

October, 1997

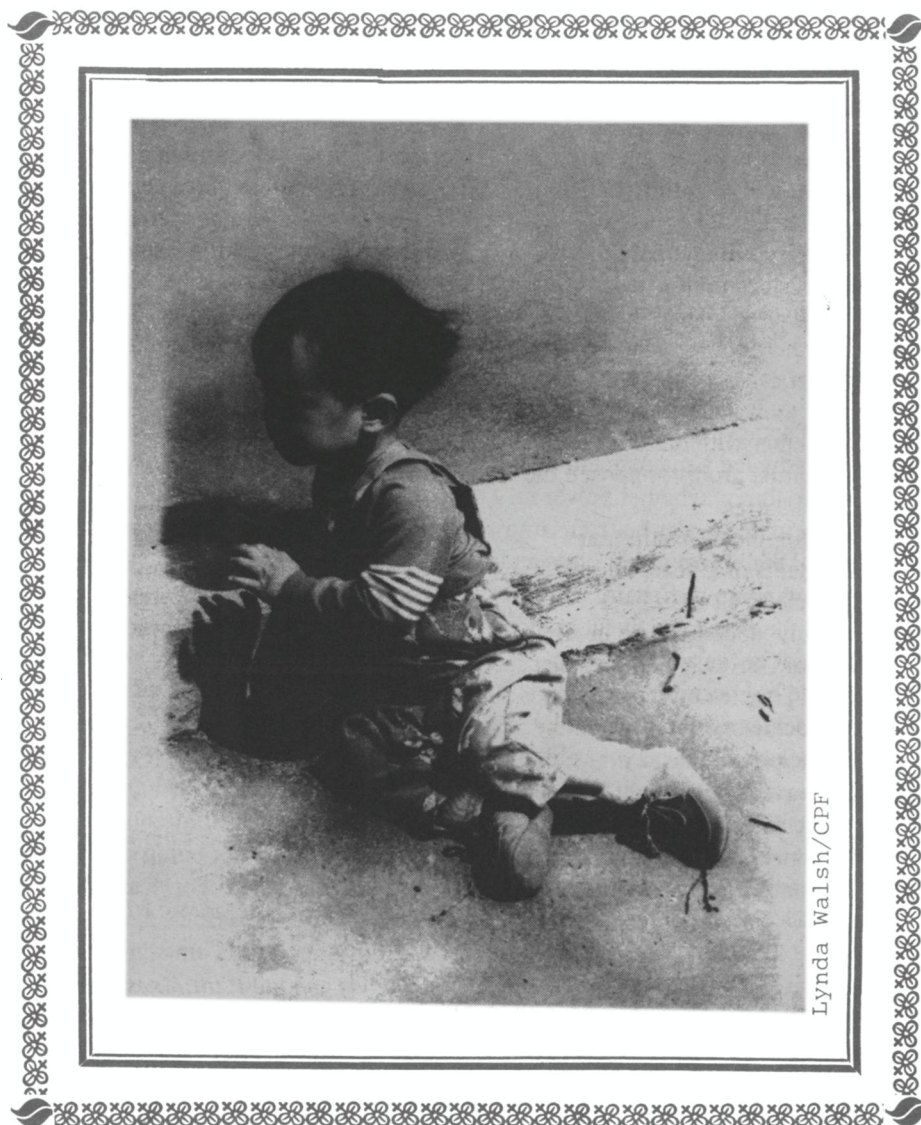
Women and Children, Militarism, and Human Rights: International Women's Working Conference

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International Women's Working Conference



Indochina Newsletter/CPF

From 1-4 May 1997 forty women activists and researchers from Japan, Korea, Okinawa, the Philippines, and the United States gathered in Okinawa to talk and strategize together about the effects of U.S. military bases in each of these countries, especially on women and children. The core organizing group included Gwyn Kirk, Margo Okazawa-Rey, and Marth Matsuoka from the U.S., and Carolyn Francis and Suzuyo Takazato from Okinawa.

Country Reports

The first day of the meeting was open to the public and participants heard reports from each country.

The Philippines

Aida Santos, Director of WEDPRO, began by noting that since 1898, when the U.S. first colonized the Philippines,

there have been as many as 21 U.S. bases and 100,000 U.S. military personnel stationed there. The two governments made official agreements about "rest and relaxation" (R and R), and an estimated 60,000 women and children, working in bars, night clubs, and massage parlors serviced U.S. military personnel. Militarized prostitution has had very serious effects on women's health, including HIV/AIDs, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, drug and alcohol dependency, malnutrition, respiratory diseases, and psychological problems related to the trauma and violence of this work. The overall economic, social, and cultural impact of the bases has been to strengthen neo-colonial relations. The best land is not used for local food production but to

grow cash crops or for industrial development, and the best goods and services are thought to come from outside. The lure of materialism is connected to a colonial mentality with the image of the U.S. as powerful and wealthy. Seventy percent of people in the Philippines live below the poverty line.

In 1992, two major bases, Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base were closed after the Philippines Senate withdrew permission for U.S. bases in the country, under pressure from pro-democracy and anti-bases movements. Both bases are very large (Subic Bay took up some 70,000 acres) and their closure presented a major opportunity for new development. Though several plans that would benefit local people were presented, including

recommendations by WEDPRO, the government preferred to attract foreign investment from Japan, Taiwan, Korea, the U.S., and Europe, using local people as cheap labor. Both bases now have new hotels, casinos, golf courses, and duty-free shops. Their very large airfields are international airports, bringing tourists and developers directly to these development areas. Military buildings have been converted for use as hotels, housing for the Philippines air force, and factories making electronic products, and hospital supplies. Federal Express now uses Subic Bay as its Asia hub. Most jobs are part-time or temporary, and low paid, sometimes below the minimum wage (of 143 pesos per day). As mayor of Olongapo City (next to Subic Bay), Richard Gordon initiated a project he calls "People

Power" (appropriating the slogan of 1980s democracy movements) where people volunteer to work on the base for a year, clearing trash, planting and weeding flower beds. There is no guarantee that they will get paid employment after doing this free work, though this is implied. There has been no government help for the many women who used to work in bars and clubs near the base, or for their Amerasian children. WEDPRO, together with other Philippines feminist groups, opposed the presence of U.S. bases.

The Philippines Constitution enshrines the ideals of a peaceful, just, and humane society; a self-reliant national economy; social justice in all phases of national development; respect for the rights of people and organizations at all levels of decision-making; and the protection of people's rights to a balanced and healthful ecology. It is now nearly seven years since the United States military withdrew from the Philippines but there have been no government programs to address the needs of women and children. Women who had worked in the bars were faced with how to make a living. Some went to South Korea or Guam to service GIs, others moved to Filipino bars and clubs, and still others tried to make a go of small businesses. Many are still working in the bars around Olongapo and Angeles, servicing GIs on shore leave and tourists, mainly from Australia and Europe.

Amerasian children are a particularly stigmatized group. The average age of Amerasians in the Philippines is 12 years. Two-thirds are raised by single mothers; others by relatives and non-relatives; 6% live on their own or in institutions. 90% are born "out of wedlock." As a group Amerasians suffer great discrimination. Generally there is no regular income in their families; and they are discriminated against in employment due to stigma, a lack of training and education, the absence of credit, and other supports for poor families. Six basic needs identified by Amerasians are education, employment, housing, livelihood, skills, and U.S. citizenship so as to be able to find their fathers.

Aida Santos also noted two other serious problems of the post-base years: the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), and toxic contamination of the base lands. The ACSA gives the U.S. military access to 22 Philippines ports and airports for refueling, supplies, repairs, and R and R—potentially much greater access than before. In March 1996 some 2,500-3,000 GIs took shore leave in Angeles and Olongapo, such a high demand that the mayors of these cities got together to work out how to find more women.

WEDPRO, BUKLOD, GABRIELA, and the Coalition against Trafficking in Women (Asia) have taken up the very difficult issue of military

prostitution, and are tackling it in several ways: providing support to women and Amerasian children through counseling, daycare, legal and medical services, and referrals to other agencies; training women in business skills, especially to set up micro enterprises, get access to loans, and by helping women's co-ops; through public education and advocacy, and political activism.

Okinawa/Japan

Speaking for Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence, Suzuyo Takazato emphasized that Okinawa has 75% of the U.S. bases in Japan, although it is only 0.6% of the land area. Okinawa has 1,200,000 people and is

towns were squeezed around the bases. Although the military pays rent for this land, some landowners have always opposed this enforced appropriation. The bases have sprawling lawns, pools, and US-style housing with swing sets and picnic tables. The Japanese government pays for electricity on the bases, and pays highway tolls for U.S. military personnel. Japanese tax money supports shopping centers, schools, libraries, and churches on the bases (even though the Japanese constitution separates church and state). There are 20 children to a class in the U.S. base schools; Okinawan children are 40-45 to a class. In other parts of Japan U.S. planes cannot land after 7pm. At Kadena Air Force Base

and peace. When they returned from Beijing they saw a very brief newspaper report about the rape of a 12-year old girl by three U.S. military personnel that had happened while they were away. Immediately they organized around this issue and revitalized opposition to the U.S. military presence in Okinawa.

Suzuyo Takazato also emphasized concerns about toxic contamination of the bases and possible pollution of water and the ocean; also concerns about future redevelopment of the bases, especially with the Philippines experience in mind. The continued presence of the U.S. bases is being actively challenged by anti-war landlords, organized labor, religious groups, and political groups, with increasing demands for self-determination over the past two years. By contrast, many people from mainland Japan are not aware of, and seemingly not interested in these issues.

Takazato argued that the U.S. military presence does not protect local people but endangers them and that there is a need to redefine security for women and children. Officially security is thought of in terms of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, with a Status of Forces Act which sets out details of U.S. military operations in Japan. But what is true security, and how to achieve it? For example, in 1996 an interim report on babies born to women living near Kadena Air Force Base showed that these babies have significantly lower birthweights than those in other parts of Okinawa, which local people attribute to stress and noise generated by the base. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in no way protected the 12-year old girl who was raped; also in May 1995 a 24-year old woman was beaten to death by a GI with a hammer in the doorway of her house. Women's lack of security is directly linked to this Security Treaty.

Two other participants reported from mainland Japan:

Kayako Kobayashi, from Yufuin in Kyushu, a spa resort with many natural hot springs, noted that the Japanese government has asked other towns to "share the suffering of Okinawa" and has designated six new locations, including Yufuin, as sites for testing live ammunition. Having heard Takazato san, who went to Yufuin to talk about Okinawan women's opposition to U.S. bases, Kayako Kobayashi initiated the Fukuro Club, a local organization that opposes not only the relocation of live ammunition drills to Yufuin, but all drills of this kind anywhere. Their main concerns are environmental destruction and the possibility of violence against women. Troops would not be relocated to Yufuin but would use firing ranges there and return to base in Okinawa. This represents an expansion of U.S. military activities in the guise of a substitution.

Yoshiko Matsui reported on a lawsuit against the Japanese government for using what is known in English as the

Participating Organizations	
<i>From Japan</i>	
•Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence	
•Fukuro Club	
•Korean Atomic Bomb Sufferers Relief Association of Japan	
<i>from the Philippines</i>	
•BUKLOD	
•WEDPRO	
• Coalition against Trafficking of Women-Asia	
<i>from South Korea</i>	
•National Campaign Against Crime Committed by U.S. Troops	
•Sae Woom Tuh	
•My Sister's Place	
•Korean Women's Hotline	
<i>from the U.S.</i>	
•Asia-Pacific Peace and Justice Center	
•Bay Area Okinawa Peace Network	
•Urban Habitat Program	
•San Francisco State University	
•Mt. Holyoke College	
•Coalition against Trafficking of Women--International	

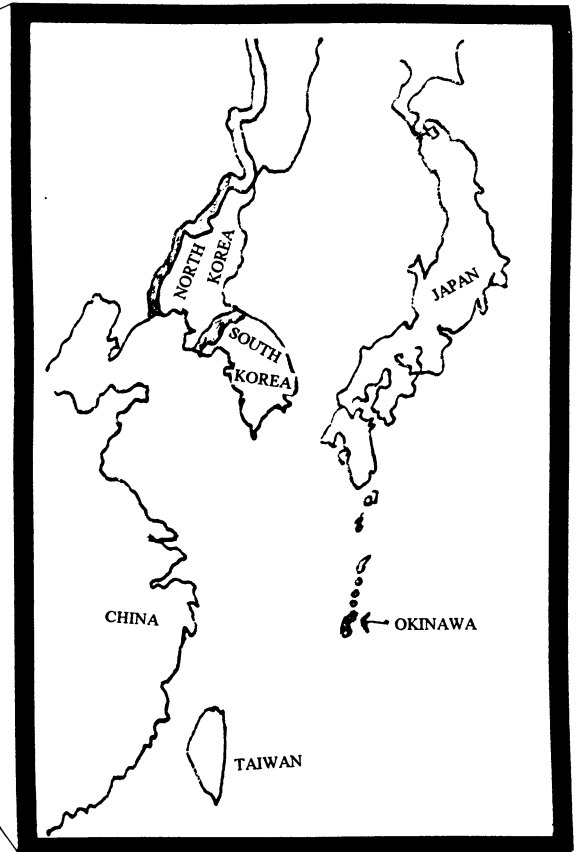
twice the size of Guam, smaller than Oahu (Hawai'i). It is roughly midway between Tokyo and Manila, and called the "keystone of the Pacific" by military planners because of its strategic location. Okinawa was governed directly by the U.S. until 1972, 25 years after the rest of Japan. Twenty percent of Okinawa is currently occupied by U.S. bases, which house some 30,000 troops and another 22,500 family members.

Okinawa was annexed by Japan in the late 19th century and is the poorest prefecture. During the bitter, three-month long Battle for Okinawa between Japan and the U.S. at the end of World War II, Okinawan people were displaced from their homes by the fierce fighting. Under the U.S. military administration, local people were not allowed to return to their homes until the military had claimed land for bases. The rebuilt

they can land at any time, and cause severe noise through the day and at night.

Suzuyo Takazato noted the very similar situation in Okinawa, Korea, and the Philippines, especially during the Vietnam War. U.S. military personnel returning from battle were angry, fearful, and frustrated, and took it out on Okinawan women. There are many stories of women being beaten, choked, and killed. Many survived, now in their 50s and 60s, but their scars remain. At this meeting Okinawan women emphasized violent attacks of women and girls by U.S. military personnel, especially the marines who are in Okinawa in large numbers. Okinawan women went to the Beijing Conference in 1995 to make connections with other women in Asia. They offered eleven workshops, five of them about militarism

continued on page 16



continued from page 9

"compassionate" budget or "benevolence" budget -- ridiculous words for it, she pointed out -- to support U.S. bases. The Japanese government pays 62 billion yen a year for the upkeep of U.S. bases in Japan, or roughly \$100,000 for every GI stationed there. The "compassionate" budget started in 1978, quite separate from the provisions of the Status of Forces Act. The U.S. government was in a pinch after the expense of the Vietnam War and asked for financial help to cover medical insurance for Japanese civilians working on U.S. bases. Japan agreed, out of compassion for the U.S. government, hence the name of this budget. It is now 44 times as big as it was originally, because the U.S. has kept asking for more. In 1996 a group of peace activists came together to discuss suing the Japanese government for using taxpayers' money in this way, partly in response to the rape of the 12-year old girl in Okinawa and inspired by Okinawan women's activism. Seventeen lawyers came to the first meeting to offer their services, and some 600 plaintiffs from Okinawa in the south, to Hokkaido in the north planned to file suit on 17 May 1997.

South Korea

Hyun Sun Kim, a staff member of Sae Woom Tuh (a center that supports bar women in Tongduchon, next to Camp Casey, a U.S. Army base north of Seoul), emphasized the division between North and South Korea and that 54 years after the end of the Korean War there is no peace treaty between the two countries. There are over 100 U.S. bases in South Korea and some 35,000 U.S. military personnel. The Commander of U.S. forces in Korea also formally commands the Republic of South Korea army. The main theme of the Korean women's report was violence against women, especially the situation of women who work in the *kijichon* (GI Towns).

In 1910 Korea was colonized by Japan. Military prostitution has deep roots in Japanese imperialism and continued under the U.S. after the liberation of Korea from Japan at the end of World War II. Prostituted women work in deplorable conditions and earn roughly \$170 per month. They are allowed one rest day per month; if they take an additional rest day they are fined half a month's wages. Among the older women who draw in customers to bars and clubs are comfort women who survived the Japanese.

Hyun Sun Kim emphasized the work of two NGOs, Du Rae Bang and Sae Woom Tuh, that work with bar women. The *kijichon* movement goes back 12 years when Du Rae Bang was founded, and focuses on counseling, education, providing shelter and alternative employment. A bakery at Du Rae Bang, for example, has been running for 9 years and has led the way for some bar women to learn skills and become self-reliant. These organizations seek to empower the *kijichon* women to make demands of the Korean and U.S. governments concerning their situation, and to educate the wider society on this issue.

Hyun Sun Kim also talked about violence against local women committed by U.S. military personnel, citing the brutal rape and murder of a bar woman, Yoon Kum E, in 1992 as an important event in galvanizing opposition to the U.S. military presence. Pimps and GIs attempt to intimidate the women against speaking out; also women are afraid of public humiliation. The National Coalition for the Eradication of Crimes by U.S. Troops in Korea, which comprises human rights activists, religious groups, feminists, and labor activists is working on this issue. Drawing public attention to such crimes is embarrassing to the U.S. military. They are usually denied and covered up.

Another key concern is for Amerasian children, who are despised

and discriminated against due to their physical appearance and the stigma of their mothers' work. They are thought of as "half persons" who can only half-belong to Korean or to U.S. society. Most older Amerasian people have menial jobs; some are stateless persons who have never been officially registered and, as a result, could not attend Korean schools. There is no government support for Amerasian children from either the Korean or U.S. governments. The U. S. 1982 Amerasian Immigration Act is of little help to Amerasians in Korea due to

foreign men, with foreign women workers coming to Korea from the Philippines, China, Taiwan, and Russia, some of them illegally. The problems of GI Towns are not local. The Korean women's report noted links between militarized prostitution and sex tourism, similar to the problems in the Philippines. The report emphasized the exploitation and violence of *kijichon* women and also included powerful stories of their strength. There are examples of women clubbing together to buy each other out of the bar. In the case

While in Okinawa, women from Sae Woom Tuh visited a women's herb-growing project that inspired them to begin a herb-growing project in Tongduchon when they got home. They have also found a landowner willing to let them use an uncultivated field, rent free, for women from the *kijichon* to grow herbs and vegetables. They see this as both a practical and symbolic project, directly concerned with the physical, emotional and spiritual health of *kijichon* women.

its stringent conditions. It only applies to people born between 1951 and 1982; an applicant needs documentation that her or his father is a U.S. citizen, and also a financial sponsor. Du Rae Bang and Sae Woom Tuh have educational programs for Amerasian children, and seek to educate Korean society about their situation. The women of Sae Woom Tuh demand that every Amerasian be given U.S. citizenship and educational opportunities, with visas for their mothers. The Korean government should also provide education, job training, basic livelihood, and medical care.

In the past few years GI Towns have undergone changes, becoming international prostitution zones for

of Yoon Kum E, another bar woman who knew the murderer waited outside the base for him and forced military police to arrest him. He still had blood on his white pants.

United States

Gwyn Kirk, a member of the San Francisco Bay Area Okinawa Peace Network, began by noting the central place of the military-industrial complex in the U. S. economy, with many major companies supplying weapons components, electronics, textiles, foods, and household items on military contracts. Roughly 50% of federal tax dollars is currently spent on the military (including wages, pensions, veterans

continued on page 18

continued from page 17

services, the upkeep of hundreds of bases worldwide, weapons systems, and part of the national debt attributable to military spending). In the past 20-30 years the U.S. labor force has changed due to automation and the movement of jobs overseas, leading to high unemployment rates especially for young African

water, especially the effects of the nuclear weapons program, including uranium mining and radioactive waste disposal.

As well as economic support, there is great ideological support for the military in the U.S. expressed in terms of patriotism, pride that the U.S. is number

educational opportunities, and to get out of crisis-torn inner cities. Thus the military drains off capable young people who might otherwise provide valuable leadership in their communities.

Gwyn Kirk also mentioned feminists in the U.S. who recognize that sexual harassment is inherent to military training and operations; similarly the high levels of domestic violence within military families, and high levels of rape around military bases in the U.S. Militarized prostitution and the trafficking of women should be opposed. However, transnational corporations, capitalist economics, and patriarchal power make a daunting combination to overpower. In the 1980s there was a strong feminist anti-militarist voice in the U.S. This has been much weaker in the 1990s, and needs to be revitalized.

Working Groups

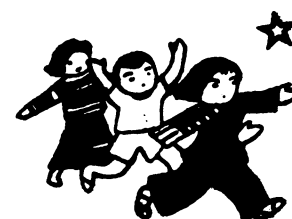
The second and third days of the conference were reserved for the invited participants so we could learn from and with each other and make personal connections needed to establish an international network.

An important part of this discussion was the acknowledgment of complex inequalities among participants, and the relationships of domination and oppression that exist among the countries we represent. This includes the colonial histories of the U.S. and Japan, for example; Korea as a war-torn country profoundly affected by Japanese imperialism and U.S. imperialism, but now Korean companies are in the Philippines wanting to make money out

of a much poorer country. The governments of Japan, Korea, and the Philippines are also all complicit in supporting U.S. military policies and need to be held accountable.

Closing Session

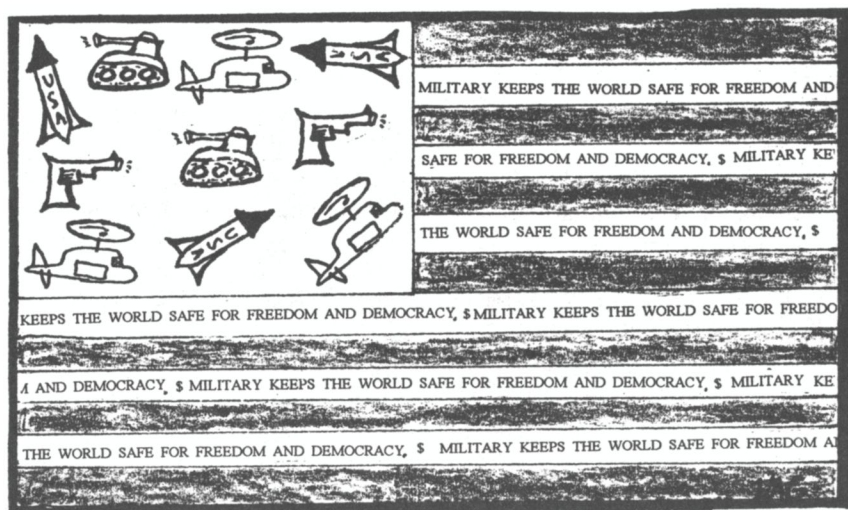
On May 4, the closing session, also open to the public, drew about 100 people, including the press. Suzuyo Takazato, Margo Okazawa-Rey, and Mi Wha Chae read a final statement; there were short reports from the working groups and comments from other participants. Women from each country



Indochina Newsletter/CPF

represented have sent this final statement to heads of state, government officials, religious organizations, human rights groups, various U.N. agencies and commissions, as well as publicizing it in newsletters, newspapers, and journals. As a result of our time together we made new connections, and deepened our understanding of these issues, learning from each other.

by gwyn kirk, martha matsuoka and
margo okazawa-rey



Americans and Latinos. High military spending is justified in terms of jobs and the military is a major employer in some areas. Components for the B2 bomber are made in 383 congressional districts (out of 435), so many people are involved. The U.S. is first in the world in military spending.

Current Pentagon policy is to be prepared to fight two regional wars at the same time. In this scenario these wars are assumed to be in the Middle East and Korea. This means that military personnel are constantly involved in training and maneuvers. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 many expected a "peace dividend," a drop in military spending. But the United States government came up with new justifications—an international policing role, the Gulf War, and the "war on drugs" in Central and South America—to maintain military spending at high levels. Bases are being decommissioned in the U.S. and elsewhere, including the Philippines, but these are generally large industrial facilities now considered obsolete. Military spending, however, is not significantly down compared to that of the Reagan/Bush administrations in the 1980s. Another negative effect of military bases in the U.S. is environmental contamination of land and

one, and a belief in the rhetoric that the military keeps the world safe for "freedom" and "democracy." Many people are very ignorant about what the U.S. military does abroad, and have very little reliable information about it. This is part of what it means to be an imperial power. Also people are absorbed with daily life and distracted by consumerism. The U.S. is also number one in the world in shopping.

There is a division among feminists about the military. Some call for equal access for women within the military, and currently 12% of military personnel are women (43% of them are women of color, especially African Americans and Latinas). Organizations like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and WAND (Women's Action for New Directions) oppose high levels of military spending while socially useful programs, especially those that support women and children, are being cut. Examples include prenatal care, pre-school education, health care, and welfare. These groups emphasize the negative effects of the U.S. military on people in the United States, as well as those affected by U.S. bases overseas. Young people, especially young people of color, are going into the military for work,

Future Projects Proposed

- a commitment that the 4 working groups would continue to work together and share information
- the formation of a new young women's group in Okinawa called DOVE (Deactivating Our Violent Establishment)
- the idea that women from the Philippines would go to Korea to find out more about Filipinas working in GI Towns
- that women in the U.S. research what happens to Korean women and Filipinas who marry GI, what their lives are like. There is only anecdotal evidence only so far, that many end up in bars, clubs, and massage parlors in the U.S.A.
- continued analysis and comparison of the different SOFAs and other legal agreements between governments
- compiling information on environmental hazards, what evidence to look for
- a commitment to meet again, hopefully in 1998, and probably in Washington DC.