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Women in A Global Environment

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This Second Edition, *Women in A Global Environment*, comes after our very successful First Edition the theme of which was *Feminists Confront Empire*. In her editorial notes to the First Edition, Dr. Nagel discussed the shortcomings of Western Feminism and acknowledged the rising voices from the rest of the world. As a journal, Wagadu wants to be a forum for women's issues from all over the world and in all the languages that our logistical capabilities allow us to handle. We were particularly grateful to have submissions this time in Spanish. We look forward to having articles soon submitted from Arabic to Zulu since diversity and inclusion is our motto.

The theme of this second issue is *Women in A Global Environment*. Though we have received more submissions than we could publish, the excellent articles presented here only begin to scratch the surface of this theme. Women have played important roles in the shaping of the world locally, nationally and globally. As mothers of emperors, priests, warriors and slaves, advisors in the fore and background, major actors in all the historical events that have shaped our Global Environment, the role played by women cannot be exaggerated. In many ways, women constitute the currency that sets in motion, directs or balances global trends and thoughts. Slowly, but surely, we are getting there. "There" is the time and place when and where the studying and understanding of women's predicament will become the basis of understanding the global human condition.

There were many issues to be addressed on *Women in A Global Environment*. The following articles are sub-themes that we have retained for this second issue of Wagadu.

Women's Transnational Identities in a Global World:

Gastaldo, Gooden and Massaquoi's bring a very interesting interdisciplinary approach to the intersection of immigration, gender and health promotion studies. We learn from this article that the average immigrant to Canada is healthier and more educated than the average Canadian though after 10 years the former are in poorer health (Chen et al., 1996, Dunn & Dyck 2000, in Gastaldo et al). The article also contradicts traditional migration theory by showing that primary migrants to Canada are female. It will be interesting to know if these migration trends are found in the rest of the developed nations and find out the sociopolitical reasons that sustain such migratory patterns.

Gastaldo, Gooden and Massaquoi take a social constructionist approach to transnationalism in order to understand how the transnational subjectivities (of immigrant women involved in the promotion of the health of transnational individuals and communities) are constructed. Unlike the globalization phenomenon, Gastaldo *et al* discuss how transnationalism is a set of negotiated and overlapping identities, and intertwined economic, political and socio-cultural lives. The transnational woman's identity as "immigrant" coexists with other identities in transnational social spaces. With their overlapping and intertwined identities, transnational women actively generate wealth and engage in the production of health and well-being for their families, communities and nations in international networks.

Gerhard echoes some of the transnational women's identity issues presented in Gastaldo et al. Informed by transnational feminism, Gerhard's article is the textual analysis of two transnational women's autobiographical works, one born in France to parents of Algerian origin, the other born in the United States to parents of Hispanic New Mexican heritage. The two women find themselves struggling to find an identity facing racism, rejection and cultural oppression while growing up in the society of their place of birth. Both women try to escape their ambiguous life contexts by traveling to the countries of their roots only to find that to some extent they are strangers there too. Gerhard does an excellent analysis of the critical cultural tension points in these autoethnographies where each autobiographer faces situations that makes her feel she has a split identity. These two women's condition makes one think of the West-African Mandingue metaphor of the "bat," considered to be a non-bird, a non-animal and a bird-animal. These women are in a prison of split identity, the concept of prison being actually used by one of the authors. These transnational women find a resolution in reintegrating the societies of their birth, not by embracing its culture, but by "branching out across national borders" and connecting with other women who have transnational stories of their own.

Gómez , Bonilla and Jódar's contribution to this issue discusses the transformations in feminist thought that have come about when new generations of transnational and transdisciplinary feminist theorists. The result was a movement away from the singular idea of "woman" towards the recognition of multiple variables (race, social class, age, sexual preference), recognition of the possibility of multiple subjectivities in defining "woman." This movement constitutes both an epistemological and a political shift allowing an understanding of the influence of the local into the global issues and vice versa. We are especially grateful for this contribution, not just for its intellectual import, but for the Spanish medium in which it is written since we want Wagadu to be the place where all languages find a home.

Sisters but Unequally Globally Connected:

The Internet is a powerful tool that has helped give a voice to the voiceless. A very good example for this is the role the Internet has played in the hands of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). Women remain unequal sisters in their global connectivity however. Krista Hunt's article discusses how an important tool such as the Internet in the hands the Afghani women can only serve the privileged ones among them. She further warns us against identifying the cybervoices of privileged local women as representative of all local women. Her article invites us to critically assess issues of access along the lines of gender, class, race, education and location etc. Not only is there a major digital divide between Western and non-Western women, but this divide exists locally in the developing countries and contributes to the exclusion of the majority of women who are prevented from adding their voice to transnational feminist discourse.

Women in Global History:

History like many other disciplines has long been androcentric. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's article asks the question whether women's voices can be recovered from the Zimbabwean past. This article claims that women remain invisible and their voices unheard even in the most recent narratives of the Zimbabwean pre-colonial history. In some cases, women's voices may even be silenced for ideological reasons. Using post-structuralist and feminist approaches as well subaltern views, Ndlovu-Gatsheni criticizes the patriarchal nature of Western metanarratives and hagiography. In the case of Zimbabwe, the discipline has always dominated by males who have had very little interest in gender and women history. Ndlovu-Gatsheni proposes new methodologies that will decipher women's voices from various sources of history.

Women and Global HIV/AIDS:

Discussing the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa Lesetedi and Wodi through parallel analyses argue that understanding gender roles and relations is very important in facing the HIV/AIDS challenge in Africa. These two enlightening articles discuss how gender bias in Africa puts women in a position of powerlessness in a sociological sense.

Lesetedi writes that gender inequalities generate different responses from African societies in the HIV/AIDS crisis in ways that are favorable to men. Men have more resources than women. Men have more sexual partners than women and for this reason are the main vehicles for the spread of the AIDS virus. In spite of men's role in the spreading of the disease Lesetedi further argues that gender inequalities have often contributed to the social construction of HIV/AIDS as a woman's disease in African societies. She concludes that an important step in fighting this global disease is to recognize HIV/AIDS as equally male, female and global problem.

Wodi supports that patriarchy in Africa continues to shape the overall socialization of girls including their sexual behavior. The patriarchal nature of African societies makes it that women are vulnerable to sexual violence and coercion and consequently to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Wodi concludes that measures that will reverse gender subordination (poverty reduction, education) and culturally relevant public health education are necessary to deal with this global crisis. Both Lesetedi and Wodi think that the feminization of poverty (with all its implications) is in part responsible for women's vulnerability to this global disease.

The articles we are publishing in the second edition represent issues concerning women in our global environment. As mentioned above, we have just scratched the surface of this theme. We appreciate the contribution of these authors in fueling the intellectual debate with novel ideas on women issues. We also thank them for shedding the light on the lacunae we have in understanding the conditions of the other half of humanity in this androcentric global environment.

Women and the Global Environment

Nagel's paper treats how environmental activism and justice and global peace are interconnected. In a tribute to the 2004 Nobel Prize winner, the Kenyan Wangari Maathai, Nagel discusses Maathai's visions on how environmental rights and human rights are linked, cutting across ethnic, cultural and ideological bases, and potentially constituting a globalizing platform. Maathai's Green Belt Movement, built on consensus reaching strategy in Kenya could spread to the rest of the African continent, and why not to our global planet ?