

A quarterly journal

AL-RAIDA

The Leader

الرائدة

*Arab
Regional
Priorities
for Beijing*

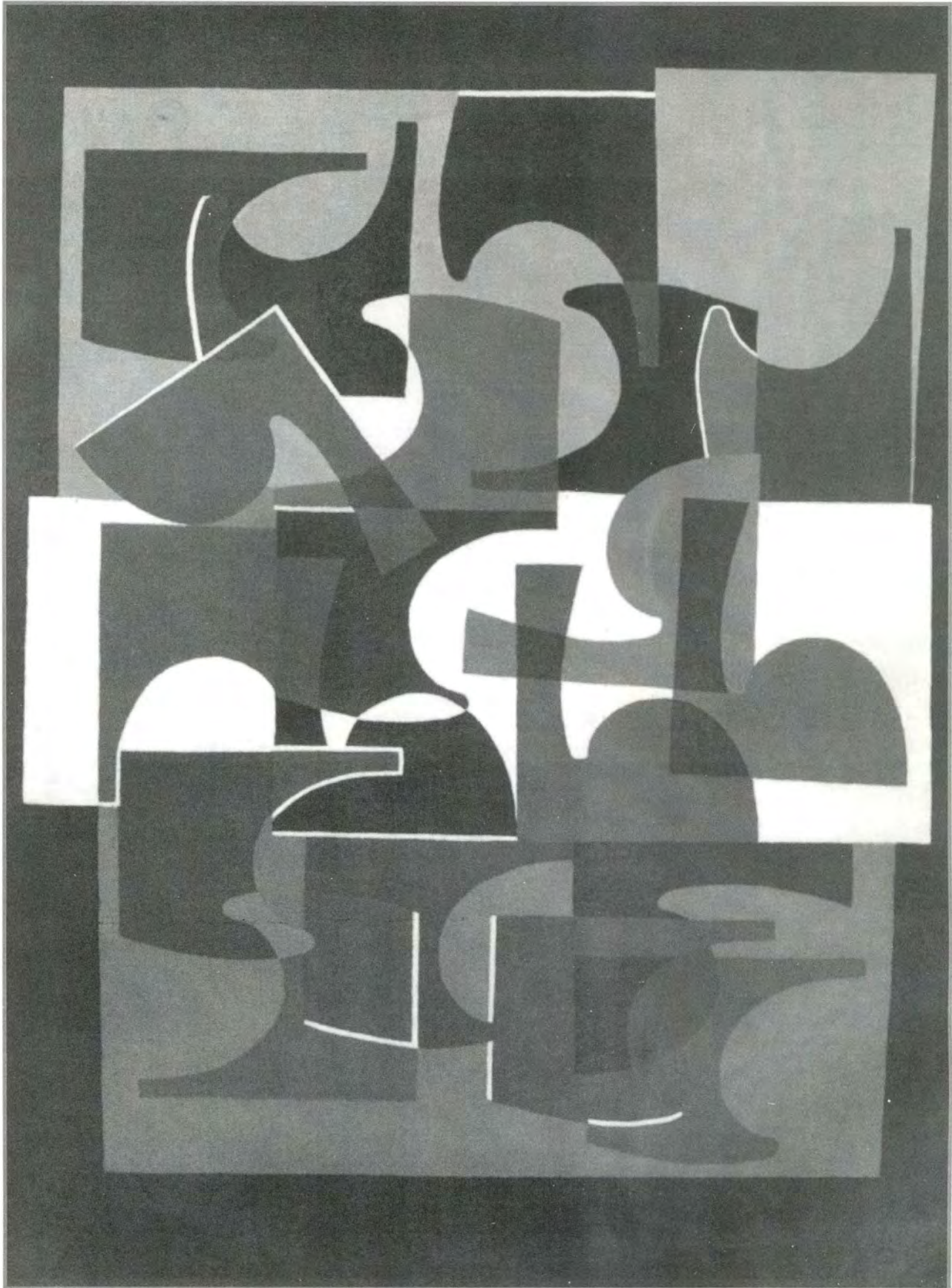


*Women's
Tribunal*



**File:
Arab Women In Management**

Spring 1995, Vol. XII. No. 69



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About Art...

This issue of *Al-Raida* features two paintings by Lebanese women artists who are also graduates of Lebanese American University (formerly Beirut University College), Ghada Jamal and Saloua Raouda Choucair. The artwork on the cover of this issue is a detail from a painting by Ghada Jamal entitled "To Everything there is a Season." This is a mixed-media work which expresses a sense of nostalgia and loss for pre-war Lebanon. The artwork on the inside cover, entitled "Two=One," is a lively abstract study by Saloua Raouda Choucair.

Both of these paintings are featured in a recent book, *Forces of Change: Artists of the Arab World* (published by the International Council for Women in the Arts and The National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1994). This catalogue, compiled and written by Selwa Mikdadi Nashashibi, accompanied an extraordinary exhibit of artworks by Arab Women Artists which was displayed at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., USA, in 1993 and 1994. The exhibit, the first of its kind to be held in the United States, also traveled to several other cities in 1994 and 1995.

About the Artists

Seloua Raouda Choucair was born in Lebanon in 1916 and graduated from Beirut College for Women (now LAU) in 1938. She also studied at the American University of Beirut and the Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts in Paris before moving to the United States, where she received additional training at the Pratt Institute in New York City and the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. In 1947, Choucair exhibition at the Arab Cultural Gallery in Beirut was the first abstract painting exhibit in the entire Arab world. The artist, who has exhibited her works in Lebanon, Paris, Egypt and Iraq, now lives and works in Beirut.

Ghada Jamal was born in Beirut in 1955 and received a bachelor's degree from Beirut University College in 1984. She also has a master's degree in Fine Arts from California State College at Long Beach. The subject matter of Jamal's work is the war-ravaged landscape of Lebanon, and the fading collective memories and emotions of the pre-war period. Jamal, who has exhibited in Lebanon, Jordan and the United States, now lives in California.

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About Al-Raida...

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Purpose and Content: *Al-Raida's* mission is to enhance networking between Arab women and women all over the world; to promote objective research on the conditions of women in the Arab world, especially conditions related to social change and development; and to report on the activities of the IWSAW and the Lebanese American University. Each issue of *Al-Raida* features a File which focuses on a particular theme, in addition to articles, conference reports, interviews, book reviews and art news.

Reprint Rights: No unsigned articles may be reprinted without proper reference to *Al-Raida*. Permission to reprint signed articles must be secured from the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Lebanese American University (formerly BUC).

Submission of Articles: We seek contributions from anyone engaged in research, analysis, and study on Arab women. Contributions should not exceed ten double-spaced pages. Please send a diskette and a hard copy. We reserve the right to edit in accordance with our space limitations and editorial guidelines. Submissions will not be published if they have been previously published elsewhere.

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1985 to 1995:

A Decade of Power and Progress for Women?

As we prepare this issue of *Al-Raida* for publication, thousands of women throughout the world are busily preparing for the Fourth International Women's Conference, to be held in Beijing in September. The conference participants, representing half of the world's population, face daunting challenges -- logistical, political, and philosophical -- as they draft agendas and set priorities for this once-in-a-decade event. After reviewing literature and publications emanating from the last International Women's Conference, which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in July of 1985, one cannot help but notice how much more ambitious, optimistic and proactive was the tone of the statements and agendas of the mid-1980s compared to the tone of Conference-related publications in 1995. The world has changed dramatically since 1985, and where women's and children's issues are concerned, not enough developments during the past decade have been for the better. In spite of rising levels of education world-wide, and despite the global reach of the communications revolution, women in 1995 express more feelings of frustration, pessimism and disempowerment than did their sisters in 1985.

Women representing many active non-governmental organizations, which have become increasingly crucial to the survival of women and children throughout the developing world, are justifiably angry that the Chinese Government plans to house the NGO participants in a location considerably distant from the site of the inter-governmental representatives' meetings. This will hinder the NGO community's efforts to participate in the shaping of international policies and programs which will have a significant and long-reaching impact on the lives of women and children in the next decade and beyond. Individuals and institutions throughout the world have voiced dissatisfaction with the equivocal language of the Conference document, The Platform for Action, which many feel does not go far enough in effectively addressing the real and pressing problems facing women throughout the world.

Ten years ago, when the Third International Women's Conference convened in Kenya, the world's political and economic structure was such that two heavily-armed superpowers set the pace and determined the possibilities for the rest of humanity. Academically, politically, and programatically, the world was neatly divided into those supporting various shades of capitalism versus those supporting various shades of communism. With the break-up of the communist countries, the abrupt disruption of a familiar world order, and the ensuing political confusion and ideological uncertainty throughout the world, wars, injustice and suffering on a scale not seen since World War II have again been unleashed. Without doubt, women and children have paid the highest price for the "New World Order." According to a recent Amnesty International report, women and children comprise 80 percent of the world's current refugee population. As nationalist and fascist ideologies spawn political conflict and military confrontations in the countries of Eastern Europe, Africa, Central Asia and the former Soviet Union, women and children have swelled the ranks of distraught refugees who are herded, day after day, into school gymnasiums and squalid camps. There they wait, frightened, powerless and frustrated, entirely dependent on the inadequate services and ineffective protection of the United Nations, whose forces and leaders have been incapable of halting heinous violations of human rights, such as ethnic cleansing and the systematic use of rape as a method of warfare.

In other regions, such as the Middle East, politicized religious ideologies pursued to the point of fanaticism have transformed women into one-dimensional symbols of cultural purity and religious rectitude in the ongoing confrontation with the West. Ten years ago, the idea of an Algerian high school girl, Katia Bengana, being shot dead before her horrified classmates and teachers for the crime of not wearing a *hijab* would have been unthinkable. Today, it is just another newspaper headline.

Meanwhile, in the West, "feminism" became a dirty word sometime during the last decade. A ground-breaking book on the state of the women's movement in the United States (*Backlash*, by Susan Faludi, 1992), revealed that a feminist, according to American popular opinion, is a mean, bitter and aggressive woman who hates men, strives to destroy the traditional family, and who is probably also a lesbian. Faludi attributes the erosion of the gains of the women's movement in the United States to the rise of the religious right as a political force calling for a return to "traditional values." Although unopposed to most rich cultural traditions, many feminists perceive "traditional values" as a code word for keeping women

confined to the private realm of the home, far removed from public centers of political, economic and intellectual power.

And it is power which is the fundamental issue underlying all other women's issues throughout the world, whether in the United States, Algeria, Bosnia, or China. Women need power to achieve their aims and to secure safety, health and education for themselves and their children. Women must access power to participate in fora of decision-making at the local, national and international levels which will so crucially influence their lives and their children's lives in this tumultuous period of change and uncertainty. Women need psychological power to stand up to socially sanctioned injustices; they need economic power to achieve independence and better lives for themselves and their children; they need political power to influence legislation and the distribution of key resources. As activists, NGO representatives, researchers and concerned citizens of the world, we must ask a new set of questions as we enter the new millennium: How do women understand and access power in their specific cultural and social contexts? What methods and models do they employ for exercising power? Do women define and use power in different ways than men? Are women's conceptions of power more constructive in and appropriate to the world's rapidly changing economic and political environments? Do existing governmental and non-governmental aid agencies and development projects focus on empowering women and encouraging their active and creative participation in forging their own lives, societies and polities? The status of women and children -- and perhaps humanity itself -- hinges upon the answers to these questions.

The File section of this issue of *Al-Raida* examines a specific conjunction of women and power in the Arab world: Arab Women and Management (pp. 9-24). The articles presented in the File, which were originally presented at a May, 1995 conference in Beirut entitled "The Arab Woman and Business Management," reiterate an important point: women are not attaining positions in the decision-making ranks of the private and public sectors in the Arab world commensurate with their education, efforts, capabilities and experience. Professional women in the Arab world have discovered the "glass ceiling," and are trying to find ways to break through it. According to several of the conference presenters, one of the greatest obstacles confronting the professional women is her own deeply ingrained and socially-given negative self-conceptions as a woman. The first step on the road to empowerment and success, then, is the psychological step of questioning the voices of traditional gender socialization which tell women that they cannot and should not exercise decisive power. Research on Arab women who have achieved considerable success in the field of management indicates that the most salient common denominator shared by these women is not their economic class, social background or religious heritage; rather, it is their strong belief in themselves and their dreams, their ability to work hard, their educational achievements, and their willingness to persevere through difficulties and set-backs. In other words, women who succeed are women who are willing to take into their own hands the power to make or break their own lives.

The psychological dimensions of Arab women's empowerment features prominently in another article in this issue of *Al-Raida*. Hania Osseiran reports on a compelling event which took place in Beirut in late June, "The Women's Tribunal," which included the live and very moving testimonies of women throughout the Arab world who have suffered violence and humiliation at the hands of their husbands, fathers, brothers, governments and societies. The "accused" was not a specific individual, but rather, the dysfunctional cultural beliefs, attitudes, values and institutions that facilitate and legitimize the brutalization of Arab women. The fact that an event dealing with such a sensitive and controversial issue could be held publicly in a major city of the contemporary Arab world speaks volumes about the incremental, yet dramatic, psychological and cultural changes which have occurred in the Middle East during the last decade. Women are beginning seriously to question authority, and that, in itself, is a revolutionary act of empowerment.

This issue of *Al-Raida* marks the first issue in nearly five years that was not overseen by the caring and conscientious eyes of my predecessor, Randa Abul Husn, who instituted many innovations and improvements in this publication. We wish Randa luck in her new position at the United Nations Development Program office in Beirut. Her new employer is fortunate to have such an intelligent and dedicated woman of integrity as an employee.

The next issue of *Al-Raida* will be a special double issue devoted to the multi-faceted topic of "Women in Post-War Lebanon." If you want to learn more about how Lebanese women survived seventeen harrowing years of civil war, and how they are faring in the post-war political, social and economic environment, be sure to renew your subscription.

— Laurie King-Irani
Guest Editor

About IWSAW..

IWSAW - The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World was established in 1973 at the Lebanese American University, formerly BUC. It began with a grant from the Ford Foundation with Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr as its Director.

Objectives: To serve as a data bank and resource center and to advance a better understanding of Arab women and children; to promote communication among individuals, groups and institutions concerned with women and children in the Arab world; to improve the quality of life of Arab women and children through educational and development projects; and to enhance the educational and outreach efforts of the Lebanese American University.

Projects: IWSAW activities include local, regional and international conferences; seminars, lectures and films; and educational projects which improve the lives of women and children from all sectors of Lebanese society. The Institute houses the Women's Documentation Center in the Stoltzfus Library at LAU. The Center holds books and periodicals. The Institute also publishes a variety of books and pamphlets on the status, development and conditions of Arab women, in addition to *Al-Raida*. Eight children's books with illustrations, and two guides, one of which specifies how to set up children's libraries, and the other which contains information about producing children's books, have also been published by IWSAW. In addition, the Institute has also created income-generating projects which provide employment training and assistance to women from war-stricken families in Lebanon. The Institute has also devised a "Basic Living Skills Project" which provides a non-formal, integrated educational program for semi-literate women involved in development projects. Additional IWSAW projects include the Rehabilitation Program for Children's Mental Health; Teaching for Peace; and the Portable Library Project. The latter project was awarded the Asahi Reading Promotion Award in 1994. For more information about these or any other projects, write to the Institute at the address provided above.

According
to a recent
Amnesty
International
report,
women
have
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invisible
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the 1990s.

Amnesty International Launches Campaign to Protect Women's Rights

In preparation for the Fourth U.N. World Conference on Women, The U.S. branch of Amnesty International has launched a campaign to draw attention to increasing abuses of women's basic human rights around the world. The campaign, entitled "Human Rights are a Woman's Right," will urge governments to do more than sign documents and make speeches about the need to protect women's basic rights; effective and decisive action is required to end such abuses as mass rape, public floggings and extra-judicial killings of women around the world. According to a recent Amnesty International report, women have become the invisible victims of the 1990s. They are the primary casualties of ethnic conflicts, constitute 80 percent of the world's refugees, and are the targets of human rights violations on a horrifying scale. Amnesty's current campaign hopes to hold governments more accountable and also aims to speak for thousands of women "who have been silenced by shame and fear." The campaign consists of five components: 1) launching a massive public education effort; 2) targeting abusive governments; 3) taking specific action on behalf of women at risk; 4) spotlighting the human rights activism of women around the world; and 5) confronting the community of world governments. The keystone of the campaign will be a 15-point program to protect women's human rights. For more information, contact your local branch of Amnesty International, or write to Amnesty International-USA, 322 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10001.

Egyptian Court Rules that Happily-Married Couple Must Divorce

In an unprecedented decision which was announced on June 14, 1995, an official Egyptian court ruled that a married

Arab Women's Beijing Women's

The following list of priorities for Arab women in relation to the Fourth International Women's Conference, to be held in Beijing September 4-15, were recently issued by a committee of Arab women activists and specialists during the preparatory conference held in March at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. These priorities will provide Arab participants with guidelines and serve as a basis for discussions and decision-making at the conference.

1. To strengthen the basis of the democratic process in both the political and social realms; to ensure the sanctity of human rights and the amendments of legislation that target the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, in particular, family laws.

2. To ensure the immediate and complete withdrawal of foreign occupation forces from the Arab region to achieve a just and comprehensive peace based on international legitimacy and to safeguard the rights of its people to self-determination and freedom of choice.

3. To ensure the basic human rights of freedom for victims of armed conflict and occupation, such as refugees, displaced peoples, political deportees, political prisoners, and in particular, women and children.

couple, Professor Nasr Abu Zeid and his wife of more than ten years, Ibtihal Younis, must divorce on the grounds that Dr. Abu Zeid is an apostate. The respected Egyptian professor of literature has been branded an atheist and an infidel by Islamic militants because of his controversial views on the *shari'a* (Islamic Law). According to Islamic law, any Muslim who renounces his faith cannot remain married to a Muslim. Hence, the court's unexpected ruling implies that the couple, if found together alone, will be considered adulterers and may face harsh yet legitimate punishment -- even death -- for their abrogation of the law. Ibtihal Younis voiced the sentiments of all hu-

Priorities and the Conference

4. To ensure the commitment of all governments to the international conventions on banning the dumping of wastes and nuclear by-products in the Arab region in order to protect the lives of women and children.

5. To urge all governments to sign and ratify the International Conventions for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women without any reservations, and subsequently to incorporate these elements within their respective national civil laws to eradicate all forms of oppression against women.

6. To protect the lives and properties of Palestinian women and families who are suffering from foreign occupation and/or living in refugee camps.

7. To strengthen the international cooperation and support of Arab Women's NGOs, particularly those under foreign occupation and suffering as a result of economic sanctions.

8. To condemn fundamentalism and cultural extremism, which can lead to terrorism and violence against women.

9. To promote social development to counteract the negative impact of applied structural adjustment programs and to ensure the basic human needs of women.

man rights activists, intellectuals and feminists in the Arab world when she told a reporter that "we are in a state of shock. This verdict is a disgrace to the Egyptian judiciary; the court has submitted to the will of the Islamists."

The June 14th ruling was only the latest episode in a three-year confrontation between Dr. Abu Zeid, a faculty member at Cairo University, and Egyptian Islamists. At issue are writings and statements by Dr. Abu Zeid which interpret the Qur'an and certain aspects of Islamic theology from an objective and secular perspective. Islamic militants are particularly outraged over Dr. Abu Zeid's

claims that a revered 8th century legal scholar, Imam al-Shafie, set down an interpretation of Islam's meaning and legal system which was too narrow and delimited. Because of these views, Islamists have labeled Abu Zeid an atheist and infidel. Islamic militants first took the case of Abu Zeid's marriage to court, without the permission of the couple, in 1993. At that time, Abu Zeid placed and won an appeal blocking the Islamists' move from a lower court, but the Islamists appealed, and last month the Cairo Appeal Court for Personal Status Issues reversed the lower court's earlier verdict in favor of the couple. Abu Zeid and Younis are now lodging an appeal for the court to reconsider the case, in the hope that the negative international reaction to the court's decision will facilitate repeal of the ruling. With the 1992 murder of Egyptian journalist Farag Foda, who was also accused of apostasy, fresh in their memories, Abu Zeid and Younis are living in daily fear for their lives.

Human rights activists in Egypt and abroad consider the court's astounding ruling to be as dangerous as it is unprecedented. Not only has the court's verdict transformed Dr. Abu Zeid into a legitimate target for militants ready to murder in the name of their faith, it has also called into question the inviolability of human rights, the independence of the judiciary, the future of personal status laws, and the extent of democratic freedoms in Egypt. According to a spokesman for the Egyptian Association for Human Rights, "on the basis of this verdict, anyone can be accused of being an infidel." Readers can voice their concerns by sending letters of protest to the Egyptian embassy in their country, or by sending letters to the Egyptian Ministry of Justice in Cairo.

Pope John Paul II Apologizes for Church's Oppression of Women

In a sixteen-page letter which is widely viewed by women's groups as an effort to win support for the Vatican's position at

Human rights activists in Egypt and abroad consider the court's astounding ruling to be as dangerous as it is unprecedented.

Although the letter heralds a new awareness in the Vatican of women's views, concerns and grievances, the Pope has not signaled any dramatic changes in official church policy.

the upcoming United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, Pope John Paul II apologizes to women throughout the world for the church's historic complicity in their oppression. Although phrased in general terms, the letter contains language and ideas of a far more feminist tone than any previous statements or declarations made by the Pontiff. Calling for increased respect for women and sensitivity to their needs, the letter also claims that "there is an urgent need to achieve real equality in every area: equal pay for equal work, protection for working mothers, fairness in career advancements, equality of spouses with regard to family rights and recognition of everything that is part of the rights and duties of citizens in a democratic state." Recognizing women's significant achievements and sacrifices inside and outside of the home, the Pope expressed admiration for "those women of good will who have devoted their lives to defending the dignity of womanhood by fighting for their basic social, economic and political rights, demonstrating courageous initiative at a time when this was considered extremely inappropriate, the sign of a lack of femininity, a manifestation of exhibitionism, and even a sin." Although the letter heralds a new awareness in the Vatican of women's views, concerns and grievances, the Pope has not signaled any dramatic changes in official church policy: women's ordination, divorce, abortion and birth control are still considered beyond the pale of acceptability.

Women's Role in Science Reconsidered

The latest issue of *Sci-Quest*, the publication of the Science Sub-Committee of the Alumni Association of the American University of Beirut, featured as its key theme "Women in Science." The choice of this intriguing theme was explained by the members of the Science Sub-Committee in their editorial, which stated that "women...would bring a new dimension to science, making it less masculine and more completely human." The Sub-Committee cited a quotation by the famous British novelist, Virginia Woolf, who once noted that "science, it would seem, is not sexless; she is a man, a fa-

ther, and infected, too."

The issue contains eight articles focusing on the history and philosophy of women in science, the differences in scientific endeavor among males and females, the life of female scientists, and the claimed biological differences among the two genders that lead many people to argue that males are more talented in sciences than are females. Most important, the issue contains two articles that represent a statistical framework of the problem in Lebanon. The first addresses gender and university education in Lebanon, and the second surveys women physicians at the American University of Beirut Medical School. These two articles attempt to show the status of women in the scientific field in Lebanon compared to women's status in other, comparable countries. It is hoped that this issue of *Sci-Quest* will spark interest among researchers in the Middle East to undertake projects relevant to their own societies.

Sci-Quest is a quarterly publication of the Science Sub-Committee of the Alumni Association of the American University of Beirut. Issues can be obtained by writing to the following address:

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The Women's Tribunal

Hania Osseiran
Staff Member, IWSAW

A revolutionary and innovative event, heralding significant changes in contemporary Arab society and culture, took place in Beirut in late June. El-Taller, an international NGO movement, in cooperation with Secours Populaire Libanais, organized a Women's Tribunal at the Carlton Hotel under the patronage of Lebanon's First Lady, Mrs. Mona Al-Hrawi. Women from various Arab countries testified before the court, each sharing a personal experience of violence and humiliation, whether domestic, social or political, with the jury and the audience.

The women who testified shared their personal tragedies in the hopes of establishing new values and behavior patterns which will improve the way that Arab society deals with victims and abusers. The ultimate goal of the Tribunal is to eliminate all acts of violence against women. According to the participants, women should join efforts to break their silence about violence and thus make it a political issue relevant to all members of society, not just to women.

In general, the live testimonies criticized the patriarchal structure of traditional Arab society, which places women in a subordinate position, thus enabling some men to control, dominate and exploit women. Many political, economic and legal

factors legitimize men's authority over their wives and companions, and give fathers complete authority over the family. This stems from the traditional concept of a woman as the property and dependent of a male protector, whether father, brother, husband or son. Societies organized on the basis of gendered hierarchical power structures legitimize violence against women, not only in the form of physical abuse, but also as emotional abuse, expressed through threats, exploitation, discrimination and other forms of control and coercion.

Shared cultural beliefs and attitudes which regard women as inferior to men, in addition to traditional values and practices giving men proprietary rights over women, are critical factors in shaping abusive and exploitative behaviors towards Arab women. It was these beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, rather than specific individuals, that were on trial at the Women's Tribunal. According to one of the testimonies, a woman was murdered by a male member of her own family, who had accused her of dishonor in order to inherit from her. Courts generally accept the dishonor defense, and then drastically reduce the sentence given. Another case was that of a man who killed his wife because he doubted her fidelity. In this type of

case, the courts often relied on concepts of family honor to justify light sentences for men who kill their wives and daughters. In fact, the more violent the nature of the crime, the more likely the court is to believe the man's defense; for a husband to have killed his wife in so brutal a manner, the logic goes, she must have given him serious provocation. The victim, not the victimizer, is to blame. In such cases, the state itself is blameworthy for not enforcing appropriate laws and policies to protect women. The state is also guilty of permitting violence when it accepts the "honor" defense and thus grants men immunity from punishment for violence in cases where they murder their wives. The state, under these circumstances, is a co-perpetrator of violence.

Most societies regard the family affairs of their members as private matters not to be dealt with in public. Legally, this places women at a clear disadvantage. Women are most vulnerable to violent actions when their dependence on men is total: their freedom is restricted and they have no access to the public world, nor any options for escape. Men are entitled to control the mobility of the women in their charge and to punish any behavior they deem inappropriate. With reference to another woman's testimony, wife-battering is

regarded as simply a normal, ordinary feature of domestic life. The fact that state intervention is discouraged indicates official acceptance of a certain level of violence in the family.

Perhaps the most crucial factor legitimizing and facilitating the mistreatment of Arab women is shame. Shame will continue to obstruct women's progress in the Arab world until the family and the community become reliable bases of support for women at risk. It is unlikely, however, that shame will entirely disappear from our social life. A woman who is raped or battered still brings shame upon herself and her family because traditional societies believe that she is not a victim, but that she herself did something wrong to bring this calamity upon herself.

Violence against Arab women calls for urgent measures. Although there is a need to change social attitudes and behaviors so that the relations between men and women are free of the abnormalities that lead to violence, that goal will not be achieved unless women are empowered by education and a full awareness of their rights. The recent Women's Tribunal offers dramatic evidence not only of Arab women's suffering, but also of their courageous struggles towards equality and justice.

The Women's Movement: The Second Wave

Dr. Nadia El-Cheikh

Assistant Professor of History, American University of Beirut

Although a majority of Lebanon's charitable organizations are constituted of female members, they do not have feminist goals

On May 15 and 16, 1995, Foundation Rene Moawwad and Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung sponsored a workshop entitled "The Women's Movement: The Second Wave". The purpose of the meeting, as stated by the organizers, was to explain the absence of the younger generation from the scene of women's activism. The projected aim was to draw up a new agenda that rephrases the women's issue, using a different language and finding new meanings. The women who were invited to participate were mostly university-educated, but they came from various socio-cultural backgrounds, and thus had different experiences and viewpoints.

The meeting began with a re-evaluation of the women's movement in Lebanon during the past 25 years. Maitre Laure Moghaizel, who has been an activist since her student days in the late 1940s, embarked on this delicate task of discussing both the achievements and failures of the Lebanese women's movement. Maitre Moghaizel signaled a number of successful landmarks for Lebanese women: In 1952, they obtained the right to vote; in 1959, Christian women obtained the right for equal inheritance; in 1974, Lebanese women acquired the freedom to travel; and in 1983, all punishments relating to the use of contraceptive measures were annulled. Maitre Moghaizel also noted that, although a majority of Lebanon's charitable organizations are constituted of female members, they do not

have feminist goals. In addition, she criticized the successive Lebanese governments for their lack of initiative and cooperation, noting that "the authorities always give half-measures whenever they give anything." A discussion then followed between the speaker and the participants.

The workshop also included a presentation by Randa Al-Husseini (UNIFEM) and Randa Abul Husn (UNDP) on the kinds of programs and mandates that international women's organizations have provided for women. A summary of the draft of the platform of action that will be discussed at the World Conference in Beijing was presented. A few participants criticized the draft for being on the defensive in its phrasing and wording, reflecting a compromising position that women in the Arab

world cannot afford to adopt if they hope to improve their overall social, political and economic situation.

As for the workshop itself, the various groups were first asked to define what they understand by the expression "The Second Wave." Once each group reached a definition or a certain understanding, the members of the group had to formulate their intended goals. What seemed to be a straightforward task soon proved to be much more complicated in the presence of various levels of awareness and/or activism. Much time was spent on discussing various concepts and terms, agreeing on the basics, and trying to reach least common denominators in the various aspects and facets concerning fundamental issues. In retrospect, this preliminary and unplanned session was the most revealing and productive as it witnessed discussions of topics that are rarely, if ever, touched upon in Arab society, such as domestic violence against women and the nature of the relationship between men and women. The latter issue monopolized a relatively large amount of time, especially when the question arose of whether men should be included in any potential group that may come out of the meeting.

Continued on page 25

Women in Management Means Women in Power:

Implications for Society, Family and Culture in the Arab World

At first glance, the general topic of women in management does not appear especially controversial, revolutionary, or potentially threatening to the established social order. However, a closer examination of Arab women's role in management, as well as a consideration of the social, political and cultural ramifications of women's actual and potential power as decision-makers, reveals the stirrings of a significant revolution in attitudes, values, and behaviors concerning gender, power and social structure in the Arab world. Investigating the topic of Arab women and management also highlights the many and varied obstacles which confront Arab women as they strive to attain decision-making positions in business, banking, industry and public administration. Although most of these obstacles are social and cultural, the internal obstacles arising from a woman's own self-image, education and childhood gender socialization are no less formidable.

As participants from a number of Arab countries recently discovered at a conference held in Beirut, "The Arab Woman and Business Management," women in the Arab world still have very far to go in their efforts to gain not only management positions, but also the legitimacy, power and respect so necessary to any manager's job performance. The confer-

ence, held in late May, was a joint project of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World of the Lebanese American University and the Lebanese Management Association, and was sponsored by Mrs. Nazik Hariri, wife of Lebanon's Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, and by the Canadian Government. According to Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr, Director of the Institute

for Women's Studies in the Arab World, the main goals of the conference were to objectively investigate the reasons for women's relative absence from the decision-making ranks of management in the public and private sectors in the Arab world, to ascertain the characteristics common to those Arab women who have been successful in attaining management positions, and to suggest methods and measures to facilitate women's increased attainment of decision-making positions. Conference participants also discussed important ancillary issues, such as the stresses and strains of balancing the demands of work and home, and the potentially important role of women managers in the non-profit and non-governmental sector.

The file of this issue of *Al-Raida* features translations and summaries of three of the conference presentations. Ideally, we would have preferred to publish all of the conference papers, but due to the lack of space, we are not able to include each and every one. We have thus selected presentations dealing with broad themes, such as the difficulty women face in balancing the demands of work and home, and the social, cultural and psychological obstacles which still confront Arab

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women as they strive for promotion, power and influence in the work place. The presentations and proceedings of the conference will be published in Arabic in the near future by the Lebanese Management Association.

Although the various speakers, representing both the public and private sectors of management throughout the region, focused on different aspects of women's role in management in the Arab world, important and interrelated themes emerged during the three days of presentations, discussions and dialogue. These themes can be contextualized with reference to the Arab woman manager's relation to her work environment, her home environment, and the socio-cultural environment which shapes her sense of self as professional, mother, wife and woman. Clearly, these contexts impinge upon and influence each other. A woman who exercises power effectively and creatively in her work environment will feel a sense of confidence and empowerment which will undoubtedly carry over to her home life, where it will be expressed in strong and competent communication and parenting skills as well as effective financial management and joint decision-making with her husband. Conversely, a wife and mother who has had years of successful experience running a busy household, bud-

getting for weekly supplies and coordinating the schedules and activities of many different people will be able to transfer these skills effectively in any management position.

Women who are increasingly accustomed to exercising power and authority as managers and home-makers will eventually demand that they

they see before them; the places at the top, it seems, are still reserved for men only. In 1970, only 18.5 percent of managers in the United States were women. By 1992, there had been some improvement, evidenced by the fact that women accounted for 42 percent of all U.S. managers in that year. But senior management positions continue to be a pre-

dominantly male domain. In 1992, women filled only five percent of top management positions in the U.S. (1) Women managers in the Arab world face no less daunting obstacles to attaining top leadership and decision-making positions. Indeed, the "glass ceiling" hindering promotion of women in the Arab world may well be somewhat lower than that of the United States or

A woman who exercises power effectively and creatively in her work environment will feel a sense of confidence and empowerment which will undoubtedly carry over to her home life

Canada. In both the Arab and the Western cultural contexts, women's entry into the top tier of decision-making positions is hindered by powerful cultural assumptions that a woman cannot be a successful worker while also maintaining effectiveness in her roles as wife and mother. However, according to Abla Nuwais (see article, this issue), recent research on working women in the United Arab Emirates clearly contradicts this commonly accepted cultural belief.

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Canada.

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In the Arab world, no less than in the West, power and authority in the work-place are de-

fined by masculine values, beliefs and behavior patterns favoring rigidly hierarchical command structures, "zero-sum game" ideologies, narrow specialization, asymmetrical relationships and pronounced competitiveness. Women's conceptions of power are usually more egalitarian and cooperative, with a focus on group problem-solving and consensus-building, rather than the domination of the many by the few. According to one scholar, "feminist management emphasizes connectiveness, cooperation and mutuality over separativeness, competition and individual success....The presence of women managers in corporations has resulted in basic organizational assumptions being questioned, new ideas being offered, and previously untried approaches being adopted." (2) In a rapidly-changing world market, in which more people of widely diverse cultural back-

grounds must cooperate and coordinate now than at any time in history, perhaps women's cultural conceptions of power offer a more constructive way of managing diverse workforces in new and challenging situations.

The obstacles confronting Arab professional women in the home and in her social and cultural setting are difficult to surmount, but the biggest obstacle may well be her own self-image and her deeply-ingrained and socially-imparted sense of her inadequacies and limitations as a woman. In assessing the characteristics common to successful women managers in the Arab world, conference presenters stressed that a woman who has self-confidence, education, ambition and a willingness to work hard will usually succeed, no matter how many cultural and social obstacles block her path. It is the woman who defines herself, rather than the woman

who lets society, family or culture define her, who will rise highest and fastest in the ranks of management. The lesson to be drawn from the conference on Arab Women and Management (which has applications in many social and political domains, not simply in the immediate contexts of the business world or public administration) is that women should not wait passively to be handed power; nor women should let men define the nature and uses of power. If Arab women are to be successful and realize their goals and dreams, they must claim their own power in their own ways and use it wisely and creatively for the benefit of their societies, families, corporations, governments and themselves. Such a spirit of enterprising initiative would indeed lead to a cultural, social and gender revolution in the Arab world.

— Laurie King-Irani
Editor

Perhaps women's cultural conceptions of power offer a more constructive way of managing diverse work-forces in new and challenging situations.



A general view of the audience during the opening of the conference on "Arab Women and Business Management."

Yancey, Patricia Martin. "Feminist Practice in Organizations: Implications for Management" in **Women in Management**, Ellen A. Fagenson, Ed. New York: Sage Publications, 1993, p. 277.

2ibid., pp. 302, 306.

Conference Recommendations

At the conclusion of the conference on "Arab Women and Business Management," the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and the Lebanese Management Association is-

sued the following recommendations in the hope that governments, educational institutions, and organizations in the private and public sectors will recognize and encourage the important con-

tributions of women in the domain of management.

The organizers and participants of the conference on "Arab Women and Management" recommend that the following be undertaken:

1. In-depth and objective studies and research on the topic of women in management in order to design future plans and programs which will assist women in their efforts to be productive in society and in leadership positions.
2. Departments concerned with women's issues should increase guidance and counseling programs for women workers and professionals and should strengthen their spirit of persistence and determination so that women can obtain their legal rights to be promoted to leadership positions.
3. Training programs should be devised which enable and empower Arab women to undertake administrative and leadership duties in various domains of work.
4. Women's self-confidence and conviction in her own vocational abilities should be strengthened whenever possible so that she will be better able to partake in the technical developments and innovations in the field of management.
5. All employment opportunities and open positions in organizations (especially leadership positions) should be announced publicly in order to give women more opportunities for work and career advancement.
6. Training centers should be established to develop and enhance the skills of volunteers in non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
7. Encourage stronger and more effective ties between the private sector and the NGO community.
8. Train professional employees in the NGO sector about the principles and concepts of management in order to support these institutions and to increase their effectiveness.
9. Make more room for the younger workers in the ranks of the NGO community so that they will increasingly occupy leadership positions in their organizations.
10. Institute more flexible working hours for women and men with the aim of reconciling various conflicting responsibilities and concerns.
11. Raise consciousness about means and programs of education concerning women's powers and capabilities, and objectively criticize the intellectual perspectives which limit women's roles and aspirations.
12. Improve the laws concerning nurseries and day-care centers in order to increase the role and the quality of these child-care institutions within the workplace.
13. Reformulate work laws to remove clauses and language prejudicial to women's rights.
14. Invite successful women in the management field to share their experiences and recommendations with other women, especially less fortunate women in cities and rural areas.
15. Strengthen the existing momentum in order to form influential Arab women's pressure groups which will work continuously in a coordinated fashion on behalf of women's issues, and later, on behalf of society.
16. Enlighten directors and managers in the private and the public sectors about the importance of women's role in management, and increase their awareness of the difficulties which confront women on their career path.
17. Undertake a qualitative sociological analysis in the work-place in order to enact appropriate and empowering gender-training.

Has Gender Anything To Do With Management Style?

Zouhra Mourabet
Chief Technical Advisor
UNIFEM

Statistics about the labor force in the Arab World show a near absence of women at managerial levels in both the public and private sectors. What are some of the gender issues that may have contributed to this situation, despite the unquestionable improvement of Arab women's educational level and their increasing participation in the labor force during the past two decades?

As reported in the Western Asia Platform for Action for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Arab women's enrollment in schools has dramatically increased as a result of the oil boom of the 1970s and the commitment of a considerable number of Arab countries to advancing the welfare of all their citizens. However, pronounced gender differences still exist in many of these countries. For those countries which achieved equal rates of education, such as Lebanon, women still tend to enroll in stereotyped women's courses which limit their abilities to fully integrate into all sectors of the labor market.

Social, economic and political changes, such as migration, wars and conflict, have led to an increase of the female work force. Increased educa-

tion levels, government policies for recruitment in the public sector, and equal opportunity have created favorable grounds for women's integration in the public work force. However, even though advancement in education and equal employment opportunities for men and women are being proclaimed by most of the Arab countries today, one can see (as the Lebanese example shows) that more women are appointed in the public sector at the supervisory level (third level, 114 women out of a total of 1414), while only a small number of them can make it to the managerial and/or executive levels (second level, 16 women out of a total of 242, and a percentage of only 3.3% for the first level).

I recently came across a study carried out in 1973 about American women executives ("The

Managerial Woman," by Margaret Henning and Anne Jardin). It pointed to several critical gender issues in management style and career approach which impede the advancement of women on the organizational ladder. It will be instructive to review some socially-ingrained behaviors of women which can lead to a lack of the self-confidence and assertiveness which are essential assets for any managerial role. These behaviors are similar to the behavioral trends seen today among Arab women; we need to acknowledge them in order to develop effective tools which will enable Arab women to take advantage of and gain access to the equal opportunities formally offered to men and women in the public sector.

The following will focus on attitudes and behaviors of men and women of a comparable level of education who could be eligible for a managerial position. A brief gender-desegregated analysis of girls' and boys' behavior at an early age reveals the root of the issue. We will look at three elements: career approach, teamwork and risk-taking, which are among the determinant factors to women's ascension of any organizational ladder.

The decision to pursue a career is usually a late decision in a woman's professional life, often resulting from external factors, most commonly, an unexpected change in marital status as a consequence of death or divorce.

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Career

Early on, a boy is made to understand that he will need to support himself and eventually a family, too. This has great impact on the professional life and career he will be choosing. Men decide early on a career plan by which they will undertake a series of jobs leading them upward to ever higher positions. They consistently maintain a vision of where they want to be and accordingly, they build a strategy to reach their goals within their professional environment, employing alliances, negotiations and strategic use of informal networks. Their professional success is carefully designed and situated within a specific social and professional context.

At a young age, a little girl is made to understand that she is expected to find somebody to support her. The necessity of a successful professional life is not perceived as a life goal. Many young women take up a job without the certainty that they will still be working after marriage. Priority is given, from the beginning, to her personal life before her professional life. The decision to pursue a career is usually a late decision in women's professional life, often resulting from external factors, most commonly, an unexpected change in marital status as a consequence of death or divorce, less commonly as a result of encouragement from a superior or relative. Also, when engaged in a career path, women see their career advancement as tied to individual self-improvement and exceptional performance,

and thus they expect immediate personal growth and satisfaction.

Teamwork

Through games and sports, boys learn at an early age to win and lose as a team; they learn that they need to be eleven to make a football game whether they like each other or not. A team is a place to learn, to build strength, to manage resources and reach an objective together. The same pattern of teamwork they learned during their youth is often reconstituted in their work environment. Men bring those skills to their jobs in management and exercise their ability to use the strengths and weaknesses of the group to minimize conflicts, maximize performance, and thus reach the organization's goals.

Girls are typically discouraged from participation in team sports. Girls' sports and games ask for personal skills, perfection of performance and endurance. For those women who have a chance to practice a sport, it is usually swimming, dance or gymnastics. Unlike boys, girls learn to compete on a one-to-one, rather than on a team, basis. They often practice and exercise to achieve a personal level of perfection; they usually do not play to win. Women at work usually strive for excellence through individual exceptional performance and time investment. They would rather do a job on their own to maintain a high quality level than risk leaving it to a less capable subordinate.

This difference of behavior points to the critical step between the

managerial and the supervisory levels that women often fail to take. In management jobs, plans and goals need to be defined with a broad vision and understanding of the organization, groups' interaction and human resources. The managerial tasks essentially involve coordination and supervision of different functional areas in order to ensure that the organization objectives are being met.

In a supervisory job, one has to apply specific technical knowledge and experience to the solution of primary routine tasks. Career paths leading ultimately to the most senior levels of management critically depend on the important ability to move from a specialized supervisory role to the broader role of a manager.

Risk-taking

The majority of men see risk as loss or gain, winning or losing. The majority of women see risk only in a negative way: it is loss, danger, ruin. Men see risk as affecting the future. Women see it as a threat to everything they have achieved in the past. What can we learn from these remarks? Beyond obtaining a formal educational background and acquiring the technical skills one can learn at school or on a job, the majority of women have not yet developed a whole set of informal values and behaviors which underlie the managerial functions of any organization. We should not, of course, overlook the fact that existing public and private organizations are primarily man-made and thus reflect male culture. It is therefore easier for a

man to walk in to a position with his cultural/behavioral orientations affirmed and pursue his career goals than for a woman to make her way up while she does not necessarily know all the rules of the game.

These observations should not lead us to the conclusion that women need only to learn to behave like men to succeed, nor that we should strive to change the culture of existing organizations. Fighting those two battles would not lead us very far. First, there is no reason for women to adopt a male culture. Second, how can one individual change an entire organizational culture? Creating a solid female majority at all levels of the organization might help, but such a development would not automatically lead to a dramatic change in or-

ganizational culture. Perhaps we should think about the steps women need to take in order to move successfully in a new territory. The authors of the aforementioned book offered a wonderful metaphor: what must one do to prepare for an extended stay in a foreign country? One would certainly try to learn the language, the social values, what is considered polite and what is considered offensive, and how one can gain friends; one would want to find out about the important organizations, their functions and how can one travel through a new and unfamiliar country.

If we follow the same line of thought, perhaps we need to explore more carefully the existing organizational culture and managerial behavior in Arab countries from a

gender perspective. We need to conduct intensive research on successful Arab women managers: How did they do it? How did they cope with the male-dominated organizational environment? Do successful women have anything in common, e.g., educational background, personality type, socioeconomic status, etc.?

The findings of this proposed research could serve as a basis for training modules to develop and strengthen women's leadership skills and assertiveness at different levels of the work arena in order to empower women and enable them to travel more swiftly on a career path toward clearer goals, and to assist them in developing a strategy to reach higher managerial or executive positions in their organizations.

The
majority of
men see
risk as loss
or gain,
winning or
losing. The
majority of
women see
risk only in
a negative
way: it is
loss,
danger,
ruin.



Dr. Leila Nimeh, Dean of the Beirut Campus of the Lebanese American University, chairs a panel during the conference on Arab Women and Management. With Dean Nimeh on the panel are (from left to right) Najwa Malak Ghazali, Nidal Ashqar, Hamida Muhammad Ali, and May Menassah.

Balancing Women's Roles at Work and at Home

Abla Nuwais

Editor-in-Chief, Flower of the Gulf Magazine, UAE

Without doubt, one of the greatest problems professional women face in most countries, the United Arab Emirates included, is that of achieving a balance between their work on one hand and the demands and requirements of their homes and their families on the other. My research and survey of others' research (1) on this problem in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reveals that such a balance is not impossible to achieve and that, rather than taxing the energies and abilities of women, maintaining active roles within and outside of the home actually enables women to lead richer, fuller and more effective lives as professionals, wives and mothers. The management and communication skills women must develop as homemakers and mothers often prove to be indispensable in the professional world. By the same token, work experiences can enable women to be better decision-makers and problem-solvers in the home.

My investigations into the situation of working women in the UAE focused on the following questions: In general, why do women in the UAE go to work? What kinds of work do women do in the UAE? What are the overall effects on women's work of the process of development which has occurred in the UAE in recent years? What are the salient characteristics of

women as a work force in the process of development? What is the effect of the foregoing on women's education? Furthermore, is it true that a woman's work has an impact on her home and children, and is this impact positive or negative? What are the main problems that women face in the workplace? This brief report on my research findings concludes with some suggestions and recommendations which might lead to appropriate solutions to the problems and challenges women inevitably confront as they strive for a balance between their roles as workers, wives and mothers.

Among the most important results of my research are the following:

Women's work has become necessary to society in the UAE to such an extent that it is no longer reasonable to suppose that this important human force should remain excluded from the building of society.

The encouragement of women's education has led to women's entry into the labor market, and women workers have thus become a basic social reality in our time.

Women in the UAE work for a variety of reasons, the most salient of which are to help realize the material needs of their families and to achieve personal goals.

Until today, men continue to view some fields of work as unacceptable for males, and thus, they readily accept women's pursuit of these professions, such as teaching and nursing.

Women's work outside of the home does not impact negatively on their roles as mothers; rather, to the contrary, women workers are usually better mothers than those women who remain at home. In the work environment, women develop communication and conflict resolution skills which are very applicable in the home environment.

Some important studies have confirmed that women workers are better off psychologically than women who work only in the home. This reflects positively on home life because women who work are more effective in dealing with challenging family situations. Women's professional experiences enhance their self-esteem, allow the expression of strong emotions, both positive and negative; afford them an opportunity to develop their skills and realize their potential; and provide them with a sense of empowerment and self-sufficiency; all of which leads to good mental health and effective communication and interaction in all contexts.

There are still certain



Standing for the Lebanese National Anthem during the opening session of the conference on "Arab Women and Business Management" are (from left to right) Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr, Director of the IWSAW; H.E. Katchik Babikian, President, Lebanese Management Association; Mrs. Nazik Rafic Hariri, Conference Chairperson; H.E. Leila Najjar Sharaf, Keynote Speaker and former Jordanian Minister of Information; and Siham Jubayli, Conference Coordinator and LAU alumna.

negative realities which impact on women's work in the UAE, for example, the predominance of men's stereotypical ideas and attitudes concerning work. Thus, women still carry within themselves conflicts concerning their various roles. Because of the lack of public information and awareness of the challenges facing women workers, most women do not know the solutions to their work-related problems.

There are -- without doubt -- viable solutions to the problems women confront in attempting to strike a balance between their work and the demands of their families. What women must do is spend much effort on themselves, on society, and on the owners of businesses in order to reach these solutions.

Recommendations

To resolve the tensions between her roles as worker, as mother and as wife, the professional woman must begin with her own unexamined attitudes, acquired through the socialization process. First and foremost, she must reject the idea that her work interferes with the process of growth and development of her family and the realization of her happiness as a wife and mother. Secondly, women must strive to reconcile the demands of their work and the requirements of their home. For instance, the professional woman must organize her work schedule so that it does not conflict with the needs of her husband and children, or she should choose a type of work appropriate to her household situation, or work part-time in the home and part-time in the office.

Thirdly, the government should arrange programs of training and instruction to enable women to work more efficiently, such as training in time-management, negotiating skills, decision-making, and enhancing her ability to think practically and theoretically. Fourthly, public consciousness must be raised concerning the necessity and the importance of women's work, and likewise concerning the topic of legislation which facilitates women's entry into the work-force. Lastly, the expansion of private institutions for the care of children during their mothers' working hours is crucial if women are to continue to play an important role in the UAE's work-force and, by extension, in the development of UAE society.

*Translated from Arabic by
Laurie King-Irani*

Rather than taxing the energies and abilities of women, maintaining active roles within and outside of the home actually enables women to lead richer, fuller and more effective lives as professionals, wives and mothers

This research project relied on a group of academic studies which were recently carried out on women and work in UAE society. In addition, I have made use of governmental reports of the UAE which are to be presented at the upcoming International Women's Conference in Beijing.

Factors which Assist Women in Reaching Centers of Power and Leadership Formerly Dominated by Men

Sabah Khalil Ibrahim Muayyad

(Assistant to the General Director, The National Bank of Bahrain)

This study addresses the reasons for women's absence from various ranks of decision-making in the private and public sectors, and examines possibilities for overcoming the main impediments which affect women's employment and progress in reaching centers of power and leadership. My attempt to address this important issue relies upon field studies prepared by the Bahraini Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in 1983. In addition, this study also relies upon personal investigations concerning the status of women workers in private corporations in order to inquire about the problems which confront and hinder them. I also surveyed some comprehensive field studies undertaken by a bank in northern Canada on the status of women professionals in that bank and the impediments which hindered their rise to leadership positions. In this, we can easily note considerable similarities between the problems which confront Bahraini, Arab and foreign women alike in the corporate world.

This study focuses on various aspects which influence women's attainment of positions of power. First and foremost, it seeks to discover the nature and extent of the shackles which affect the employment and progress of women. In the work-

place, there is a direct connection between women's lack of effective participation in the growth of the organization and participation in affiliative activities in the nation. Quickly glancing at the highest administrative ranks which

women occupy in the private sector, especially women's participation in jobs connected with decision-making, we find that women's participation at this level does not surpass three to five percent of the total workforce. Until today, we do not find in Bahrain any women directors of hospitals, banks or private corporations.

According to my research findings, women's absence from the highest decision-making levels of organizations stems from three key impediments:

1. Incorrect presumptions and conceptions which limit women to submissive roles in society, and which place them in a specific, tradition-bound context which has a direct impact on male managers' expectations of women workers. For instance, a woman's age presents problems for her employer, whether she is young (and thus, too inexperienced) or old (and thus, no longer capable). A man's age, on the other hand, rarely influences the way he is perceived as a worker by his employers. Many employers also hold a strong belief that women are not as qualified or as capable as men when it comes to

handling great responsibilities. These deeply ingrained conceptions automatically lead to women's own participation in surrendering her power and priorities to men. All too often, the professional woman finds herself in a situation in which she has no choice but to accept a position lower than a man's position in the workplace, no matter what her capabilities and talents are.

2. The absence of a clear and detailed policy on behalf of management which focuses on the development of women as an important social and economic force. If such a policy were to be implemented, it would impact positively on women's employment and attainment of leadership positions in addition to increasing vocational training and employment policies. Such a course of action would inevitably lead to the hiring of more and more highly skilled women. Following a policy of discrimination in organizations, whether intentional or not, results in the appointment, promotion and advancement of men to centers of leadership and decision-making while preventing women from attaining positions at the same technological and professional level. All of the foregoing indicates a need for correction and intensive work to create radical solutions to the problem at the highest management levels.

3. Lack of adjustment on behalf of organizations to changes and develop-

ments which influence social values and customs which impact directly on men and women in the workplace. Our present era is witnessing a generation which suffers from continuous conflicts which require reconciliation between social, academic, family and professional commitments. Women's desire to achieve a healthy balance between all of these pressures appears to their superiors (who are usually men) as evidence of their lack of commitment to and focus

Deeply ingrained conceptions automatically lead to women's own participation in surrendering her power and priorities to men.

upon their jobs. Women, much more so than men, are scattered and stretched between so many conflicting concerns and demands, which their superiors perceive in a negative light. This perception has a direct impact on women's opportunities for employment and promotion, as compared to men's opportunities for the same.

Factors which Assist Women in Reaching Leadership Positions

The marginal participa-

tion of women in private corporations clearly stems from a policy of discrimination between the sexes, in addition to women's lack of awareness about their capabilities to demand rights equal to those of men. Thus, it is inevitable that the increase of such awareness must be achieved through the mass media and through women's groups and organizations. This must be done through media programs, targeting the large audience of women workers, which clarify women's progress and problems while also encouraging organizations to strive toward the creation of appropriate solutions to the difficulties of working women. The overall aim should be to effect an improvement of working conditions in general.

It is important to call attention to some factors which can help women overcome the aforementioned difficulties, and which may be considered as the foundation for the creation of a process of equality between the sexes in the workplace:

1. A concerted effort on behalf of organizations to break down the incorrect ideas and presumptions concerning women's work by urging the top ranks of managers to be more accountable in their employment and promotional practices, and to monitor laws and legislation concerning wom-

A woman's age presents problems for her employer, whether she is young or old. A man's age, on the other hand, rarely influences the way he is perceived as a worker by his employers.

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en workers, while ensuring that women are aware of their rights.

2. Provide continuous support to women as a complete and integral part of the process of human development, which entails increasing the benefits offered to her and opening the way for her to attain leadership positions equal to those of men.

3. Avoid psychological pressures upon women workers and adopt clearly designed and carefully studied programs and plans for enlightenment, supporting the right of every employee to achieve a balance between work, home, school and society.

4. Coordination and collective work on behalf of the organizations to make every director and manager accountable concerning the extent of his or her contribution to the removal of impediments related to conditions of work. Especially harmful are impediments to women's ef-

fective participation in social and political decision-making, such as the survey of the bases of employment, hiring and advancement required to ensure legal effectiveness and the continued non-discrimination between the sexes.

tems and policies which evaluate and monitor discriminatory actions against working women. Among corporations and institutions in the Arab world, however, we are still suffering from policies and practices which distance women from decision-making and leadership positions.

With the attainment of education, experience, and economic independence, as well as the creation of clear laws for application in public and private sector institutions which still do not support equality, Arab women will create the best and strongest basis for obtaining their full rights in the work-place. Unfortunately, the Arab woman professional is still at the beginning of this long journey.

Among corporations and institutions in the Arab world, however, we are still suffering from policies and practices which distance women from decision-making and leadership positions.

In conclusion, it is clear that Western corporations and institutions have made significant progress in creating well-defined sys-

*Translated from Arabic by
Laurie King-Irani*

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Viewpoints and Voices from the Conference on Arab Women and Business Management

Myriam Sfair, IWSAW

Between presentations at the recent conference on "Arab Women and Business Management," IWSAW staffer Myriam Sfair conducted impromptu interviews with most of the presenters and some of the audience members. We present here some of the interesting voices and viewpoints that Myriam recorded. The comments of the conference participants contain valuable insights into Arab woman's role in management, the nature of the challenges she confronts, the future requirements for her continued success and progress in the professional world, and observations based on hard-won personal experience.

"When a woman finds herself unable to cope with her dual role as a mother and a career woman, her family should be given top priority....Career women often suffer internal conflicts of guilt and incompetence. Moreover, their families often feel let down. However, there is a personal satisfaction when they feel appreciated. Besides, children of career women value time and are more organized than other kids....The banking sector is very tiring, demanding and time consuming. It requires caution, devotion, analysis,

constant supervision and tact, as well as the ability to take the right decision at the right time. It is exhausting physically and mentally; however, with time it becomes like any other job: the more you master it the easier it becomes."

— Sabah Al-Muayyed
**Assistant to the General
Director, The National
Bank of Bahrain**

"My mother, who is an illiterate but very strong woman, encouraged me to actualize my aspirations and dreams....UNIFEM is not forcefully growing like

other UN agencies, due to the fact that women are not as ambitious as men and lack men's long-term vision and willingness to take risks Arab women are not focused enough and this is their weakness. We are here attending a workshop on management and we should concentrate on this specific topic and find new means to improve it and bring about more women managers.... Holding a conference on Arab Women and Management is a rare event, because management, although not much talked about, is very important. Creating a kind of network between Arab women concerned with management should be our aim because if we want to promote women we should make sure that they are at a decision-making level."

— Zouhra Mourabet
**UNIFEM Representative
Algeria**

"My parents, although well-off, encouraged me to continue my education, work and be self sufficient.... My father looks down upon people who do not work and considers their existence

Women & Management

as meaningless.....My husband is very supportive and understanding due to the fact that we work in the same domain....Efficiency in one domain does not necessarily mean inefficiency in the other, i.e., it's not impossible to do, managing a job and a house....In Jordan, the government appreciates the work of the NGOs and the women's organizations. In rural, conservative areas, where women are restricted by their families to run for municipal office, the government took an active role by appointing a number of women.... In this conference there are two types of women: those who are interested in women's issues and the women's movement, and those who actually work, i.e., employers and employees. These two have different perceptions and viewpoints. Working women soon realize that there is no man/woman competition. Those who qualify, succeed. However, men are always ahead. Feminists are using the language they started out with over and over again; they lack innovation in tackling their problems.... The solution lies in the hands of the youth in challenging the existing social structure in order to bring about a gender-free society."

— Hala Al-Ayouby,
**Representative of the
 Business and Professional
 Women's Club
 Amman, Jordan**

"One can not develop without caring for the environment, which is not just water, air and soil pollution, i.e., the physical environment, but also an integrated social, economic and physical environment, for they are all inter-related.... Environmental issues ought to be integrated in all aspects of education.....Most of my work includes integrating gender and environmental issues into policy planning, which, in the

results in negative interferences and jealousy from colleagues, whereby they attempt to use my success as a means to diminish his accomplishments.....The fortunate educated woman has an obligation towards the unfortunate, illiterate one...by empowering these women and making them conscious of their capabilities.....If you train the mothers, you will get balanced men....We should get rid of the ingrained habits of the mind which restrict and inhibit progress."

— Dr. Samia
 Gallal-Saad
**Professor of
 Environmental
 Health
 Alexandria
 University
 Egypt**

*“ My mother,
 who is an
 illiterate but very
 strong woman,
 encouraged me to
 actualize my
 aspirations and
 dreams.... ”*

"I started work when I was still a second year university student. My parents objected to my work on many grounds. They were surprised by my desire to work in spite of our favorable financial

Middle East region, is the hardest thing....My parents were very liberal and encouraged me a lot. On the other hand, my husband complains about my work, especially when I am abroad....I make an effort to cater to his every need, and when at home, I adopt the role of the traditional wife. I spoiled him and I should bear the consequences....My husband and I work in the same domain, and are professors in the same department....Our working situation often

situation....I was required to do quality control for Syrian products, and after working in that domain, I decided to establish a specialized center....I encountered a lot of difficulty and was faced by enormous obstacles, for it was the first private center of its kind in Syria and no one was willing to help me, although they all felt the importance and need for such a center....It took me two years to obtain a license, and the center is now affiliated with the Syrian Ministry of In-

dusty.....The impact of such a project is immense and our center is now considered a leader in this domain....Until now, there is no other private sector corporation licensed and supported by the government other than our center in the Middle East....The system in Syria supports women in general. There are laws that support the working woman. Moreover, if the number of children in a working place exceeds five, then the law obliges the institution to establish a nursery on the premises for the children of those working women....At my husband's workplace, there is a nursery of high standard that admits children at a very early age, two months and a half, so I had no problems....."

— Dr. Nazha Alyan,
Director
Industrial Observation
Center
Syria



A conference panel. Left to right: Dr. Najat Sanbary, Ms. Zouhra Mourabet, Minister Bahij Tabbara, Dr. Myriam Saleem, and Mrs. Aida Na'aman.



Dr. Walid Ammar answers a question during a panel discussion. Seated with him are, from left to right, Dr. Nazha Alyan, Mrs. Na'amat Kan'an, and Mrs. Muna Bouwarshi.



IWSAW Staffer Myriam Sfair interviews Nazha Al-Yan about her rich management experiences.

*My husband
 is very
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QUESTIONNAIRE

In an effort to be as responsive as possible to our readers, we would like to know which of the following topics you would like to see addressed in future File sections of *Al-Raida*. Please choose three of the topics listed below and indicate the priority of preference of each of your choices (*e.g.*, write the number 1 next to the topic which interests you most, 2 next to the second most interesting topic, *etc.*). After you have made your selections, please clip out this questionnaire and send it back to us at the address listed below. Thank you in advance for your participation in making *Al-Raida* as interesting and as relevant as possible.

- Women and Politics
- Women and the Arts
- Women and the Environment
- Women and Non-Governmental Organizations
- Women and the Family
- Women and Spirituality/Religion
- Women and Economics
- Women and Agriculture
- Women and Education
- Women and Psychology
- Other topics (_____)

If you wish to make any comments and/or suggestions concerning *Al-Raida*, please do so in the space below:

Return this questionnaire form to:

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Al-Raida
 c/o Lebanese American
 University
 475 Riverside Drive
 Room No. 1846
 New York, NY 10115

Or

Editor,
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 Beirut, Lebanon

Continued From page 8

The various groups then presented their definitions and suggested goals for the Second Wave. These ranged from traditional propositions concerning education and the labor market to more radical suggestions concerning the necessity of confrontation. The majority of the voices, however, belonged to the former end of the spectrum and the conclusions were to a large extent traditional.

The meetings failed to draw up a new agenda for the women's movement. However, in some respects, much more was achieved. The success of this event was evident at the end of the workshop, and was expressed through the individual assessments of each of the participants: "it is impressive," said one participant, "that after seventeen years of war, we are able to meet and discuss issues in such an open and free way." Another

admitted that it was a timid effort, but stressed its novelty and usefulness: "For the first time, we sit with our sisters for more than twenty-four hours, discussing and interacting, with no restraints." One of the most important aspects remarked upon was the democratic procedure that was followed throughout the meeting. For most and perhaps all, this was the most democratic gathering that they had ever attended. If only for that, the meeting was a unique and worthy experience.

Another positive aspect was the frank discussion of very delicate issues among complete strangers. The participants talked about certain sensitive issues in public for the first time, thus succeeding, if only for a short while, in putting aside the main social constraint in our Arab culture: shame. For some, the workshop marked the first time that

they were ever involved in discussions pertaining to physical and psychological violence against women and complete personal and sexual equality. Not everyone agreed, but everyone was heard and everyone's opinions and feelings were genuinely respected. In a patriarchal social structure that discourages self-expression on both the political and personal planes, this was indeed quite an achievement.

Although the meeting clearly reflected the ongoing conservatism of our society, it also highlighted something else: that in a non-oppressive atmosphere, women are very willing to be accepting of each other. Indeed, the open-mindedness and intellectual maturity of all those present was the most rewarding aspect of all. Whether deeply religious, very conservative or feminist "western style," the acceptance of the other was most remarkable. No one tried to recapture the meeting and steer it in certain directions, making it something which it was not. The meeting reflected the pluralism of our society, of any society, once everyone's opinion is taken into consideration.

Even though the workshop did not result in straight-forward plans and organizational structures, the farewell reflected the strength of the bonds already formed, in such a short time, due to the prevailing mutual respect and appreciation. These bonds will have the chance to be tested in the near future and it is hoped that they will prove resilient. In any case, "The Second Wave" was and will remain a memorable and enriching experience.



Lebanese Attorney Laure Moghaizal discusses the legal status of women in Lebanon during a panel of the conference on "The Second Wave." Seated to her right is Dr. Nadia Cheikh, Professor of History at American University of Beirut; to Moghaizal's left is Member of Parliament Naila Mouawwad.

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Young Women Speak Out, East and West

Alia Moubayed

Assistant Researcher, IWSAW

Especially
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related to
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In the context of the Euro-Arab Dialogue begun in Malta last year, a Euro-Arab Women's Seminar was held in Beirut between July 26 and 30, 1995. Jointly organized by the Progressive Youth Organization, representing the Arab Youth League, and the Youth Forum of the European Union, the seminar gathered young European and Arab Women, each representative of youth or women's association in their respective countries. The women were eager to voice their opinions and discuss their concerns forty days before the Beijing Conference, the outcome of which will set the framework for women's activities and struggles for the next decade. The dialogue covered an exhaustive list of women-related topics, such as the participation of young women in education and their situation in the labor market; sexuality and health; women in civil society (participation of women in politics, legal rights); and the influence of religion on women's roles in society.

The main objective of the seminar was to encourage the participants to discuss frankly the problems facing young women and to formulate plausible solutions and tangible actions to encompass common problems in Europe and in the Middle East. The goal was not only to describe the status of young women, but more importantly, to establish a basis for a continuous exchange of experiences, methodologies and strategies aimed at enhancing young women's position in every aspect. A major socio-

cultural challenge, however, quickly arose: that of overcoming the traditional stereotypes and prejudices that each held about the other, whether Arab or European, and transcending the obstacles to understanding the other's views within their socio-economic and cultural contexts without passing any moral judgment or making self-serving comparative analyses. This ideal, though noble, was not actually attained because politics entered the picture. Some participants were blamed for their governments'

policies by those who had assumed (and here comes the stereotype) that individuals always agree with their governments' policies. Especially salient challenges appeared in those sessions related to religion and sexual education.

Overall, the dialogue reflected the inherent differences among the participants. Differences were remarkable, not only between Arabs and Europeans, but also among Europeans and Arabs themselves. Yet, the dialogue proved that differences are not and should not be regarded as obstacles to effective communication and cooperation, but rather, can be viewed as sources of diverse experiences from which both parties to the dialogue can benefit.

Indeed, despite these cultural differences, recommendations were unanimously agreed upon. Resolutions emphasized the condemnation of every type of violence against women, whether domestic violence, genital mutilation, sexism in the media, at work and in public places; or terrorism against women, as was recently witnessed in Algeria. Also, participants demanded the empowerment of women through education and called for programs to provide women with access to resources; to release immediately all women "prisoners of conscience" and guaran-

tee them fair trials. Participants were unanimous in calling for solidarity with women who have been unjustly denied self-determination and independence, as in South Lebanon, Bosnia, the Golan Heights and Palestine. An extensive list of discussion topics was also suggested including the development of a culture of dialogue among women and between genders; the key role of women in identifying and overcoming prejudices (as evidenced during this seminar); and the role of the media in creating an appropriate image of women. As to the proposed actions to be taken, they included: consciousness-raising campaigns; newsletters; confidence-building and training for women; drop-in centers for women; clearing-houses for the dissemination of crucial information, and the exchange of documents, statistics and work methodologies; language courses; and organizing a follow-up seminar on the Beijing Conference. The participants also insisted on presenting an advocacy paper to the Barcelona meeting in November 1995 in the context of the economic cooperation effort between the European Union and the Arab Mediterranean countries.

In the wake of the dialogue, we must ask: What's in it for us as

young Arab women? Undoubtedly, the seminar was a very important opportunity for Arab women to speak out openly and to divulge the secrets of their suffering as a result of violence and discrimination, i.e., the arbitrary terror inflicted upon Algerian and Palestinian women and girls; and to talk exhaustively about cultural taboos; e.g., religion, the patriarchal system, circumcision and honor killings. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the dialogue gave young Arab women an opportunity to rectify many of the prejudices the Europeans held about them.

The dialogue also provided important insights into the problems of our own region. Dr. Fahmia Sharafeddine, a professor at the Lebanese University, discussed the glaring differences between the Arab governmental plans of action and the NGOs' documents prepared for the Beijing Conference in respect to their divergent priorities for enhancing women's status in the Arab world. According to Sharafeddine, governmental reports, unlike those of the NGO community, understate the importance of fostering democracy and protecting human rights; they also fail to reveal the long-term implications of gender discrimination, technology transfer, indebtedness and conflicts,

and thus propound insubstantial and vague strategies for the integration of women in overall development efforts. The NGOs, however, forcefully call for the ratification of conventions for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and affirm women's right to development by linking the atrocious conditions of women to the structural underdevelopment of their societies.

Another pitfall evident in Arab governmental reports is that issues specific to young women were not addressed in these documents at all. As usual, no young women attend their governments' preparatory meetings, so their concerns were neither voiced nor recorded. Does this mean that young Arab women should carry, in addition to the first burden of debt, a second burden, that of being subject to decisions we never participated in making? Should we unquestioningly accept to be doubly marginalized, first as women, and secondly as young people? Or should we instead think of ourselves as winds of change, and thus get organized to lobby for our opinions to be heard and adopted? I conclude this report with an invitation to every young Arab woman to look deeply inside herself, and to look beyond her social and political walls, and to decide whether she wants to make a change or not.

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AL-RAIDA

Future topics in Al-Raida include Women in Post-War Lebanon; Arab women in agriculture; Arab women in creative design; and Arab women's in the media, in addition to a look at Arab women's appraisals of the World Summit in Beijing. We invite you to submit articles and share information if you feel you can contribute.

**Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Lebanese American University (Formerly BUC)
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Beirut, Lebanon.
Fax: (01) 867098.**

Elizabeth Fernea in Beirut

Interview conducted by *Wafa' Stephan Tarnowski*

She chose
to "speak"
through
Middle
Eastern
women's
voices,
rather than
impose her
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Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, author and editor of two feminist classics, *Women and the Family in the Middle East* and *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak* (both published by the University of Texas Press), visited Lebanon in June with her husband Robert, a renowned anthropologist, to update their book, *The Arab World: Personal Encounters* (Anchor Press). The book, first begun in 1956, when they initially visited Beirut as young academics, is a personal narrative of their travels in the region, travels which took them to Egypt (1959, 1983 and 1995), to Morocco (1971, 1983 and 1995), as well as to Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Iran, Yemen, and the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank. The updated version of the book will conclude with an article on post-war Lebanon.

Elizabeth Fernea, who learned Arabic in a "total immersion" program in the mid-1950s at Georgetown University, has lived for extended periods of time in Iraq, Egypt and Morocco. She has written books on her experiences in all three of these countries: *Guests of the Sheikh*, *A View of the Nile*, and *A Street in Marrakech*, respectively. These books have been exceedingly popular with the American public, perhaps because they are part autobiography, part travel writing, and part ethnography. Although these books were informative and entertaining, they were not as crucial to feminist scholarship and Middle Eastern studies as were her subsequent books, which were among the first to use a documentary and oral history approach to-

wards Middle Eastern women. Fernea's later books marked a departure from the usual western treatments of Middle Eastern women, which relied exclusively upon essays based on second-hand accounts by western scholars. Her work is also significant because it includes materials not previously available in English, sources which had never before been translated from Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Fernea was also one of the first scholars to examine the paradox of Middle Eastern women's low status and segregation in some countries, and their rise to political and intellectual eminence in others. She chose to "speak" through Middle Eastern women's voices, rather than impose her voice on theirs, and in that, she is much re-

spected and often emulated. Fernea stated that originally she had no orientalist training; in fact, she still teaches English at the University of Texas at Austin in addition to Middle Eastern Studies. But her sensitivity towards her host culture and her desire to fill in the gaps between academic and lay people with regard to knowledge of the Middle East has made her a much-respected scholar of the region. Fernea notes that, although there are many specialists on the Middle East in the academic world, there still remains a great deal of ignorance on the subject among ordinary people.

She recalled that, in 1966, when her husband Robert became Director of the Middle Eastern Studies Center at the University of Texas, there were only three faculty members. Now, thanks to an increasing interest in the region, there are 35 faculty members teaching subjects as varied as anthropology, geography, literature, and sociology of the Middle East. Fernea's first anthology on women (*Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*) was undertaken as a supplementary reading list for her students, who had no access to original Arabic sources. She started translating from the original Arabic "after dinner, when the kids were in bed" and her students loved it, as did the general public. English speakers were able to read and enjoy poems by the famous pre-Islamic woman poet, al-Khansa', and the

Andalusian poet Wallada bint al-Mustaki. Biographical sketches of the Prophet Muhammad's favorite wife, Aisha, as well as the famous 20th century Egyptian singer Umm Kulthoum and contemporary writers such as Leila Baalbaki and Ghada Samman, also touched and intrigued English-speaking readers.

After writing about women in the Middle East, Fernea then turned to children's issues, and edited a resource book entitled *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, which was also published by the University of Texas Press. This book, unlike the book on women, is organized into sections on childhood, growing up, health, work, education, politics, war, play and the arts. It includes essays in history and social science, poems, proverbs, lullabies, games and short stories from all over the Middle East: Tunisia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Yemen and Afghanistan.

In addition to her literary

productions, Fernea is also an accomplished filmmaker. She has made several successful documentary films about women's issues in the contemporary Middle East, one of which this interviewer saw, which was entitled "A Veiled Revolution." Fernea wrote an article with the same title for Bowen and Early, eds., *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East* (see review in *Al-Raida*, No. 66, Winter, 1995, pp. 30-31). Fernea's film introduces the viewer to various women in Cairo who have decided to wear the veil again. The film explores the ironies surrounding this symbol of submission which has now become a tool for attaining wider social freedoms and a way of making a statement of one's own respectability and cultural and religious identity in the face of westernization. Fernea says that "westerners are more worried about the veil than Middle Easterners, for their own agendas," and she believes that in 1995 there are fewer women wearing the *hijab* in Egypt than there were in 1985. When asked if women's situation in the Arab World has changed, Fernea

answers that it has indeed, but that women are first and foremost concerned about their economic situation, then about family pressures, then about laws governing their personal status. She adds that "women don't mention the *hijab* as one of their main concerns."

Fernea believes that, in general, women in the Middle East today have more opportunities than their mothers did. They can work outside the home and there is "more scope for them to negotiate." Her firmest belief, however, is that Middle Eastern women's status is never fixed, but constantly changing as women grow, learn and develop and feel the impact of political and economic events beyond their immediate control. Thus, she says that scholars of the region must always pay attention to the many factors which affect women's lives and the important decisions which shape women's present and future in the Middle East.

When asked to name some of the Middle Eastern women she most admires, Fernea cited Umm Kulthoum, the late Egyptian singer; author Leila Abou Zeid; Sheikha Fatima, wife of the ruler of Abu Dhabi; Aziza Hussein of Cairo Family Planning; Salma al-Jauyyusi, the Jordanian literary critic; and Huda Na'amani of Lebanon. Fernea went on to say that there are many other women in the Middle East whom she admires and that she has a large number of Arab women friends. However, rather than naming all of them, she prefers to mention that the important point for Arab women today is that "women are becoming reflexive about themselves and taking control of their own destinies" as much as their circumstances allow them to do.

Middle Eastern women's status is never fixed, but constantly changing as women grow, learn and develop and feel the impact of political and economic events beyond their immediate control.



Elizabeth Fernea with her husband and collaborator, the anthropologist Robert Fernea.

The absurd-
ist vein of
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"The Secret Pocket": A Theatrical Success for Lebanese Director Siham Nasser

Mona Takieddine Amyuni

Assistant Professor, Civilization Sequence
American University of Beirut

Dramatic art, for Lebanese director Siham Nasser, means not only survival, as she phrases it, but life itself. After earning a degree in Theatre Production from the American Catholic University in Washington, D.C., she began teaching dramatic art at the Lebanese University in Beirut, where she is still working today. Nasser also acted in many plays and produced many others adapted from the world repertoire. Siham Nasser first received international recognition in 1992, when her play, *The Secret Pocket*, adapted from a novel by Rashid Boujedra, won the first prize at the International Festival for Experimental Theatre in Cairo. Earlier that same year, the Beirut Theatre had produced the play. Subsequently, it was also performed at the Gulbenkian Theatre of the Lebanese American University and at the Russian Cultural Center in Beirut. Adapted into French, *The Secret Pocket* was recently performed at the French Cultural Center in Beirut and is now heading towards France and Carthage.

What accounts for the phenomenal success of *The Secret Pocket*? What is the theme of this unusual play? In broad outline, the play is the story of a man from a Third World country who suddenly discovers that his

city has been invaded by five million mice. The State appoints this man director of an office for the extermination of the annoying and destructive pests. The setting of the play is reminiscent of Beirut; it portrays a game which repeats itself *ad infinitum*, revealing its plot in a mosaic of colors, dark at one moment, comic the next.

But *The Secret Pocket* does not tell a conventional story; it unfolds more like a symphony than a play, because the actors repeat and reiterate a dramatic melody which varies in polyphonic rhythms, rhythms borrowed from traditional oriental orchestras. Unlike classical drama, the play ends not on a note of resolution, but in a deadlock, like a game of chess ending in checkmate.

Political overtones abound in *The Secret Pocket*. The play had a great impact on its Lebanese audience, who viewed it at the Beirut Theatre soon after the signing of the Taef Agreement of 1990, the accord which brought the Lebanese civil war to an end. The audience flocked to the theatre feeling bruised after so many years of war, but also so happy to meet at a cultural event during peace-time. When the curtain rose, the staging

was powerfully arresting: 21 immobile actors in a triangular arrangement stood paralyzed, dressed normally, but with their faces grotesquely made-up. The stage was filled with scraps of newspaper, evoking the image of a large waste basket. For Beirutis, newspapers connote absurd news stories of Beckettian cease-fires which continuously broke down, then were patched up only to break down again, *a la Godot*. Beckett's *Godot* and Camus' *Oran* in *The Plague* were ever present in the audience's collective imagination as they watched the play. The absurdist vein of contemporary theatre underlay an absurd situation, an absurd war, and an absurd peace treaty which left all conflicts unresolved.

The success of *The Secret Pocket* was fully deserved. The play demonstrated the technical brilliance of Siham Nasser, as well as her sensitivity to human nature and her black humor. Her actors were no less brilliant under her able direction. *The Secret Pocket* touches upon the existential realities of a wounded city and its wounded citizens in a compelling and memorable way. It was an excellent example of theatre which speaks resoundingly to its time and place, and now, with its warm reception in France, to all times and places.

Balancing the Traditional and the Modern

Hratch Tchilingirian

The post-cold war era has been a mixed blessing for the "new world order". On the one hand, there is increasing interest in social, ecological, gender and moral issues facing the world; on the other hand, nationalism and politicized religion have dominated the central stage of public discourse.

The current wave of "globalization" and "universalism" of emerging modern culture needs to be examined in the context of micro-social concerns of a given community in a given society. As the value system and identity references of society are rapidly modified and changed, the "old" and the "traditional" are easily discarded as archaic conventions of yesterday. Addressing the problems facing a community -- especially during such complex social transitions -- is a challenge to politicians, educators, scholars, and all those who are concerned with the welfare of society.

Azadouhi Simonian, a member of the faculty of the Lebanese American University, in *Youth and Education* (in Armenian, 1995), addresses the "modern problems" of the Lebanese Armenian community. She presents a diagnosis of the issues concerning youth in particular and the Armenian family in general, and suggests practical remedies based on her experi-

ence as an educator, columnist, activist, wife and mother. The thrust of *Youth and Education* evolves around the youth-family and woman-culture axes. In discussing the overall education of the youth -- academic, moral, religious, cultural -- Simonian concentrates on the role of the Armenian woman in the education of youth. She brings the Armenian woman out of the kitchen and assigns her a more active role in the social discourse of the community.

Comprised of ten essays, *Youth and Education* deals with a series of complementary and overlapping topics, such as: the traditional and the new in modern society, religious-moral education in the family, rebellion in youth, parent-child relationships, the Armenian woman as educator, youth and the educational challenges of modern times, and others.

Throughout the volume, the contextual framework of Simonian's propositions is the Lebanese education system. For example, she laments the inadequacy of the Lebanese Baccalaureate curriculum, which is based on the French model. The present curriculum falls short of providing a balanced higher education to the post-war Lebanese youth. While the current French educational system in France has been

significantly modernized and updated, the Lebanese curriculum remains to be updated. Therefore, supplemental and extra-curricular educational methods play an important role in filling the gaps in the state educational system.

In the introductory essay of *Youth and Education*, Simonian explains the need for achieving a balance between the "traditional" and the "modern". She cautions young people about the dangers of materialism, consumerism and opportunism, all traits that have come to characterize modern society in general and post-war Lebanon in particular. In explaining the traditional and the new, Simonian writes:

The traditional is [one's] culture. It is a man's [woman's] creativity in the arts, literature, music, architecture and other related creative expressions. Through democracy, freedom of thought and expression, respect of human rights, education, family and religion, society sets the parameter of its function.... Civilization is the new, the modern. It is the technical, the scientific advancements and material achievements.... The influence of the modern era is characterized by the stripping of the person from his/her traditionally upheld moral character and by empha-

sizing the material values [of modern life]"(pp. 9-10).

Without being anachronistic, Simonian weaves an appreciation of traditional values, i.e., the proven wisdom of life and qualities that are important in the Armenian ethos, and blends them with the modern norms and demands of life.

While being sensitive to the particular socio-cultural idiosyncrasies of the Lebanese Armenian community beyond the boundaries of its ethnic parochialism, instead of treating Armenian educational, cultural and religious values as sources of exclusion or differentiation, she presents them as sources of moral strength and wisdom which make a person a better person. The achievements of individuals are not measured by their academic education per se, but by their contribution to society, and ultimately to humanity.

Azadouhi Simonian has been, for over two decades, an active member of the Armenian community and has greatly contributed to the cause of Armenian women. Whether in her previous book, *The Armenian Women, Family and Youth* (in Armenian, 1988), or in this volume, or through her numerous lectures and seminars, Simonian has been among the few Armenian women who have had the courage to voice their convictions and thus become the conscience of their community.

— *Hratch Tchilingirian, Ph.D. Candidate, is a researcher in sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science in England.*

Hanan Ashrawi, 1995.

This Side of Peace: A Personal Account.

New York: Simon and Schuster. 303 pages.

In a frank and conversational tone, Hanan Ashrawi, feminist poet, college professor and former spokeswoman for the official Palestinian negotiation team in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, recounts her experiences as educator, activist, politician, wife and mother. The book provides important insights into gender relations in occupied Palestine, as well as valuable perspectives on Arab women's approaches to political action.

Margot Badran, 1995

Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt .

Princeton: Princeton University Press. 337 pages.

Badran utilizes a variety of documents, including letters, diaries, fiction, journalistic articles, and oral histories, to support the hypothesis that feminists and feminism played an integral role in the shaping of the modern nation-state of Egypt. Badran also demonstrates the gendered nature of nationalist, Islamic and imperialist discourses, and highlights the ways that feminist discourses have provided a consistent internal critique of Egyptian state and society throughout this century.

Jill M. Bystydzienski, Ed. , 1993

Women Transforming Politics: Worldwide Strategies for Empowerment.

Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Bystydzienski, a Polish-Canadian feminist and sociologist who has conducted research on women's political participation in Africa and Norway, presents a compilation of various feminist voices from around the world. This volume represents a highly successful effort to examine and comprehend women's role in political action and processes in a wide variety of cultural contexts. Bystydzienski provides theoretical introductions to the different

sections of the book, providing a cogent overview of the existing academic literature on women's political culture. Contributors include academics, politicians, journalists and activists from Palestine, Africa, Spain, Canada, Central America and Scandinavia.

Martin, Susan Forbes, 1991

Refugee Women

London: Zed Books, Ltd.

(Women and World Development Series)

Examines the difficult circumstances of everyday life for the growing numbers of women refugees around the world, and the implications for their host countries. The book traces the ways that discrimination and violence from women's own communities, as well as the threat of military attack, abduction and rape, can greatly increase their emotional trauma. The author stresses the importance and effectiveness of involving refugee women as active participants in finding solutions to their short-term problems. The book contains a survey of current international commitment to refugees and offers practical recommendations for action.

Panos Publications, 1995

Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak Out About Conflict.

London: Panos Publications, Ltd. 278 pages.

This volume is a collection of oral histories of women in the world's most war-torn regions: Somaliland, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Bosnia and Lebanon. While stressing that unarmed civilians, particularly women and their dependent children, are the most common victims of modern warfare, the book provides insights into the ways that women throughout the world make sense of the horror, injustice and losses of violent conflict. A variety of responses to warfare are recorded, from the women who take up arms and join the battle to those who form organizations dedicated to using non-violent means to establish peace. In the final analysis, the overarching impression imparted by these dramatic oral histories is that women are extremely resilient and creative in the face of danger and despair.