a process question. It's all of these things.

**Sharon:** *What specifically does diversity mean in terms of access to education?*

**Charlotte:** It is very important to be creative about addressing the needs of women and questions of access within the context of the cultural situation in which women live. You may want it to change. The women may want it to change. But it won't change until it evolves in a way that takes account of why the situation is as it is and how those needs can be met in another way.



Women from Uganda, S. Korea and India participating in the international planning meeting. May 1990.

For example, when I was working with some groups in India, I visited a project, in the south of Calcutta, with rural village women who were concerned about illiteracy among women and girls. They first opened a 'girls school at regular school hours but few came. So they evolved a more creative and practical way to give access to education to females. School hours were set at times that did not deprive families of their children's necessary labour. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, in order to get families to send their girls to the school, they made the school co-ed but would not accept sons unless the daughters were also sent. Thirdly, they started a mothers' club, because they saw that change for girls was closely linked to the situation of their mothers. Since this club was connected to the school it gave a legitimacy to the women's meeting that they wouldn't have had if someone had started a women's organization independently.

Women in the Muslim network, as another example, talk about the importance of their setting the priority of issues to be addressed. They don't want to destroy the private spaces that women have as a result of the seclusion they face in Muslim culture because those spaces form the base of what power women have. They want to challenge the exclusion of women from other areas but not by undermining the power women already hold.

We must start from expanding women's opportunities, not by taking away the things that women have drawn their identity or their support from. I think that this is very important in looking at all questions of access.

A similar issue in the United States, and probably Canada, is teenage pregnancy, where the assumption is made that what the teenage mothers need is simply to be relieved of their children. In many cases, the teenage mother has another child because that child is meeting a need that young woman feels - a need we might hope she didn't feel, a need for love that she's not getting, a need to have or do something that is really hers. Programs that are more creative look at how to help the teenager take responsibility for her child and also build a stronger sense of herself so that children are not a substitute for something else in her life. Then you can look at ways to meet the mother's other needs.

The same can be said for the notion of women having "false consciousness" and therefore identifying with anti-feminist or right-wing ideas. I think it's more productive to consider what needs a right-wing or anti-feminist ideology has met in the lives of some women that

make them unwilling to work for what might be more broadly their self-interest. It may be an economic need. It may be the fear of abandonment, that men will refuse to be responsible for their families. While it could be called false consciousness, we have to address better ways to protect the interests - of those women rather than imply that they're acting irrationally, or that they don't understand their situation. One might then be able to work with them toward creating better alternatives for women.

To me, that's at the heart of feminism: that the personal is political, that we can listen to one another, and that we learn about women from letting women speak.

*Sharon Goldberg is currently employed as the Supervisor, Continuing Education! Conference Centre, Frost Campus, Sir Sandford Fleming College. She is in the process of completing her M.A. in Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.*

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## Living and Learning: The Choice to be Playful

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BY LANIE MELAMED

**Y**ou might ask, "What does play have to do with adults and learning?" Frankly I was not quite sure myself when I embarked on a study several years ago to find out. I was curious to know why playfulness was so misunderstood as a valued life skill for adults.

*How does play  
fit into women's  
lives and what  
difference does  
it make in the  
way they learn?*

We already know that kids depend on play for learning about the world and for building healthy minds and bodies. We might even have read Schiller's words that "man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and he is only completely a man when he plays" (1). Could we say the same for women? How, I wondered, does play fit into the story of women's lives? Where do they find it, how does it work for them, and what difference does it make in the way they learn?

Theories of play since the time of Plato and Aristotle have been based on male experiences and preoccupations. Play is equated with games and competition, winning and losing; joke-telling is central. By contrast, the play experiences of women seem to involve small, often inconsequential happenings.

Over a two year period I talked with over 68 women about their play experiences and conducted nine in-depth interviews. The subjects were white, middle-class, and middle-aged, 40 to 66 years old. The results might be very different had I chosen women who were racially, economically and/or culturally less privileged. Most of them worked part or full time at a relatively fulfilling job, and each of the women valued her playfulness and tried to make it a prominent feature of her life. I was fifty-five at the time, working toward a doctorate in adult education.

## **Vivre et apprendre ou l'art d'être enjouée**

**PAR LANIE MELAMED**

Il y a plusieurs années, j'ai entrepris une étude sur la gaieté car je voulais découvrir pourquoi on ne lui accordait que peu de valeur en tant qu'outil précieux dans la vie et dans le domaine de l'apprentissage. La gaieté permet d'aborder la vie avec un sentiment de plénitude, avec spontanéité et d'être "branchée". Le plaisir et le sérieux ne sont pas incompatibles. Si on a un peu d'humour, même en période de deuil, la douleur devient un peu plus supportable. Les femmes que j'ai interrogées m'ont affirmé que le fait de vieillir et d'être davantage en paix avec elles-mêmes leur a permis d'être plus gaies et de reléguer dans le passé concurrence et réussite.

Le système social dans lequel les femmes d'un certain âge de la classe moyenne ont été élevées a exercé une forte influence sur leur pouvoir de s'amuser et les a préparées aux travaux ménagers, à mater et à s'occuper physiquement et affectivement des autres. Il se peut que ce ne soit qu'au foyer ou dans la vie privée que nous trouvons l'amour, la tendresse et la gaieté qui font défaut dans la vie publique.

Une réflexion gaie nous aide dans notre façon de comprendre certaines choses, nous stimule par le biais de l'intuition ou des sens et, plus tard, donne un côté humoristique à notre discours. L'expérience devient une méthode clé pour s'instruire. Lorsque la gaieté nous pousse à penser par nous-mêmes ou à agir insolemment face à l'oppression, celle-ci prend des allures radicales. Pour maintenir un système patriarcal, obéissance et ordre sont nécessaires. Ceux et celles qui accordent de la valeur à l'ordre et au contrôle se sentent menacés par la joie et la spontanéité. Il faut rendre hommage à la joie et défendre l'enjouement car il fait partie intégrante de l'apprentissage et du travail sérieux que nous fournissons dans notre vie.

***To be playful is  
to approach life  
with a sense of  
spontaneity and  
connectedness.***

The study surely had its roots in my curiosity to understand my own playfulness - sometimes outrageously liberating, other times scary and off-putting to others. Other people would ask, "What do you mean by play?" At first I was not sure myself. Nine and a half pages in the Oxford English Dictionary convinced me that the phenomenon would be impossible to pin down with a neat word or two. One plays the horses, watches a play, plays around and plays hard to get. The easiest thing seemed to be to flip the question around and ask people what it meant to them. It

was then I realized that men and women hold very different conceptions of play. Men talked largely in terms of activity, game, or sport. When pressed, they might mention sex. Most women responded with a brief story, describing a special moment and good feelings.

In my personal experience, frequently I felt unappreciated by co-workers for being playful and for breaking out into "inappropriate" behaviour at "inopportune" times. Inclined to view life from its brighter side, I have tended to avoid boredom through playful diversion, and will risk appearing foolish for the potential pay-offs. When I'm functioning in a playful mode I feel good about myself, spontaneous, and authentic. When I am lucky enough to combine playfulness with my work, the work sings. Sharing the fun with other people makes everything better; good feelings are contagious. On a spiritual plane, there are transcendent feelings of hope, of joy and celebration, of saying "YES" to life.

Talking and thinking about play for hours on end was an energizing venture. Four interesting findings emerged from the answers the women gave me: (1) play-fullness or the lack of it is an integral feature of their world-view, (2) the capacity for play may be enhanced as we grow older and more sure of ourselves, (3) women may have a particular capacity for play as a result of their preparation to function in the "non-serious," private sphere of life which includes their contact with children, and (4) play and learning can be potential partners in an adventurous, energized, and transforming quest for knowledge.

I was surprised to learn that each of the women saw playfulness as an integral part of her life-style, as a way of seeing and being in the world. To be playful is to approach life with a sense of wholeness, spontaneity, and connectedness. Playfulness is an affirmation of life itself since we choose to invest ourselves fully, willing to face the risks and the challenges of the unknown. Each of the women had difficulty speaking of play without referring to other parts of , her life. Despite describing themselves as cheerful, able to see the bright side of things' and to laugh at life's absurdities, they also acknowledged sorrow, pain, and struggle as complementary emotions.

Fun and seriousness are not mutually exclusive. Risa, a therapist, talked about the incredible surge of energy she feels when she acknowledges her own suffering: "It's like saying yes to that suffering. To say yes because suffering is also to be alive." Another woman, anxious to support her friend during a period of grieving, was surprised to find them both laughing within ten minutes of their meeting. "I think now I realize that that was not taking away the pain of grieving or anything else. It was making it all bearable." It seems we can play at things which are deadly serious without diminishing ourselves or the situation.

Concepts it' society which tend to be viewed as opposites, ie. glad/sad, work/play, mind/body, were viewed by the women in a more integrated way. In moving back and forth along a continuum in a cyclical or rhythmic manner, play can help to balance sadness and pain, and may even keep us from succumbing to despair. For sixty-six year old Brenda, taking things lightly is clearly a survival skill: "If I couldn't have the relief, the complement of seeing the funny things, the humor, the joy, then life would be too damn serious and I would dry up. I would become cynical and bitter, which I'm not. Joy is the

mechanism by which you break the seriousness and the sadness that could overtake us."

None of the women felt a separation between the way they work and the way they play. Ideally, the two can be fused. Even housework can be fun if undertaken in the right frame of mind and at our own speed. Work ceases to be play when the focus is on a product, accompanied by the pressure of time and the threat of external evaluation (which is unfortunately the case for most working women).

*This drawing illustrates the moving, tapestry-like quality of a playful living/learning style. Especially vital for the enhancement of women's experience is the need for connection with self and others (relational), valuing and learning from personal and communal experience (experiential), honoring our oft well-founded hunches and intuitive powers (metaphoric), seeing the whole picture with all of its organic complexity (integrative), and a belief in the possibility of transformation, for ourselves, our children and the world(s) we are a part of (empowering).*



***As wives, mothers and caretakers of others, women have been regarded as men's playthings and sexual playmates.***

there to unfold" (2).

For the women in the study, becoming older, wiser and more at peace with oneself made it easier to be playful, even to be a bit outrageous. As they aged, they found it easier to express their playfulness, to care less about what people thought about them, to affirm their right to be who they were. When we were younger, most of us experienced the pressure of having to achieve and compete, to do things correctly, or to follow other people's rules because we didn't trust our minds. Now there is an increased sense of self-worth and of permission to have fun. One woman said "I tried to do much more than was possible when I was young. I put so much pressure on myself, not trusting there was a whole life

Over fifty, Dana now laughs at the *faux pas* she commits instead of putting herself down for being clumsy or dumb. She admits she felt dumb a lot in her younger years. The greatest trade-off of having stiff joints at fifty-six, says Risa, is that you can laugh at yourself and feel better about it. Ivy adds, "I no longer wonder about whether I can cut it. I don't think I'm afraid of success. I really have a sense that I'm good, and that's not nagging me any more."

These women seemed to take themselves less seriously as older people now, realizing that for all their planning and worry, events are still unpredictable. "No matter how hard you try, it doesn't seem to make one bit of difference in the end!" said one mother in the study. Freer of responsibilities and less accountable to others, they are able to let go of the need to control and to be controlled.

***When play is  
infused with  
learning we  
become more  
involved  
intellectually  
and emotionally.***

One of the powerful influences on older middle-class women's approach to play is having grown up in a social system that prepared them, more exclusively than young women today, for housework, mothering, and emotional and physical care-giving. As wives, mothers, and caretakers of others, women have been variously regarded as childish, silly, passive, foolish and scatter-brained-men's playthings and sexual playmates. In effect, these so-called childlike characteristics became learned survival behaviors, in no way reflecting women's abilities to think and act with intelligence and competence. And it may be that only in the home or in private life do we find the love, nurture, and playfulness absent from the "public" marketplace. Male socialization has been serious and task-oriented, concerned with separation, power and control; women's lives are seen as less ordered and predictable. Some feminists feel that the compensatory strengths developed by women as a result of being "other," ie. marginal to the public sphere, are the very strengths and skills needed today to save the planet: attributes of care, connectedness and concern.

Because women do not conform to traditional male definitions of what is considered humorous or playful in our society, some have never considered themselves playful. The participants in my study said, "We don't play competitive games and we're rotten joke-tellers." Since most joke-telling is at the expense of women and other minorities, it's no wonder that we are not very enthusiastic about it as a pastime. Nor is taking centre stage in mixed company considered respectfully feminine. Our humour tends to be in the shape of informal story-telling that describes the foibles of our personal lives and which generally takes place in groups where we feel trusted and at ease. Feminist studies indicate that humour is experienced differently according to who has the power in an interaction, to whom the humour is directed, and what is "at stake" (3).

The way we learn can also be an expression of playful inclinations. One woman puts it this way: "There's something related to the stance of being a learner - that one approaches one's experiences, one's life work, as learning. It is the same as approaching it as a player." When a playful attitude is not present, learning is diminished, and for some women, impossible. In describing the connection between play and the way they learned, the women in my study unanimously agreed that "play opens me up to learning." A playful approach has the potential to release censors which inhibit and control our thinking and feeling. This was expressed by the women as "releasing the steel bands around my body of knowledge," "opening doors," "opening up possibilities," or "enabling me to see things in new and different ways." One woman called play "the great lever which allows all of my intelligences to interact." For some of the women the risk in taking a playful stance was always preferable to what is predictable or routine. Ivy explained: "With a task, if I know how to do it, it gets boring. It has to be an adventure. I don't want to know how to get there. That's where the fun is. Your whole being is working. I don't like doing things that have been done before. I need the self-discovery notion in everything I do. If you add predictability, you lose me."

On a practical level, when play can be infused with learning we become more energized

and involved intellectually and emotionally. "If it's not fun, it's not worth doing" was a sentiment often repeated by the women. When we engage in playful learning we temporarily suspend judgment, "go with the flow," and venture into the unknown, daring at times to rock the cultural boat. Playful thinking helps the way we come to know things, stimulating us first through intuition or the senses, later helping us to put hunches into words.

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## POETRY

without a lover my body  
drifts

like sand, or snow, down  
an empty street.

waiting.

wailing, inside, for a  
mother's touch,

mouth on nipple, hand  
around finger,

baby love.

without a lover throw  
myself

into work, words, the  
grown up world

of concrete & paper,  
& scissors,

& stone.

the earth sometimes  
holds me,

throbbing, among its  
green children:

aimlessly, on crowded  
streets,

alone.

**di brandt**  
*Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

Experience becomes trusted as an important source and method of knowing. Sharing and reflecting on experiences with friends and colleagues shapes our learning, deepens and expands what we know, and makes the whole process more enjoyable.

Competition and having to perform according to other people's standards alienates and inhibits us from expressing the best within us. The "best within us" is often submerged and unavailable waiting to be released when we discover our "voices" and begin to believe in ourselves as members of a community of knowledge-makers. Until then, many of us perfect male-style procedures for achieving success whether this be in institutions of learning or at the workplace (4).

Affirming our playful selves is not always easy and may even be accomplished at great cost in the western world because of contradictory messages around play and fulfillment. We are promised the wonders of the good life when we drink the right beer, chew striped gum, or use sexy antiperspirant; at the same time, guilt is imposed on excessive pleasure and delight. In double-speak, "doing your own thing" may actually mean doing what everybody else does. When playfulness leads to thinking for ourselves or acting defiantly in the face of oppression it becomes a radical act. Joyful, creative and spontaneous behaviour can be threatening to those who value order, conformity and control. The ability to freely imagine, to colour outside the lines, and to take action toward "what could be" may actually work to subvert "what is," or the status quo. Dale Spender notes the delight many women experience when they learn it's okay, even empowering, to be angry and defiant (5). Canada Raging Grannies are a case in point (6).

Playful behaviour is circumspect. Obedience and order are necessary for the maintenance of the patriarchal system. Despite or because of this, it is critical that women of all ages remember and stress the positive aspects of our culture. The human potential for joy and celebration is a valuable means of staying connected, and of healing ourselves and our communities in these despairing times. We need to cherish the creativity, the joys, the achievements, and the resourcefulness which women have demonstrated throughout our history. Reclaiming play as a contribution to the serious learning and work of our lives is a beginning. There are lessons to be learned from the older, wiser and more outrageous among us.

*Lanie Melamed did her graduate studies in Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Her eclectic research interests are in the area of women's ways of knowing, feminist pedagogy, adult play, and educating for peace and social change. She teaches at Concordia University in Montreal.*

- 
1. Schiller, J.C. "Letters on the esthetic education of man" in Lukacs, *Historie et conscience de class (Education de minuit, collection "arguments")*. Originally published in 1875.
  2. A very funny novel about a woman who chooses freedom after 65 is Constance

Beresford Howe's *The Book of Eve* (New York: Avon Books, 1973).

3. See, for example, Wischnewski, M., *Making Sense of Humor, Gender and Power: Implications for Adult Learners* (1989). Unpublished doctoral dissertation. O.I.S.E., University of Toronto.
4. Belenky, et. al. *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*. New York: Basic Books, 1986.
5. Spender, D. *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.
6. For information on the Raging Grannies, who rage and sing about contemporary social injustices, write Jean McLaren, R.R. #2, Suite 22, Comp.B, Gabriola Island, B.C. VOR 1X0.

---

## POETRY

### LAST TESTAMENTS

The cancer began in her tonsils,  
she'd say that with a smile  
almost expecting to be teased  
for such a serious disease  
rooting in that childish place.  
She remembered her son at four  
when he'd had his out,  
the way he'd looked at her as the nurse  
slid the cold thermometer up his bum.  
She carried on as usual, cleaned the house,  
fried a chicken for her husband every Sunday,  
cutting the breast in four pieces, the wings in two.  
The morning of the day she died  
she took him down the basement,  
showed him how to separate the clothes,  
how to measure the soap, set the dials,  
how to hang his shirts and pants  
so the creases would fallout

\*

The man with a worn-out heart, sold his tools  
so his wife wouldn't be left with that part of him  
to deal with. How he had loved them  
in his hands, each so perfectly designed

to fit the palm, the wheels, bits and teeth  
made for one specific use.  
On the empty walls of the garage hung the shapes  
of all the tools he'd ever owned,  
sixty years of wrenches, saws and drills.  
He'd traced around them row on row  
so he'd know where to hang each one,  
know what his neighbour had borrowed,  
and failed to return. From his pocket he removed  
a black felt pen and in the corner on a board painted white,  
he drew the perfect outline of a man.

\*

Before she walked into the river  
and didn't come back, the woman  
who couldn't remember the day of the week  
or the faces of her children,  
made a list of all the men she's ever loved,  
left it for her husband by the coffee pot,  
his name on the bottom,  
underlined twice  
for emphasis.

**Lorna Crozier**  
*Toronto, Ontario*

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# Northern Dynamics: Profile of a Women's Resource Service

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BY JUDITH CLAYDEN

*NWRS is unique  
in its goal to  
serve the entire  
north.*

**T**he Northern Women's Resource Service (NWRS) has emerged as a reality after two and a half years of planning and research. We are a grassroots organization whose aim is to improve the situation of women and their families in the social, economic, and political spheres. The concept originated in 1986 with a steering committee comprised of seven northern Manitoban women's groups from the city of Thompson. They hired a project consultant to identify gaps in services, analyze existing activities and services, and establish the need for a northern resource centre for women.

The research showed that existing services were minimal and many were sporadic. In addition, the women interviewed indicated the need for information and referral, knowledge on rights and options, education and awareness, and support and advocacy. A proposal was made to the provincial government Family Dispute Services; the proposal was approved and the service started in March 1989. The official opening of a base office of the NWRS in Flin Flon, Manitoba, happened in late August.

The NWRS is unique in its goal to serve the entire north, not just one specific community. The service's main operations are advocacy, education, and research, and these are achieved through the provision of information, referrals, support counselling, a lending library, training, workshops, presentations, research, consultation, networking, a northern resource directory, and a skills bank card file. NWRS is flexible and will endeavour to reflect the changing needs of women in the north.

A collective called the Northern Coordinating Committee, with members from communities across the Manitoba north, is the governing body of the NWRS. They hired two Resource Coordinators, myself and Judy Hughes, to work out of the base office in Flin Flon. We both have expertise in initiating and developing direct services and programs for non-profit organizations, in promoting political action, and in awareness of the barriers women face in our society.

During the first year of operation, the NWRS held awareness meetings in nineteen northern communities, inaugurated the Flin Flon base office, developed service information packages, established a resource library, developed a clearing house of information and resources, had awareness workshop and training events, initiated and facilitated a Northern Conference for women, and developed and implemented a satellite office in The Pas, Manitoba.

## **Dynamisme des régions du Nord: le profil d'un service de ressources pour les femmes**

**PAR JUDETH CLAYDEN**

Le Northern Women's Resource Service (service de ressources pour les femmes du Nord) est un organisme d'inspiration populaire qui s'attache à améliorer la situation sociale, économique et politique des femmes et de leur famille et dont l'objectif est de servir tout le Nord plutôt qu'une collectivité précise. Le bureau principal de l'organisme, qui se trouve à Flin Flon au Manitoba, a ouvert ses portes en août 1989. L'organisme est administré par le Comité de coordination du Nord, dont les membres viennent de tout le nord du Manitoba. Un bureau satellite a été ouvert pour faciliter la prestation des services dans des régions du Nord et remédier aux disparités économiques entre le Nord et le Sud. C'est à The Pas que les femmes autochtones de la bande des Opasquiak ont ouvert le premier bureau satellite en juin 1990. Elles s'occupent essentiellement des besoins des femmes autochtones dans des domaines comme l'alphabétisation, les soins de santé, l'information, les services d'orientation et de counselling. L'organisme aimerait avoir des données sur d'autres organisations de femmes. Si vous souhaitez avoir plus de renseignements sur le Northern Women's Resource Service ou au contraire échanger des données avec cet organisme, veuillez écrire à NWRS, C.P. 266, Flin Flon, Manitoba, R8A 1M9 ou téléphoner au (204) 687-3346 ou encore envoyer une télécopie au (204) 687-3322; vous pouvez également contacter le Opasquiak Women's Resource Service, C.P. 3137, The Pas, Manitoba, R9A 1R7 on téléphoner au (204) 623-4852. Télécopieur (204) 23- 4422.



***The Opasquiak Women's Resource Centre, serving native, metis and non-native communities, opened in June 1990.***

Because of the greater distances and economic hardships experienced by northern communities, the patterns of service delivery in the south do not always work in the north. The satellite concept was introduced as a new approach to service delivery appropriate for northern communities. The NWRS asked existing groups if they were interested in sponsoring a satellite service and in October, 1989, The Pas Opasquiak Aboriginal Women applied for sponsorship of an office. The application was endorsed by the Northern Coordinating Committee in May of 1990, and the Opasquiak Women's Resource Service - serving native, metis and non-native communities - Opened June 18, 1990. The main activities focus on the needs of aboriginal women in the areas of literacy, healthcare, information, referral, and support counselling services. Evelyn Ballantyne has been hired as the Resource Worker in The Pas and was previously employed as a literacy and Job Development Coordinator. She has

always advocated on behalf of women's legal, political, social, economic, and education rights.

The Opasquiak Women's Resource Service is governed by the Opasquiak Aboriginal Women in conjunction with the Northern Coordinating Collective of the NWRS. In the past, aboriginal women have felt uncomfortable belonging to "mainstream" feminist groups and have indicated that, in their experience, the concerns of aboriginal women have been marginalized. The satellite office will formalize the mutually beneficial relationship between the Opasquiak Aboriginal Women and the Northern Women's Resource Service, as both groups envisage the need and the opportunity for expanding the network of women in the north.

The Northern Women's Resource Service wants information and materials from other women's organizations across Canada. If you would like more information on the NWRS and / or if you want to share information on your organization, please contact: Northern Women's Resource Service, Box 266, Flin Flon, Manitoba R8A 1M9, Phone (204) 687-3346, Fax (204) 687- 3322; or Opasquiak Women's Resource Service, Box 3137, The Pas, Manitoba, R9A 1R7, Phone (204) 623-4852, Fax (204) 623- 4422.

*Judith Clayden is currently one of the Resource Coordinators working at NWRS.*

## Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity

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REVIEW BY HEATHER WRIGHT

by Judith Butler  
Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc., New  
York, 1990, 172pp. \$12.95 (U.S.) paper

**W**hat exactly is "woman" and in whose name do we speak when we demand representation for "her"? Judith Butler has written a lucid, succinct account of the issues involved in representational identity politics as they arise in current feminist debates. *Gender Trouble* makes use of texts by Lacan, Freud, Irigaray, Kristeva, Wittig, and Foucault to point to the dangers feminists run by adopting a fixed gender identity in their quest for representation. At the same time, Butler suggests some subversive strategies for avoiding these dangers.

The problem inherent in the demand for representation is that the description of the identity to be represented - the qualifications for candidature in the category called "woman" - inevitably enforces the exclusion of those who do not qualify. Moreover, what usually accompanies this invocation of a universal feminine subject is the notion that all women are struggling under the oppression of universal patriarchy, an idea which many critique for its ethnocentrism. What is at stake here is the idea that the "feminine" has an ontological status independent of any cultural construction. For Butler argues that in their desire to find a universal basis for feminism, feminists may be duplicating the regulatory practices of phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality.

As Butler observes, there is no escaping representational politics: "The juridical structure of language and politics constitute the contemporary field of power; hence, there is no position outside this field, but only a critical genealogy of its own legitimating practices. ... And the task is to formulate within this constituted frame a critique of the categories of identity that contemporary juridical structures engender, naturalize, and immobilize" (p.5). *Gender Trouble* is Butler's attempt to do just that.

The text is divided into three chapters which propose a critical genealogy of the construction of gender categories in a number of different discursive domains. In the first chapter, Butler investigates the status of "women" as the subject of feminism and the sex/gender distinction. Drawing on the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig and Michel Foucault, she considers where and how phallogocentrism and

compulsory heterosexuality converge in language. On Butler's account, gender would appear to be the effect of a series of performative acts, and not the assumption of the role demanded by a particular "natural" sex. Indeed, as she argues in the following two chapters, sex is a "performatively enacted signification" just as culturally constructed as gender.

Looking at some psychoanalytic and structuralist accounts of sexual difference in chapter two, Butler shows how they have both exposed *and* reproduced the regulatory regimes of phallogocentrism and heterosexuality outlined in her first chapter. In analyzing the work of Levi-Strauss, Freud and Lacan, she argues that accounts of the incest taboo as the mechanism for enforcing discreet and coherent gender identities give homosexuality and bisexuality pre-discursive origins (before the entry into the Symbolic) which are therefore unintelligible within the dominant culture. And if they are unintelligible they cannot provide positions from which to critique that culture.

In chapter three, Butler extends this critique to Kristeva's placement of the feminine and maternal outside of the Symbolic. She is particularly critical of Kristeva's acceptance of Lacan's contention that culture is equivalent to the Symbolic, that the latter is fully subsumed under the "Law of the Father", and that the only modes of non-psychotic behaviour are those which participate in the Symbolic. As Butler sees it, Kristeva takes heterosexuality to be prerequisite to kinship and culture, and thus also renders homosexuality ineffectual as a subversion of heterosexuality. Butler prefers Foucault's account of the feminine, the bisexual, and the homosexual as effects of the paternal law which both represses and produces the objects of its repression. But, if Butler is right, in his work on *Herculine Barbin*, Foucault, too, participated in the idealization of a pre-discursive sexuality.

Butler finds the most conscious understanding of the radical contingency of sex and gender in the lesbian-feminist work of Monique Wittig. The latter's deconstruction of the textual construction of sex and the naturalized institution of heterosexuality, particularly in her fiction, suggests that it is possible "to become a being whom neither *man* nor *woman* fully describes." But Butler complains that Wittig's theoretical work tends to claim a radical disjunction between heterosexual and homosexual economies, thus denying the constitutive function of the heterosexual in the homosexual. The point, says Butler, is not for lesbianism to define itself in exclusion from heterosexuality but to *resignify subversively* the heterosexual constructs by which it is inevitably partially constituted.

Since, for Butler, sex and gender are not given but enacted, by parodying the natural enactment of gender we can subvert it. Thus drag and cross-dressing are understood as parodies not just of stable gender and sex identities but of the very notions of natural sex and gender themselves. The act of resignification of gender categories through parody is what Butler offers as the way out of the identity-exclusion circuit. And it is here that I found her argument somewhat insubstantial. I wanted more.

Informative, provocative and compelling though *Gender Trouble* is, it suffers from the

limitations imposed by its packaging. One of the *Thinking Gender* series, the book looks deceptively introductory. It is true that, because of Butler's clear, succinct style, even the uninitiated can profit from her work. But, as my partial delineation of the essential structure of her argument has shown, Butler pulls together a diverse set of texts - philosophical, psychoanalytical, anthropological, and literary - raising many more questions than she can possibly address in detail in a work of this length. Her analysis of the dangers of essentialism is convincing but the exhortation to resignify by acting periodically needs more discussion, development and illustration. It could be argued that her purpose - as in most poststructuralist work - was not to design a program but to suggest an orientation and raise a series of interrogations. Certainly her style, which proceeds by posing question after question, would substantiate this claim. We are left with these questions and it is perhaps up to us to work towards the answers.

*Heather Wright* is a Ph.D. student in English Literature, with special focus on women's writing and feminist theory, at York University.

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## Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary studies of gender in the nineteenth century.

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REVIEW BY MIRIAM JONES

Edited by Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall.  
London & New York: Routledge, 1989.  
260 pp. \$64.50 cloth, \$19.50 paper. Index.

**T**here has recently been a marked emphasis among many academics on the desirability of an interdisciplinary approach to research in the arts and humanities. Certainly literary studies have vastly benefited from the integration of historical, linguistic, and cultural studies approaches. The best work does not merely *include* other disciplines, however: it is irreducibly informed by them. The old disciplinary boundaries will soon have none other than a historic meaning; they are rapidly becoming irrelevant to a sophisticated understanding of literary texts as aesthetic moments embedded in an informing cultural context.

Both feminist theory and critical practice have been at the forefront of innovation. The present volume is an excellent example of the best of current feminist approaches. It is a strong collection of articles developed by the women who taught an interdisciplinary course in Victorianism for the new Women's Studies Master's program at the University of York (UK) in 1984. The contributors later met in workshop sessions to discuss the structure of the volume. *Sexuality and Subordination* is not, then, simply a collection of loosely-related articles, but rather part of an ongoing theoretical and pedagogical project to which all the participants were committed. As a result, it is a much tighter text than is often the case with anthologies.

Victorianism is the new hot topic. At once both at an exotic remove and yet still I close enough to be pertinent today, the nineteenth century, much of which had been hitherto banished from serious intellectual consideration by literary critics because it was considered so moribund and overblown, has come into its own. This shift is largely a result of new theoretical emphases on ideological and discourse analyses. Freed from the evaluative straitjackets worn by critics earlier in the century, we now no longer make mere aesthetic judgments about the "redeeming value" of literature; instead, texts are constructed as historical moments, as vehicles of ideology, and as part of the multiplicity of conflicting discourses existing in a given time and place. Some of these discourses are oppositional, and others are integrative; nearly all are fraught with contradictions.

Mendus and Rendall explicitly cite Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* in their introduction, as having provided the "outstanding theoretical discussion" they used in both

the course and the articles. They indicate their intention to get beyond received wisdom about the Victorian double sexual standard (men as duplicitous and women as prudish) and examine the rich diversity of discourses on sexuality that existed. They maintain that there were significant instances of women attempting to transform the languages of sexuality for a variety of purposes. Josephine Butler, for example, worked with prostitutes and so had to claim "the right to a *knowledge* of that impurity, the right to enter public debate on such issues" (p.11).

Mendus and Rendall's second major theme is the relationship between sexual subordination and economic and political inequality. They maintain that an understanding of sexuality is necessary to a full comprehension of political relations, as both are masculinist ideologies in western societies: "That duality, that equation of sexual experience and of knowledge, through which the full subject hood of the adult might be attained, is one which pervades nineteenth-century discourses of gender" (p.7). In other words, an inexperienced woman was not allowed full social participation on any other than very restricted grounds. The two themes nicely dovetail: in order to challenge the social order, women must explore new ways of representing female sexuality.

For example, in "The Marriage of True Minds: the ideal of marriage in the philosophy of John Stuart Mill" Mendus argues that Mill, long since lauded as a pro-feminist man in a hostile age, in fact formulated his notion of female equality at the expense of women's sexuality. Many feminists themselves took this course and endorsed what has come to be known as maternal feminism. Other nineteenth-century women engaged in the more difficult exploration of women's sexual nature. Mendus and Rendall include the Brontes and Elizabeth Barrett Browning among these latter. Two of the essays in the volume particularly explore early feminist notions that knowledge is power for women: "Friendship and Politics: Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-91) and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925)" by Jane Rendall, and "Privilege and Patriarchy: Feminist thought in the nineteenth century" by Mary Maynard.

Other topical articles are Anne Digby's "Women's Biological Straitjacket," an examination of the ways in which medical discourses presented controlling representations of femininity, and Joanna de Groot's "'Sex' and 'Race': the construction of language and image in the nineteenth century" in which orientalism and the intersections of race and gender are explored. This article seems to have inspired the choice of illustrations for the cover: two paintings by W. Holman-Hunt, "Afterglow in Egypt" (1854-63) and "The Lady of Shalott" (1886-1905). One presents an idealized, dark-skinned woman, and the other a Pre-Raphaelite rendering of the Arthurian legend. De Groot's article suggests ways in which exoticism, either of race or a mythologized past, functions as a way of representing unequal gender relations as superseding both culture and history. And if sexual subordination is constructed as universal, then it must also be unchanging.

This volume should be seen as part of the ongoing critical project of rereading the past, jettisoning preconceptions and discovering the multiple voices beneath the perceived monolithic order. The Victorians did not project a one-dimensional picture of themselves as much as we created of them. The contributors to *Sexuality and Subordination* allow

nineteenth-century voices to be heard a little more clearly, in some of their diversity.

*Miriam Jones* is a Ph.D. student in English literature at York University and an active feminist.

---

### **Related Reading:**

Davidoff, Leonore, and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*. Hutchinson: London, 1987.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Trans. Robert Hurley. 2 Vols. New York: Vintage-Random, 1980, 1986.

Gallagher, Catherine, and Thomas Laqueur, eds. *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.

Poovey, Mary. *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988.

Suleiman, Susan Rubin, ed. *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1986.

## Back Doors and Freight Elevators: Disabled Women's Education

---

BY LIZ STIMPSON

*Barring a disabled woman from access to an educational institution is tantamount to denying her an education of her choice.*

The examples and comments written here have been obtained by the writer from disabled women in colleges and universities in the Toronto area and from first-hand experience.

The barriers to a disabled woman's education range from physical to attitudinal. The University of Toronto has very few accessible buildings and this is also true of the Ontario College of Art. There are buildings on the campus of the Ryerson Technical Institute which are totally inaccessible and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O.I.S.E.) has no ramp. The only entrance for disabled women at O.I.S.E. is through the back door; leaving after dark poses safety hazards. Barring a disabled woman from access to an educational institution is tantamount to denying her an education of her choice, which not only denies her rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms but denies the letter of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

It is hard for some disabled women even to finish secondary school because few are accessible and less have integrated the need of disabled people into the curriculum. On every level, disabled women are being denied the education to which most other women are entitled. There is no excuse for this since money is made available by the government of Ontario through The Office of Disabled Persons to make buildings accessible.

Disabled women are expected to jump through hoops to get into university or college and, when confronted with inaccessibility, the stress of education begins before they even get to the classroom. For instance, a disabled woman was accepted into a journalism course, which means her fees were accepted but nobody bothered to tell her the building was inaccessible. They have refused to return her fees. The lack of compassion shown this woman is nothing less than appalling.

## **Portes et ascenseurs de service : l'éducation des femmes handicapées**

**PAR LIZ STIMPSON**

Les femmes handicapées ne peuvent pas s'inscrire aux cours d'enseignement dont la plupart des autres femmes tirent parti, tout simplement parce que d'une part elles ne peuvent avoir accès aux édifices et parce que d'autre part on ne tient pas compte de leurs besoins spéciaux dans la salle de classe. Ainsi, un Institut polytechnique à Toronto a accepté une femme handicapée dans son cours de journalisme pour lui refuser ensuite de lui rembourser ses frais de scolarité après qu'elle s'est rendu compte qu'elle ne pouvait accéder à la salle de classe. En 1989, une femme mentalement handicapée essayait de terminer sa maîtrise: son conseiller lui annonça alors qu'il ne pouvait travailler avec elle en raison de son handicap. Cet homme semblait oublier qu'elle avait déjà obtenu un diplôme universitaire du premier cycle. Le ministère des collèges et Universités de l'Ontario a octroyé à tous les collèges et universités de la province des subventions pour que ces derniers répondent aux besoins des personnes handicapées mais la plupart refusent que les étudiants gèrent les fonds alloués et décident des besoins sur lesquels il faut se pencher. Il est louable que le Ministre accorde des subventions pour rendre la vie des étudiants handicapés plus faciles, mais si personne ne surveille à quoi sert l'argent, ses efforts resteront lettre morte.

*Such attitudes  
leave disabled  
women  
dependent and  
without dignity.*

Attitudinal barriers can be just as devastating as physical barriers and their combination spells doom for the disabled woman trying to get an education. In 1989, a developmentally disabled woman trying to complete a Masters Degree was told by her advisor that he could not work with her because she was learning disabled. I guess the fact that she had an undergraduate degree had slipped his mind. In another incident, a visually impaired woman wanted to complete a course requiring lab work and went to considerable trouble to find someone willing to work with her as her "eyes". However, this person was denied admittance to the lab, not on the pretext that the two may be cheating but from plain bigotry on the part of the professor.



The Ministry of Colleges and Universities has given funds to every college and university in Ontario to meet the needs of their disabled students. One such institution refused to allow the funds into the hands of the disabled students who had formed a committee for the purpose of administering them. In one of the most condescending gestures to disabled students, every request for special needs was forced to go through the administration on the assumption that able-bodied administrators know better than the students what these needs should be.

Another nightmare has turned out to be The Fine Arts Department at an Ontario University. A woman who cannot walk upstairs was admitted to the program and then relegated to using a freight elevator - often full of garbage piled high in green garbage bags, assorted boxes, and broken glass - which she cannot open by herself. The

Department's response to her protests was that they did not have \$10,000 to install a new elevator and that she should ask other students to assist her. Of course one is not likely to find many students hanging around freight elevators during the day on the chance that a disabled colleague might need help up to her classroom. Such an attitude leaves disabled women dependent and without dignity.

At another art college, the reputation with disabled women is only slightly better. People with mobility impairments often find it difficult to get up in the lift provided by the school, and some of the faculty have been known to state that they are not interested in providing special needs for disabled women students. One might ask what these institutions are doing with the funds provided for them by The Ministry of College and Universities to meet the needs of their disabled students. It is a great idea for the Ministry to give funds to make life easier for disabled women in higher education, but if no one is monitoring where they are going and what they are being used for, then the money might just as well have stayed with the Ministry.

In many cases a disabled woman trying to get an education is treated to a combination of sexism and bigotry. Blind women applying for grants are treated as if they lost their brains rather than their vision. The administration and faculties of educational institutions must learn to look through the disablement to the person.



*Liz Stimpson is currently the chairperson of the Disabled Women's Network in Toronto.*

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#### **Fireweed**

Special issue on Jewish Women

The feminist quarterly *Fireweed* is planning a special issue on Jewish women. Essays, fiction, herstories, humor, poetry, theory, artwork, etc. should be submitted by **April 30, 1991**, to Fireweed, Jewish Women's Issue, P.O. Box 279, Station B, Toronto, Ont., M5T 2W2.

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#### **Sage**

Special issue on relationships

*Sage*, a scholarly journal on Black women, is soliciting essays, personal narratives, and interviews for a special issue on relationships. Send submissions **by September 1, 1991**, to Sage, P.O. Box 42741, Atlanta, GA, 30311- 0741, U.S.A.

## **Canadian Journal of Education**

Special issue on feminist pedagogy

Submissions are invited from persons working in foundational disciplines including sociology, psychology, philosophy, and history or in interdisciplinary fields such as curriculum studies, women's studies, policy studies, and administrative studies. Articles that move beyond the experiential to theorize feminist pedagogy and situate it analytically in relation to critical pedagogy, progressive education, popular education, and feminist theory are especially encouraged (length: 25 pages, double-spaced) as well as shorter descriptive accounts of attempts to engage in feminist pedagogical practices in the classroom or notes on research-in-progress (length: 5 pages, double-spaced). Submit brief abstract immediately; final deadline **June 15, 1991**. Send abstracts and/or queries to: Special Issue on Feminist Pedagogy, Canadian Journal of Education, Faculty of Education, University of B.C., 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C., V6T 125.

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## **Association for Women in Development**

Learning Together /Working Together: A South-North Dialogue

AWID is accepting proposals for the 5th conference on women in development. General areas to be addressed are: work, education, health, family, political participation, institutional development, and the environment. Proposal deadline **April 20, 1991**. Contact Dr. Suzanne Kindervatter, Program Chair, OEF International, 1815 H Street NW, 11th Flr, Washington, D.C. 20006, U.S.A., (202)-466-3430, fax 202-775-0596.

## **SOUSSIONS DE TEXTES**

### **Fireweed**

Femmes Juives

*Fireweed*, une revue féministe, annonce une édition spéciale sur les femmes Juives. Envoyez des contes, essais, blagues, poèmes, théorie, histoires, etc. Date limite: **30 avril, 1991**. Envoyez les soumissions à Fireweed, Édition des Femmes Juives, B.P. 279, Station B, Toronto, (Ont.) M5T 2W2.

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## **Revue canadienne de l'éducation**

La pédagogie féministe

Les personnes spécialistes de certaines disciplines, comme la sociologie, la psychologie, la philosophie et l'histoire ou de domaines interdisciplinaires, comme l'étude du curriculum, des femmes, des politiques et de l'administration sont invitées à soumettre des articles (longueur: 25 pages à double interligne), ou des compte rendus faisant état des

efforts déployés pour mettre en oeuvre des pratiques pédagogiques féministes dans les salles de cours, ou des notes ayant trait à des recherches en cours (5 pages à double interligne). Date limite: **le 15 juin 1991**. Prière de faire parvenir les résumés, les demandes de renseignements ou les articles à Rédactrices invitées du numéro spécial sur la pédagogie féministe, Revue canadienne de l'éducation, Faculté de l'Éducation, Université de C.-B., 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, (C.-B.) V6T 1Z5.

## **AWARDS /SCHOLARSHIPS**

### **Toronto Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies**

The Centre has launched a series of four awards (annually) of \$200 each to support and encourage scholarship and cultural work that expands the social political or historical understanding of lesbian and gay people in Canada. Awards are intended to honour a single work (film, video, theatre, book, essay, etc.) or the achievements of an individual or community. Send nominations for potential recipients (including a description of the work and information on how to contact them) by **March 31, 1991**, to The Awards, Toronto Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies, 2 Boor Street West, Suite 100-129, Toronto, Ont., M4W 3E2.

### **International Council for Adult Education**

#### **J. Roby Kidd Award**

An award of \$2,000 annually is offered to one or more people who have made a significant contribution to adult education at the local or national level. Female and male practitioners of any age, nationality, religion or race are eligible. Applications can be made in English, French, Spanish, or Arabic and must be submitted **by August 15, 1991**. Forms are available from ICAE at 720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ont., M5S 2R4, Fax (416) 588-5725, or from regional associations.

## **SUBVENTIONS**

### **Conseil international d'éducation des adultes**

#### **Prix J. Roby Kidd**

Un prix de 2 000 \$ est attribué tous les ans à une ou plusieurs personnes qui ont joué un rôle clé dans le domaine de l'éducation des adultes au niveau local ou national. Des hommes et des femmes de tout âge, de toute nationalité, race ou religion sont admissibles. Les demandes peuvent être faites en français, anglais, espagnol ou arabe et être soumises d'ici au **15 août 1991**. On peut se procurer des formulaires auprès du CIEA, 720 rue Bathurst, Suite 500, Toronto, (Ont.) M5S 2R4. Télécopieur: (416) 588-5725 ou auprès d'associations régionales.

## FILM /VIDEO



### **Our Voice Will Be Heard! Guatemalan Women Speak**

Neustra Voz P.O. Box 20092 1395 Lawrence Ave. W. Toronto, Ont. M6L 1A7  
(416) 766-6892 A 20 min. slide show in English introducing the theme of women in Guatemala.

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### **What If? Women Inventors & Entrepreneurs**

Women Inventors Project P.O. Box 689 Waterloo, Ont. N2J 4B8 (519) 746-3443 \$149.95  
(introductory price) \$50.00 to rent

A 16 min. video featuring interviews with successful women inventors and entrepreneurs. The video is useful as a training video for professionals working with inventors and an educational tool to teach about innovation and entrepreneurship and help build self-esteem for young women. Suitable for grades 7 - university.

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### **More Than Just a Job**

L.M. Media Marketing Services Ltd. 115 Torbay Road, Unit 9 Markham, Ont. L3R 2M9  
(416) 475-3750

A 15 min. video produced by the Ontario Women's Directorate that promotes non-sexist career choices to high school students and teachers. Women and men in non-traditional occupations discuss their work, education, family life, working environment, personal rewards, and advice to students.

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### **Talking Sense /Talking Sex**

L.M. Media Marketing Services Ltd. (as above)

A set of 5 videos for parents, educators and teens offering information on teenage sexuality from teenagers, health specialists, and educators. Produced by the Ontario Women's Directorate.

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### **Women in Scholarship: One step forward, two steps back?**

The Royal Society of Canada P.O. Box 9734 Ottawa, Ont. K1G 5J4 (613) 992-3468 fax  
613-992-5021 \$50.00 video and transcripts \$10.00 edited transcripts only

A video of the panel discussion held by the Committee for Advancement of Women in Scholarship in memory of the 14 women murdered at Ecole Polytechnique. Seven scholars present their views and suggestions to counter "backlash" .

## **FILM / VIDÉO**

### **Ça prend du métier**

L.M. Media Marketing Services Ltd. 115 chemin Torbay, unité 9 Markham, (Ont.) L3R 2M9 (416) 475-3750

Un nouveau film vidéo, produit par la Direction générale de la condition féminine de l'Ontario, qui présente des choix de carrières non sexistes aux étudiantes et étudiants du secondaire et aux enseignantes et enseignants. Ce film est destiné spécifiquement aux élèves de la 7e à la 10e année.

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### **Femmes vers l'an 2000**

Productions filles en vue 2279 de Champlain Montréal, (Québec) H2L 2T1 (514) 523-9078

Ce film vidéo est un complément aux actes du colloque du même nom. Les thèmes abordés sont l'histoire des suffragettes de la région, la mise sur pied d'un parti politique de femmes et les enjeux économiques et politiques de demain.

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### **Place au pouvoir des femmes**

Production filles en vue (sus-mentionnée)

Ce film vidéo retrace les moments dominants de la rencontre de la Côte- Nord, et cerne, grâce aux conférences, aux entrevues et aux témoignages des participantes, les instants mémorables de cette rencontre.

## **BOOKS /PUBLICATIONS**

### **Responding to the Abuse of People with Disabilities**

Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped 40 Orchardview Boulevard Suite 255 Toronto, Ont. M4R 1B9 (416) 482-8255 (416) 482-1254 (TDD) (416) 482-2981 (fax)

This 34 page manual is designed to help those who have contact with people with disabilities respond to situations of abuse (including assault, sexual assault, negligence, human rights violations, isolation, humiliating behaviour, etc.) The manual is available in French and English and on tape for those with visual disabilities.

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**Literacy and Labels: a look at literacy policy and people with a mental handicap**

G. Allan Roehrer Institute Publications c/o Fitzhenry & Whiteside 195 Allstate Parkway  
Markham, Ont. L3R 4T8 \$16.00 ea. + 10% handling + 7% G.S.T.

This study examines barriers to literacy education for adult with a mental handicap, the ways literacy is delivered in Canada, changes necessary to make literacy programs more accessible and inclusive, etc., and provides concrete directions for policy change and development of literacy programs.

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**Green Teacher Magazine**

95 Robert Street Toronto, Ont. M5S 2K5 (416) 960-1244 \$30/year (6 issues)

A magazine for teachers, teacher educators, & curriculum developers produced cooperatively through British, Canadian, Australian and American sources, with a focus on the environment and "green" education and providing classroom- ready materials and information on environmental issues.

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**Creation Fire: an anthology of Caribbean women's poetry**

Sister Vision Press

P.O. Box 217 Station E Toronto, Ont. M6H 4E2 \$19.95 400 pp.

An anthology of poetry by Caribbean women, published by Sister Vision Press and the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action.

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**Feminie**

The Athena Group Consultants 93 Sheppard Avenue E. Willowdale, Ont. M2N  
3A3 free

A new magazine for Canadian women with information on business, health, law, finance, relationships, etc., targeted at business and professional women.

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**Connexions Digest**

427 Bloor Street W. Toronto, Ont. M5S 1X7 (416) 960-3903 \$25/year (4 issues + Annual)

Connexions publishes articles selected from the alternative press about working for social change, as well as resources and information about events, projects, campaigns, etc., from across the country. The Connexions Annual is a reference of grass-roots groups involved in social, environmental, peace and community issues in Canada.

**Black Women's Studies**

Sage P.O. Box 42741 Atlanta, GA 30311-0741 U.S.A. \$8 /issue, subscription (2 issues): \$15/individual \$25/institution

Sage has published a special issue on Black Women's Studies, including issues such as feminist theory and its sensitivity to race, pedagogical essays on teaching about Black women, the works of African and African-American writers.

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**Women and Men in Education: a national survey of gender distribution in school systems**

Canadian Education Association Suite 8-200 252 Bloor Street W. Toronto, Onto M5S 1V5 \$14.00 102 pp.

Author Ruth Rees (Queen's University) examines educational institutions, boards and associations across the country for job segregation based on sex, and reviews employment equity programs, hiring practices, and the development of women's skills and leadership. Recommendations included.

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**Telling It: women and language across cultures**

Press Gang Publishers 603 Powell Street Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1H2 \$14.95 208 pp.

Edited by a collective of Sky Lee, Lee Maracle, Daphne Marlatt, and Betsy Warland, this compilation addresses issues of racism, cultural appropriation, and homophobia through contributions from Native, Asian-Canadian, and lesbian writers.

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**Catching Our Breath: a journal about change for women who smoke**

Women's Health Clinic 419 Graham Avenue, 3rd Flr Winnipeg, Man. R3C OM3 (204) 947-1517

The Women's Health Clinic have created the journal and an accompanying guide as part

of a smoking cessation program designed for women. The approach combines adult education methodology, group process techniques, and an understanding of women's social and economic position.

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### **Violence Against Women and Children**

FWTAO Newsletter 1260 Bay Street Toronto, Ont. M5R 2B8 (416) 964-1232 fax: 416-964-0512 free (up to quantities of 280)



The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario has produced a special Montreal massacre memorial issue of their newsletter, examining issues like violence against students and teachers, how to teach students non-violent conflict resolution, sex stereotyping in school readers, and Ministry of Education initiatives.

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### **A Literacy Celebration**

Canadian Library Association 200 Elgin Street, #602 Ottawa, Onto K2P 1L5 (613) 232-9625 \$10.00/set of 3

Three volumes of students personal accounts of their literacy challenges and life experiences.

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### **Canadian Women and AIDS: beyond the statistics**

Les éditions communiqu'Elles 3585 rue St-Urbain Montreal, Que. H2X 2N6 (514) 844-1761 fax: 514-842-1067 \$15.95 + \$1.00 handling + 7% G.S.T.

Sections include Women with HIV/AIDS share their stories, Who's vulnerable?, Educating ourselves and organizing our communities, etc.

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### **Women and Poverty Revisited**

National Council of Welfare Brooke Claxton Bldg Ottawa, Onto KIA 0K9 (613) 957-2961

An updated look at women and poverty since the 1979 National Council of Welfare report on the subject.

## **LIVRES / PUBLICATIONS**

### **Nouveau Départ: analyse de ses impacts**

Nouveau Départ national inc. 1355 ouest, boulevard René Lévesque Bureau 420  
Montréal, (Québec) H3G 1T3 (514) 866-0416

Ce document présente les résultats des recherches qu'a effectuées une équipe auprès des femmes qui avaient suivi le programme Nouveau Départ au Québec de 1985 à 1989. Nouveau Départ offre un programme d'orientation aux femmes de 30 ans et plus qui veulent procéder à des changements dans leur vie.

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### **L'alphabétisation des femmes francophones: guide à l'intention des formatrices**

Le Réseau national d'action éducation femmes 50, rue Vaughan, local 3 Ottawa, (Ont.)  
K1M 1X1 (613) 741-9978 7\$

Ce guide traite des différentes approches et des moyens à prendre pour répondre au besoins des femmes qui s'alphabétisent. Ce guide découle de la "Rencontre nationale des femmes francophones et l'alphabétisation" qui a eu lieu en mai 1989 à Ottawa.

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### **Les femmes canadiennes et le SIDA: au-delà des statistiques**

Les éditions Communiqu'Elles 3585, rue St-Urbain Montréal, (Québec) H2X 2N6  
(514)844-1761 Télécopieur (514) 842-1067 15,95 \$ + 1,00 \$ frais d'expédition + 7% TPS  
+ taxe provinciale

Ce livre comprend les sections suivantes: La problématique du VIH/SIDA chez les femmes, Des femmes nous racontent leur histoire; Qui est vulnérable?; S'éduquer soi-même, nous éduquer entre nous et organiser la communauté.

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### **Les femmes et le tabagisme: Quoi de neuf?**

Les éditions Communiqu'Elles (susmentionnée) 7,50 \$ + 1,00 \$ frais d'expédition + 7% TPS + taxe provinciale

Chaque année 13 000 femmes canadiennes meurent pour des raisons reliées à l'utilisation du tabac. Lisez les raisons pour lesquelles les femmes fument et documentez-vous sur les méthodes à appliquer pour s'arrêter de fumer.

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### **Intervenantes au service des immigrantes: guide pratique d'information et de références**

Les éditions Communiqu'Elles (sus-mentionnée) 5,95 \$ + 1,00 \$ frais de manutention

Le guide pratique, produit par le Centre des femmes de Montréal, est un outil indispensable à toute intervenante qui travaille auprès des femmes immigrantes. Les sujets traités sont la famille et les rapports parents/enfants, violence conjugale, parrainage, les garderies, le logement, le travail, la santé et les services sociaux.

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### **La femme et la pauvreté, dix ans plus tard**

Conseil national du bien-être social Brooke Claxton Building Ottawa, (Ont.) K1A 0K9  
(613)957-2961

Une mise à jour de la situation de la femme et de la pauvreté depuis le rapport de 1979 du Conseil national du bien-être social sur le sujet.

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### **Guide mondial des techniques et outils**

Centre de la Tribune Internationale de la Femme 777 United Nations Plaza New York, N. Y. 10017, É.-U. 10,00 \$ (É.-U.)

Le Guide présente des fiches descriptives pour 57 techniques utilisées dans des domaines divers dans le monde entier, des suggestions pratiques à l'intention des agents de développement et des organisations qui souhaitent faciliter l'accès des femmes à la technologie et des adresses utiles pour la réalisation de projets de technologie appropriée pour les femmes.

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### **L'Emploi en devenir**

Institut Québécois de Recherche sur la Culture 14 rue Haldimand Québec (Québec) G1R 4N4 (418) 643-4695 Télécopieur (418) 646-3317

L'auteure, Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay, pose quelques questions au sujet des nouvelles formes d'emploi.

## **AGENDA**

**Adult and Adolescent Literacy**  
International Reading Association  
March 21-23 Banff, Alberta

Topics include: family literacy programs, special needs, aboriginal literacy, youth and literacy, etc. Registration \$135 (IRA member), \$150 (non-member). Contact the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, Box 8139, Newark, Delaware, 19714-8139, U.S.A.

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**Sorrow & Strength: the Process**  
Creating Connections April 11-13 Winnipeg, Manitoba

Elly Danica and Christine Courtois are part of this conference for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Contact Sorrow & Strength 1991 Coordinating Committee 160 Gerfield St, Winnipeg Manitoba, R3G 2L6 (204) 786-1971 .

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**Women and Mental Health: Women in a Violent Society**  
Canadian Mental Health Association May 9-12 Banff, Alberta

Keynote speakers include Andrea Dworkin, Shirley Turcotte, Kate Millet and Rosemary Brown. Registration \$150 (before March 15), \$200 late registration, + 7% G.S. T. Contact Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta North Central Region, 9th Floor, 10050-112 Street, Edmonton, Alta., T5K 2J1, (403) 482-6091.

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**Open Learning: Critical Reflections**  
Canadian Association for Distance Education May 15-16, 1200 Eastern Standard Time

CADE's biannual conference at a distance, delivered through print/video package, and audio-teleconference calls. Registration: \$275/site (before February 28), \$325/site until March 31. Contact CADE '91 Conference, c/o TETRA, Hickman Bldg, E 1000, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Nfld., A1B 3X8, (709) 737-4066, fax 709-737-4635.

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**The Future of Literacy in Canada**

Sub-commission on Education of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO September 11-13 Ottawa, Ontario

The sub-commission is holding a meeting to discuss the future of Literacy in Canada. Contact Brad Munro or Isabelle Marquis (613) 598-4385 .

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**Lifelong Learning: An Odyssey to the Future**

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education October 14-20 Montreal, Quebec

A look at adult education into the 21st century, with over 200 workshops and presentations to be offered. Contact AAACE, 1112, 16th Street N. W., Suite 420, Washington, D.C., 20036, U.S.A.

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**Learning Together/Working Together: A South-North Dialogue**

Association for Women in Development November 20-24, Washington, D.C.

(See "Call for Submissions" in Resources) Topics to be addressed include work, education, health, family, political participation, institutional development, and the environment. Contact AWID Secretariat, 10 Sandy Hall, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, 24061, U.S.A., (703) 231-7615.

# Women's **EDUCATION** des femmes

**Index to Women's  
Education des femmes**  
*Volume 8, Nos. 1- 4*

**Index de Women 's  
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*Volume 8 Nos. 1- 4*

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entre 100 000\$ et 500 000 \$ 80.25\$
- Organisation: budget annuel  
supérieur à 500 000 \$ 133.75\$

Abonnement seulement *Women's Education des femmes*

- Particulier 18.19\$
- Organisation 32.10\$

\* Un reçu de 20,00 \$ aux fins de l'impôt sera remis.

\*\* Un reçu de 240,00 \$ aux fins de l'impôt sera remis.

Les dons supplémentaires feront l'objet d'un reçu aux fins de l'impôt.

Veillez trouver ci-joint un chèque payable au CCPEF d'un montant de:

Adhésion ou abonnement \_\_\_\_\_ \$  
Donation \_\_\_\_\_ \$  
**Total** \_\_\_\_\_ \$

Please return form and payment to  
CCLOW, 47 Main Street, Toronto,  
Ontario, M4E 2V6.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: HOME \_\_\_\_\_

BUS. \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_

AREA OF INTEREST \_\_\_\_\_

I do NOT give CCLOW permission  
to trade, or sell my name and address to  
other like-minded social action groups  
for the purpose of fundraising or as a  
means of networking.

paiement au CCPEF, 47 rue Main,  
Toronto (Ontario), M4E 2V6.

NOM \_\_\_\_\_

ADRESSE \_\_\_\_\_

CODE POSTAL \_\_\_\_\_

TÉLÉPHONE RES. \_\_\_\_\_

BUR. \_\_\_\_\_

PROFESSION \_\_\_\_\_

INTÉRÊTS \_\_\_\_\_

Je N'AUTORISE PAS le CCPEF à  
échanger, prêter ou vendre mon nom ou  
mon adresse à d'autres groupes d'action  
sociale aux fins d'une campagne de  
souscription ou pour faire du réseautage.

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The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CLOW) was founded in 1979 and is a national, voluntary, feminist organization with networks in every province and territory. CLOW advocates equality between women and men by promoting equal participation in our educational, political, economic, legal, social and cultural systems. To overcome discrimination based on gender, age, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, CLOW focuses on improving educational and learning systems. Our work and research includes maintaining a Women's Learning Resource Centre, publishing a quarterly magazine (Women's Education des femmes), advocacy, program development in local areas and involvement in educational - related activities and events.

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Le Congrès canadien pour la promotion des études chez la femme (CCPEF) a été fondé en 1979. C'est un organisme national, bénévole et féministe qui a des réseaux dans chaque province et territoire. Le CCPEF prône l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes en promouvant une participation égale de tous et de toutes à notre système éducatif, politique, économique, judiciaire, social et culturel. Pour surmonter la discrimination qui se fonde sur le sexe, l'âge, la race, la classe sociale, les caractères ethniques et l'orientation sexuelle, le CCPEF s'attache à perfectionner le système éducatif et celui de l'apprentissage des femmes, publie une revue trimestrielle Women's Education des femmes, se fait le défenseur des femmes, s'occupe d'élaborer des programmes dans différentes régions du pays et participe à des activités et à des manifestations dans le domaine de l'éducation.