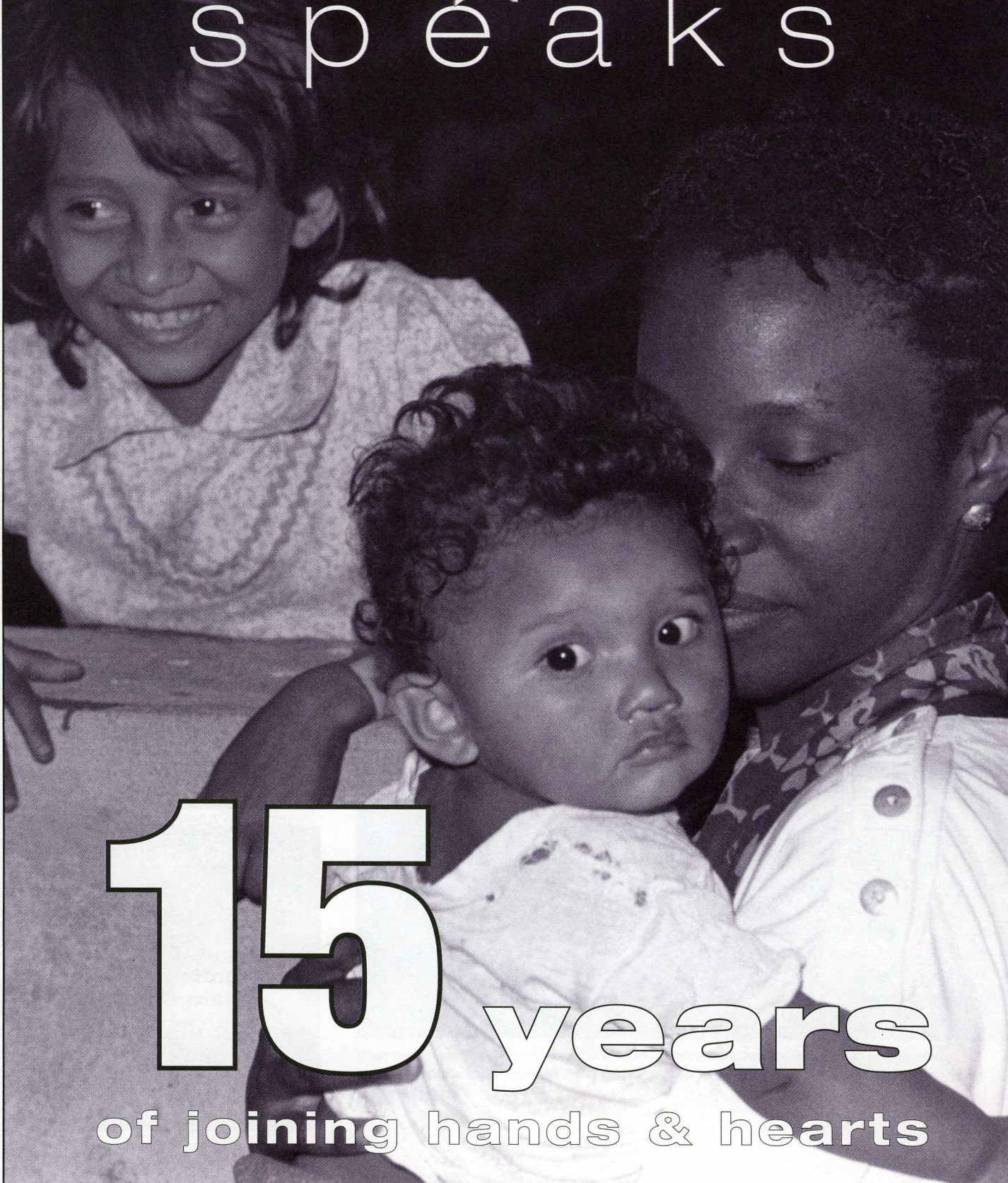


YOUR
1999
MADRE
CALENDAR IS
ENCLOSED!

MADRE

s p e a k s



15 years

of joining hands & hearts

From the Executive Director

Vivian Stromberg

Fall 1998

Dear friends,

On this, our fifteenth anniversary, we can be proud of what we've accomplished together. But we must also draw on the experience of our last fifteen years to plan our future work.

Together, women all over the world have succeeded in placing gender on the discussion table. Since the U.N. Human Rights Conference in Vienna in 1993, women's rights have been part of the discourse on human rights—despite opposition from some governments and extremists. One important manifestation of this struggle was seen at the conference to establish a permanent International Criminal Court held in Rome this past summer. There, the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice worked to guarantee that gender considerations are included in the violations of law which will be tried by the Court. The Vatican fought like crazy to remove the word 'gender' from the document, but there was too much precedent and we won. While we should feel proud of these accomplishments, we must remember that unless we are creative and persistent, our successes will remain in the realm of

theory and will not touch the lives of women who daily struggle to subsist.

In this newsletter we hope to demystify some of the workings of the global economy. We have learned from our sister organizations that the lack of rights in the workplace puts them at risk. Wages as low as 11 cents an hour, factories with no ventilation, latrines shared by hundreds, 10+ hours a day with no remuneration for



David Foecke

overtime, required sexual service, are just some of the violent conditions women endure. As we take up the struggle for economic justice in a newly globalized world, we need to make sure that women's rights are integrated into every aspect of our work. By keeping the discussion of women's rights isolated, we entrench our marginalization. Economic rights are women's human rights!

Sincerely,

MADRE

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MADRE's newsletter, *MADRE Speaks* is published quarterly

MADRE is a 20,000-member, multi-racial, cross-class, international women's organization that works in partnership with women's community-based organizations worldwide to address issues of women's health, economic development and other gender-based human rights. MADRE provides the resources, expertise and organizational support that enable our sister organizations to meet the immediate needs of their communities, while working to change the balance of power to promote social justice.

Newsletter Staff

Yifat Susskind, Editor
Amy Thesing, Design

cover photo by Jon Snow

A big thanks to

Taina Figueroa

MADRE's summer intern, for
all your energy and hard work.

Come See Cuba
for Yourself

Join MADRE's 1999
delegation to Cuba in
late Spring.

Fill out the coupon on
the back cover for
information about this
year's trip.

What's So Liberal About Neo-Liberalism?

Some Basics on the Global Economy

by Yifat Suskind

For more than two decades, poor people around the world have been getting poorer and their absolute numbers are rising. Today, nearly 1.6 of the world's 5.7 billion people live in severe poverty. Over 70% of these are women and girls, many of whom work between 60-90 hours a week to maintain the same marginal standard of living that they possessed just a decade ago. Economic misery is most widespread in countries that were colonized by Europe and the US (the so-called Third World). But even the richest country—the United States—has witnessed devastating increases in poverty and income inequality, with the percentage of children living below the poverty line up 49% since the 1970's.

These conditions reflect the dominant economic trend of our times, "globalization." The rhetoric that accompanies this term often leaves us feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. Jargon-filled discourse on "market forces" masks the raw violence of economic exploitation, suggesting that the economy functions according to scientific principles instead of political choices. Once we accept this proposition, it is easy to believe that economic matters are simply beyond our control. But the way that people organize and distribute the world's resources is a matter of human decisions—and human rights. In fact, seemingly abstract "macro" economic policies have a concrete impact on women and families around the world. For women in MADRE's sister organizations, changing these policies to meet the needs of communities instead of corporations is an integral part of the struggle for women's rights.

MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FOR MONOPOLY

Many of the economic trends that we experience today are a result of a balance of forces that crystallized after World War II. By the 1940's, the Third World (which is actually two-thirds of the world) was ravaged by colonialism. Europe was devastated by war. By comparison, the US emerged from World War II as an economic superpower. Since then, the main objective of US foreign policy has been to safeguard this position. Consider the words of George Kennan, one of the most influential post-war US policy makers (and a renowned "dove") addressing the State Department in 1948:

"We have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population. In this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real

task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity... We should cease to talk about vague and... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards and democratization... The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better." (Walter LeFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, Norton, 1983).

Kennan's view remains the touchstone of US foreign policy, which, as in his day, generally consists of economic moves made with ideological rationales. This point is often better understood by people in countries where these policies are implemented than by those in the US whose tax dollars finance them. One reason is that foreign policy is usually presented domestically as serving the very objectives Kennan characterizes as



Women do two-thirds of the world's work. When state health, education and social welfare programs are cut, women are expected to absorb the added burden of providing these services.

Meredith McGregor

“Everyone has the right to [an adequate] standard of living...including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood or old age...”

ARTICLE 25 OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

irrelevant: human rights, living standards and, above all, democracy. But when we look at the record of post-war US military actions (both direct and covert) we see that nearly all of them aimed to force developing countries into an economic role prescribed by the US: namely, to provide markets and raw materials to industrialized countries. This economic lens highlights an important facet of US aggression against countries as diverse as Vietnam, Chile, Iraq, Congo and Guatemala. Even economically negligible countries like Nicaragua, Grenada, Haiti and Cuba have been targeted for insisting that their national resources be used to benefit local populations instead of US corporations, thereby setting a dangerous example for others.

By the 1970's the rebuilt economies of Germany and Japan challenged US economic supremacy. US corporations began looking for cheaper materials, manufacturing and labor, which were available in developing countries, where US-backed governments smashed labor movements, helping to keep production costs down. New technologies made it easier than ever for corporations to move from country to country, setting up shop until some other location became more profitable. This “flexible production” is one hallmark of today's global economy. The other is the emergence of unrestricted worldwide markets in stocks, bonds, currencies and other financial instruments. Governments have little control over these “global capital markets,” which have concentrated an unprecedented proportion of the world's resources in the hands of a few corporations. In the last 20 years, corporations have gained control of 70% of global trade and become the world's most powerful economic actors.

While worldwide trade and commerce are nothing new, the “global economy” refers to this combination of

mobile production and massive international investment in a climate of minimal government interference. This is the macro-economic condition that erodes the wages, living standards, health, social welfare and environments of so many women and families in the US and around the world, including those with whom MADRE works.

CORPORATE GREED GOES GLOBAL

Economic globalization is based on a theory called “neo (or new)-liberalism.” The term can be confusing in the US, where “liberal” is associated with left-of-center politics. Economic liberalism, however, holds that minimal



Laura Flanders

Neo-liberal policies diminish women's access to land rights and endanger food supplies by favoring export crop production, which is controlled by men.

government intervention and unrestricted (i.e., “liberal”) manufacturing, commerce and trade are the key to economic growth. In theory, this growth is supposed to benefit everyone. (Remember the “trickle-down”

promises of Reagan and Bush?) But the theory ignores the class inequalities built into categories like gender, nationality and race, which ensure that not everyone benefits equally from economic “good times.” The US, for example, has witnessed astounding profits for large corporations and plummeting wages, job security and working conditions for most people, with women and people of color hit hardest by the “economic boom.”

Simply put, neo-liberalism helps ensure that the world's wealthiest people remain at the top and get richer. This goal is pursued by taking wealth (mostly in the form of wages and social benefits) away from poor and middle-income people worldwide, and reallocating it to the richest (mainly in the form of corporate profits). The trend is visible both within countries (in the US, the percentage of national assets owned by the richest 10% has more than doubled in the last 20 years: the top 1% now own more than the bottom 92% combined); and between countries (the gap between poor and rich countries has doubled since 1960, with a total transfer of more than \$400 billion from 1982 to 1990).

In the US, neo-liberal policies dismantle social welfare systems and force poor women (who are the majority of welfare recipients) into “workfare” programs at below-minimum wages, thereby driving down wages in general. These policies bolster prisons as a for-profit industry and a means of social control, outlaw affirmative action, and in general, discredit the idea that governments have a responsibility for the welfare of their people. Neo-liberalism is also evident in US foreign policy, with Clinton's “trade not aid” prescription for Africa serving as

an ideological counterpart to the rhetoric of domestic welfare reform, and nearly all developing countries forced to adopt neo-liberal economic models, based on the doctrine of "free trade."

WHAT'S SO FREE ABOUT "FREE TRADE"?

Advocates of neo-liberalism say they favor unregulated, or "free," trade. But in reality, all rich countries maintain their advantage through erecting trade barriers and subsidizing industry. US enterprises that are internationally competitive—like agribusiness, pharmaceuticals and high technology—are all heavily subsidized by tax dollars (profits, by contrast, are pocketed by corporate owners). Neo-liberal trade arrangements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), actually increase protectionist measures in areas where the US has an advantage. In fact, the World Bank reports that these measures cost developing countries twice the amount that they receive in foreign aid. Meanwhile, only developing countries are held to the letter of "free trade" and barred from buffering industry against foreign competition. One way to understand "free trade," then, is as the freedom of industrialized countries to exploit developing economies.

NAFTA, for example, locks Mexico into serving as a market for US agribusiness by setting conditions in which Mexican farmers cannot compete with their US counterparts. As Mexico's chief creditor and trading partner, the US demanded an end to Mexican farm subsidies, while large-scale US farmers each continue to receive an average of \$29,000 a year in indirect government aid. Since NAFTA took effect in 1994, US corn and grain has flooded the Mexican market, bankrupting nearly one million Mexican farmers. About 85% of the rural labor force has gone from being poor, but getting by, to watching their children go hungry.

The crisis is acute in Chiapas, home to 3% of Mexico's population, but 13% of its corn production. NAFTA is the latest



photographer unknown

Increased poverty rates for families mean drops in food intake and school enrollment for girls, who are put to work inside and outside the home.

in a long history of assaults on the rights and resources of indigenous people in Chiapas. That's why the Zapatistas chose the day of its signing to rise up and demand democratic reform as a basis for economic and racial justice. Some of the loudest calls to crush the rebellion came from US corporations like Chase Bank, which had invested billions in Mexico under NAFTA. In response, the US quickly stepped up training and funding for Mexico's army, which has subjected the people of Chiapas to massacres, rapes and a "scorched earth" campaign that has driven thousands to the brink of starvation. By conditioning rising corporate profits on increased exploitation of the poor in developing countries, neo-liberal policies like NAFTA promise to perpetuate the use of US-backed violence as the last word in securing corporate interests.

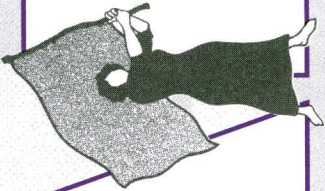
In Haiti, trade liberalization and privatization (the sale of government-owned national resources to foreign investors) are the centerpiece of the neo-liberal "development" model. Implemented through the Structural Adjustment

Programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and directly through the United States Agency for International Development, these policies have proved much more beneficial to US corporations than to the people of Haiti. Before structural adjustment was imposed in the 1980's, 70% of Haitians were peasant farmers. Most of the country's food came from women's small family plots. By now, US imports have almost wiped out local agriculture. Haitian women can no longer feed their families. On a national scale, "food dependency" holds Haiti's government captive to further US demands, like an injunction against raising the minimum wage. A key ingredient of the neo-liberal recipe, "wage repression" is a disaster for Haitians and a boon to the many US assembly plants that have set up shop in Port-au-Prince. These corporations take advantage of a huge reserve of workers, including the tens of thousands of women who were driven off their land by US agribusiness and left with little choice but to accept rock-bottom wages and miserable conditions.

In the singular logic of neo-liberalism, profit is the only measure of economic success. Providing decent jobs at a living wage, respecting the rights of workers to unionize, protecting the environment and ensuring national food supplies are all seen as liabilities for corporations. A major thrust of neo-liberal policies is to limit government "interference" in these matters. So is lifting restrictions on international investment and marketing, which allows corporations to manufacture in low-cost Third World countries and maintain the same access to profitable US markets as if they were producing in New Jersey or Michigan. One result has been a sharp rise in sweatshop models of manufacturing. In Guatemala alone, the number of *maquilas* (Spanish for sweatshops) has quadrupled since 1994. Like their counterparts in Haiti and elsewhere, workers—90% of whom are young women—endure meager wages and brutal conditions, including sexual abuse and beatings. The Guatemalan government does little to

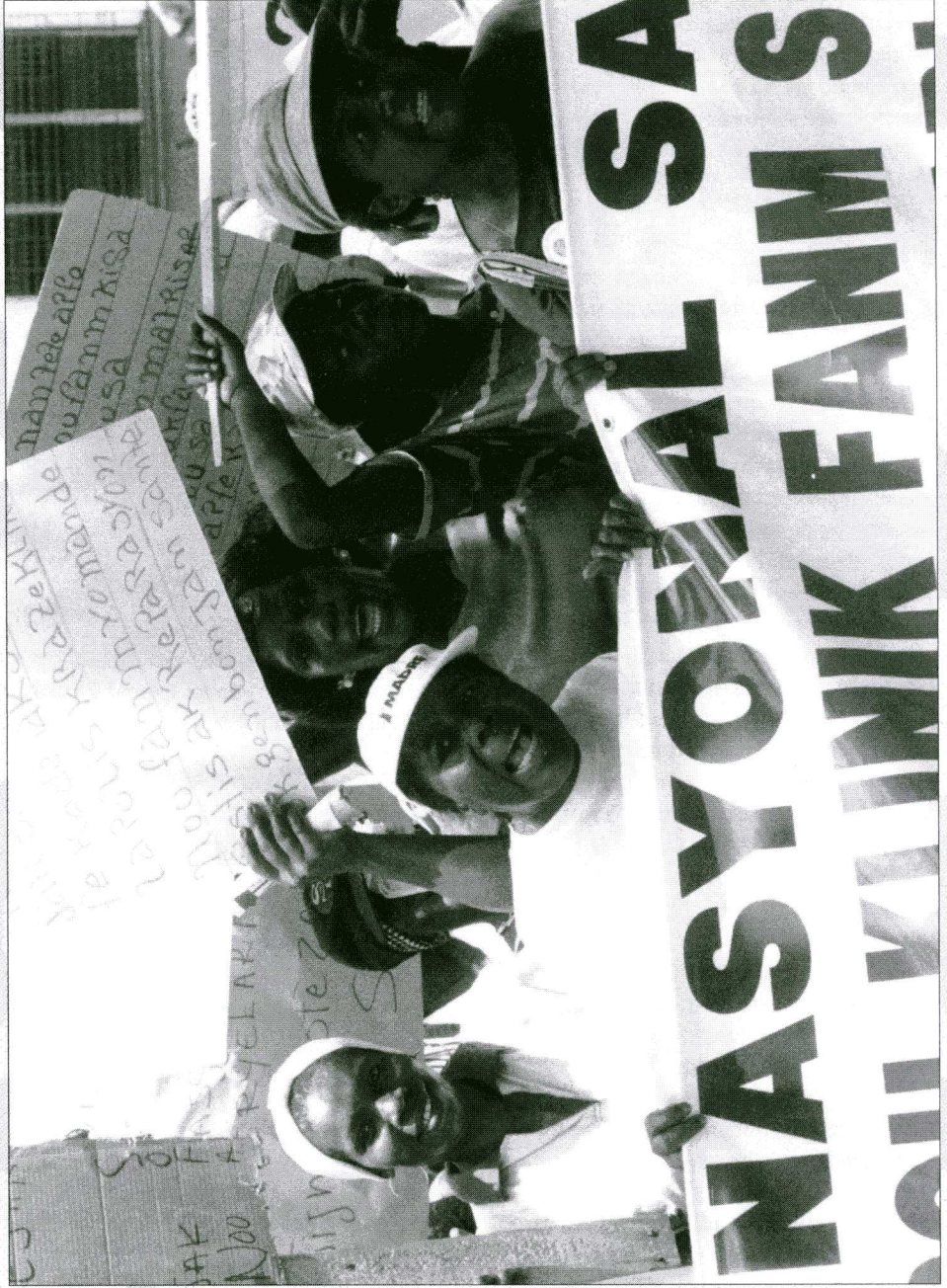
MADRE

1999



MADRE works in partnership with women's community-based organizations worldwide to address issues of health, economic development and other human rights for women and families. MADRE provides support, resources and training to enable our partners to meet immediate needs in their communities and work for long-term development and social justice. Since 1983 MADRE has delivered over 8 million dollars worth of support to women's organizations in Central America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, the Former Yugoslavia, central Africa and the United States.

Women from SOFA, MADRE's sister organization in Haiti, protest a police attack on the women's clinic founded with MADRE in 1996. Klinik Famn provides health care and human rights education to women in one of Haiti's most impoverished communities.



David Foecke

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enforce protective labor laws. Officials say that if it did, foreign corporations would simply relocate to a country with even fewer controls.

This problem is emblematic of a global economy where workers, communities and even governments have lost their leverage to demand standards for corporate conduct. The ease with which corporations can now relocate jobs and investment—or simply threaten to do so—gives them a powerful upper hand. This dynamic has helped spark a worldwide downward spiral in labor, social and environmental conditions, as communities and whole countries compete to offer corporations the cheapest deal. Poor countries are most vulnerable to accepting degraded conditions, while US workers suffer plant closings, downsizing, union busting and cuts in benefits. In fact, the rights of workers in all countries are eroded by policies that prioritize corporate profit over people's needs.

ECONOMIC RIGHTS ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Since the collapse of Thailand's currency, the baht, in July 1997, neo-liberalism has sustained a rapid succession of blow-outs around the world. In "macro" terms the crisis is about developing countries' rising debt, collapsing currencies and dwindling demand, induced by the unregulated investment and quick withdrawal of foreign capital. In human terms, the crisis means more children and new mothers dying from preventable causes; more hunger, homelessness and forced migration; and even less money for school and hospital fees mandated by the IMF.

The crisis will require some adjustments in the global system, but corporations will remain the primary shapers and beneficiaries of the world economy. They have already achieved a crucial transfer of power from national governments to "supra-national" institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These US-dominated "governing

Economic injustice is being challenged around the world by vibrant new formations of popular movements & non-governmental organizations. Check out:

- **Alt-WID/New York: Alternative Women in Development** (contacted through MADRE)

- **50 Years is Enough: The US Network for Global Economic Justice** 1025 Vermont Ave., NW, #300, Washington, DC 20005

- **Global Village or Global Pillage: Economic Restructuring from the Bottom Up**, an excellent guide to the global economy, by Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello.

bodies" of the global economy conduct their operations in secret and impose far-reaching decisions without the consent of the communities affected by them. Now, corporate elites are negotiating an agreement defined by the WTO as "the constitution for a single global economy." The Multilateral Agreement on Investment is scheduled to be announced by the Clinton Administration this fall. It aims to enhance NAFTA's most dangerous, anti-democratic provisions and extend them to the entire world.*

Multi-national corporations are able to trample the economic and social rights of the world's majority because the global arena lacks any countervailing democratic structures through which to oppose them. In fact, the creation of effective mechanisms to win transparency, accountability and representation for ordinary people in the workings of the global economy is a central challenge of today's progressive movements. MADRE is part of this emerging effort. Our support for local women's initiatives in Chiapas, Haiti and Guatemala enables marginalized women to resist the worst of neo-liberal abuses. MADRE's inter-

national advocacy helps these women take an active role in the project of creating new, democratic structures in the global arena; and MADRE's work in the US helps promote alternatives to exploitative economic policies.

Advances in the fight for women's human rights, such as MADRE's work against rape as a weapon of war, have taught us the importance of creating international responses to global problems based on women's local experience. The formula is crucial in a world where key concerns (unemployment, immigration, environmental destruction, militarization, etc.) are not only global in scope, but more interconnected than ever before. To overcome today's problems, we must replace single-issue politics and purely national solutions with integrated approaches and effective international organizing. This model, which has always been the foundation of MADRE's work, is proving critical in the struggle to defend economic human rights for women and families around the world. ♀

* To learn more about the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and find out why and how you should oppose it, visit MADRE's website at <http://www.MADRE.org> or contact MADRE.

From the MADRE Bookshelf: NEW BOOKS BY MADRE MEMBERS

The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender and Freedom, by Barbara Smith: This collection of essays is a cornerstone of Black feminism and women's studies; a primer for all of us in the crucial business of "working for liberation and having a damn good time."

Negotiating Women's Reproductive Rights: Women's Perspectives Across Countries and Cultures, edited by Rosalind Petchesky and Karen Judd: Based on interviews with women in Brazil, Egypt, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines and the US, this book explores women's decisions about childbearing, work, marriage, fertility control and sexual relations. It provides an important tool for translating women's reproductive and sexual rights into concrete policies and programs.

The Farming of Bones: Edwidge Danticat's latest novel tells the story of the 1937 massacre of Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic. It is as much a story of love and dignity as of persecution and endurance. This is a beautiful, poetic and powerful book.

Help Spread the MADRE Word

Opportunities for MADRE to reach new people are a crucial way to raise awareness and support for our programs. If you are affiliated with a university, religious or community institution that could arrange a MADRE speaking engagement, please let us know.



Jon Snow

Traditional Medicinal Herbal Teas will feature a description of MADRE on its packages throughout 1999. If you know of other creative ways to promote MADRE's work, please pass along your suggestions.



Laura Flanders

Loud & Clear

MADRE SPEAKS TO THE MEDIA will help us reach even more people through the press, radio & TV. If you know a journalist or editor whom we should speak with, please send us their contact information. Thanks!



Jon Snow

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photos: (HENDERSON-HOLMES & CUNNINGHAM) Jon Snow; (KENNEDY) Peggy Siegal



Emergency Relief to Cuba and Haiti

• MADRE members responded to the devastation of Hurricane Georges with generous support for medicine, water purification supplies, food, blankets and clothing for survivors. Many thanks from our sisters and their families in Cuba and Haiti.

Haitian Women Continue to Call for Justice

• The women of MADRE's sister organization, SOFA, also send thanks to the hundreds of MADRE members who telephoned the US embassy in Port-au-Prince in April, demanding an investigation into the police raid on Klinik Fam. In May, MADRE's Executive Director, Vivian Stromberg, and MADRE member David Foecke visited the clinic, which provides health care and human rights training to women in one of Haiti's poorest communities. They marched with nearly 1000 SOFA supporters protesting police violence and met with Haitian and US authorities to deliver a powerful message: namely, that local police, trained and installed by the US, will be held accountable for human rights violations.

• On September 16, the New York City Council heard a resolution calling for the extradition of Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, leader of FRAPH, the Haitian paramilitary group that waged a campaign of murder and rape against democracy supporters in Haiti. After the 1994 coup d'etat, the US government granted Constant permission to live and work in New York. Vivian Stromberg and MADRE Board members Marie Saint-Cyr and Anne Hess testified at



David Foecke

Klinik Fam was reopened within a week of April's police raid. Support from MADRE members gave SOFA women added courage to continue their work despite the attack.



Anne Hess

Representatives of MADRE's sister organizations were part of the delegation to Cuba. Olga Rivas, director of GRUFEPROMEFAM in Guatemala, helped deliver toys to children in Havana.

the hearing in support of Haitian women's demand that Constant be extradited to stand trial for his crimes in Haiti.

MADRE Delegation Visits Cuba

• More than 60 women joined MADRE's April 1998 trip to Cuba. The delegation attended the International Women's Conference in Havana, with participants from over 70 countries, and saw first-hand the effects of the US embargo on Cuba's health care system. Together with the US+Cuba Medical Project, MADRE members delivered much-needed medicines and supplies to the Cuban Red Cross. Plans for our 1999 Cuba delegation are now underway.

War-time Rape Survivors Get Their Day in Court

• This summer, governments met in Rome to establish a permanent international criminal court to prosecute human rights violators. The Women's Caucus for Gender Justice, representing women's organizations from around the world and sponsored by MADRE, saw to it that war-time violence against women, including rape and enforced pregnancy, were treated with the same seriousness as human rights violations directed at men. Despite US government objections to the establishment of the court, The Women's Caucus scored a fundamental victory, marking the first time an international body will be required to address war crimes specifically affecting women.

• In September, Jean Paul Akayesu, the former mayor of Taba, Rwanda, was found guilty of inciting acts of genocide, including rape. The judgement, handed down by the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda, is the first conviction for rape in an international court. The Tribunal's decision was widely recognized as a result of "pressure from women's groups," (*The New York Times*, 9/5/98). MADRE is proud to have been a part of this effort.



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• Joining hands & hearts with women & families for peace, justice & human rights •



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MADRE is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization. All contributions to MADRE are tax deductible to the extent of the law. A copy of MADRE's latest financial report can be obtained by writing to the New York Department of State, Office of Charities Registration.

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Introduce a friend or relative to MADRE by sending them a gift membership in celebration of a birthday, wedding, holiday or special event. For \$30 or more per membership, MADRE will send an acknowledgement to you and an information packet and membership to the people you list below.

NAME _____	NAME _____
ADDRESS _____	ADDRESS _____
CITY/STATE/ZIP _____	CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

Enclosed is \$30 or more for each Gift Membership

YOUR NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY/STATE/ZIP _____
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 ADDRESS _____
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