

THE WORLD OF WOMEN

Also by Janice Wood Wetzel

CLINICAL HANDBOOK OF DEPRESSION

The World of Women

In Pursuit of Human Rights

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With love to my granddaughters, Caitlin and Emily . . .
women of the 21st century
the future holds promise . . .

my lifetime
listens to yours.
Muriel Rukeyser, "Kathe Kollowitz," 1968

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I also appreciate the permission granted by a number of journals which allowed me to reprint portions of previously published articles. They are credited below as follows: Janice Wood Wetzel. “The World of Women Unite in Diversity.” This article originally appeared in *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme*, “Post Nairobi,” Vol. 7, Nos 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 1986), pp. 11–14. Janice Wood Wetzel. “Global Issues and Perspectives on Working with Women,” *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* (Vol. 1, No. 1), pp. 5–19, copyright Feminist Press, 1986. Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications, Inc. Janice Wood Wetzel. “Feminist World View Conceptual Framework,” *Social Casework*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (March 1986), pp. 166–173. Courtesy of Family Service of America,

Publisher. Janice Wood Wetzel. "Mental Health and Rural Women: An International Analysis," *International Social Work*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (January 1987), pp. 43–59.

It should be noted that the Articles listed under "Anti-Discrimination Policy Analysis" (Convention, 1980) and all the assessment items listed under "Pertinent Questions for Analysis" (IWRRAW, 1988) in Chapters 2 through 9 are reprinted verbatim from the International Women's Rights Action Watch manual, "Assessing the Status of Women". So, too, is the reporting information reprinted under the same heading in Chapter 10. Permission to quote was granted by Stephen Isaacs, senior author of the manual which is listed in the Bibliography under Isaacs, Holt, and Irwin (1988).

The *Forward-Looking Strategies* (1985) in Chapters 2 through 9 are presented as paraphrased summary paragraphs for the most part. I made as few changes as possible in order to retain the intent of the original writers, while making the content accessible to readers. When I added an occasional thought that they had not introduced in the *Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies (FLS)*, I used brackets to indicate that the comments were my own. The content on "Special Populations at Risk" in Chapter 10, excerpted from the *FLS*, is largely quoted verbatim, as is most information extracted from major reports.

The 1955 World/UN Conference, Beijing, China, will write a new Platform of Action. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and their legal rights are expected to be major topics.

Because *The World of Women: In Pursuit of Human Rights* is essentially a global resource manual, all materials should be credited to the original sources whom I have referenced throughout the text. The Bibliography also reflects the extensive contributions of people and organizations to whom I and the women of the world are indebted. At the top of the list is the United Nations Decade of Women's *Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies*. Thank you, Gracias, Grazia, Efharisto, Danke schon, Shukria, Meherbani, Merci, Spaseboy, Tashakur, Gamsahmida, Sce sce nin, Cam on, Kob kun . . .

Preface

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!

Edna St. Vincent Millay, "God's World," 1917

Rationale

As we approach the twenty-first century, a global perspective on social welfare policy and practice is essential to the intelligent understanding of local issues. A multitude of common problems have been found to be too complex and interconnected internationally to be resolved in a domestic vacuum. Profound changes in demographics, technology, and world markets deeply affect the lives of human beings everywhere, and consequently, the services that they require. The education of all people, therefore, must encompass an understanding of the issues that impact the world. Among the most obvious are poverty due to corporate globalization and world debt; energy waste and environmental poisoning; population issues, homelessness, migrants and refugees; hunger and malnutrition; alcohol and drug dependency; sexually transmitted diseases; high rates of physical and mental illness; education deprivation and illiteracy; pornography and sex trafficking; religious, ethnic and gender bigotry; the plight of children, single parents and elderly abandoned by society; and violence in the home, the community and the world. The problems intersect, interpenetrate and merge one with the other on a universal scale. These are enormous human rights issues; and these are largely personal problems that affect individual women throughout the world.

In the few areas where women generally have not represented the majority, such as homelessness and the AIDS epidemic, they are the population in which the problem is rising most rapidly. Yet, regardless of the subject, women continue to be treated as a marginal special interest group by governments, social science disciplines, the professions, and even by most international organizations. This book is intended for all constituencies, for the content is derived from their complementary and mutually enhancing knowledge and skills. There is a need for a global partnership if we are to find solutions to the vast problems of the world of women.

My reasons for writing this book are three-pronged. First, I hope to influence educators and members of the professions to focus their efforts

on the global conditions of women from a human rights perspective. The relevance of the subject matter to social development, political and economic social policy and legislation will be obvious. I want to make equally tangible the connections that must be made between global issues and the personal development and well-being of people. I hope to influence both professionals and involved members of the community who are concerned with the conditions prevalent in our societies to include prevention as a primary focus of their work. This can best be done by incorporating personal and social development programming into their repertoires. Second, I want to provide a comprehensive resource for achieving human rights for women. This is accomplished by making accessible the wisdom and experience of women throughout the world who have contributed to the Conventions, Declarations and Forward-Looking Strategies put forward by the United Nations. Third, I want to provide a resource for women and men who wish to learn from one another, particularly sharing the expertise of women in the developing world. Too often knowledge transfer has focused on that of the more developed countries, denying the leadership of "third world" people. To that end, this book is concerned with the transfer of knowledge, providing ready access to relevant model programs already successfully implemented by the world of women, primarily, though not exclusively, women from developing nations.

This is a book about linkages forged on behalf of women. It focuses on women who are poor, but recognizes the common issues of the more advantaged. It celebrates the leadership of women in the developing world, while honoring the efforts of those in relatively developed societies. It is concerned with making grassroots projects more visible, but does not overlook the work of women in the mainstream. It is a book about human rights policies and programs, but it applies to them knowledge for therapeutic practice, based on psychological theories and research about human development. *The World of Women* is clearly about conditions that are by-products of having been born female, but it acknowledges the negative impact of ethnicity, class, age, sexual/affectional preference, disability, and other differences, on women and men alike. And, finally, although the content is concerned with the problems of women, it should become clear that it is their strength, endurance and resourcefulness that offers hope for the world.

Most of the problems confronting professionals and lay people everywhere are directly related to women. Even when troubles arise affecting children and men, women as their caretakers generally are considered to be chiefly responsible for their alleviation. It is not surprising, then, that helping people around the globe are likely to work primarily with women. In fact, such helpers are most likely to be women themselves, whether

they are professionals, or the majority of people in the world who have non-traditional educations.

Awareness of the differential impact of the forces of history on women of disparate cultures serves to enrich the knowledge and insights of all. Rather than dividing women, unity is emerging from their diversity. Domestic problems which have appeared to be culturally unique and overwhelming are becoming accessible through a universal lens. The nuances may vary, but there are common themes that pervade the world of women. The sharing of experience and ideas is not only facilitating progress, but is overcoming apparent barriers. Culturally-based explanations take on new meaning when excused in culture after culture as indigenous reasons for female subservience. The power of the global women's community and the inherent influence of worldwide visibility are not easily ignored.

Because our lives are influenced and controlled internationally, social change can only occur if social consciousness is global, and our commitment to human rights includes the humanity of women on a global scale. Whether in rural Bangladesh, Kenya, or the USA, in urban Thailand, Brazil, or Germany, our local and national actions must be based on a world view that takes into consideration the global context of women's lives. While there are individuals and groups dedicated to this perspective, there is no profession or discipline in the world that is taking on this challenge. Concerned people can reverse the trend, changing the direction that the future holds for women and for the world.

Kugler's (1987) scholarly history of the struggle for women's rights in the western world underscores the importance of lessons learned about the destructiveness of past schisms. His research makes clear that moving forward on the "big, unfinished agenda" of the women's rights movement requires that strategies and tactics of a broadly-based movement be developed, building coalitions and avoiding the narrower issues. Despite the gains in legislation, consciousness, and linguistics, the fundamental fact of women's low status will prevail if this is not accomplished. At this point in history, according to Charlotte Bunch (1987), a leading international feminist, a global partnership can be an important force for change that challenges and transforms the way in which human beings look at themselves in relation to one another, and to the world.

How to Use this Book

Chapter 1 details the conceptual framework for *The World of Women*, beginning with an overview of United Nations' human rights actions as they apply to women. An explanation of the four subsections of the core

chapters, 2 through 9, is presented, as well as a detailed explanation of the Person-Environment thesis which provides a blueprint for preventive program analysis, development, and research. The author's Multicultural Prevention and Intervention Assessment instrument (a person-environment inventory), scoring, and score assessment guidelines are detailed for utilization for person-environment program planning.

Each of the core chapters begins with an overview of the focal issue, based upon the sixteen articles contained in the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1980). The discussion is followed by an *Anti-Discrimination Policy Analysis* heading which includes one or more of the articles with an accompanying section called *Pertinent Questions for Analysis*, developed by the International Women's Rights Action Watch (1988), and relevant *Forward-Looking Strategies*, described below. The analytic material provides a blueprint for a national assessment of the status of women anywhere in the world. It is also an excellent action-oriented teaching tool, for the organization welcomes reports from around the world that serve to keep their information up-to-date.

The *Forward-Looking Strategies* provide summary paragraphs selected for their relevance to the focal topic. This resource document was developed with the universal consensus of member nations at the final Decade of Women conference in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985. It legitimates the human rights issues put forth and provides direction and priorities for both developing societies and relatively developed industrial nations. While the situation of women in developing countries is of particular concern, that of women in the rest of the world cannot be taken for granted. When it comes to women, so-called developed countries are a lot less developed than they wish to acknowledge.

Finally, each core chapter concludes with a section on *Person-Environment Program Models* which includes local programs, reports, research and materials from around the world that are congruent with that chapter's human rights subject matter. Most were acquired through personal interviews in Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, The Netherlands, Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Criteria for program selection also required that it address most, if not all, of four major dimensions that research indicates are essential to personal development and mental health. With creative changes to suit local realities, the information provided should be useful to the well-being, social and personal development of women everywhere. Because the experience of the world of women cannot really be separated into pristine compartments, the content of programs is necessarily overlapping. For example, a project

selected primarily for its educational excellence may have employment characteristics, role relevance, and legal implications, each of which is addressed in separate chapters. Programming resources, therefore, are cross-referenced.

Chapter 10 provides an overview of common qualities of successful action strategies that are taking place throughout the world – a global zeitgeist; summaries of special at-risk populations of women identified in the *Forward-Looking Strategies*; common errors made in social development; national directives for assessing the status of women, and a global networking resource.

A list of countries that have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women can be found in the *Appendix*. The *Bibliography* includes personal interviews and communications, and both the *Bibliography* and *Index* include international program and personal interview references.

JANICE WOOD WETZEL