



# Newsletter



WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

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### *WOMEN IN MOVEMENT CHANGE THE WORLD*

The first steps of a long march that will unite women in the World March of Women from Brazil to Burkina Faso began to resound on March 8, and they will continue until October 17.

Women of Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Haiti, Cuba, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, United States and Canada have taken similar steps to say no to exploitation, oppression, intolerance and exclusion. Women in the World March of

Women are inviting humanity as a whole to join with us—feminists—in building a world based on equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace.

Diverse and pluralist, we march in solidarity—in the North, South, East and West—because we believe that women in movement change the world.

Our determination is as great as our anger, and each of us has reasons for marching and demanding change—in her home, her community, her region, and her world.

Whether we live in Sao Paulo, Montréal, or Ciudad Juarez; whether we are from Switzerland, Togo or the Philippines, we live under the same yoke—patriarchy—and we are fighting it.

We are also the first victims of neoliberalism, racism and militarization; and we say NO: we are not for sale; we are not merchandise; and we are not your war booty.

Women who resist suffer repression by men, the police, and those in power, but we continue our struggle because our resistance is our hope and that of humanity; our solidarity is our tool; our Women's Global Charter for Humanity is our call; and our movement is our response.

It is up to each of us today to set the pace of the movement that is the World March of Women. Our voices will be echoed by thousands upon thousands of women in the months to come and our solidarity will grow until we reach Burkina; until women—all women—can live, love, work and grow up in complete freedom.

**Diane Matte, Coordinator, International Secretariat**

## *RELAY TRAVELS THE AMERICAS*

Having left from Brazil on March 8, International Women's Day, the Women's Global Charter for Humanity and the solidarity patchwork quilt will soon be on their way to Europe. Here's a brief account of their travels so far.

### Brazil

#### *March 8, 2005, Charter Launched*

The World March of Women's international actions for 2005 kicked off in São Paulo, Brazil, on March 8, International Women's Day. Over 30,000 women paraded through the streets of the city, asserting their right to a decent minimum wage; to free, safe abortion on demand; to land reform; to housing; and demanding an end to sexist violence, racism, militarization and war. These women showed their ability to mobilize by being present in such large numbers to launch the Women's Global Charter for Humanity on its trip around the world.

Women mobilized in many other countries as well.

### Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina

#### *Event on a Three-way Border*

The first stage of the World Relay occurred on March 12 in Puerto Xavier, a Brazilian city on the border with Argentina and Paraguay. Three thousand women—notably a delegation of Indigenous and peasant women from Paraguay—gathered there to watch the Charter being handed over. After crossing the Uruguai River, the World March of Women representatives from Argentina travelled to Buenos Aires.

### Argentina

#### *First Cultural Relay*

On Sunday, March 13, women from every neighbourhood converged on downtown Buenos Aires, where the Charter and patchwork quilt were received amidst an artistic and cultural festival. They listened to a public reading of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity. The presentation was interspersed with musical interludes, theatre scenes and poetry readings. The Relay went on in Argentina to Salta and La Quioca, at an altitude of 3500 metres, before crossing into Bolivia.

## Bolivia

### *From One Bridge to Another*

The international bridge linking Argentina and Bolivia was the scene of the Relay on March 15. Women from the two countries along with members of social movements participated in handing over the Charter and the patchwork quilt, symbols of hope for an entire network of women fighting to eliminate the poverty and violence they are subjected to.

The Charter then went across the country before being handed over, on Saturday, March 19, to Peruvian women gathered in Desaguadero, a town on the shores of Lake Titicaca, (the largest lake in the world at that altitude—just under 4000 metres—shared by the Aymara and Quechua women of Bolivia and Peru). To the strains of a brass band and under a scorching sun, they exchanged the first greetings. Then they went to the Town Hall in Desaguadero for a more formal ceremony at which the Bolivians delivered the Charter and quilt into the Peruvian women's hands.

## Peru

### *Moving Episode*

After the ceremony in Desaguadero, another meeting, held at the Puno Theatre, ended the day.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the women marched in the streets of Arequipa, and the following day they were received at the Town Hall where they made known their demands related to the Charter. A symbolic presentation was made to women's groups and then to the national press in Lima. On March 29, the women of the northern city of Piura went to the Macará bridge, which links their country to Ecuador. There they handed over the Charter and the patchwork quilt to the Ecuadorian women. Rural women from the two sides of the border then gathered together for a seminar.

## Ecuador

### *Ritual of Fire*

Indigenous women in Ecuador performed a ritual of fire to receive the Global Charter from the Peruvian women's hands. The motocades continued on, carrying the Charter from south to north, passing through the provinces of El Oro, Azuay and Riobamba, before stopping in Quito. There the Relay was marked in the Plaza San Francisco before heading for El Arbolito Park on March 30. Discussions and mobilizations took place throughout the country. For example, in Otavalo, in the north, the women added their square to the solidarity patchwork quilt, which illustrates the aspirations of women

around the world. Last, on April 1, the Relay went on to Colombia, again crossing a bridge over a border, the one in Rumichaca.

The Ecuadorian women's proposal for building a different country maintains that it's time to use the Constitution, since its provisions could place the country among the most advanced in terms of rights and diversity—if only they were fully implemented.

## Colombia

### *Antiwar Actions*

Over 3000 women gathered at the Rumichaca bridge to be present for the Relay's arrival in Colombia. They blocked the highway to demand, in particular, that the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) be rejected, and they protested against neoliberal globalization.

Native leader Luisa Trujillo, who heads an organization of some two million Indigenous and peasant women in Ecuador, denounced the mistreatment and abuse of her Colombian neighbours—even though she had to do it from outside the country to ensure her safety. Angela de Pérez, the wife of a senator kidnapped three years ago, was also on hand for the event. She reminded the government that the only way to solve the armed conflict was through talks between the parties concerned, and she emphasized the value of peace contained in the Women's Global Charter for Humanity.

## Haiti

### *Another Haiti, Another World, Another Humanity*

In Haiti, the CONAP, the National Coordinating Body Lobbying for Women's Rights, received the Charter in a public ceremony on Thursday, April 7. The next day, a Colombian delegate accompanied the Haitian representatives to deliver the Women's Global Charter for Humanity to the country's officials, represented by the Ministers of the Status of Women, Health, Culture and Justice.

The CONAP took the occasion to reaffirm its commitment to the fight for Haitian women's right to live without violence, with dignity and in an independent, sovereign country. It also encouraged interested women's groups to participate in popular education and consultation activities as part of the process to build another kind of humanity, as advocated in the Charter. The World Relay then continued on its way to Cuba.

## Cuba

### *For a Fairer Society*

On April 12, close to 3000 Cuban women gathered to witness the Relay's objects be passed on from the hands of Haitian women. In an open forum, they voiced their support for the demands expressed in the Women's Global Charter for Humanity. Among the Cuban women's proposals were the wish to see a reform of monetary policies, which currently have the effect of creating inequality and poverty; they also want to see the democratization of the United Nations so that it looks out for the interests of all peoples, and a review of the Millennium Accords.

During the event, women artists from the community project called La Aguja Mágica (The Magic Needle) sewed their square onto the solidarity patchwork quilt. Their collective work represents, among other things, women's fight to bring home the five young Cubans taken prisoner in the United States. Members of the Communist Party were present at the gala ceremony where many women performers converged from all over the island. The presence of the Relay in Cuba was marked in all the Women and Family Guidance Centres in the country, where the Charter was read and discussions held on the five basic values it contains.

## Honduras

### *"No Violence, No Poverty"*

The March began in Honduras on April 14, when a delegation of Cuban women arrived to deliver the symbols of feminism: the Charter and the quilt. The Honduran women then staged an activity outside the National Congress to demand that legislators enact laws to protect women's rights. They reminded them that an average of three women are murdered every week in the country and nothing is done to stop the violence or to investigate these crimes.

The symbolic act of handing over the Charter to the Salvadoran women unfolded on the border at El Amatillo de La Unión, where some 300 Honduran women had gathered. "No violence, no poverty, another world is possible" was their battle cry.

## El Salvador

### *Women Denounce Free Trade*

After receiving the Charter and patchwork quilt from the Honduran women, the Salvadoran women took them to San Miguel, where around 300 women, mostly from the eastern part of the country, attended a cultural event. Ana Isabel López, coordinator of the World March National Committee in El Salvador, explained the history and contents

of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity to the participants. She also stressed that the fight against poverty and violence against women must continue. Moreover, the Salvadoran women plan to use the Charter to denounce the effects of the various free trade treaties such as immigration and the accompanying violence.

The Salvadoran motorcade continued on its way to Cojutepeque, then to the capital city of San Salvador. That's where the woman artist who made the winning quilt square was rewarded. The Salvadoran delegation was joined by a group of Guatemalan women and together they led the Relay to the Mexican border.

## Mexico

### *Three Focal Points*

Mexico centred its actions around three focal points. The state of Chiapas welcomed the arrival of the Charter at a colourful ceremony brimming with symbols of the diversity of women and a common Latin consciousness.

The World March of Women then made a stop in Mexico City.

In Mexico's Federal District, the WMW held a Forum on Women and Neoliberal Economic Policies, where 100 women—indigenous women, trade unionists, academics and activists—gathered to decry the perversity of neoliberalism and to protest poverty.

The action in the state of Chihuahua was held with great symbolism in Ciudad Juárez, where already this year the murders of ten women have been recorded—a reminder of the importance of the struggle against violence against women.

The Mexican women said they were sure to participate in the 24 Hours of Feminist Solidarity, on October 17, 2005. They pointed out that, in the cosmogony of Indigenous communities, the hour of noon, when the sun is at its zenith, is a very important time.

On leaving Mexico, the Charter crossed the United States of America on its way to Canada.

## Canada

### *Events throughout the country*

Women welcomed the Charter arriving from the United States on May 1. A public rally took place at the Vancouver Public Library. In Yellowknife May 2, 2005, they played a round of the Poverty Game™. Used to assist professionals and lay people to understand the effects of poverty within the family, it is a creative way to deepen understanding among agencies and individuals. In Winnipeg May 3, 2005, they hold a

public rally ending at the legislative buildings. It was a colourful event with children and child care workers leading the march.

The events in Ottawa, May 4, 2005 opened with a young women's breakfast, sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Students. A public rally followed at noon at the Human Rights Monument where there was speaker focusing on Pay Equity. There was an evening reception on Parliament Hill hosted by Status of Women Canada. In Moncton May 5th, 2005, the women of Moncton organized a supper and evening event. "Another World is possible- No Poverty, Better Childcare, No Violence Against Women and Give Us Pay Equity!"

Tonika Morgan was sponsored by the YMCA to carry the Global Charter for Humanity from event to event.

## Québec

### *Fifteen thousand women in Québec City*

Fifteen thousand women gathered in Québec City on Saturday, May 7, to receive the Women's Global Charter for Humanity. Safiétou Diop, of Senegal and Marthe Kingué and Alice Lobe, of Cameroon, stood beside Diane Matte, coordinator of the International Secretariat, on the ferry that brought the Charter to Québec City from the south side of the river. Tonika Morgan, who accompanied the Charter during the relay through English Canada, and Mary Clarke, vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress, were with them, as were a large women's delegation from the Chaudière Appalaches region.

The women then formed a human chain, passing the Charter hand to hand up the hill to the parliament buildings. There, Michèle Asselin, president of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, presented the five demands of Québec women, each of them linked to one of the Charter's values.

**Texts written by Martine Sénécal (Liaison, Burkina Faso)**

## ***AN INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT IN TRANSFORMATION***

You all know that the International Secretariat of the World March of Women has been dealing with huge financial problems in recent months. During our 5th International Meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, we carefully examined our options for continuing the international work that is essential to our action and our movement. We resolved to take the following steps:

- every national coordinating body of the World March of Women is invited to contribute a minimum sum of US\$200 to support the International Secretariat and the various other international working bodies: the survival of our movement depends on it;
- the Secretariat was reduced to its most basic form (3 workers) and we will be relying more on decentralized operations or reducing our work plan. This means that more national coordinating bodies will have to assume international tasks, as Brazil and Burkina Faso are now doing;
- the two levels of government of Québec and Canada were approached one last time to obtain funding for the Secretariat's basic operations in 2005-2006: 3 full-time salaries and operating costs for one year. By May 1, we had succeeded in obtaining half of our request and we are continuing the pressure campaign to obtain the additional funds. If we are unsuccessful, the International Committee will have to consider our alternatives;
- we are beginning a strategic planning process that is being piloted by the Senegalese coordinating body and an advisory committee. This process should enable us to analyze the problems confronting the International Secretariat, the diverse options available to us to ensure the continuity of our work at the international level, action prospects after 2005, and, more generally, the consolidation of our movement.

We still intend to move the International Secretariat to a country in the South in 2006. We are doing our best to build new partnerships with funding agencies that operate in the global South, and developing criteria for a proposal to move to a particular country.

We invite national coordinating bodies that have not already done so to send a cheque today, made out to the World March of Women, 110 rue Sainte-Thérèse bureau 203, Montréal, Canada H2Y 1E6. Remember, your support is essential.

**Diane Matte, Coordinator, International Secretariat**

## *THE SHAPE OF THE QUILT IS CHANGING, BUT NOT THE FORMAT OF YOUR SQUARE*

In the first leg of the Relay, the Solidarity Quilt has begun to grow, taking on cloth squares from many different countries, and it is a very colourful representation of women's aspirations for a better world.

The pattern that was initially chosen for assembling the quilt squares (a large square, in fact) does not seem to be very practical, however, when the Quilt is displayed in public, for example, during a demonstration.

We are therefore changing the shape of the quilt so that it looks more like a banner. This change will not affect the dimensions of your national quilt squares (50cm X 50 cm); only the manner of attaching them to the quilt.

This means that, that the first square (which is larger than the others) should always be in the middle, with the national squares attached in rows (of three), from the top to the bottom, alternating sides to ensure that the large logo be in the centre:

18	12	6	WMW Logo (centred)		1	9	15
19	13	7			2	10	16
20	14	8	5	4	3	11	17

To enable the construction of another quilt, should the original quilt be lost, we are also asking national coordinating bodies to send a copy of their square to the national coordinating body in Burkina Faso:

**Marche Mondiale des Femmes/Action Nationale du Burkina Faso**  
06 BP 9879  
Ouagadougou 06  
Burkina Faso

## WEB SITE

### Your actions—and other news!

Click the link on the WMW site (<http://www.marchemondiale.org>) to follow the progress of the World Relay. A new trilingual Web site opens up where you'll find masses of information, including contact information for the national coordinating bodies and groups that support the March; activities being planned in each country; and reports and photos of past events: <http://mmf.lecarrefour.org>.

Contribute to the dynamism of this Web site by sending us information about your actions that you think will interest your sisters around the planet! With this gesture, you will also be supplying us with material for the next Newsletter!

Contact: [relaismondial2005@hotmail.com](mailto:relaismondial2005@hotmail.com), [bverdiere@marchemondiale.org](mailto:bverdiere@marchemondiale.org)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### *Collaborators*

We thank all the women from countries that have hosted the Relay for regular news updates. In some cases, information has been taken from national newspapers.

Thanks to the women who collaborated on this issue of the Newsletter:  
Élise Boyer (translation into English), Michelle Briand (translation into french), Nancy Burrows (International Secretariat), Nicole Kennedy (translation into English), Diane Matte (International Secretariat), Magaly Sala-Skup (translation into Spanish), Martine Senécal (Liaison), Brigitte Verdière (Communications).

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