

The Borders of Human Security: Bringing Geopolitics Home

By Sandra Morgen, CSWS Director

How are economic security, human and civil rights, and national security related in our lives? In what ways are globalization and militarization racialized and gendered processes producing security for some and vulnerabilities for others? How might international, national, and local security policies be different if their core goals included reducing poverty; violence; and racial, ethnic, and gender inequalities? These are some of the questions to be addressed by an eminent group of social scientists, lawyers, labor leaders, and community advocates at a conference sponsored by CSWS May 20–21, 2004.

The borders we will examine are both material and metaphorical. They are policed national and community borders. They are limits and restrictions that differentially affect citizens and non-citizens and people from different racial, ethnic and class communities. They are boundaries often invisible to those with economic and social privilege, but palpable to those who experience racism, gender subordination, or class inequality.

Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), will open the conference by exploring the concept of human security—an alternative security paradigm that has captured the attention of many in the international policy community. Dr. Heyzer, who received her education at the University of Singapore and Cambridge University, has been at the helm of UNIFEM since 1994, advocating models of development that promote economic security and the empowerment of women and their families. In addition to work with women migrant workers at the community level, workers in the informal sector and free trade zones, and women who have experienced domestic and other forms of violence, she has also been a policy advisor to Asian governments and a founding member of such groups as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN).

A series of panels the next day features distinguished scholars and advocates who will discuss the effects of violence that result from war, political conflict, terrorism and the war on terrorism; human rights, immigration, and work; the production of economic insecurities in the context of globalization; and the efforts of local, national, and international groups to promote human security. Among the panelists are Dorothy Roberts, Northwestern School of Law and author of *Killing the Black Body: Race Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty*; Cynthia Cockburn, City University

in London and author of *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*; and Cindi Katz, City University of New York, whose research focuses on what she calls the “global retreat from social reproduction.” Dalia Hashad, who has a law degree from NYU, will be talking about the ACLU Campaign against Racial Profiling, specifically her work on issues confronting Arab, Muslim and South-Asian Americans following 9/11. Other speakers will focus on immigrant issues, political violence, and civil liberties. These include Rhonda Ramiro of the Bay Area Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines, Ramon Ramirez of PCUN (*Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste*), and Patricia Cortez, who works with *AMIGOS de los Sobrevivientes* in Eugene. The final panel brings together (will include) five Eugene community advocates whose work spans issues ranging from peace, civil liberties, and immigrant rights to the effects of economic restructuring on working people and issues affecting indigenous communities in Oregon. Guadalupe Quinn, Carol Van Houten, Hope Marston, Deanna Dart, and Harriet Merrick will participate in a dialogue among themselves and with conference participants about work they are doing to promote human security in our community.

The conference is funded by the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, the College of Arts and Sciences, and nine departments: anthropology, ethnic studies, geography, history, international studies, Latin American studies, political science, sociology, and women’s and gender studies. This broad base of institutional support speaks both to the breadth of issues to be addressed at the conference and the theoretical and political importance of interrogating issues about security.