The Supreme Court of Canada recently ruled that although the nation's criminal obscenity law infringed on the freedom of expression, it was legitimate to outlaw pornography that was harmful to women. In a unanimous decision, the court also redefined obscenity as sexually explicit material that involves violence or degradation.

The court acknowledged that women and children are usually the subjects of pornography, but it said that materials that degrade men would also be covered by the law.

The Canadian decision still allows individual prosecutors to decide which materials violate humanity and meet the test of 'undue sexual exploitation'. But the court recognised the difficulty of deciding which pornographic materials meet the test.

In its decision it offered new guidelines: "The portrayal of sex coupled with violence will almost always constitute the undue exploitation of sex," it said. It added that explicit sexual material that was non-violent could be prosecuted if it was degrading or dehumanizing. "Degrading or dehumanizing materials place women (and sometimes men) in positions of subordination, servile submission or humiliation," the court said. "They run against the principles of equality and dignity of all human beings."

(Excerpt The New York Times, 28/02/92)

Glimpse the Reality of Honduran Women

* Population - 4.2 million
* 50.3% of population are women
* Birthrate - 5.6 children per woman
* Children under the age of 15 account for 46.8% of the population

Rapid urban growth in recent years has spawned various social problems, including unemployment, lack of adequate housing and basic services, all of which affect women most severely.

The migration of predominantly young women from rural to urban areas, because of a lack of farmland and employment, has resulted in a dramatic increase in numbers of urban women. Of persons concentrated in urban areas, 53% are women.

One of every four women in Honduras above the age of 12 years is the primary, and often sole breadwinner in her family. Honduras has an extreme high child labour rate; second only to Brazil in the world.

Honduras has a high illiteracy rate of 81% (42% women and 39% men). At primary school level, more girls than boys are registered, but at secondary
and university level the numbers of women diminish drastically. Reasons for this are cultural and gender-based. In this society emphasis is placed on the importance of education of men.

Women are assigned the burdens of domestic work and childcare. In rare instances where women complete secondary school level, chosen careers are those traditionally dictated by society, i.e. as a teacher or nurse.

The primary cause of the high maternal mortality rate is given as being due to the practise of abortion. Illegal abortions are performed under conditions of great risk. The accelerated growth of AIDS is another factor, claiming more and more women's lives each day. Government-adopted measures to combat the disease have thus far proved ineffective.

The practise of the so-called 'white slavery', the sale of young girls and women into prostitution slavery plays a major role in the transmission of AIDS among heterosexual couples. Honduran women working in the informal sector find many innovative means by which to survive: mostly as street vendors of cooked foods and cheap merchandise. This situation further enforces economic segregation of the sexes. Women's income is minimal and without any social security or other benefits.

The economic crisis into which Honduras has plunged claims as its victims those most vulnerable - single mothers and their children. The fight for basic survival and the burden of house and childcare keeps women from active participation in organised labour groups, where grievances may be made known. At political level women are excluded from decision-making processes.

We, at Sister Namibia hope that Entre Amigas will continue to be published in order to give women of Honduras a voice. We know that you face many hardships. Some of them are similar to the hardships of Namibian women. Viva Amigas!

(The article is a contribution from one of the founding members of Sister Namibia, Jo Rogge.)

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**Culture in Zimbabwe**

Elizabeth Ncube is Zimbabwe's only woman praise poet. As a teenager she performed in Buluwayo beerhalls, offering the resident singer 20 cents to allow her five minutes on stage. Her physical and verbal agility soon made her famous. "When I perform I feel the spirit of my grandfather and I shiver all over," she says. "Once a male praise poet tried to stop me. He said no woman should do this thing. He had a spear and knobkerrie but so did I. He was surprised when I challenged him. I said 'I am a warrior just like you!' He was the one who had to back down. The audience cheered. I think people really enjoy seeing a powerful woman."

Elizabeth Ncube is one of 54 women or groups of women included in the *Zimbabwean Women in Contemporary Culture 1992 Diary - Notebook.* This valuable publication is well researched and portray Zimbabwean women in the fields of performing arts, music, writing, sculpture, drama, pottery, playwrights, and more.

The notebook/diary is obtainable for $28 (Zimbabwe dollars) excluding postage fees. For more information write to: ZWICCT, Box 2192, Harare. Tel: 882328.