

wise, this is an excellent and important study. Roberts' assertions are well-documented and poignantly argued.

The people who back the new immigration legislation, Bill C-55, with its allowance for unscrutinized bureaucratic deci-

sion making on the fate of refugees, could learn much from Roberts' work. In the forward Abella eloquently pleads: "If we err in the future, as we likely will, let it be for once, on the side of humanity." Given that Bill C-55 does not technically ac-

knowledge humanitarian grounds for refugee status, whereby claimants would be judged only according to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to Refugees, on which side will the adjudicators of this new Bill C-55 err?

## THE POLITICS OF COMMUNITY SERVICES: Immigrant Women, Class and State

Roxana Ng. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987.

### *Pamela King & Carmen Perillo*

Ng's book explores the process of development in a community service agency and illustrates the control exerted on this process by its funding sources. Although there is a general awareness of the powerful influence of funders on the operation of any organization, Ng extends the analysis in two ways: (1) her approach is an "institutional, ethnographic" one which looks beyond the institution itself (in this case, an employment agency for immigrant women) to consider the dynamics of the socio-political context within which the agency must function; and (2) Ng uses examples from the agency operating practices to illustrate its role in supporting the *status quo*, a result which is inconsistent with its stated goals. Her essential question appears to be: "Whose needs are being served?"

Her use of Marx's and Engel's definition of class (a social relation fundamental to and permeating capitalist productive and reproductive activities) is integral to the perspective from which she analyzes community development activity. Class issues are inherent in all activity and must be included in any examination of funding and its impact on service goals.

Her selected case is a grassroots, urban employment agency with a collectivist

philosophy, serving immigrant women. Its original purpose was to support individual women in overcoming barriers to employment, while fulfilling an advocacy role to improve the overall status of immigrant women in the labour force. The latter role, especially, implies that change will occur both in the labour market and in the women themselves—the needs of each being considered, rather than socializing the clients to fit the system's needs. In the course of her study, she observed that the agency's role became that of a mediator between employers and the women, with the primary focus on helping the women to adapt to employers' needs, thus ensuring a maximum number of placements and the perpetuation of the class relations.

The book presents a detailed analysis of the transformation which occurred within the agency, and the links between the demands of the funding mechanisms and the changes. Ng uses the three processes identified by Patricia Morgan (1981) in her analysis of the battered women's movement in the US: bureaucratization, individualization and professionalization. These processes contribute to the re-definition of political problems as social ones, and the change from grassroots, community-based organizations to bureaucratic, hierarchical ones. The components of the funding and counselling processes within the agency and the influence of the state and labour market are all examined. The state's funding requirements necessitated that the collective become incorporated, with a formally-constituted board and a clear separation of administration and counselling services. This divided staff into separate groups with different inter-

ests, responsibilities and accountability centres. An increased expectation of quantifiable results (i.e. numbers of job placements successfully completed) by the funder initiated a shift in emphasis from the clients' needs, as a group, for increased status in the labour market, to the funder's requirements for clients to fill available positions in the existing labour market.

The agency began to assume a social control function: it became responsive and accountable primarily to the funder (the state), with the client becoming the marketable commodity produced by the agency.

Ng asserts that the service becomes an "extension of the state: not only through the funding requirements but through the concomitant transformation of its perspective."

Ng's work contains a very detailed description of the agency, and her analysis of class and state as a source of conflict within community services, and between services and the state funders, is an approach too often neglected. An expanded discussion of the conflicts, and of alternatives and preventive or ameliorative strategies for addressing the dilemma which most community services encounter, would make the book more complete. Alliances with clients and other interest groups do not seem to have been considered as a source of support for active advocacy efforts to press for changes in the system. We suggest that the addition of the latter, and a more focused, briefer discussion of theory would have made the book more interesting and of greater value to community developers, practitioners, students and researchers.

## ISSEI, NISEI, WARBRIDE: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service

Evelyn Nakano Glenn. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.

### *Franca Iacovetta*

For Japanese American women, particularly in northern California, the association with domestic service has been an enduring one. Since the 1900s, limited job opportunities, the women's lack of industrial skills, and systemic racism have seriously circumscribed their participation in the workforce and led to their ghettoization in domestic service. This

has been true for all of the three groups of Japanese American women: the first immigrants, or *Issei*, many of whom arrived as young "picture brides" in the period 1915-24; the second-generation, American-born *Nisei*, even though many of them had trained for white collar or professional careers; and the post-World War Two warbrides who had married

white American military men. Written by a sociologist whose family connections in the San Francisco Bay area gave her access to female informants, this book is a richly detailed and sophisticated examination of the lives of these women. The book covers a long period, from the 1920s to 1980s. It details both how historical and economic forces restricted women's lives and how women devised strategies for dealing with their plight. Arguing against a static model of class, race, and gender, Glenn seeks to capture the contradictions and dynamism of the women's situation.

Apart from two chapters charting immigration patterns and the profiles of the three birth cohorts under study, early chapters focus on the structural determinants of Japanese women's oppression. Special attention is given to the restrictive labour market they entered. Two chapters — one theoretical, the other heavily statistical — detail how capitalist labour systems are stratified according to gender and race. Marginal groups, such as male migrants and ethnic women, were confined to a narrow set of job opportunities. The early entry of Oriental men into laundry and other "dirty, female jobs" created an association between Asians and service jobs. This was reinforced as kin networks channelled women into one of the few jobs available to their group.

Factors distinguishing Asian women's lives from other ethnic women are noted. While the daughters of European immigrant women exhibited upward mobility, usually into white collar work, continuing racism explains why *Nisei* and their *Kibei* (Japanese-educated) sisters did not. Ironically, many of the first used their skills in the internment camps, where there was a demand for trained staff. Afterwards, many returned to domestic work. They were joined by former *Issei* domestics and by Japanese American women from rural California whose families had lost farms

or businesses or been displaced by post-war urban expansion. Not until the late 1960s did things change, which is why the three groups of women under study had very similar work patterns.

Later chapters on the labour process, workplace constraints, and barriers to unionization explore a key question: How did women doing work that was regarded by them and others as degrading find satisfaction in their lives? Drawing heavily on interviews, Glenn suggests that blanket definitions of household work as demeaning are misleading and ignore the complexity of the women's lives. While some resented the intensely personal relations they had with their employers, others valued these "friendships." Domestics also found ways to exert control over the work process by developing their own routines and insisting that employers leave the house while they worked. Still others avoided intense relations with one mistress by working for several families on a part-time basis. And they derived satisfaction both from doing their job well and from supporting their families, especially their children. The testimonies also defy conventional images of Japanese women as highly submissive. While some were indeed fatalistic or uncomplaining, others were outspoken critics of husbands and employers. In considering family relations, Glenn argues that the economic deprivation and racism that Japanese Americans faced meant that the conflict over gender inequities within the Japanese family were partly muted by the countervailing pressure on the family to unite against assaults from the outside. For the women the family was simultaneously a resource in the struggle for survival and an instrument of gender subordination. This contradiction was played out on various levels. It was reflected, for instance, in the ambivalence of *Issei* husbands towards their wives' employment.

Husbands opposed it on the grounds that the wife's services were needed at home or that it was insulting to themselves to have their wife employed in demeaning work. Women nevertheless defied their husbands and went out to work. Within *Nisei* families, women's paid work was taken for granted. In both cases, however, working women were expected to tolerate the double day. On the plus side, paid work led to some subtle gains: it gave women a degree of control over their economic circumstances and improved their ability to provide for children. The warbrides, it should be noted, faced a different set of realities. Many had cut themselves off from family at home and they lacked kin and community networks in America — leading some to cherish their "friendships" with caring employers. In contrast to the durability of *Issei* and *Nisei* marriages, the warbrides' marriages tended to be highly unstable; many of them ended in divorce.

Glenn has a sophisticated grasp of complex issues and a talent for making them accessible to non-specialists. Interestingly, many of her findings resemble those of feminist historians studying immigrant domestics in Canada. The book's main shortcoming is the absence of a final chapter summarizing the book. Perhaps Glenn felt overwhelmed and, indeed, she may have tried to accomplish too much. The book is at once an exploration in sociological theory and labour statistics, and a sensitive evaluation of oral interviews with forty-eight women. Also, rather than directly comparing the experiences of *Issei*, *Nisei*, and warbrides, she gives them separate treatment in each chapter; this makes for some unnecessary repetition. But these are minor points. This book significantly contributes to the growing literature on working women, on racial-ethnic women, and on the female immigrant experience.

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## **NO WAY TO LIVE: Poor Women Speak Out**

Sheila Baxter. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1988.

## **WOMEN ACTIVISTS: Challenging The Abuse of Power**

Anne Witte-Garland. New York: The Feminist Press, 1988.

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## **FEMINIST ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada**

Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, Margaret McPhail. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.

*Elsbeth Heyworth*

George Orwell has said that poverty is not only inconvenient but boring. This bleak summary is illustrated time after time in Sheila Baxter's book of interviews with poor women: the volume seldom pretends that it is anything but boring to be forcibly poor. Baxter believes that poor women have a right to be heard, to speak out for themselves, and they do in these vivid interviews, frequently with a burning and justified anger. But, what