

The Impact of Globalization on Women

Seminar: March 27, 2004

Dr. Jane Bayes (jbayes@csun.edu)

For more information on Dr. Bayes: <http://www.iggd.org>

I. "What is globalization? Three Views:

A. Began in 16th Century – nothing new
Continuation of European Imperialism

B. Began in 1970s

C. Began in 1989 with fall of Berlin Wall

II. Characteristics of globalization from 1970s on

A. Death of distance (2A/2B)

B. 1973 oil crisis and global indebtedness (2C/2D/2E)

1) Debt Trap ñ World Bank figures for 1999 show that \$128 million was transferred daily from the 62 most impoverished countries to wealthy countries, and that for every dollar countries receive in grant aid, they repay \$13 in old debts.

2) Debt Crises ñ Latin America in 1982-83; Brazil in 1987; Mexico in 1994-95; Russia in 1998; Brazil and Argentina 2002 to present

3) IMF, World Bank and Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs).
Brazil and black beans versus soybeans

C. Capital mobility and financial bubbles (2F)
East Asia crisis in 1997-98

D. Growth of international trade and foreign direct investment (3A/3B/3C/3D)

E. Growth of offshore production (3F)

F. Increased mobility of labor (3G)

G. Changing role of the state

H. Hegemony of neo-liberalism

Market over politics, shrinking of state functions, privatization, deregulation, free markets, free trade, free investment, emphasis on growth. Globalization is inevitable.

III. Consequences of globalization for women

A. Growing Inequality ñ Feminization of Poverty

Improvement in vital statistics for many nations in terms of decreased infant mortality, longer life spans, better nutrition, but also large numbers of people thrown into abject poverty ñ displaced from subsistence agriculture or forced into volatile and very unstable labor markets. No job security, terrible working conditions, demise of state welfare systems especially in former Soviet Union. Many nations of Asia, Central America, Africa and Latin America left out of the global economy almost altogether. In poorest countries, women often left to cope on their own. Abject poverty, more porous borders, and great disparities in wages lead to increased migration flows, human trafficking, sex slavery. Examples of Russiañ6 million a year between Finland and Russia. Russian women flowing into Japan for entertainment industry. Global Nanny Chains.

B. The indebtedness problem and women

Structural adjustment policies (SAPs) require indebted states to turn their attention to reducing domestic spending and producing for exportñPhilippines and the export of labor. Sex tourism as a means of earning foreign exchange.

C. Changing role of the state

State searching for capital rather than seeking to serve its citizens. Decline in welfare programs. Crony capitalism rampant among elites in developed and developing countries. Deregulation, privatization, dismantling of the welfare state in Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) replacing Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). Not a roll back of state power but rather an expansion.

In less developed countries, privatization often requires the sale of water systems and power plants to foreign companies who then charge money for their services.

D. Feminization and flexibilization of the labor force

Two kinds of feminization. One is the increased number of women being drawn into the labor force as corporations seek ever cheaper and more docile forms of waged labor. The other refers to the nature of the work experience ñ that is making jobs temporary, low paid, and flexible ñ "feminizing" them in the sense that all women's paid work has been low paid and unstable.

1) What is the impact of drawing women into the paid labor force?

a) Depends on family structure: Jakarta versus Taiwan or Palestine ñ dutiful daughter versus more independent woman

- b) Terrible working conditions, violations of human rights, rapes, sexual harassment, fired at 24, ruined health
- c) Backlash in Juarez and in Honduras and all over Latin American ñ killing of young women.

E. Backlash of religious fundamentalism as reaction against globalization with women at the center as symbols of the community that must be resurrected and/or saved.

IV. What are women doing to improve their lives?

A. Window of opportunity ñ U.N. World Congresses on Women beginning in 1990 started in 1975

- 1) Mexico in 1975
- 2) Copenhagen in 1980
- 3) Nairobi in 1985 ñ forward Looking Strategies
- 4) Beijing in 1995 ñ Platform for Action

B. World Conferences after 1989 ñ Fall of the Berlin Wall

- 1990 New York ñ World Summit on Children
- 1992 Conference on Environment and Development
- 1993 Conference on Human Rights
- 1994 Conference on Population and Development
- 1995 World Summit for Social Development
- 1995 U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women

Critical areas of concern:

- The persistent and increasing burden of **POVERTY** on women
- Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to **EDUCATION** and **TRAINING**
- Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to **HEALTH CARE** and related services
- **VIOLENCE** against women
- The effects of **ARMED OR OTHER KINDS OF CONFLICT** on women
- Inequality in **ECONOMIC STRUCTURES AND POLICIES** in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
- Inequality between men and women in the **SHARING OF POWER** and **DECISION-MAKING**
- Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the **ADVANCEMENT** of women
- Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the **HUMAN RIGHTS** of women
- Sterotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the **MEDIA**
- Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the **ENVIRONMENT**
- Persistend discrimination against and violation of the **RIGHTS OF THE GIRL CHILD**

C. Women all over the world organizing domestically and transnationally

1) Led by the United Nations and some nation states ñ especially Scandinavians

a) State feminism

b) Women in development

c) Gender and development

2) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

a) Economic and poverty organizations/OXFAM (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief)
Micro-credit Organization/lots of religious organizations doing poverty work

b) Regional organizations: ABANTU/Women Living Under Muslim Laws/many others

c) Human rights organizations

d) Diaspora organizations ñ hometown organizations

f) Union organizing

D. Women and age of empire ñ lack of unity

1) Anger at Neo-Liberal hegemony in Latin America ñ power asymmetries and industry of gender and development work

2) Empire issues crowding out feminist issues in Europe

3) Feminism and unemployment in China

4) Shirin Ebadi and U.N. Peace Prize in Muslim world

5) African women and survival (HIV/AIDS), agricultural trade barriers _ Lomé
Convention