

# Global Women's Forum

Mary Warren Moffett at the 12<sup>th</sup> Guardians Consult, April 13, 1977

I remember an invitation from the Chicago area, to come to a series of three luncheons that were called the Trilogy. The Institute from its beginnings were interested in women. Now the Trilogy was about how to involve and engage women in the metropolitan area of Chicago in 5th City. I'm here this morning because of that Trilogy. I was a part of a group of women, who saw that engagement in a comprehensive community development project was the most exciting and incredible expenditure possible .

I don't know why you're here, maybe you took a course sometime in the past, maybe you have participated in Town Meeting, maybe you have been engaged in Social Demonstration, -- but you are here because of the one thing that we are doing: We are spending our lives touching, reaching, moving toward every single human being in the world, to say to them, "It wasn't an accident that you got born. You are a part of the creative process of history, and the future of that history depends on you."

We've had programs for special groups throughout our history. Some of you remember when most of the work the Institute did was on the University campus. In the future we'll have many programs, I suspect, for special groups. I look forward to working on the campus again, I'll bet you do too. I suspect it's time. I look forward to a program for particular impact for the elders of society.

The Global Women's Forum is such a program. Now, every woman in the world today is a part of the female revolution. It does not matter where she lives in the world; the most rural, dusty road you can go down, anyplace in the world today, the women who live there know that something is different. And of course it goes without saying, the men know that too.

Last June I was in Japan, teaching a LENS Seminar to a corporation. There were two women on the faculty. We were the only women participating in the weekend, which in the first instance shocked the Japanese businessmen. But then they sort of enjoyed it. On Saturday afternoon, in the middle of the think-tank, one of the teams working on creation of a proposal called me over to their group. I thought they wanted to ask me a question of procedure. But what they wanted to talk about the contradiction they were working on: the new kind of style that is coming forth from the breakdown of the family. They asked, "What are we going to do with the women? We don't know what to do with the women! Our mothers knew what to do and what a woman was supposed to do; but our wives don't act like that!" They went the whole gamut from "My wife doesn't wear traditional clothes. Why doesn't she do that?" to, "My wife says that she isn't going to stay home all the time anymore!" This was not amusing thing to them; it was painful. Although they laughed about it, it wasn't funny for them. So what I say is every human being in the world today is participating in the female revolution.

The place where we are in the world today, I believe, is that we're in a transition, as Kenneth Boulding has said. For the women of the world there aren't any models for what this is. The women of the world have said, "It isn't like grandmother, and I don't know what it is like for my granddaughter." There is, in every woman in the world today, two women living. (I'm a Gemini, so that makes it a little more helpful for me.) First, there is the woman who is angry and frustrated. Angry at centuries of wanting to get her creativity in, in a kind of way that has not been allowed, not been open for her. Angry at a situation where a human being lives like a dog in many places of the globe. And at the same time there is a woman alive in each of us who longs for the comforts of being protected and taken care of. It's like being on a 'bongo board', I think. There are two women alive in every woman.

The key to the edge of the female revolution today is that consciousness raising is over. I mean, once you know that a revolution is going on, then you don't have to keep fighting the revolution. It isn't necessary for all of the women of the world to create a battlefield. The key to the future, we believe, is combining significant engagement with the awakening that has already taken place. And therein lies the timeliness and the cruciality of a day like the Global Women's Forum.

Ten years of self-conscious research and testing have gone into this day, but many years before that have contributed to it. The women of our staff have demonstrated from the very beginning a kind of responsibility, bearing the burden and moving with a style and determination that helped in the creation of this day. After the Trilogy, we had a group that on the 5th City model showed as a 'blip' that arched out called 'auxiliary forces' -- that's who we were.

That's who we were and we called ourselves the New Women's Forum. Now we have lived long enough to be the Old New Women's Forum. I don't even mind that. I think it's fun to be one of the old, new women. We had a 44-hour course called the New Women's Seminar that some of you may have participated in. It was a fine, fine weekend. Then, about a year and a half ago, Houston, who had a New Women's Forum, decided that it needed to be redesigned. So all of that wisdom and all of those years were reduced to one day.

Since then, the construct has been changed; but not very much. It is a particular day for women who want to be a human being. Since Houston, we have tested and tested and tested that day in this continent, in Europe, in Asia, and this past January, we had three of these days in Majuro.

It was like what some of you who have participated in Town Meeting know about creating the time design. The women said, "Tell them it starts at 8:00 if you want to start at 9:00, so that you can begin by 10:00." The day works well in translation (which I will say more about later).

It's a happening. When you look at the program, you see that the design looks rather familiar. We sing, have introductions, a talk, a workshop, and lunch together. The morning is about Authentic Selfhood; and the afternoon is about Significant Engagement.

It's an opportunity to move 'way beyond the issues that so frequently get raised in a group of women. The day gives women an opportunity to talk about things they never talk about. We used the Ontological Pillars for the lecture in the morning. That is: the fact that you are related to the whole world; the phase of life that you live and the significance of the age that you are; what it means to be a woman -- having been born female instead of male; and what it means to participate in creating new realities. It's fun! And it is an incredible happening!

The mobilizing, of this forum across the globe is the place where we are now. The schedule in front of you gives a picture of the places where Global Women's Forum will be held outside of North America this spring. It's rather shocking to see how quickly we intend to move out across the world with such a program. And it has been exciting to get telexes and reports from these places and their absolute intrigue about doing such a day.

In Europe we will be doing one with university women in Amsterdam. That particular day comes out of the experience of two university women who attended the forum in November, in Amsterdam and just went back to their campus and found 40 others on their campus who are struggling very deeply with the question of being a woman. But their questions are not, "Am I going to get a job?", or, "What about my husband?" So they want to have a University Women's Forum. A very exciting one to me.

We will be doing these forums in both cities and Social Demonstration sites. We saw in Majuro the excitement of the women there participating in the Human Development Project. We saw it deepen their resolve to see something happens in their community, to see them risk doing things they haven't done before. It was like watching a rose open up. So we will be doing the forum in other Human Development Projects,

Our emphasis at this point is with the strategy and phasing of the day. If you said that the last ten years of research, the phasing we are in now is about revising the program, which we will be working on this summer. It looks like testing it with women who we call the 15%, those women who will join us as an

international faculty to be trained to offer the forum in their own countries, in their own languages, and in their own communities. We are interested primarily now in this phase to reach that group.

In Majuro, Ginny DeBrum, the wife Oscar DeBrum (the Marshallese Director of the Trust Territories), is a great friend of ours. Ginny translated two of the three days in Majuro. At the end of the second day, she said, "I don't believe what I've done! Oscar is not going to believe it. All of my life I have been a Marshallese woman, who is taught from a very young girl to be quiet, not to speak, and I was up there giving a lecture to those 50 women!" Ginny DeBrum is a Marshallese woman who is a part of our international faculty. And Ginny grins and sort of giggles when you mention the fact that she'll be on a team of women going to India and Southeast Asia to do the forum. But she knows that she will; and I know that she will.

What we're about this weekend, primarily, in our task force, is funding this program. I want to tell you now that I speak for our whole group when I say that we intend that this program be self-supporting and we intend to win at that. We intend to see that it happens with excellence. It is no problem to recruit. We have not yet run into the situation where you had to get on the telephone and urge women to come to a day like this. And so you feel inside yourself that it's timely.

You don't think I'm going to miss the opportunity to let you heave a sigh of awe over this -- [art form]. Isn't it something? That comes under the rubric of winning, for me, and it comes under the rubric of support, all across our group for this. After Laverne created this montage, I think her fingers were glued together and it was done by the time -- just like that! You are looking at a four color, carefully screened, and -- I don't know printing terms -- Piece, that was FREE. That's a victory, the kind of victory that we are going into such a program with. We have a big job this summer. Make your plans, men and women, to think about the Global Women's Forum this summer.

Now finally, -- Why would we do this now? Why would we do it? I said, rather facetiously, recently, that when someone asks me that question these days, inside myself, a voice says, "Now if you have to ask that question, there isn't any answer I can give you that is going to be adequate." But I have some answers. First of all, in terms of our strategy: Town Meeting can happen. On the other side of Global Women's Forum you have a core of women who will begin a steering committee. What do you do after a Town Meeting? What about Social Demonstration projects? How do you engage the women of that community? How do you build in the motivity that allows women to participate in a way, in that community, that they haven't, before? How do we help create the networks across this world of women of prestige; of women who are already part of global networks, who can open doors for us, who can participate with us, in the nations of the world.

In terms of the place where we are in history, every woman in the world today is standing in this moment of transition. And when we die, the memory of the past is going to be gone. Our daughters are not going to be the women who have the memory that any woman alive today, has. Our granddaughters will no more know what being a woman like our grandmothers was, -- that will be gone. We stand at a critical moment in transferring the past into the future. I feel an urgency about that, because I'm not getting any younger. I want to be a part of transferring the greatness of the tradition of woman into the future of woman.

And what about all the women of the world? Well, someone gave me some figures: 51% of the population of the world is female, half of the 85% of the women of the world is 43% of the population of the world. I don't think we're going to have time in my lifetime. I haven't figured out the millions, but 43% of the population of the globe. I don't want to have on my conscience that I lived at a time when it was possible to tell a human being that life can be lived -- that I didn't do something about that. Nor do I believe anyone in this room does.

This is not a 'women's thing', it is a Day for Women, but it is not a women's thing, any more than the female revolution is just about women. These days the two women inside me are something like, -- Well, I

don't have a reputation of being a great cook. (And I won't ask for any comments from the floor.) For the past year and a half, I have lived out of a suitcase and so I haven't had to cook very much. There were a lot of years when I spent a lot of psychological energy just being determined to "get out there and do something!" Nowadays, I find myself thinking, "If I could only go home and bake cookies for the rest of my life." The challenge is what I'm talking about. Because this is the crunch that women find themselves in, today.

I didn't start the female revolution. I tip my hat to the ladies in England who decided that something had to be done. But I have participated in all the kind of explosions that revolution has created. And now the world has said, "Okay, take it!" And now women stand at the point of, "Did you mean it?", "Are you willing?", "Do you want to do what you've been crying about?", "Are you going to bear up year after year after year?"

That's part of being two women today. The challenge for women today: to get behind one another, to support one another, to create a network of collegiality that is international and that is one which sees the future as a part of society in which they are standing together with the men of the world.

This is the challenge and we have decided as a group to meet it. And you'll hear about Global Women's Forum in the future. We invite you to begin thinking now, about the next year and about the groups in your particular piece of geography, who will want to participate in this day. And at the particular moment, we invite you to participate in launching this Spring Trek with sources of money who will send this first team out to finish the phase in which we are, so that in October there will be a worldwide rocking excitement for this Day.

I tell a story sometimes about Chou En Lai's wife, who, when he died came with a bouquet of flowers, and on the ribbon of the flowers were the words, "Comrade-in-Arms". I like that. And I like to think of the women of the world participating with the men of the world as Comrades-in-Arms. This is not a day for women, it's a Global Women's Forum.