

Dear (Re)Collection Reader

This newsletter was inspired by the Women for Genuine Security Retreat, "WOMEN FOR GENUINE SECURITY ALL DAY: Sustaining our bodies, work, and future" (DECEMBER 7, 2008).

Participants were welcomed by Maikiko James, moved by Colleen "Coke" Tani Nakamoto's body workshop, enjoyed music provided by Aileen Suzara, critically engaged in conversations on sustaining ourselves and our organization through reflection and discussion of our strengths, passions, weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats of the current moment facilitated by Debbie Lee, sustained themselves through creative writing led by Annie Fukushima, reinvigorated their bodies with Eriko Ikehara, and inspired to continue as a collective by Gwyn Kirk's closing statements.

The writings in this newsletter came out of the creative writing portion and opening statements made by the participants.

We want to thank all of our contributors and invite our readers to join us in this continued journey.

(Re)Collection Editorial Staff

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(Re)Collection Newsletter

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**A Women for Genuine Security Publication
December 2008**



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About Recollection

(RE)Collection is a newsletter that illuminates the work of those committed to a culture of peace. (RE)Collection developed from the collaboration of U.S. based activists who are part of the WGS connection. WGS envisions a world of genuine security based on justice, respect for others across national boundaries, and economic planning that meets people's needs, especially women and children. WGS work toward the creation of a society free of militarism, violence, and all forms of sexual exploitation, and for the safety, well-being, and long-term sustainability of our communities. **Interested in submitting works? Email: recollection@genuinesecurity.org**

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I want to look at you.
She sits up from her bed
Looks at him, squinting
Hands cupped over her eyes.
She can see him smile
Lick his lips
And come forward.
She begins to whimper
As he gets closer
She turns her head and hopes for the
madam to come
She cries -- *Madam*
And he slaps her
She sits with her hand on her cheek
And he grabs her by the wrists
And pushes her to lie down
While she wriggles
And cries
And says no. po.
Haan. No. po
An jiakayat.
Haan,
Oh god. Stop..
Haan!

Legs pried open
With his knees that dig deep
Into her thighs

The sharp pain of a Charlie horse
Stab her heart
Like his tongue intruding
Her mouth
Breath of cigar,
Some liquor
Some musk cologne...
Ripped panty
Buckle snapping off
And penetration

Gone...
She is gone
Away from home.
Only the memory of her son
Growing distant and blurred
Like looking through a water droplet
Dripping down the tricycle's plastic window
And his face wet
In the rain
Calling out *Mama*
While she whisks herself away
Heartbeat in rhythm with the clapping
Of the gasoline engine
Sputtering the lies of quick cash
But enough to buy some chiclets.
Son,
so you won't have to sell them no more.

***Read by Cachola at the Women for Genuine Security Open House, Walking on the Fenceline – November 17, 2008, Manilatown Center, San Francisco USA*

Women for Genuine Security illuminates the work of those committed to a culture of peace. WGS envisions a world of genuine security based on justice, respect for others across national boundaries, and economic planning that meets people's needs, especially women and children. WGS work toward the creation of a society free of militarism, violence, and all forms of sexual exploitation, and for the safety, well-being, and long-term sustainability of our communities. **When provided this definition, the women in this workshop we were asked to say what it meant to us, being a part of this international women's network. We wrote our responses on paper flowers and pasted it to a banner of the world. This is what it means for us to walk together in the struggle for peace and genuine security**

A Rupture	Depth	Personal Growth
Addressing pain in the world and pain stuck in our bodies	Energy	Potential
Anti-imperialist	Expanding Oasis	Relationships
Anti-racist	Family	Smart
Art/Performance/Body	Giving	Stories in the Body
Beautiful People	Growth, Relationships, Wisdom	Thinking complexly, not just one issue, but seeing the whole picture as best as we can.
Being together in ourselves, as a community	Heart	Space
Body, Mind, and Spirit Connection	Spirit	Resilience
Celebrate Life	Help to create a "common context of struggle" – Chandra Tapalde	Sisters walking together on the journey to make change
Come as you are	Mohanty	Thinking Deeply
Commonality	Holistic	Undoing the harm of foreign policy and militarisms
Connection	Honoring Histories, stories	Warmth
Create	Hope	Wisdom
Cultural Diversity	Inclusive	Women who Share a Lifelong Commitment
	Intersection	

Woman

Body in human form, fragile, vulnerable, honest, yearning, tell us what you have to say about your experience in life dealing with the powers that oppress and lessen your capacities to become. To see your true spirit you must take the time to explore and reach out to those who voices and practice reflect your need to be in the present. Women's bodies as places of strength and empowerment – speak to me everyday. Her bodies are embodied in my ancestors, my body, my past, my histories like beads worn on the neck. Family heirlooms passed down through generations... Sometimes they are tarnished pearls. Forgotten bodies of those women who have been known for their bodies, not for their precious memories, histories, and precious lives are remembered in our work, lives, and resistance.

Womankind

“Un mundo para los mujeres”: A world for women in which women are given respect and can play a role to bring peace and share solidarity within ourselves, each other... but my sense of fear is that we as women will not always recognize common ground amongst ourselves. Womankind must be open to all beings (even men) because it is from mutual respect and understanding where we will be able to listen and engage. Women, some women, many women, are very good listeners – that's why we always want to talk. Talking should never be underestimated, and as women we must value our ears and hearts to be connected. We grow and reach out in order to live, to know who we are, to learn and to love. What we're really good at is an unending list that ties us together as womankind.

Dreams with a Price By Ellen-Rae Cachola November 2, 2008

Migrant worker chooses to leave son behind
Carries his screams and cries in her luggage
And even though his mangled wails grow distant,
Overwhelmed by the whining of the tricycle motor,
Demands of a work ethic churn in her soul
Oiled by industrialized dreams that build pathways
Out of the barangay, provincial limits.
She dares to transgress. Not for herself
But for her descendants.
Crossing the borders out of the mother land
She becomes a mother without land.
Her child, a scent perfuming the clothes on her back.

It took her 2 days to fly to Jordan.
She waited half a day at the recruiter's office.
The men that passed in and out
Looked at her and raised their eyebrows.
They would speak in their language.
But the word *Maganda* would trigger her ear.
She swung her head to see who said it
And two of them would look at her.

She was driven by a chauffer to a house
A woman with a shawl covering her head
Waited at the door.
She did not shake her hand or hug her.
Migrant worker was told in accented English

You follow me.
Back turned to her upon entrance.
Work began.
Little room with no windows
Right next to kitchen.
Big kitchen, one window above sink.
Modern refrigerator
Those stoves with no coil but underneath flat
plastic surface
Marble floors.
Beautiful, *Tagaytay* home, she thought.
And the closet of brooms, mops came tumbling
from the closet.
Welcome,
the madam said.

At night, Migrant worker would cry
Smelling her night dress
Her son all around her...

The door opens.
The Master of the house.
He pulls the beaded string from the ceiling
And the bulb that hangs
shines a violent bright.
Stings her eyes.
He says,

Continued on page 6

A collection of words that define us as women together

By Ellen-Rae Cachola, Annie Fukushima, Lina Hoshino, Eriko Ikehara, Maikiko James, Gwyn Kirk, Deborah Lee, Colleen Tani Nakamoto, Sabina Perez, Taeva Shefler, Aileen Suzara, and Sandra Schwartz.

Cavity

Body Cavity hollow festering wound scales crack rupture skin when it is left alone with no recognition, acknowledgement, or thoughts. Cavern of longing, of sorrow, the silent roar of loss + possibility. Possibility of what? Healing? How does one begin to repair the things we have perhaps helped torn apart but this cavity brings ancient memories to the surface. Cavity healed and healing, gaping and yet full of potential for change. With enough care and awareness, we can acknowledge the spaces within ourselves.

Cellular

Plants, muscle, mind... And memory through living tissues that aches, feels, evolves, and changes. Cellular is the smallest yet busy level where we begin – and end, in decomposition we become cellular again. Sometimes I wonder if the makeup of the cellular is like karma, and your cell memory is what creates your next move. Each cell, a mind of its' own, propels us forward, life in a microscopic drop. Its' drive carries us to have cellular integrity.

Desire

I hold the pomegranate above the light and warmth of the flame, wanting to bring to life my many seeds. Some are named, some are faint glimmers, fragments of thoughts and ideas. Each waiting to reveal the secrets of harmony, to understand the path of natural flows. Each is a ruby red teardrop with the potential of life, a tight kernel encased within unknown boundaries. To indulge one or many and spit out hard centers – spitting: fulfilling a desire to thrust something into the world. And ideally, a seed would grow. Deep desire for things growing, deep desire for roots and fertile earth not destroyed. Erosion only the remnants of untouched desires, breaking, waiting... waiting...

Dreams

I dream with my eyes open. Sometimes, when I look out there is an unclarity. But I'm walking tiredly floating underneath the ground of my own shadow, my ancestors footsteps I hear with my body, it beckons me to utter in the language of my dreams, bearing truths to a world that needs to embrace the language of dreams. A world that remembers the pains and sufferings, the triumphs and the ancient despair. Dreams are an umbilical cord to that world that has been and could be. How do we react to our dreams? How do we choose between our hopes and our lived realities and enable our dreams to become that reality.

Ego

What is the ego? How does one know and set its boundaries? It drives us to action and allows us to get what we need... it's also good to step back, sometimes, observe, and really listen. Ego is still present and I take the thumb of my femininity and squash it like a bug. Ego is there like a schizophrenic wanderer asking questions how the world has produced it. When it was a child, it didn't recognize itself, its' nature, habits, power. I met it for the first time when I bloomed under

affirmation. When I felt inspired into action, into the great loving No! (Yes!). When I was silenced by fear, blame, self doubt – the heavy hand of other. Where lies the balance?

Embody

To embody is to inhabit.

My body is where I inhabit,

Or does my body inhabit me?

Where do I and my body begin and end?

Are we not one and the same, though sometimes

We live apart?

That Nan Han has said once the spirit form exists

Before the body and our body is a smaller part

Of our existence, being.

What we see in the mirror is only skin deep, that the world sees. But the world can only know the part of your spirit that sings through your eyes, your skin, your actions that enable an embodiment. To embody is to live and receive, and let go. Reflecting experience of the world and revealing what it has created and allowed to survive... Different openings are what we embody.

Exhaustion

The world is exhausted. Take deep breaths.

Too much going on, not enough breathing

Wake up time – or reenergize

Maybe this would help us to move forward at last.

It's been a long eight years

It's been a long millennium.

It's been a long step, a long breath, a long thought, yet we taken another step, another breath, another try.

Sitting in the stillness of exhaustion – is it a good tired or a bad tired? What do we hear in the exhaustion? What do we learn?

Time to renew the spirit, to be in touch with what brings joy; lying beneath the stars and taking in the universe... Winds change direction often, knowing and being detached.

Exhaustion is frightening when you don't know why.

Hands

Hands build

Creating, Shaping...

Providing care and helping others

Holding up and molding... Building structure/healing, hands cleaning, hands washing and squeezing

Creating large changes with small muscles – the tools with which we work everyday without noticing. The

delicacy of fingers, intricacy – attention to detail in our work, especially created by our hands. Also taken for granted, but without hands we find other ways to create and to express because it is necessary that we see the value in our hands, but the value to all the parts it is connected to.

Healing

Healing has so many levels and many of them are invisible except to the body. I know that in this moment, my body is remembering. Remembering that things are moving, layers, overlap. Onion skins

make me want to stay still – I don't want to cry, but keep it frozen, please don't laugh or judge, just be here with me as I shake and cry, dance and shout, move into a union of self that unveils the beauty of being a woman where roots go far... in rooted remembering I am healing. Inside the healing is both warn and carries its' own kind of pain that I return to knowing that in healing I am always ever more connected to the yous that sustain me.

Hugs

Comforting touches soothing rest stops in deep recesses of my soul in need of support warm, strong, self-loving, hugs keep me warm throughout the day. I need to think of you like a sweater even though you are far away. How long did I have you? Before we were born. Our time together here is not the first time, not the second time, for we are both of time and not bound by it. Hugs enable our acts to continue on, in the darkness and in the memory of our connection of our choice to reach toward the other. A moment of recognizing we are human beings despite the distance or the time we are apart.

Intersection

Entering into a space of multiple realities, one is turned here, there beyond, and within. One tunes in to hope of listening deeply and hearing the promise of shadows that reveal the facets of things that combine rough with soft, the unseen with the visible. There are things named and unnamed here that draw their power from their intersection of energies and bodies and ideas. It is here in the space between, the space within, we find ourselves at vulnerable crossroads – often afraid to make the journey over. Then someone waves from across the street, or turns the corner and places a hand on our shoulder, and the intersection becomes less daunting. The path becomes a crossroad of possibilities.

Things

How much, how little, does it take?

What is the cost of things?

Does a thing imply value or does value imply things?

Some things I loathe, some things I need, some things I love, some things I seek.

What if we lived in an economy not based on things – not based on buying and selling things –

Be-ings not th-ings

This is what capitalism brings – (Marx) (the invention of capitalism) dehumanization where people are objectified as sources of labor from which the capitalists extract greater wealth for their gain.

Where do we draw the line of being sucked into a system that is motivated by profit and not people's welfare. Things we need – health, education, livable wages, a community to share, food, clean air and water. This makes me feel secure and enriched as a woman, a daughter, a friend. I can turn things into what I believe.

Understanding

Understanding comes from listening to what somebody or something is saying, and then listening to yourself and your response to that. Understanding is an exercise in empathy and healing, but without imposing cures. It's really difficult to understand many things so perhaps it's best to pick a few things and focus on what is really necessary. Sometimes, understanding is all we really need, a greatest gift to ourselves and others, and yet so hard to do – to understand another when it's hard to even understand oneself. How circumstance impacts others, being present and