

The tentative conclusions of our research project on the problems of women in the community provoke some important questions. Is it likely that the participation of women in community activities and struggles will terminate in a return home and thus preclude their personal growth? Will their community experience allow them consciousness-raising about gender issues?

It is worthwhile to point out the need to systematically analyze the participation of women in neighbourhood movements from a *feminist* perspective. Women should not only be made target groups for policies, but the ways in which they present their problems and the ways in which social movements try to exclude those issues related to woman's oppression must be analyzed in connection with female subordination patterns. An awareness of gender issues is crucial to developing an awareness of this double oppression of women.

Our study showed how the firmly-set network of male chauvinism (*Machismo*) is "answered back" by women in the daily

routine. Our project, although not intentionally directed towards raising consciousness about women's subordination, did create an environment which stimulated the emergence of contradictions and ideas that must have been in the heads and feelings of the neighbourhood's women for a long time.

Women exposed to the contradictory messages of the mass-communication media, objecting within their homes to the sometimes despotic authority of their husbands, suffering the difficulties of coping with everyday life, punished by the death of their sons in the war over Malvinas or under their dictatorial government's political persecutions – all this in the context of an emerging democracy with new political perspectives – are questioning male domination in the household and political spheres.

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<sup>1</sup>"Las mujeres y la participación popular: ideas para la investigación y debate," in UNRISD, *Diálogos sobre la participación 2* (1982).

<sup>2</sup>*Las mujeres en los movimientos sociales urbanos de la ciudad de México* (México: Archivo Histórico de la ciudad de México – UAM Iztapalapa, 1983). Mimeo.

<sup>3</sup>See Cardoso, "A adesao dos homens ao feminismo: uma estratégia de sobrevivência," and Kirkwood, "El feminismo como negación del autoritarismo." Papers presented to the Seminar "Mujer y Política en América Latina: Viejos y Nuevos Estilos". (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 1983).

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## SANCTIFICATION OR THE DEATH OF THE OLD WOMAN

We didn't seem like pilgrims  
as we travelled our distances;  
we were disguised in other modes  
but reached the place just the same  
though it was not as we had expected.

I marvel now that we have survived at all  
or that we were granted even a glimpse of such resplendence.  
But to face it together unafraid  
that was the miracle.

This is a juncture that has always been here.  
We have been journeying these years  
perhaps in a circle,  
rounding the spot night and day  
without even knowing.

And to think it was reached finally in a moment –  
your faithful lead urging me on  
til my old woman died her natural death  
under your pastor's heart.

*Margo Swiss*  
Toronto, Ontario