



The Association of Bahá'í Women - Wales

A QUESTION MORE OFTEN than not put forward by men is, "Why do you need to have weekends especially for women?" Why indeed? Just what does the The Association of Bahá'í Women, Wales have to offer? Well, it's a chance for women of all ages, single or married, from all sorts of backgrounds – professional, retired, domestic technicians, child-rearing engineers, Bahá'ís or not, to come together informally in a relaxed, safe environment.

If you get a group of women to-gether, they usually form their chairs into a circle, so that everyone's on an equal footing, it's easier to get to know each other, and we tend to look for areas of common ground. Women have the ability to cut right through the "protective" layers that society erects around itself, layers that create unnecessary and superfi-cial barriers, and get right to the heart of things without the custom-ary preamble associated with the outside world. There's no need for any of the posturing adopted by outside committees either. There's real freedom and respite from outside pressures, too. We very quickly gain an insight into each others' lives, develop a rapport and mutual trust, we become aware of our capacities, our needs and we expand the former to assist the latter.

What are our aims at these events?

To encourage each other, develop skills, stimulate personal growth and start a process of transformation. This is particularly good for those who are normally shy and less capable - those that lack confidence!

Why?

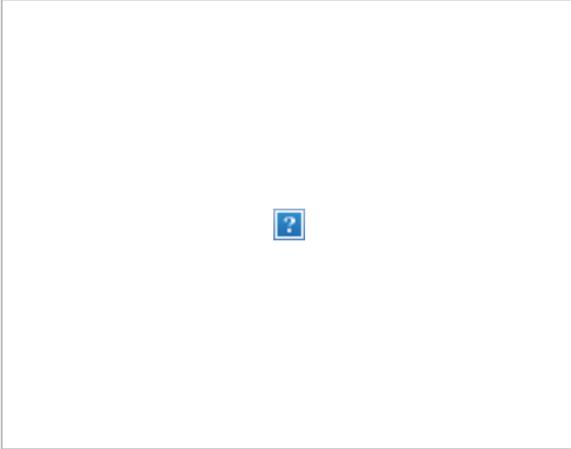
Because so many handmaidens possess wonderful undervalued skills and abilities that remain hidden and locked away, unused. We feel that this is a wonderful opportunity to look at these abilities, find the key and start the process of releasing them. Women's input into the next Plan is crucial. If we have the vision, and the motivation, we can promote and encourage initia-tive, and we can "get things done". If we want to change the world, if we want to redress the balance, if we want to be an influence for good, if we want to remedy the injustices and ills of a sick world, then lets start now with preparing ourselves and extending our God-given attributes and abilities and put them to work.

The next women's residential weekend will be from Friday, October 12 to Sunday, October 14 at the Maerdy Cottages, Llandeilo Carmarthenshire, just off the M4! This time the focus is on self-emergence, personal development and time-management, as well as lots of diversion therapy (food). The cost is £47.50 inclusive of meals, materials, entertainment and excel-lent luxury accommodation... oak beams, log-fires, antique furniture (and organisers) and huge, squashy armchairs. You'll love it. Its ideal for friends, colleagues or even remote acquaintances.

Book early to avoid disappointment, as there are only 30 places! (One lady that came last year after seeing our advert in the local hospital is coming again with two friends). For registration details/form contact Tracey Roberts-Jones, email: TTRobertsjones@aol.com

Come and see what the women's weekends can offer you. Only then will you find out what you can offer the world!

One-Day Conference on Racism and Gender



Participants in the conference, Pam Evans, Tish Roskans (ABW Wales) and Rev Kathryn Price, all from Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, S. Wales.

MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION of Bahá'í Women in Wales hosted a one-day conference on the linked issues of racism and gender at Cardiff City Hall recently. Themes discussed included the sources, causes and forms of racism, how it affected women in particular, measures of prevention, education and protection, and the provision of remedies and strategies to achieve full and effective equality.

Amongst those attending were representatives from the National Assembly For Wales, the Minority Ethnic Women's Network and the Women's National Commission. The conference was

chaired by Mrs Kathryn Delpak MBE member of the Bahá'í Council for Wales.

The day began with an introductory talk by Mrs Zarin Hainsworth-Fadei, director of the Office for the Advance-ment of Women, who represented the Women's National Commission and who is vice-chairperson of the steering group for the forthcoming World Conference Against Racism and Related Intolerance held in Durban, in South Africa in September. She gave a summary of the historical background leading up to this third such World Conference. Sadly, due to the posturing and national self-interest adopted by many of the participating countries, even the most limited proposals had failed to be implemented and no action had been forthcoming from the two previous world conferences. We must move away from the concept of certain races being perceived as superior in relation to others, or dwelling on past conflicts, she said. We must move forward into a new era of co-operation and inter-dependence, where diversity was welcomed and all nations had equal status.

Workshop consultations then produced a number of avenues for action to be recommended to the Women's National Commission for inclusion in the final paper to be presented at the World Conference. It was felt that a major source of racism was the bad example set by parents in the home and sub-consciously continued by children. A lack of knowledge, reinforced by stereotyping and ignorance resulted in false assumptions and intolerance. We are all guilty of it, whether we realise it or not, and realisation can be painful. Recent events in the UK have shown all too clearly how racism exists throughout our society, in spite of our protestations to the contrary.

Although the issue of gender was critical in the analysis of existing problems, it was racism per se that needed to be addressed. The key was education, starting at an early formative age and continuing throughout the school curriculum. Multi-cultural community projects should be actively promoted to encourage initiative, motivation and vision. Greater contact with other cultures would lead to greater understanding, co-operation and acceptance, resulting in unity in diversity. The key to a major sea change in established patterns of behaviour required the acceptance of global responsibility for the injustices perpetrated against women. It was agreed that a fairer balance needs to be created by including many more women on local, national and international committees, thus enabling them to become actively involved in the decision-making. In order to promote and safeguard women's interests and implement action with regard to their needs, their input is crucial.

It was felt that the conference had been extremely productive and had highlighted specific ways in which racism intersects with gender. It was fervently hoped that the lines of action put forward by The Women's National Commission would be effectively addressed

at Durban resulting in a major step forward in eradicating the inequality and under-representation of women in many areas of society.

The day's conference had provided an important opportunity for women's groups in Wales to contribute their views to such an important global event.

Women's Weekend

12th to 14th October, 2001
Maerdy Cottages
Llandeilo
South Wales

Self-emergence, personal
development, time-
management
"Ripples" and much more.

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