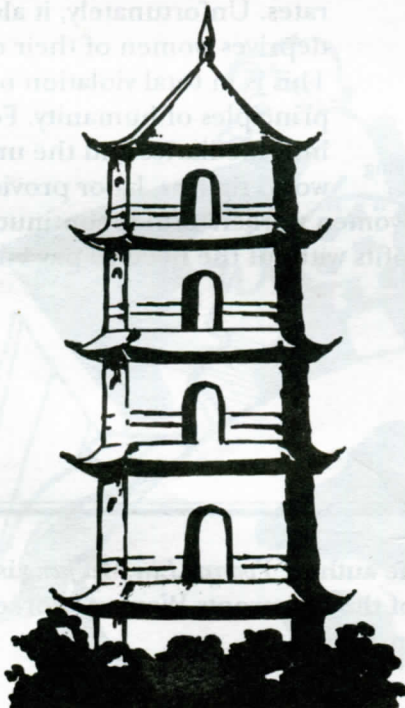




Outrageous Victimization of Female Laborers and Tribals

by Yvonne Lin Mei-jung

Under the constraint of culture and tradition, women in Taiwan are still considered the second-class gender group. Women are still discriminated against in society. Women have less opportunities for employment and the hard labor of household chores rests on their shoulders. Women workers have to play dual roles of housewives and vocational workers. In the work sites, most of the management personnel are male while female workers are on the production lines. They have few opportunities for promotion. When companies or factories hire female workers, they ask these women to sign an agreement that when they marry or give birth to a child, they must resign voluntarily. When these women resign "voluntarily," they cannot receive the dismissal allowance.



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The work sites are violent places for women workers. Employers and managers ask female employees to sleep with them in order to maintain their jobs or to obtain better working conditions. On the production lines, this kind of sexual harassment is even more serious. These women workers are from the country side or are aboriginal girls. Some are only thirteen years old. They come to the cities as trainees or interns. More and more young girls are resorting to abortions. There are no safety facilities in the factories. Women often work in the textile, garment, plastics, and electronics industries which are considered vital to the development of the national economy. The industrial areas where they work are dark and isolated and the girls suffer from violence from men, often being assaulted or raped.



Aboriginal Women

There are ten tribes of aboriginals in Taiwan who speak 13 different languages. The lands formerly used by them to cultivate crops are now being used as national parks, experimental forest areas for universities, farms for retired servicemen of Chiang Kai-shek's army and golf courses. Owing to the shrinkage of their lands, the agricultural and hunting societies of the tribals have collapsed. Young girls, women and men are forced to come to the cities to look for jobs. Only the elderly and children under the age of 12 remain in the villages. Some primary school graduates are forced to work as prostitutes even if they are below the minimum age to work legally. They are sent to the owners of brothels, where they are injected with hormones and fed chicken soup so they will develop faster and be used by male customers. According to Chinese tradition, a man who has intercourse with a virgin will live ten years longer.



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Foreign Women Workers

The introduction of foreign labor is one of the strategies to rob big money in capitalist societies. During periods of economic crises, factories close and discard their workers and then try to introduce low-cost laborers from Third World countries. This is intended to fight sky rocketing consumer prices and maintain low wage rates. Unfortunately, it also deprives women of their dignity. This is in total violation of the principles of humanity. For the intermediaries and the under-world figures, labor provided by

foreign women workers brings continuous huge profits without the need to pay fair wages.



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