

Bethune House's Local Fund-Raising:

A Success of Our Mission A Tribute for Our Migrant Women

At this time of the year when Christmas is just around the corner, joining Charity Bazaars is one way of raising funds for our program and services as well as promoting the work that we do among distress foreign domestic helpers. It is also an avenue to make known the hand made products created by the residents of Bethune House.

Several groups such as the American Women Association and the Community Advice Bureau hosted Charity Bazaars in October.

In both occasions, Bethune House participated by selling hand made cross-stitched Christmas cards, virgin coconut oil, women's accessories and organic coffee which are excellent gifts this Christmas. These are whole day events with different charities and business groups selling their goods and crafts at a very reasonable prize.

On the 19th of November, the Bethune House was given the special opportunity to join The Gift and Lifestyle Fair at the Conrad Hotel, with a donated table space. More than 4,000 people were expected to attend the gift fair, which was full of children's toys and clothes, bags and purses, wine and chocolates, designer clothes for women and an assortment of jewelry.

The Bethune House table was able to offer something unique to the fair with their hand made cross-stitched Christmas cards, bottles of virgin coconut oil, organic coffee from the Philippines, and pieces of jewelry. Raffle tickets for the programs and services of the Mission for Migrant Workers, who helped establish Bethune House in 1986



The Bethune House successfully held fund-raising initiatives as friends showed their support to the events and the cause.


were also sold for the upcoming December 27th Raffle Draw.

Hundreds of copies of the Migrant Focus and the Bethune House pamphlet were handed out as a way to continue to spread the word and gather support for both the Mission for Migrant Workers and the Bethune House. The day was a great success. Every single Christmas card was sold and the raffle tickets also proved to be popular with the grand prize being two round trip tickets to the Philippines.

A big thank you to the organizers of the Gift and Lifestyle Fair for allowing us to join you this year and we hope to be part of this yearly event!! We also thank the Community Advice Bureau and the American Women Association for their

steadfast support.

Aside from Charity Bazaars and Fairs, public Solicitation was organized as an alternative fund-raising event this year.

We were given permits to put up stationed counters in different areas in Central District. There were thousands of Food Drive Flyers distributed as part of Bethune House' publicity. Residents of the shelter took turns in manning the different stationed counters while several students of the Canadian International School helped one Sunday. The funds raised would help at least ¼ of our monthly budget. Thanks to those who donated, it makes a lot of difference knowing that there are good hearted people who believe that we are worthy of their support. 



RADICALS!

In modern times, sanctity is often associated with otherworldly piety, no doubt influenced by stained-glass window portrayal of the saints. But look at their lives critically. They tell us of men and women who have rejected the worldly standard of power, wealth privilege and selfishness and have committed to make the world a better place to live in. They are in truth, the radicals of their times.

Adomnan of Iona's greatest achievement was convincing the chief kings of Ireland, the King of the Picts, and the King of Scottish Dal Riada in 697 to recognize The Law of the Innocents, which protected the Island of Iona and all non combatants: women, children and clergy. It exempted women from military service, and punished the killing of women, for injury, assault, insult or rape. Moreso, it fined men who get women with child outside wedlock, and for men who denied their children. Heavy fines were imposed not only on those who violate the law but also on kings who failed to enforce the law.

Augustine of Hippo is known as a Doctor of the Church. His intellectual prowess

and oratorical skills were not detached from the reality around him. He hated the slave trade which was the mainstay of Mediterranean economy. He often bought, using the money of the church, the freedom of slaves living under cruel masters. At one time members of his community forcibly freed slaves from a ship in which they were held in the harbour. He was one of the first theologians to argue that women too are created in the image of God contrary to prevalent view at that time.

John Chrysostom, lived at the time when the Emperor of Rome made absolute claims over the lives and consciences of its citizens. To the claims that the people must marry and breed to serve the empire, John preached, that their bodies belonged to themselves and no longer to the city. Thus denying the Emperor's absolute jurisdiction.

Catherine of Sienna lived and ministered during the so called Babylonian Captivity of the papacy – when the (French) popes resided in Avignon and not in Rome. Aside from her works of mercy, she was deeply

involved in the internal wranglings of the church. She wrote for the Pope to cleanse the church of nepotism and leniency of the clergy who “think of nothing but pleasure, status and wealth” She brought her influence on Pisa and Lucca not to support anti-papal forces but to go on the Crusade – although she recognized the Muslims as “our brothers redeemed by the body of Christ just as we are,” – a teaching far beyond her time. She persuaded Gregory XI to return to Rome. And in the events that followed, supported Pope Urban VI who was deposed as successor of Gregory.

There are many more like them. The saints have, because of their faith, totally committed themselves to changing the world by challenging the normalcy of their days. They stood up to kings and popes. They defended the lives of the poor and the weak and the vulnerable. They are the models, inspirations and comrades-in-arms of those who struggle against corruption, injustice and the excesses of wealth and power.

They are indeed the radicals of their times.

KARTINI Asia Network holds Second Conference

The KARTINI Asia Network Second Conference on the Future of Asian Feminisms Confronting Fundamentalisms, Conflict and Neoliberalism was held on November 2-5 2008 in Bali, Indonesia.

It was organized by KARTINI network, an Asian-European network of women academics and activists.

Attended by more than 200, the second conference was based on grounds that *processes in economic restructuring are often played*


out on women's bodies as a battleground: cuts in social spending, affecting budgets on health and education due to processes of liberalization and structural adjustment have important consequences for women – both in retaliation to demands on their time, and in relation to their health and educational levels.

The conference had studies, papers and visuals on five areas of concerns: Women's and Gender Studies in Asia, Fundamentalisms and Feminisms, Conflicts and

Violence, Sexuality, Poverty, Vulnerability, and, Livelihoods, where 24 workshops with several panelists each were held, 6 plenary speakers invited and 2 keynote speeches were presented.

It was in this gathering on 3rd November 2008 that the APWLD's book on *Fundamentalisms in Asia Pacific Trends, Impact, Challenges and Strategies Asserting Women's Rights* was launched with the APWLD-sponsored workshop on the same topic.

The KARTINI Conference is an arena for the interaction of academics and activists consistently working for the recognition of the rights of women.

It is an important arena that hopefully will interlink all issues raised and see the need to confirm the veracity of the data through actual implementation on ground level. Studies and researches are best used when they are done for the practical benefit of women to liberate them from exploitative conditions and patriarchal control. 



The Strength of Imelda

by Libby Fainsilber, a volunteer from HK International School

Imelda has a quiet way about her. She shyly covers her face and giggles about her English ability. Despite her pain and suffering, Imelda manages to radiate calm and composure. She recounts her story factually, even though it has been the most difficult year of her life.

Imelda came to Hong Kong a little over two years ago, and worked for her employers as part of a two-year contract. During her second year, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent surgery in January of this year. Between January and May, Imelda received chemotherapy. Although she describes her employers as "not being bad," she was still expected to work despite her condition and the debilitating medical treatment. She cooked, cleaned, and shopped for groceries. Many nights she cried because it was so physically difficult for her. However, at least her mind was at peace because she knew she could receive high caliber medical treatment.

Imelda first came to Bethune House in February of this year. She knew her employer would want to send her back to the Philippines at the end of her contract, and she wanted to know her options. Bethune House counseled her to continue working for her employers and to return for help once the contract ended. The day arrived in mid-May of this year, and sure enough, Imelda's employers chose not to re-hire her. Bethune House took her in while Imelda continued her medical treatment. After some complications, she now no longer received chemotherapy, but radiotherapy. This time, the hospital had to charge her 80 HKD per day. Bethune House solicited from different individuals to cover the treatment.

On 20 September, during the Bethune House anniversary, Imelda noticed fluid coming out of breast. The doctor advised her for a two months' post treatment

When Imelda went to the Immigration

Department to request for a two month's extension of her stay, the officer did not hesitate and wish that her condition would get better.

However, this time when she went to the hospital, she was told she could no longer avail the same benefit as those of a HK resident as the Immigration Department faxed the hospital that she is holding a visitor's visa. She was told to pay the visitor's fee of 750 HKD per session. Imelda could not pay this amount, which was far beyond the means of a migrant worker, especially an unemployed one.

At this point, Bethune House called the South China Morning Post about Imelda and her circumstances. After the article was published on 5 October, several private donors came forward to pay for Imelda's treatment.

The private donors who came forward after hearing about Imelda in the media have made a huge impact on her life, for which Imelda is eternally grateful.

She also appreciates everything the staff and volunteers of Bethune House have done for her. When Imelda left her employers' house, she says she found a home and family at Bethune House. Fellow clients have accompanied her to immigration and provided her with both company and comfort. She is thankful

IAMR, from page 4

are their sole property and they alone can decide on what to do with it.

The rest of the sessions were divided into 11 workshops to discuss different issues of migrant workers covering unionism, undocumented migrants, seafarers, women, rights of migrants, racism and xenophobia, youth and education, and health.

A whole day event was organized by the local organizations led by Migrant International with the support of APWLD

to everyone at Bethune House for their kindness, but singles out Edwina, who personally accompanied her to the hospital to defend her against the inflated charges and who advocated for her at immigration.

Imelda's visa expires in a few weeks. Luckily, donors have paid for her return flight to the Philippines. Upon her return home, Imelda intends to spend time with her husband, Anastacio, and her three-year-old daughter, Hazel Gae. Although she will miss her newfound family at Bethune House, she looks forward to reacquainting herself with the daughter she has not seen in over two years, the daughter who calls her "auntie" over the phone, rather than mother. Imelda will continue to take medication for the next five years and will see a medical professional every three months. She is hopeful, that despite being far away she can continue to benefit from the generosity of her donors, so that it is possible for her to maintain her health. While the hardest part of the battle has now been fought, she still requires the support of others to make sure she will win in the end.

Imelda was very grateful to be given the opportunity to bring her message of thanks to the staff, clients and volunteers at Bethune House, as well as the private donors who covered the cost of her health care and flight home. 📷

and Caram Asia. Dubbed as Migrants' Speakout, it started with a protest rally in the morning and a march to Bonifacio Shrine, where migrants and refugees spoke and performed.

The successful IAMR was even more magnified through build up coordinated activities when the 10-day countdown to shake GFMD with an opening salvo on October 19 as well as an internationally coordinated action that was held with the unfurling of the campaign on Zero Remittance Day on October 29, the opening of the government sponsored GFMD. 📷

Genuine Assembly of Migrants and Refugees a Success

Hundreds of delegates from migrants and refugees grassroots organizations in 33 countries and their supporters gathered in Manila, Philippines to attend the International Assembly of Migrants and Refugees (IAMR).

The Assembly held on 28-30 of October 2008 is in time with the second GFMD, a forum among sending and receiving governments on migration being hosted this time by the Philippine government. Aside from IMA and Migrante International, Ibon International, APWLD and Caram Asia supported the holding of this Assembly.

The IAMR aimed to show to the world that the GFMD – state sponsored forum is not the real forum to talk about migration. The GFMD even pretentiously put up as their theme Migration and Development and will talk about the protection of the rights and empowerment of migrants. Ms. Eni Lestari, the IMA chairperson, stated in her keynote that how can GFMD talk of their theme and topics when the very stakeholders of their forum were not invited at all. That only the migrants'



rights violators are the ones talking among themselves.

The IAMR was graced by prominent people even before it started. A dinner gathering was hosted by Philippine Senate President Manuel Villar in their residence. The main guest was the UN Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on Migrants Rights Jorge Bustamante. Other guests are the Ambassador of Cuba and their delegate to the GFMD and Venezuela Charge d' Affair and their delegates. Representatives Luz Ilagan of Gabriela Women's Party in charge of concerns of migrants of their party, Satur Ocampo and Teddy Casino of Bayan Muna and Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis graced the occasion too. The main guests, the members of the International Coordinating

Body of IMA are in full force.

The IAMR was formally opened by the welcome address of Gary Martinez, the spokesperson of Migrante International and Rep. Hon. Luz Ilagan.

Words of inspiration were delivered by UNSR Jorge Bustamante who arrived with his wife. In his speech, he chose to talk as a professor and not as UNSR in order to "remove" the constraints on him as UNSR. He was critical of the GFMD to a point of castigating the governments on why they are using migrant workers for development. Development is the responsibility and duty of every government and not of migrant workers. He said that the remittances of migrants
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