

Forum urges equality

a column
by Elfrida Mensah

The U.N. Decade for Women Conference began with Forum '85, the non-governmental world meeting for women in Nairobi, Kenya. The forum opened July 15 in the Kenyatta Conference Centre in Nairobi.

There were crowds of eager, serious faces belonging to many women and a few men as the U.N. Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, gave his opening speech. There were women in African, Western, Eastern and Oriental attire who had come to represent their countries. The forum, involving women from 157 countries, focused on how development, peace and equality affect women and the roles women play in their achievement.

Discussions at workshops stressed the need for women to be a part of the development going on around them. Women, young and old, were encouraged to be active in the politics of their countries and be aware of problems in their motherlands and other coun-

tries. They were also encouraged to exchange views with each other and to read more. These acts would bring about understanding and therefore help make the world a better place to live in.

There were also a number of youth groups that organized workshops. Most of these groups were concerned with the lack of peace in the world. In trying to come up with possible solutions, they pursued such topics as nuclear disarmament and the elimination of apartheid. Young people were urged to use their knowledge to educate others on the ills of the arms race and racial injustice.

Issues dealing with equality were emphasized by delegates from most, if not all the countries represented. This emphasis was because discrimination was what made it difficult for women to participate actively in development and in the attainment of peace. Women are discriminated against in their homes, at their work places and in their community.

Discussions were stimulated and solutions were suggested.

Some of these were that women should refuse to accept the stereotyped figure they are made out to be and prove themselves able in all aspects of life.

There were those—men and women alike—who failed to understand that the message that was being conveyed through the forum was that women should be allowed to prove themselves. Their aim was not to become lords over the men.

The forum gave many women the opportunity to voice the obstacles they had encountered and the progress they had made in working toward their aim. Solutions were then suggested, some from experiences gained by other women.

This might not be the end of the problems, but a lot of good would be achieved if men as well as women would consider seriously this theme: "... the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world, and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men."

Belles at key congress

A column
by Vicky Dunn

I spent three of the most exciting, enlightening and historically important days of my life in June at the First National Political Congress of Black Women in Atlanta. When I heard former Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm speak of the conception of such a congress during her visit to Bennett, I had no idea that I would actually witness the birthing of the "baby," as its mother and most capable chairwoman so called it.

Jade Osborne, a political science major from Charlotte, also attended the conference. We were the mini-delegation of the Bennett College Debate Society. At the conference, which was held at Spelman College, the oldest historically black female institution (pshaw!), we met with hundreds of black women with diverse backgrounds but common objectives to erase the blatant and covert sexism and racism that exist against women of color from every nation. Not previously acquainted with the notion of global sisterhood, I gained much perspective on the strength in our struggle and continuing war against inequality.

The congress was a historically educational experience for me. The very first meet-

ing gave us the opportunity to share in decision-making and by-law writing. After all, our baby had to be legitimately established. We met with such inspiring role models as C. Delores Tucker, vice-chair of the congress; Dorothy Height, president of the oldest surviving black women's organization, which was begun by Mary McLeod Bethune; Marion and Iffie Berry, mayor and wife, of Washington, D.C.; Paula Giddings, Angela Davis and many others. Of course, as any good daddy would, Rev. Jesse Jackson appeared Sunday morning to give his baby encouragement for the week. You see, he and Ms. Chisolm had first discussed the congress at the Democratic Convention of 1984.

"Encouragement for the journey": How that phrase brought back thoughts and memories of the stories I been told of the Middle Passage. Physically, many more journeys would be made, but could the past ever be restored? Some 500 women took a trip back in their minds to reestablish goals. Not that we dismiss the future, but that we recognize the strength and wisdom in the fertile history of our mothers. Though our group differed greatly in religious conviction, political persuasion, philosophical perspective and even mode of dress and hair, we found com-

mon ground. It was the ground that our mothers and foremothers had tilled for us, watering it with tears and blood. Daughters sprang up and, because of our deep roots, will not soon wither.

In fact, Osborne met with the North Carolina chapter president in hopes of establishing a Bennett chapter. Jade made a lasting impression on the congress with her political "freshness." She ran for the slot of youth vice-chair. Although the electee, Kay Williams, had the backing of several states, having worked with them for the previous nine months, Jade only lagged behind by eight points, giving me the very real notion that someday she would return to many more congresses and soon be youth vice-chair. Her speech so accurately described our times with the words of Dickens from *A Tale of Two Cities*, for it is both the best and worst of times. We as blacks and or women who fail to see or refuse to see the paradox are deceiving ourselves.

My deepest impression of the congress was of the Saturday afternoon spent in the Spelman Chapel, the fans buzzing round my head, dreamy from the heat and the nostalgia. As the last by-law was passed, the words "Ladies, we've just delivered!" rang and reverberated a thousand times.

Mail madness

A column
by Carla Bannister

This summer I worked as a mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Services. My experiences as a mail lady were quite interesting, exciting and rewarding. Interesting in that I met several different people every day. Exciting in that I had a new route to deliver everyday and rewarding in that I earned over \$1,000 in just a month and a half.

Most days I'd deliver mail to over 600 residents and businesses. I started at 7 a.m. and stopped at 4 p.m. One hot day I went to deliver some mail in a poor section of town. I put the mail in my sack, and it was a heavy 70 pounds. I struggled hard to carry that big bag. I was determined to walk fast to ease that load.

From around the corner came this guy who had a funny-looking head, long scraggly hair and bad breath. His clothes were mismatched. His name was Chico. He told me that he wanted to take me to the upcoming Tina Turner concert and to the mall to buy me some new clothes. He talked about what a good-looking couple we'd make. I was struggling with this heavy bag, wishing that he'd get lost. I was laughing to myself, thinking that I wouldn't go to a dogfight with this slimy-looking guy.

I kept trying to give him hints that I wasn't interested by saying that I had a boyfriend, my nights were taken and I was too young to date him. Still he followed me for an hour and a half. Luck finally came when another mail carrier came around to check up on me. I told him that Chico was getting on my nerves by following me. Chico stood at a distance, not knowing what we were talking about. My fellow postal worker said that he'd circle the block to see if Chico still followed me. I walked off and Chico followed

me. I turned to him and acted mad, like I was in big trouble. I lied and told him that because of him I got fired from my job and I got in big trouble. He believed me and left me alone.

I had the unfortunate luck of working on the first of the month when nearly everyone on my route got welfare checks and food stamps. People got evil when mail with their check wasn't delivered on time. I learned really quick how poor people love their money. I had people greeting me two blocks ahead of the block that I was delivering at the time.

The people were standing on their porches waiting for me. The first of the month was the longest day that I worked. It started at 7 a.m. and ended at 5:30 p.m. I'll never forget some of the lies that people told me to get their money before I got to their block.

The chaos started even before I got out of the office. People called and claimed that they had a doctor's appointment and wanted to pick up their checks at the post office. Once, on the street, I was approached by a young boy on a bike. He claimed that his family was leaving soon for Arizona. He told me that his father needed his mail that second because he needed his food stamps. I thought to myself why would a family traveling from Toledo, Ohio to Arizona need food stamps? It seemed like the father told his son to lie to me in order to receive his food stamps sooner. I told the boy that he'd have to wait until I got around to his block. By the time I got to his house, I saw no luggage, no car and his father relaxing on the porch in no hurry to go anywhere.

At 4 p.m. people came looking for me in their cars. They started cursing at me to hurry up because the food stamp office was closing soon and they needed their food stamps.

Hopes are high for volleyball team

by Evelyn Sims

In Coach Cathy Mussington's first two years, the volleyball program moved from the dead of night to the half light that precedes dawn. Now the squad stands on the verge of a splendid morning.

In the coach's first year, the spiking Belles went 3-12. Last year, the record improved to 5-9. This year, Mussington has found an increased faith.

"The sky is the limit. We're gonna go for a 14-0 season. But whatever the record ends up being, I'm sure it will reflect our best effort," she says.

A core of talented veterans, aided by able newcomers, serves as the source of Mussington's optimism. "We're looking good," she says. "We've got a solid corps of athletes, and we've got veterans. Therein lies our strength. They've got leadership capability and confidence."

In fact, the coach believes so strongly in her personnel that she's asked each player to bring 10 fans to home games. She wants this team to be seen.

The Belles will be led by co-captain spikers Michele Sherrod of Washington, D.C., and April Gordon of Elsinore, Calif. These returning lathers finished first and second, respectively, in completed spikes last year. Setter LaTanya Hart from Salisbury and serving specialist Shonna Luten from Columbia, Md. add experience and expertise. Luten "promises to be good on defense. We're looking for great defensive saves from her this season," says Mussington.

The team received a lift when Wanda Dilworth, a junior from Bartow, Fla., decided to play. After a promising freshman performance, Dilworth chose to concentrate on her studies last year.

The spiker has "good height, skills, attitude, and she's sharp academically," according to the coach.

Joining the team for the first time are upperclasswomen Shirlisa Foster of Reidsville and Summer Houston of Denver, defensive specialists, and spiker Tricia Hairston of Winston-Salem.

Three freshmen from major metropolitan areas have sharpened Mussington's desire for the season to start. They are Yolanda Cromer of Atlanta and Kimberly Howard of Oakland, Calif., defensive specialists, and setter Kelly Holland of Columbus, Ohio.

"The freshmen come to us with more experience than they have in the past," says Mussington.

The coach is especially delighted by the intelligence of her team. "The majority of the girls are very strong academically, and they're carrying good grade-point averages. That mental keenness will do much for our strategy and our offensive technique. They think," Mussington emphasizes.

Along with intelligence and experience comes a pull toward team unity. Mussington calls it "a permeating attitude," and she says, "When you don't have to motivate, you can concentrate on strategy, and that makes it a whole different ballgame."

Other facets of the season that excite the coach are an expanded schedule featuring more trimatches, a tournament for her players to work toward and a greater investment in the volleyball program from the college.

"Finally, the school understands the relationship between the amount of money put into the program and the quality of team that will emerge," she says.

If the players convert their potential and Mussington's bright hopes into sunshine, there could be a season-long morning in Goode Gymnasium.



Double-dutch hijinks: Two familiar faces demonstrated their skipping skills earlier this month. Karen R. Taylor of Washington, D.C., and Chardel Forrest of Philadelphia show they know the ropes. (photo by Keith Miller)