



FEMINIST
TASK FORCE

Women in Libraries

Volume 28, Number 2

The Feminist Task Force—25 Years

Spring 1999

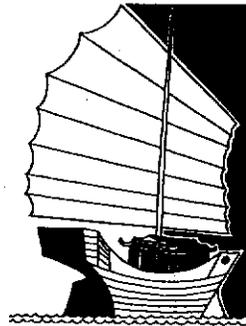
New Orleans, 1999



*ALA holds Annual meeting
in New Orleans, Summer
1999.*

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—tear out and put it in your pocket
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Letter from Beijing.

Interracial Relationships
in the People's Republic

*Ed. note: Daisy Tainton, a junior at
Simmons College, has spent the past
academic year in Beijing. This is the first
in a series on her experiences there.*

I first heard, like a rumor, that China's government forbids interracial couples. So I wondered, what are popular Chinese views on interracial dating, marriage and mixed children? And do people consider these views racist? I spent some time studying and talking to people in Beijing on this topic.

Though there aren't actual laws restricting interactions with people of different races, the government officially "discouraged" such cross-cultural activities during and after the Cultural Revolution in 1949. Everyone who had been abroad was labeled suspect. The Chinese public was adequately frightened away from beginning or continuing relationships with foreigners, making uneasiness in the presence of any "foreign devils" last many years. China-watchers faced difficulties at every turn in their investigations due to the government's threats towards Chinese who cooperated. Well-educated feminist Wu Qing offered as explanation for these behaviors the two sides of China's foreign relations coin. One side is a pervasive ethnocentrism; the other is a xenocentrism, born perhaps of a yearning towards new ideas and the glitter of a modern, fast civilization beyond China's bounds.

An illustration of the underlying current of bureaucratic hostility leftover from the past is the warning to travelers printed in *Lonely Planet's Guide to Beijing*. The author, Robert Storey, explains Chinese awkwardness in the face of interracial relations thus: "China is a bastion of male chauvinism." Sex, then, is the issue, and while it may be more complex than that, he warns that it will cause mixed couples to suffer verbal abuse and harassment. This last I have found to be very true, indeed.

After hearing comments on the streets (meant for my boyfriend's ears) of congratulations for

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"getting" a foreign woman, and seeing the disapproving looks people give male classmates involved with Asian girls, I began to ask about this. My Chinese language teacher offered her opinion that people on the street think an Asian woman would be trying to get out of the country by marriage or of being attracted to money, and that foreigners are not as marriage-minded as average Chinese; a white woman, on the other hand, would give up her country or her lifestyle and become a part of a Chinese family.

Another woman, a vendor in an indoor market, said she didn't think this was quite true, but of course there are people who think this way. She suggested that people may snidely judge the couple as being half sinophile, half xenophile, and laugh at their mutual obsession as a superficial fancy. She and my teacher agreed, though, that as long as they are in love, no one has the right to criticize them.

My teacher has a grown son, and says that she would never tell him whom to date or not to date based on race. In most areas, though, integration of a starkly different racial minority is much more difficult than integration of ideas and ideology. People believe that they are open minded, but when confronted with a completely new kind of person, with strange habits and language, not to mention our glow-in-the-dark skin, they feel some discomfort. My Chinese teacher has said numerous times that before she met us, her first Americans, she thought English was unpleasant and that we all looked similar. Now she thinks English is interesting and is very interested in each of us individually, but how many Beijingers have yet to experience close contact with Europeans or Americans? Judging from the stares and shouts we get, whether in small groups or alone, I would say very, very many.

My tutor, Yu Chi Na, told me the only thing that bothers students and young people about Westerners is the idea of casual relationships; in this group, many think that if you don't plan to marry, you shouldn't date at all.

A musician friend of mine, Xiao Rong, 19, told me that people his father's age regard anyone with identifiably foreign girl- or boyfriends as a player, but as long as they don't get themselves arrested no one minds too much. People may try to shelter Chinese girls more from damage to their reputations and marriageable status—an old fashioned principle, perhaps, but common in all parts of the globe.

One white girl who has a Chinese boyfriend and goes with him to popular expatriate clubs told me that the Chinese in these places often watch her and that they seem to think she regards her boyfriend as some sort of prize. But why do these people go to known hang-outs for foreigners if they have feelings like this? My teacher suspects some of these people only look to foreign people for money and a good time, knowing that many of the rich foreigners look to them for similar reasons.

Historically, pale skin has long been a desirable trait among Chinese. The court make-up of em-

presses, for example, included a very light-colored powder. By the turn of the century, advertisements for cigarettes and beauty products proudly displayed disturbing, gleaming white Chinese models. More recently, idols of popular culture, including Jackie Chan, disfigured their faces to make their eyes wider, more Western-looking. They did this to appeal both to Western audiences and to Chinese taste for aspects of Western looks. Every Chinese fashion magazine now has bountiful commercials for the multitude of skin whitening products that are available at every cosmetics stand.

Now, do the Chinese consider their views racist? Judging from the body language and facial expressions of the people I interviewed, I would have to say that their opinions of what makes an idea racist are the same as mine, or most people I know. When speaking of people in the countryside, or when older people speak of themselves a few years ago, they seem uncomfortable and slightly embarrassed to say they were not as open-minded as they now feel they should be. Even though modern ideas of liberalism are growing here, some uneasiness may last. Nevertheless, people understand what racism is and don't want to be guilty of it; I think this is admirable and promising for China's future.

Living in such a different country has been difficult, but I have learned a great deal: about Chinese attitudes towards integration, relationship-wise and otherwise; and about the Chinese mindset in looking towards the future of cross-cultural relations within China. I didn't expect to find such

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Women in Libraries

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~holman/FTF/>

Women in Libraries, the Newsletter of the American Library Association's Feminist Task Force, is published four times a year. To subscribe, inquire about your subscription, or to change your address, write to Diedre Conkling, Publisher, Women in Libraries, c/o ALA, SRRT, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611. Subscriptions are \$5 for individuals, \$8 for institutions (prepaid), or \$10 for invoiced subscriptions. Personnel: Madeleine Tainton, Editor, West Texas A&M University; Diedre Conkling, Publisher, Lincoln County, Oregon, Library District; Theresa Tobin, Listserv Administrator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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Women's Night Out

All Women Librarians, their Friends and Supporters are Invited

Monday, June 28, 1999

8:00 to 10:00 p.m.

at

825 Royal Street

**(Courtyard of Art Dealer
Barbara Louviere)**

Entertainment



Gina Forsyth

**Folk singer and musician
Fiddler with the Bruce Dalgrepont Cajun Band**

Sponsored by the Feminist Task Force, ALA/SRRT



ALA/SRRT Feminist Task Force
1999 Feminist Authors Breakfast

Women in Place

Lee Meitzen Grue

New Orleans author of *Goodbye Silver, Silver Cloud: New Orleans Stories*, published by Plain View Press

"If Lee Meitzen Grue didn't exist, the New Orleans literary community would have to invent her." --New Orleans Times-Picayune



Abby Bogomolny

Editor of and a contributor to *New to North America: Writing by U.S. Immigrants, Their Children and Grandchildren*, from Burning Bush Publications

New to North America: "...strongly represents the experiences of people of color as well as people who arrived on the west coast of this land, rather than taking the European or Euro-American experience as the norm." -- Feminist Bookstore News

Sunday, June 27, 1999

8:30-11:00a.m.

Embassy Suites, LaFille 4

Tickets: \$18 (library school students, \$15)

Send check to: Dorothy Granger, 5 Westmorland Place, Pasadena, CA 91103

**American Library Association Annual Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana**

1999 American Library Association Annual Conference Schedule

Meetings for FTF Members

Saturday, June 26

8:00-9:30 a.m. **FTF Membership** (part of All-Task-Force Mtg.), Fair, University Room
9:30-11 a.m. SRRT Action Council I, Fair, Bayou I
11:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m. Introduction to Women's Groups in ALA, Sheraton New Orleans, Pontcha A or EMCC-263 (differing places posted, check schedule)

Sunday, June 27

8:30—11:00 a.m. Feminist Author's Breakfast, Embassy Stes—Lafitte 4
9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m. GLBTF Membership, Hil Magnolia
2:00—4:00 p.m. COSWL Meeting, EMCC-339
6:00—8:00 p.m. GLBTF Social, Mer Ile de Fr. Br III
8:00—10:00 p.m. **FTF Membership**, Hil Salon 9
8:00—10:00 p.m. GLBTF Read Aloud, Mer Conde

Monday, June 28

8:00—9:00 a.m. **FTF Membership Mtg.** EMCC (Convention Center) #223
8:00—10:15 a.m. GLBTF Award Breakfast, Mer Ile de Fr. Br I
10:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m. GLBTF Program, Mer Ile de Fr. Br I
1:00—2:00 p.m. SRRT Membership: Dbl, Intl. Br
2:00—4:00 p.m. Action Council II: Dbl, Intl. Br
8:00—10:00 p.m. **FTF Women's Night Out**

French Quarter at 825 Royal Street (between St. Ann and Dumaine)

Tuesday, June 29

8:00—9:00 a.m. COSWL Meeting, EMCC—215

Dbl=Doubletree Hotel
EMCC=Convention Center
Fair=Fairmont Hotel
Hil=Hilton N.O. Riverside Hotel
Mer=Le Meridian



Book Review Section

Women's poverty in America

Dujon, Diane and Ann Withorn, editors. *For Crying Out Loud: Women's Poverty in the United States*. Boston: South End Press, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 0-89608-530-9, \$22.00; paper, ISBN 0-89608-529-5.

With the help of many essayists who have themselves experienced poverty in the United States, the editors use the condition of the single mother on welfare to examine the poverty of women overall in this country. Older women, single women without children, and poor married women are not heard from directly: "We, and all the authors in this volume, assume that almost all women can be mothers, that all mothers can be single mothers, and that most single mothers are vulnerable to poverty because of the demands of childrearing. Therefore, the security available to single mothers becomes a central measure of how well our society supports all women." Although we could argue this theory, this volume of work is invaluable, particularly in the light of recent welfare reforms.

Despite public speeches from conservative religious, political, and business groups about the importance of motherhood, being a mother is not in and of itself a job worthy of pay. Withorn lists what's wrong with welfare in her essay, "We Don't All Agree That Welfare Has Failed," "Motherhood is not enough; parenting cannot be supported as an economic category of socially valued work." Ironically, the groups that decry the breakdown of the family are the same ones quick to point out the failure of welfare. Motherhood should be financed by one man, not society in their views, and they are more likely to quote a story detailing welfare fraud than the much more common welfare reality.

Getting women off welfare into jobs is the goal of many who want reform. But as Nancy Rose asks, "What jobs will be available? Years of plant closings, downsizing, and streamlining have eliminated millions of higher wage jobs...The majority of jobs that have been created are low wage, service sector jobs with no health benefits." She goes on to suggest that the government create programs similar to the WPA (Works Progress Administration) in the 1930s based on market wages and which were voluntary rather than workfare.

Teen mothers, immigrant mothers, battered mothers—a wide range of experiences and problems are explored in this compilation of women's experiences with the welfare system.

This book should be a primer for those going into social services—a view from the other side of the desk. Certainly it would be valuable in women's studies classes, but more importantly it should be included in traditional history and political science classes. It is far too easy to dismiss those women and children who have "fallen through the cracks in

the system." Any opening wide enough for an individual to pass through is not a crack, it is a chasm.

—P. Crossland

New thoughts on an old theme

Segal, Lynne, editor. *New Sexual Agendas*. New York: New York University Press, 1997. Paper, ISBN 0-8147-8075-X, \$17.95.

The sexual revolution is thought to be a twentieth century phenomenon, but, according to *New Sexual Agendas*, society has been openly grappling with sexual issues since the end of the Victorian era. Sexuality and sexual practices may be intimate and personal, but sex has never been a private affair. For her fifth publication on the topic of sexuality, Lynne Segal has brought together nineteen essays, written by notable authorities, which explore the history and contemporary societal aspects of sexual expression. This work addresses the related issues of historical awareness, medical and moral treatment, and social conflicts. The underlying theme of the collection is that varying sexual practices have been in existence since the human race began, however, the way society deals with the freedom of sexual expression has been the ever-changing factor. How does sexual diversity fit with the norm? How deeply does the stigma of labels such as "gay," "queer," and "homo" erode into social values and personal identity? Has modern society placed homosexuals in an ethnic group of their own? Is the sexual revolution to blame for such medical epidemics as AIDS, herpes, and HIV? What impact has the gradual social acceptance of new sexual agendas had on the family structure? These are just some of the issues addressed in what is a significant collection of thoughtful essays.

Recommended for adult interests and research.

—L. Duda

Adjusting to Southern Reconstruction

Edwards, Laura F. *Gendered Strife and Confusion*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 0-252-02297-1, \$49.95; paper, ISBN 0-252-06600-6, \$24.95.

"Late in 1864, Susan Daniel, the wife of a landless white man, accused two slaves, William Cooper and Henderson Cooper of rape." Using this and other incidents in Granville County, North Carolina, Edwards demonstrates how men's and women's perceptions of their private roles shaped their expectations in political arenas. The book is divided topically, exploring marriage, labor, gender roles, civil and political rights, and the collapse of the Knights of Labor.

The influence of emancipation upon the private lives of former slaves extended far beyond the dismissal of a master-slave relationship. Unsettled

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Book Review Section

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by the loss of direct control over the Freedman population, the county government sought political means to regain lost ground. One of the first issues to come to a head was marriage; since slaves could not enter into legal contracts, slave marriage was not recognized. Provisional governor William W. Holden felt moved to advise freedmen that in order to pursue happiness and prosperity three elements were needed: "Marriage, hard work, and education." By insisting on legal contracts between married couples, the government shifted the economic responsibility for children from the government to the fathers and husbands. "Abdication of all economic responsibility for the freedpeople became the official policy of the county and state governments," writes Edwards.

Edwards' attention to detail in issues emergent in one small county generalize in good part to the rest of the southern states. Economic status is not passed over; the role of the elite rich in imposing their moral standards not only on former slaves but poor whites met with limited success. Too often studies of the Reconstruction omits the impact of the private sphere on political decisions; this text fills that void.

—P. Crossland

Women's prisons in the Old West

Butler, Anne M. *Gendered Justice in the American West: Women Prisoners in Men's Penitentiaries*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 0-252-02281-5, \$29.95.

Female convicts within the criminal justice system are a perennial problem. What facilities they should have, what programs should be provided, whether conviction for their crimes constitutes double victimization are questions many authors have raised. *Gendered Justice* focuses on a period before these questions were asked, when women did not even have separate penal facilities. In the American West (which for this study excludes the west coast and Northwest regions), between 1865-1915, women in the state penal system were sent to men's prisons. In many cases, they were excluded from whatever educational and recreational programs were provided for the males, and often even from work programs. Few facilities were available for differing biological needs, and inside the prison they were often subject to the same or worse punishments than the men.

The author's premise is that women in the American West were as involved in and surrounded by violence as men, using domestic violence, largely cloaked from public view, as an example. Butler examines some case histories of women prisoners, a general description of prisons, and devotes some space to problems specific to women convicts. While asserting, however, that the experience of women in

this particular region, in this particular era was unique, she does not substantiate this. Did women in the West have less power within the justice system than those in the East? Were women at that time subject to more hidden domestic violence than at other times, even the present? Was deprivation and torture within the prison worse for the women subjected to it than for the males who endured the same treatment? Common sense tells most of us that women in this situation were probably at an inherent disadvantage, and endured hardships men may not have been subject to, but the work in hand builds upon this assumption with little substantiation.

Gendered Justice contains several inherent contradictions. At one point the author argues that upon becoming embroiled in the criminal justice system a woman lost her place within the ranks of womanhood, and all support she might expect therein. Later, she gives examples of women who called upon friends, family and community members to advocate on their behalf, and were subsequently pardoned. She argues that the prison was an area based upon masculine principles, in which women had no niche, and that thus they were disadvantaged within it. She then offers examples of women who obtained early pardons simply because the penitentiaries had no facilities to deal with them, which seems something less than a disadvantage.

The most enlightening chapters of this work are those which do focus on the unique experiences of women within the walls of male prisons. The accounts of women's health problems, the incidence of pregnancies which often began after incarceration, the descriptions of caring for children while in prison, the reports of use of female prisoners as sex workers are fascinating. If the work had contained more of this, and less general prison information, it would have been improved. As it is, those chapters which do deal with the woman-specific aspects of the subject are worth buying the book for, while we may hope for a more focused treatment in the future.

—K. Thompson



Book Review Section

Censorship from ALA?

Parker, Alison M. *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 0-252-02329-3, \$42.50, paper, ISBN 0-252-06625-1, \$16.95.

Censorship, a topic of debate since the founding of this country, is viewed much differently in the timetable of *Purifying America* than it is currently. It would surprise many people to know that organizations like the American Library Association (ALA) and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) advocated the use of censorship to regulate America's social morals and culture. "[P]rofessional organizations supported a pro-censorship agenda including the National Education Association (NEA), The National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and the National Congress of Mothers (later known as the PTA)."

The child development theory of this era held strictly to the idea that children mimic what they see. "New York state's superintendent of the Department of Purity in Literature and Art, Harriet Pritchard, dramatically declared that even the mere 'sight of and evilly suggestive picture on the wall, easel, or book...often draws a young woman or man over the brink of destruction.'" The WCTU labeled any work it disapproved of as "immoral;" in addition, Parker provides a list of words used interchangeably with immoral—lewd, coarse, disgusting, bad, trashy, ignoble, and unseemly, to cite a few.

The pro-censorship movement of the current time has much in common with this prior movement. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) advocated then and now censorship as a means to protest and halt certain racist films. The NACW joined the fight and "saw its work, which included condemnations of lynchings and segregated streetcars, as being in harmony with that of the pro-censorship WCTU."

Parker parallels a number of points between current and earlier alliances. Education and pornography are still targeted, as well as films. Not content to dictate what the popular mores should be, Christian evangelicals use the very same media to vociferously attack, producing cable programs, videos, and compact discs intended to replace "impure" forms. Making a tidy profit while shaping cultural norms is an added bonus.

This is an engrossing, highly readable text that expands the limited portrayal of the WCTU as merely being an anti-temperance movement.—P. Crossland

African bibliography

Mukangara, Fenella. *Women and Gender Studies in Tanzania: an Annotated Bibliography (1982-94)*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1995. Paper, \$27.00.

Mukangara, of the Library at the University of Dar es Salaam, set out to compile a comprehensive bibliography on women and gender in Tanzania that would update earlier bibliographies. She provides an impressive listing of 956 published and unpublished works, including books, dissertations, journal articles, research reports, seminar papers, and conference and workshop proceedings. Mukangara and her researchers investigated collections in libraries, governmental agencies, and international organizations located in Tanzania and consulted academicians, researchers, practitioners, activists, and seminar/conference participants. The bibliography is arranged into 10 broad subject headings: agriculture/rural development, bibliographies, economic development, education/training, health/nutrition, labor/employment, legal rights, politics, social welfare, and women's organizations. Abstracts accompany more than half of the entries. Locations of materials are given, as are call numbers when available. Indexing is by author and subject.

The bibliography suffers from flaws that limit its usefulness for researchers, particularly those outside the country, who are among the intended audience. The addition of addresses would aid researchers wishing to obtain copies. Complete bibliographic information is not always given, especially for works cited separately from the parent publication. Brief introductions accompanying the subject sections would be helpful, as would translations of titles. In updates, attention should be given to insuring that omissions and inaccuracies are corrected in the indexes. Nevertheless, this bibliography is a valuable reference tool for those with research interests in women and gender in Tanzania.—B. Hightower



Letter from Beijing, continued from page 2

open-mindedness and understanding after being accosted with stares and shouts for so long after arriving: my own responses show how easy it is to generalize from public behavior rather than personal contact. I feel more optimism now, and my own mindset has undergone changes. Talking to people and reading what I could, I have discovered the basis for the attitudes of people with varying points of view, and their legitimacy. I'm thankful that I have met and talked with so many warm and interesting people.

—D. Tainton

Women in Libraries
American Library Association
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Coming Summer issue:

- 8 pages of book reviews for your summer reading;
- *Letter from Beijing*: Part 2 of series
A Girls' School in Beijing

