

**Women Reporting Violence in a Time of War
A Forum on Racial and Sexual Violence:
Silenced Voices of the "Race" Election
Thursday November 8th 2001 UTS**

Tape 3

Jane Corpuz-Brock: ...that's the challenge for all of us. We have to start educating our people, our local community as to the root causes of ? migration of people and why there are a lot of people coming, even though it's so risky. The means that they use as so risky. Of course, there are people who come here really for love, like myself. I'm a romantic. But my husband says he would prefer to live in the Philippines after ???. But because there are no employment opportunities, then we have to come here. And a lot of times ??? you know, just a simple person ???... People say please talk in English. I said I'm talking in English now. Oh, I can't understand you. So all this, and then sometimes they look at you and even ask you, how did your husband meet you, in a mail order bride magazine? I've had that experience. So that is the challenge I guess for us ??? And thank you very much.

Heather Goodall: Thank you Jane, for building those links between individual women's experiences, Filipinas around the world and the global terrorism, international capitalism. Our next talk is a paper that's called Silence That Speaks and Dreams That Cry. It's been written by three community women -- Omeima Sukkarieh, Mia Zahra, and Sana Salame, and it's going to be ready by Omeima Sukkarieh.

Omeima Sukkarieh: Not transcribed.

Questions & Discussion:

My name's ?, I'm ??... I found the ??... they always seem to blame the media, which is I guess right in a way, but I always thought that media reflected what people wanted and... and being a Muslim, I found it very disappointing that ??... against people's principles, ?? turn away from something that they don't agree with, so if they didn't have that audience, the media ? represented ?

I think what you're saying I think that that leads back to the fact that we have to be more active in not supporting the media, and by not buying the newspapers, perhaps. Having a boycott one day where we say we will not tolerate this, because they understand capital. They understand, you know, if they're not making profit, there's a problem. And I think that if we, kind of out of this, maybe come up with an idea or something to -- I know that recently, and it was wonderful that some ??... media misrepresentation ??...[inaudible] I had a real struggle with that, because I think on the other hand you've got ?? people trying to actually infiltrate and have, make a voice and represent themselves up against these big giants. The only way we can disempower them is not to actually pay them to keep doing this shit. And so just on that one ? I think we have to be conscious of actually, and maybe ?? a day or make it sort of a ?? where we just don't purchase the paper, and instead put that dollar into alternative media. Just as an idea.

[inaudible comments from the floor]

That's colonisation, and we're talking about decolonisation.

Heather Goodall: This is an incredibly important point about whose voices get heard, and I think you've raised a really important one.

[inaudible comments from the floor]

I kind of agree that I don't think you can just blame the media. I think that this stuff goes beyond that, and I think that, like you know, the whole system of, the structural systemic racism, and cultural imperialism, hegemony, all that stuff is what this stuff is about. So it's not just the media says this and therefore people think that. If we have

positive representations in the media, then suddenly, whoa, gee those Arabs are nice. I'm going to give the Palestinians back their land. And the indigenous people their's too, you know. It's not like. It's about power relationships. People don't want to give over their power and their power is tied to economics, it's tied to, you know, a whole heap of stuff. So I mean the way that, like, it's really interesting for me when I work with a lot of refugee communities. I've learnt a lot from working with refugee communities, particularly with people from Iraq or Iran, who might come here and say to me, but hang on a minute, it's a democracy here, you know. How can this be. It's not like, you don't have a dictatorship you're fighting against. But it's a different kind of democracy. It's the kind of democracy that puts people in concentration camps if they're dark skinned, and it's a kind of democracy that if you push too much you will end up, you know, being imprisoned or you will -- like we might have the choice to buy -- I'm all over the place here -- but we might have consumer choices, we might be able to walk down the street and pick what colour top we want in the shops, but you know, how democratic we actually are as a nation really reveals itself when you try and challenge the state.

[inaudible]

I was just going to say on the question of the media -- we're saying that ??... and we started seeing a group against the war and against racism. And we've found a lot of people, you know, we've got 100 people on our e-mail list, ??... We're seeing that there a lot of people who don't agree with the media, but they're ? you know, we don't have networks where we can share things that we do know. Because how do I know that the U.S.'s history of imperialism, bombing of oppressing countries. I know that because I've had networks where I've learnt it from. We need to actually start getting together and start sharing those networks broader and broader, and giving people the real information, and that's ?? get around the media. Because we can do the ??, ??... and I think that maybe if we could think of ways we could broaden those networks and provide more and more information to people. From people that they trust, you know people ?? workplace and trust each other. It's about sharing information in those lines. That's how I think we undermine the rule of the media.

I think that it is interesting, that this notion of democracy has been brought up, because I think that the media actually is very good at setting up these binaries between good

and evil, democratic and non-democratic, civilised and uncivilised. And I think that Wendy actually you brought up treatment of women in Afghanistan and I just want to say that the media has actually used this to further demonise Islam and also to justify the bombing of Afghanistan. And I think you have to remember that the west has been waging a war of terror as well on women through capitalism and patriarchy and in many other ways for a very long time. So I think that we need to remain conscious that we are not separate [?] and replicating these binaries.

Can I make just a comment about that. I think that's a good point, and I think someone else today made the point that it gets very difficult to talk about some things, simply because of the way they're then going to be interpreted, because there is ? information. I mean of course, for example in Afghanistan, the U.S. must bear an incredible responsibility for what is happening in Afghanistan over the last ten years, and the Soviet Union actually before that. So you've got a history. Then when you start saying, there's no broader understanding. It is probably dangerous or difficult to start talking about some things. But personally, I still feel that it is better to speak about them. And I agree with you that there is a danger however that it can be misinterpreted, or used again as yet another reason to knock people ??.

You also spoke about the media targeting who are uneducated in terms of the audience. And I actually think that it's the educated or so called progressives, so called leftists, who are actually more dangerous and are hiding behind this language that we see.

I would like to say a lot of things, but I feel that again, we've got something holding us up ? the time. And this is in Australia, I find there is just hegemony of time. ?? At least Aboriginal people, hey, we've got time, and with most non-English speaking people, again we've got time. It's like ? the others have got time, thanks God. If we don't have money at least we have time... And I really feel, I cannot speak if someone wants me to rush. So that's one barrier for me speaking, because when someone with a microphone comes in, I can't speak in that pace. I can't get my thoughts together, and I also want to speak from the heart. So it's not just my ??... who can speak like that, but I can't. So thought number one, I was very much -- I can't say touched -- ? by the point... that's the effect it had on me. I don't know, maybe it was good for people, maybe it wasn't good. I don't know. But I would prefer a more slowly ?. I could not take it all in. So this

is just telling you there was a lot there and maybe we just needed the whole, just nothing else, special event ??... Because another thing I wanted to say about general thing what happens in Australia, people have no time and no space to feel. Everything goes fast and it goes only to the head. But really what we're speaking about and what's it's about is about people suffering. So if you don't feel you are lost. If you cannot feel, you're not going to make the right decisions. You're just not. And there was no time to feel. Anywhere. Even in this time, in this session, I feel there is a pressure to be fast. I don't want to function like this. Can we please do something somewhere where we go and we give each other time. Those who need to go they can go, and we who want to stay, stay. So it's a pity for being there without the feelings and not just of thinking. There's so much about information, information, but ? in Australia many -- that's what I find, in Australia is a person from outside, people don't want to hear any more. Now Wendy, speaking about people's rights to know, but if they don't want to know. And there is so much that I find from Anglo people, they don't want to know. Why? Because maybe for the 20 years that they allowed, or 40 years, they have too much. They never were able to feel. And it is too much. Now I have lived in other countries where I had a different pace, so I am still ready to know. But what about these other people, it's been too much...?

Heather Goodall: I think it's really -- we've all felt the pressure of time this morning. And there has been so many powerful and emotional ideas and theories raised, because these issues are so important and so ?, they touch all of us in different ways, but they touch all of us. We are really hoping that it -- partly there is so much to say, because there has been so little opportunity for women to speak out and to speak to each other, across cultural and class and other barriers. We are also hoping that this will be the beginning of conversations which will keep going. We will be hopefully transcribing what we've got on tape and making it available as rapidly as possible on a website, circulating it, hopefully translating what we can. The whole question is really how we can keep building the networks and that's the important point to take.

[inaudible]

... I guess what I wanted to ask the panel was, how do we, as women, overcome some of those barriers that affect us and that may actually stop us from ??.... How do we overcome that?

Heather Goodall: The question relates directly to future directions, I guess. So I'll ask the panel if there are some observations they want to make, and then we'll move to Cleonie and Nada... So the question has been about how do we address the issues which divide women, and we know there's a whole range which have been addressed. We're looking at racism and looking at homophobia and looking at the range of ways in which people find it difficult, and women particularly are separated from speaking to each other. And the question has been where do we go from here.

Can I just make a point in regards to your question. It's a very difficult question to answer obviously, and ???. One thing that I've come to learn is that in order to overcome something like that, ?? many things that we could do, just keep talking. You know. I was -- and it's sort of in response, what I'm about to say is sort of in response to Mishka's [?sp] point as well -- if I can get one person to listen to what I'm saying -- I'm not talking about the six pages, one thing -- then I'll have done something. You know. And these sorts of things have come about... ?? So that's one way of doing it.

I think what we can basically sum up from the discussions that we had is that we're obviously going through a very critical time where there are a lot of inequities and ??...

Nada Roude: I think what has affected me as I sat there and listened to all the presentations, and I was moved by each and every one of them, and I want to thank everybody who increased my knowledge in some way or another. And I think it's also important to ? each and every one of you, because today you may or may not realise, your turning up today here is really not going to be very provocative, because I'm going to really shatter your views in a way that maybe that you haven't thought about. By you turning up here today, you have actually committed and taken part in what you call a jihad. Now, you've actually declared war on lies, you are declaring war on inequities, you are declaring war on power against the disempowered. I think we've all been feeling extremely disempowered during these events. They have turned our worlds upside down. They have basically left us feeling absolutely frustrated, in tears, and

questioning where do we fit in this world. In my opinion, this whole process is about the Americanisation of the world. Okay? If you fit within the parameters and the boundaries in terms of how you reflect your views, you're okay. If you step outside of the boundaries, then you're a threat and also a terrorist. I was just thinking the other day, I received an SMS message on my mobile. And you wouldn't believe who it was from. It was from Osama bin Laden. And he was a bit frustrated, because nobody wanted him. He was on the run. And he asked if he could come and spend a few days with me. And I thought, wow, this is an opportunity. I really want to get inside the mind of this man that I've been told is a terrorist. And I want to know what makes him tick. And more importantly, why is he on bad terms with America. After all, he is said to be a friend. He was a friend of America when they were fighting the war on communism in Russia. Now we've been fed a lot of propaganda. Anyone who sits and watched the news has been told these are the parameters set by how you think and respond. Anything outside that is really not acceptable. We're seeing censorship, we're seeing people being alienated. Even afraid to speak out. When I got that message my reaction was, oh my god, what am I going to do with that message. If they get a hold of that message, we all know that a lot of those messages are funny humorous jokes that have been circulating following this crisis, but it made me feel now, I could be under a lot of threat here. What's it going to say? Whoever sent me that message has obviously put me in a really awkward position. If anyone -- and I assure you a lot of people's phones and homes have been surveilled, and lord knows what. What is that going to -- I felt like I couldn't breath. I had to watch my movements, I had to watch what I said on the telephone, ? anything to hide. But my freedom as an individual human being was being contained. Okay? I could only speak because I was told I have to condemn the attacks, I was told I had to show ? and if I didn't therefore that makes me a terrorist. Now what has happened, the attacks on America has devastated each and every one of us. Nobody can take joy in seeing people, innocent people die. Just like we are opposing the war in Afghanistan because it is not a just war. And I was part of a, attended a conference, The Public Right To Know, and I saw some of the faces a few weeks ago. And I remember Justice Marcus Einfeld saying so clearly, he said this is not a war against terrorism. If it was, then America would have been attacking the Basques, focussing on eradicating terrorism in Basque Spain. It'd be looking at the Middle Crisis. It would addressing the issue of -- and he mentioned every country. He basically said this is a war clearly on what is perceived as Islam and even people with beards. Okay? Now, it's about truth,

it's about confronting truth. And every time you make that step forward to clarify the truth and increase people's understanding you've made that little bit of contribution to correct the wrong. Because we are, if we are all about dealing with good versus evil, then every little bit of ?, as sister Omeima said, makes a huge difference. Because we've got now the wall's created around us. These walls must come down. And it can only come down, in my belief, through the power that women have, their voices are very powerful. We are excellent communicators, we are remarkable nurturers, we've form opinions that go beyond the limits of boundaries. And through the diversity that we have initiated in that contact, establishing alliances, you know, we make a huge difference. And as I was also sitting listening to Justice Marcus Einfeld, I thought wow, if I was to get up and say what he did, I would be in a lot of trouble. Because I'm a Muslim, I can't say that. Because I can't be critical. Anything I say is to be treated suspicion, but people like Marcus Einfeld speaking from a non-Muslim perspective, non-Arab, they carry a lot of weight with a lot of audiences. So they make a huge difference to how they form and change opinions. And the situation in Australia, I think, is a really sad situation, because I don't think, all the voices that are being represented through the government I don't believe they represent me. I don't think they represent the voices here. So I think we need... **[tape runs out]**