



asian women united 170 PARK ROW 5A NEW YORK, NY 10038

Asian Women United (AWU) is a New York based women's organization committed to the development of Asian sisterhood. We recognize that the substantial gains made by the women's movements of the 1970's are being eroded by the political and economic conditions of our times. It is therefore crucial for women, particularly minority women, to maintain an individual and community network of support. Along these lines, we have decided to produce and publish an Asian Women's Journal which will draw primarily on the skills and talents of the East Coast Asian/Pacific women. We hope the Journal will become a tangible resource in furthering our network of support and our growth as independent women.

Through the Journal, we hope to accomplish several goals, namely:

1. We seek to consciously develop a collective Asian women's perspective and to document this ongoing process.
2. By examining the effects of racism and sexism in our lives and in our communities, we seek to:
 - affirm our identities as Asians and as women.
 - to clarify and define our relationship to the broader women's movement
 - to develop a greater understanding between the Asian American communities and the broader women's movements.

For the past year, members of AWU's Journal Planning Committee have carefully laid the foundation for the Journal. Through reading, research, and discussion, we have identified and developed the major areas to be included in the Journal. As a result, the following topics have emerged:

- o Mothers and Daughters
- o Social/Sexual Relationships
- o Women and Work
- o Health in Body and Spirit
- o Organizing

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Enclosed are summaries which may be helpful to you.

Eligibility

All East Coast Asian/Pacific women are invited to submit their work. Non-fiction articles, short stories, poetry, and artwork are acceptable. Although we are asking for submission in the above areas, work on other subjects are welcomed and will be judged on individual merit and relevance to the goals as explained earlier.

How to Submit

All submissions must be typed, double spaced, on 8 1/2 X 11 paper. (For artwork submission, please contact Tomie Arai using the address below. Your name, address, telephone number, and topic (when applicable) should appear on the upper left hand corner of the first page and all subsequent pages should have your last name and page number on it.

Example: Leong/p. 3

All articles, short stories, and poetry should be submitted in duplicate. (But the editorial board would prefer 4 copies.) Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope, if you wish to have your work returned. Send submissions and inquiries to:

Example: AWU Journal Submission
c/o S. Hom
37-64 63rd Street
Woodside, New York 11377
Topic: (when applicable)

All submissions must be postmarked no later than August 31, 1983. All submissions accepted for publication become the shared property of the author and AWU.

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---Concepts of "FACE" and "FATE"

"FACE" is so important that mothers many times went to extremes to "save face" -- distorted reality in their minds, lied to family or friends, chided their inferior daughters by comparing them to the superior children of friends -- yet boasting about us among friends. "FATE" ruled our mothers lives. Mothers often swallowed the bitterness of disappointments, hardships. Sometimes, this anger emerged and mothers became shrews and nags; other times it emerged in mental and physical illnesses; more constructively, less frequently, it emerged as defiance and independence -- financially and emotionally.

WOMEN AND WORKDefinition of Work

- 1) Keeping house and raising children as a full time job.
- 2) Working outside of the family
- 3) "Super woman" syndrome -- trying to have it all

Traditional View of Women's Work

It has been the role of Asian women to take care of the house and family. Historically, in working class families, this responsibility has included work in the fields and factories. In traditional Asian culture, this responsibility also included the extended family on the husband's side.

- 1) How do we as Asian women define our role in the family today? Do we feel that our job at home is as important as the husband's paid job? How do today's husbands and women themselves view the status of a housewife?
- 2) If housework is a valuable contribution to society, how can it be compensated monetarily? How can the value of housework be upgraded?

Women in the Job Market

More women today are working out of economic necessity as well as choice. Some of the issues and questions explored included:

- pursuing a career instead of marriage
- motivation and obstacles to pursuing a career
- what does success mean to a woman?
- for those of us who have attained leadership positions either outside of or within the corporate system, how do we deal with our peers and superiors as Asian women? What kind of stereotypes do they have of us?

Succeeding within a Corporate Structure

Do we play "games" to achieve what we want? And if we do play them, what kind of games do we play? Do we need to play them?

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MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Prior to discussion, summaries were given of books which put the family and motherhood in historical perspective. These readings explored the myths and realities of motherhood and examined the position of women in society. Suggested topics for discussion were: the family-extended and nuclear; single parents; working mothers; growing old; children/no children; divorce; and historical and cultural roles of mothers in society.

The following questions were raised and discussed:

- "Going against their wishes"...What happens when we adopt American values, get divorced, relate to or marry non-Asian men, live together without marriage or simply try to reverse sexual roles within our own families/relationships (sharing housework, child care, bringing in the main source of income). Do our mothers support us? What kinds of conflicts arise? How have we, as Asian women, been able to function in two cultures? How have our mothers? What are our experiences as first, second, third and fourth generation daughters?
- "Mothering and juggling"...motherhood versus career -- can we have both? Once we become mothers, how do we relate to our own mothers? What is it like to raise an Asian American child, an Eurasian child, a non-sexist, non-racist child? Deciding not to have children; what happens when we choose abortion and what are the alternatives to motherhood and the nuclear family.
- Other social structures: confucianism and our feudal roots in China, Japan, etc.; matriarchal society, society before Capitalism and after capitalism. Where do the feelings we have about ourselves, our place in society and our powerlessness come from? How much of our values are rooted in tradition/the collective experience of Asian people? As immigrants and the daughters of immigrants, we recognize the importance of the family unit as a way to preserve and perpetuate our culture and heritage within American society -- what is it that's positive about the family unit -- and oppressive?
- Sexuality: "Asian women don't talk about sex"...What role did our mothers play in defining our sexual identity? How did they affect the ways in which we can (or can't) express ourselves as sexual beings? Is it time for some "honest conversations" between Asian mothers and daughters?
- Growing old...Taking care of our parents/mothers; dealing with the death of a mother; tradition and expectations -- guilt about fulfilling our parents' wishes before they die; growing old and alone in American -- how does that affect our mothers and our relationships to them? Coming to grips with parental conflicts; judging ourselves in the eyes of our mothers.
- Mothers' expectations of daughters The ultimate goal of a mother for her daughter was to get married and have children, with a husband prioritized as: doctor/dentist; Asian; to just get married (for those women beyond 30). There was an unspoken understanding that daughters would attend college, but no particular area of study was encouraged; the arts were discouraged. "Our mothers want us to be what they're not, and then they resent us for being different from them"... "Pleasing our parents is a no-win situation"... "We grow up not wanting to hurt our parents so they wind up knowing very little about our lives; we don't talk or communicate"... (quotes from discussion) What did our mothers expect of us while we were growing up? What did they want for their daughters -- for their sons?

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Asian Women in Non-Traditional Work

- What motivated us to take non-traditional jobs (such as policewomen, taxi cab drivers, plumbers, etc.)
- Asian women in blue collar work (factories and restaurants)

Superwoman Syndrome -- Trying to have it allChoosing to have both a career and a family

- 1) What motivated us to take on these types of responsibilities -- do we have to prove that we can do both things and do them well?
- 2) How do we juggle a 0:00 to 5:00 job plus take care of a family?
- 3) How does the husband respond to this situation and does he help around the house -- does he take the wife's career seriously?
- 4) How do women structure time for themselves and for friends?

What factors influenced us to assume one or a combination of these roles -- what roles did our mothers portrayed -- were there any role models other than our mothers -- were they positive or negative in motivating us to choose career or housewife or both?

Did we have problems deciding which role to choose and were there many obstacles in our paths to achieve what we wanted: to be self fulfilling?

SOCIAL AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Historically, Chinese immigrant women were subservient to their family throughout their lives (serving their fathers in youth, husbands in marriage, and their sons in old age). The strong family unit was important. In the family, husband's or the man's career and wishes came first. Though times have changed with the Americanization of Asians, certain cultural values have been passed on (notably those of passivity and submission) to us, born in the United States.

Some of the readings prior to discussions covered the women's movement, how men and women relate to each other, and a personal account of an Asian girl's growing up in a white society.

Some of the questions and issues raised and discussed included:

Family and Friends

- How did traditional family values affect how we relate to our friends?
- Are Asian friendships important in order to maintain our Asian identity? Where do our non-Asian friends fit in?
- Since many of us experienced cross cultural conflicts, do we identify more with western values? How do we deal with the Asian values that we do not feel comfortable with?

- With growing third world awareness, and embracing our Asian identities, how do we react in an predominantly white society? Do we still encounter racist attitudes? And how do we deal with them?
- Has embracing our Asian heritage helped us in identifying with third world cultures and people?

Dating

Media stereotyping plays a strong role in our dating preferences.

- Who do Asian women date non-Asian men? or vice versa?
Why do non-Asian men date Asian women?
- What are the drawbacks and benefits of dating someone of another race?
- Does similar backgrounds make for a stronger relationship?
- Why are non-Asian men preferred over Asian men?

Female/Male Relationships

Due to the women's movement, Asian women have begun to challenge the traditional roles of women in society and within the family, particularly the male/female relationship.

- Marriage used to be a contract in which women traded their domestic and sexual services for economic support. Since most women are capable of supporting themselves, who do men resist sharing in household duties equally? How do women deal with this resistance?
- What are Asian women's expectations of men? What are Asian women's expectation of Asian men?
- In the Asian American cultural context, what does being a "liberated woman" mean?
- What does a "liberated Asian woman" want or expect from a man? What are the realities?
- Are there really any liberated relationships? What does it mean to achieve a liberated relationship? What compromises are made?
- How do we provide supportive ways to work with the men in our lives to develop mutually satisfying life choices?
- How do Asian men perceive Asian women?
- What role does the media play in creating these perceptions?

HEALTH IN BODY AND MINDA Wholistic Approach to Health:

Recognizing the direct connection between one's mental and physical health; how our life style contributes to well being and/or illness; taking full responsibility for ourselves and our bodies.

Some Topics that Emerged during Discussions:Philosophy on Living

Exploring the basic philosophy and concepts (Yin/Yang balance, five elements, etc.) of Chinese medicine and how these might be applied to our daily lives, in terms of diet, selection of foods, cooking, common colds and major diseases.

Taking Control of our Bodies

Accepting responsibility for one's own health and how this affects our relationships with doctors, hospitals, etc. Learning how and what kinds of questions to ask; determining who's in charge in case of illness.

Mental Attitude

Dealing with stress encountered on the job, family pressures, bicultural confusion, personal/peer relationships. How can they affect our health? How can we integrate them into our lives with minimal backlash? What is the relationship between stress and nutrition? How can we compensate nutritionally for stress?

Life Styles

We've come a long way baby.... As more women move up the career ladder, they are showing an increasing incidence of the kinds of work-related diseases traditionally faced by men (heart disease, lung cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, etc.). How can women reassess and rearrange their priorities and lifestyles to avoid these pitfalls? Explore the relationship between exercise, diet and work.

Getting Sick

What does being sick mean? What is the ill person trying to say? The psychology behind and the benefits gained from illness. How can a person get well again and learn to communicate their needs without resorting to illness?

Are You What You Eat?

Looking at diet and nutrition as an important cause of health and illness. Do nutritional supplements really work?

Women's Health Issues

What is the crises in sex hormones? Dealing with the hot flash of menopause and the cold reality of breast cancer.

WOMEN ORGANIZING WOMEN

What is Organizing?

On a grassroots, non-governmental level, organizing is a means of controlling one's life. Working with a group towards common goals as a source of power.

The following ideas are tentative areas upon which the section Women Organizing Women can focus:

Exploring the process of organizing -- Through interviews with women, we can examine who is involved and why. How were they politicized? Have their lives changed radically? Do they consider themselves feminists or radicals, or mainstream women? What did they learn about themselves and their relationship to the community? Did they feel they made a difference to the community? What was their personal life like; did it suffer because of their commitment? Did they ever get burned out? What would you do differently?

Motivation for working in a group -- The individual in relation to the group, the process and results of organizing and the effect it has had on us and the women's movement. AWU as an example of women working together, exploring other areas in which women are currently involved.

Targeting Issues -- Target the issues where women are working. The aim is to inform and educate ourselves on community and women's issues. Garment workers, child care, community and women's health, anti-rape, pro-abortion, battered women, recent women immigrants, etc.

Is the Women's Movement Alive and Well? -- Where is it today in the 1980's versus the 1970's? (See New York Times Magazine, October 17th, "Voices from the Post-Feminist Generation.") How has it changed? What is a feminist? Is the label "feminist" a dirty word? Do men still sneer at its use? Dealing with sexism as a feminist? How do Asian women from different backgrounds view feminism?

Is there a Need for an Asian Women's Group? -- Is there a need for consciousness-raising? Professional, equal-pay and ERA emphasis? How does a group stay together, stimulate and educate its membership, develop leadership skills, and resolve differences in age and interest in its membership? Do National groups work; are they effective? Are individual needs neglected to keep the group structure simple? How do you avoid bureaucracy in larger groups? How should/can the leaders share decision making power with the members? (E.g., Steering committee or president/vice president.) Why aren't there more Asian women's groups on the East Coast?