

# CaucAsia

international coalition of gender journalists

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**issue subject: Gender and We**

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The topic Gender and Me sounds a bit funny. But this is what we wanted: to make this Christmas and New Year issue funny and a little sad. Besides the holidays, our magazine celebrates a jubilee, it turned one. "Big deal," you'll say, "only one." That's right; but during these passed 12 months we published the magazine using our own resources only, without any salaries, honorariums, covering technical expenses and the time ourselves only. Looks like we really needed all that work we did; it seems that we had to write about gender. We decided to think and to answer a question - why do I work with Gender? What are my personal relations with it? Why am I professionally interested in these topics? The answers we could give are listed in this issue.

There are not many of us thus far. Our colleagues, who cover economy, sport, criminal affairs, or science are oftentimes unable to understand us. Sometimes even those who write on social problems fail to understand us! At the same time, it is very easy to see that the society is divided in two parts: those of women and men. Both have their own fate

and specificity. These are genders. It is very interesting to write about gender, especially considering the fact that women's gender is not something easy to see in our media. The portrait is only sketched, and it is so distorted that looks like a cartoon or a parody. This is why we want to visualize and voice real personages and their real problems. We would like to visualize the women of our region, which remains to be a problematic one, silent, and not really understood by the rest of the world. We want to tell you about this region and about the women living in it.

We also want to share the challenge that we feel in the air; the threat that is not really felt by the majority of the people. There is a myth that our planet is populated by *people* and by *women* and *mothers*. There also is a belief that there are a lot of things that *women* and *mothers* are not supposed to do and ask for.

This nominal injustice is the main engine for us, maybe.

Alma BEKTURGANOVA-ANDERSEN,  
Kazakhstan/Denmark

## female line

# Rakhilya and Tanya

We keep the memory of ancestors;  
but the forefathers only

...In my entire life, I had never seen my grandmothers. I even do not know where they were buried. I know only their names - Rakhilya and Tatiana.



*The only photograph of grandmother Tanya that I have. Photo made in early 1920s.*

My Kazakh grandmother, Rakhilya, died, the most likely during the terrible hungry winter of 1932-1933. At that time, more than one million Kazakhs, some 48 percent of the population, died of starvation. That was the time, when my family lost information about Rakhilya's whereabouts. My father used to answer me as saying: "I was taken away from her, when I was less than 6 years old. I will never forget, as long as I live, the way she was begging me, when I was sitting in a cart. She kept repeating: "Let me kiss you once again, son," I was turning aside, stupid kid."

- What happened? - I always asked my father, - why did you go, and she was left alone?

- Nobody needed her, after my father died. A sick woman, she was the second wife. Nobody knows what happened to her.

My Russian grandmother, Tatiana, died of cardiac rupture, when my mom was about four years old. They used to live in a small village at the East of Kazakhstan. Once, some neighbor told my grandma that her husband, Vasiliy, was shot by White Guards. She felt down dead.

In reality, grandfather was not killed, he was only taken to China along with other local residents. My mom met her father only 40 years after. I remember grandfather Vasiliy: tall, blue-eyed, with moustache. My son, Marat, looks a little bit like him.

I saw only one photograph of grandma Tanya. I saw it first when I was around 30, when my mom's sister gave me the picture.

As for grandma Rakhilya, I can not even imagine her. One of my old relatives, who saw Rakhilya when she was only five, says that I look like my grandmother.

This resentment against the fact that I do not know my female ancestors is, perhaps, exactly what pushes me to action. I want to change this world so that none of the women would be forgotten. My family does have several portraits of my grandfather Tastemir, it has his last name, it is a tradition that boys in our family are named Tastemir. I am glad that we keep the memory about ancestors, but it makes me mad that we remember only male ancestors, the forefathers.

My biggest joy in the life, the birth of my son, was saddened by a bureaucratic problem. It turned out that I can

not give my child my last name. According to the law, that existed then (early 1990s), a child could bare only father's last name. I was told in the registry office that the only chance to give my son my last name was to indicate in the 'father' column. This is what I did. We listed an non-existent person, Bekturganov Alexander Anatolyevich as my son's father. We are still having problems as a result of that gender unfair law. My son is unable to take my today's last name, Andersen, because the Danish legislation demands the agreement of a child's father to do so. Danish authorities had sent number of inquiries to Kazakhstan asking for a permission from non-existent Alexander Bekturganov.

I always was a very active person; and I had plenty of active women around me. As time was passing by, I noticed that there are no such women in the field of management. There are a lot of reasons for this, but one of them really drives me crazy. I remember my school # 40 in Taraz, when it was electing the school president. I had a favorite class there, which I liked because it was really valuing the importance of knowledge. Quite unexpectedly, the class proposed a candidacy of a boy, while a girl was an obvious leader there "Why?" I asked them. "we decided that a boy should be a candidate," they replied. "But he want win the elections only because being male," I said. "But this is how it is supposed to be," they replied again. That boy lost the campaign, but another boy was elected. Because all classes had male candidates.

I am not against men. It would be silly, if I'd be against men, as I have beloved son, husband and brother. But I am against the men's domination. I want to change this world so that every individual would have a chance to reveal the best qualities, regardless of the gender.

Resentment, rage, perplexity - is it possible that these feelings turn into an engine to obtain fairness? I am sure that it is possible, as every changes in the world appeared after there was a feeling.

Maria OSIPOVA,  
Belarus

## alarm

# COLLEAGUES, I CAN APPEAR IN JAIL, if the new draft law is adopted

*I was born in the family, where there were two generations of repressed. The relatives of my mother, who refused to enter Kolkhoz, were exiled to Siberia for penal servitude. Many years after that, they all were vindicated, but it does not really change anything. This is perhaps the reason why I am so sensitive to everything taking place in my country. Especially when it reminds year 1937, like today.*



photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

In early December, our parliament adopted amendments to the Criminal Code. The amendments foresee punishment of up to six-month long arrest or imprisonment during up to three years. This punishment is considered for an organization or a social union that contribute to the "prevention of family duties implementation." Impressing, isn't it?

If someone, let's say, wants to create in Belarus analogous magazine to CaucAsia, someone's husband may decide that it takes the time of the family; he can apply to correspondent bodies to obtain justice.

In the case one wants to write an article foreign international magazine saying that in her country there are very small subsidies issued to single mothers, this person is very likely to violate the Criminal Code's article on Discredit of Belarus Republic. The term of imprisonment varies from six months to two years.

Thus, we have to think twice before writing something. We have to think about ourselves, until we remain the citizens of Belarus.

Do you state that it is impossible to find an appropriate job? Is your opinion different from that officials have? It can be evaluated as false data. For this violation, you can be punished as a couple of years of correctional labor.

In the case you venture to contact journalists sharing your appeal to the international institutions, calling to protect your human rights, you are likely to get additional two-five years of imprisonment, maybe along with that Belarus editor of the publication, who agreed to publish your claims.

Besides making the Criminal Code stricter, parliament members made legislation more 'human'- they inserted a new norm, which foresees the release of those economic criminals, who agree to compensate the damage. The release is possible at the pre-trial hearing only. In order not to spend much time on the court and on presumption of guilt.

Polina MILORADOVICH,  
Georgia

**a real name**

# SLAVES' SONG

not a vocal one

I want to stand up in front of them and say opening the meeting:

*wow, you are all so nice and pretty, boys...*

I experience class hatred against my kitchen. When I think about how much time I spent in the kitchen, I go crazy. I could've been so successful, if I wouldn't get married early and would not go straight to the kitchen after the marriage.

But sometimes I even like my kitchen. Sometimes I like to clean my galley, to make it more comfortable. When doing dishes, I sing; just as African slaves used to sing when working at rice plantations.

All these pretty kitchen decorations are some odd details. In reality, we are not interested in it more than men are. It is all about or despair; we have to love all of it. That is the only what can lighten our slavery.

And a compliment that says that we are nice and pretty has the same background. Just imagine a seminar or a business meeting, where a man says before he starts delivering speech: oh, ladies, you are all so pretty; it's such a pleasure to work with you. It is serious seminar, on the national recommendations against trafficking or CEDAW report, but the audience just starts smiling. We smile and sing the slaves' song.

Getting really mad after alike episodes, I dream about the analogous situation in the men-predominated audience. I want to stand up in front of them and say opening the meeting: wow, you are all so nice and pretty, boys. Once, I had an appropriate moment to do so, but than I changed my mind. I doubt that any of these men can understand the sarcasm. They will just think that I am crazy.

Home sovereign is sitting on the couch in front of the TV-set. You are in charge for bringing him a snack and for taking the dirty dishes back to the kitchen. You do your part many times a day, while the guy enjoys his role, such as handing you your coat. And if you exchange your roles, believe me, he won't be able to stand the situation longer than a week.

In my youth age I wanted to be tinier and shorter. The reason was that my than-partner had quite a sickly constitution. I did not want to change him, neither had I thought about a new boyfriend. That was how I used to sing that slaves' song.

Just recently, I participated in a talk-show on the national TV. The topic was on the situation of women in Georgia. Experts were all men, women took their

places in the audience only. It turned out that none of the experts saw any problems in this field. Yes, there are certain social problems, but they refer equally to both men and women. In general, life is okay, they say; there is no gender discrimination in Georgia, ladies don't want to get to politics themselves, and the problem of domestic violence was exported from the West. Even a couple of successful women - a bank manager and a film director - say that they gained success only because they are so smart and active, and that they experienced no pressure or discrimination on their way to success. The life in Georgia is a lot of fun.

In this case, what was the reason for convening that talk show? Only to sing the slaves' song?



photo by Galina Petriashvili, Georgia

Nurzhan TULEGABYLOVA,  
Kyrgyzstan

## how to live?

# TO BECOME A WOMAN

despite many want to see you as an object

today's Kyrgyz society faces strengthening the role of Islam

A Kyrgyz woman is assumed to be an obedient wife, a good mother and a complaisant daughter-in-law. This is what traditions say about a Kyrgyz woman's role in the life.

In Kyrgyzstan, there are several important documents adopted, such as the National actions plan to obtain gender equality, several laws, international documents. But all these documents either do not work at all or work very weakly.

I think that the reason is that Kyrgyz mentality does not foresee direct actions. We are not used to be responsible for ourselves. We talk a lot but do not do much business. An it is impossible to build a society only talking.

What does gender mean to me? In the social understanding, it is clear: gender means fair laws, equal opportunities. But for me, the word 'gender' has another meaning as well. It means my internal harmony. Soon after I first touched gender issues, I found answers to many those questions that I thought about since my childhood. Why am I obliged to get married? Why am I supposed to give birth to a boy? It reminds me a theatre, just as if someone would have written a role for you. Many people follow the roles, this is how our society is built, and this is what the society considers normal.

Today's Kyrgyz society faces strengthening the role of Islam. From the one hand, there are CEDAW, various resolutions and the national plan on obtaining gender equality; from the other hand - there is Islam that strengthens positions. The process is accompanied by the rhetoric that we have great traditions, and that the society keeps being in the crisis. The logical conclusion is that traditions represent the only hope we have.

Today, there still remains time for a fight, but not everybody realizes the threat. Another problem is also that people avoid open critics.

I do not want to criticize Islam, but I do not want to have a mixed roles of the state and the religion. The state must protect my civil rights regardless the fact that religion might want to see me different.



photo by unknown author

Umida AKHMEDOVA,  
Uzbekistan

**once upon a time**

## CLOSE YOUR EARS, LADY

it turns out that I have always thought about gender equality.  
I only did not know how to name it

The concept male chauvinism I experienced several times myself. The most notable it was, perhaps, during my studies in Moscow cinema institute (VGIK). I was the only girl among 30 men at the department of cameramen. A well-known Mosfilm cameramen, who read lectures at our class, used to tell me once in a while: "Please close your ears, lady." If that would be today, I'd answer: "Please do not look aside. Continue the lecture." But back then it was really hard for me to give a proper answer to that fop.

From the other hand, women were also surprising me a lot. At the next floor in the institute building, there was a film editing room, with only women working. They used to astonish me with constant hubbub. I could not understand what were the argues about.

The memories are quite interesting. Even back then, I kept asking myself why is there such a difference between women and men. There are plenty of memories; but almost every-

thing changed in the life after the collapse of the imperia. It is now interesting, wither was there anyone who counted the victims of this collapse. I mean, male mortality, collapsed families, and other.

There also were plenty of male stereotype victims. Like this one: a man is the bread-winner. When I think of my male colleagues, I see that their number reduced significantly. It is hard to believe, but the main part of them died in young age. Someone committed suicide, some others became alcoholics.

And here is what I think and ask myself: what if there wouldn't be these stereotypes? If we wouldn't have these stupid rules, saying that a woman and a man have absolutely different duties. I think in this case the number of victims would be smaller.

### A REMARK

## SURE, MEN ARE IN A WORSE SITUATION

I am a student, and I am interested in gender problems. But when I started studying gender issues, I felt really sorry or men! The transformation of gender roles is a very painful process, it breaks families, it kills people. In the new circumstances, old norms are useless, while new ones are yet unable to work. We continue expecting that a man takes care of a woman, but the expectations are likely to fail. This is the ground for gender conflicts.

Thinking about men, I began studying their identity. And plenty of obstacles appeared. First of all, there is information deficit. There is practically no masculine gender. The gender issues ermain to be those referred to women. Maybe it's already time to work at another injustice?

*Oksana Pobibich,  
Karaganda, Kazakhstan.*



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

Vladimir KHANAS,  
Ukraine

## boys only

# ALL ALONE WITH YOUR PROBLEMS, YOU ARE NOT A MACHO,

but an affected aggressor,  
discriminated by his wife during the divorce

*I was born in the teachers' family. As my dad was the director of a Soviet school, my mom was practically the head of the family. Me and my brother considered the situation as absolutely normal, this is why I believe that the first stage of gender education occurred back in my childhood.*

During studying at the institute, I participated in the collapse of communism system, and since then, I remain to be an active participant of Ukrainian political life. My experience told me that in order to change social-economic politics in Ukraine, it is necessary to find new approaches, such as involving women and youth.

This is why international gender programs appeared to me as the confirmation of my arguments. I am glad that the number of my male associates from different political movements increases. Me and my wife Valentina have two children: our daughter (who dreams about becoming a president) and a son (who not only helps his sister at school, but also cleans the kitchen, when his parents are busy doing something else.

For me it was very important to participate in the Ukrainian-Swedish seminar on the Olga-2 program. At that seminar we had worked-out a strategic plan for the organization designed as the one working at men's problems. Men's Adaptation Center, this is how we named the organization.

There are a lot of factors that influence men's gender thinking, but the absence of critical perception of one's behavior we consider as the main reason behind the slow progress. The problems that result from the above, can be divided in two blocs:

- those that create problems to other categories of people or gender groups (family members, subordinates at work, etc.);

- those that create problems to men themselves.

Today the society is more likely to pay attention to the first group of problems only. The fact that men are unlikely to understand the importance of the matter at this stage result in increased aggression and conflicts (which is the normal behavior for a 'typical' man), domestic violence, wrong attitude towards women.

The first group of problems, results in number of problems, such as the gender misbalance at workplaces and other.

The second group of problems is less known, the following problems could be included in this group:

- increased aggression towards those men, who do not remind a 'typical,' a 'real' man;
- disparage towards those men who are less aggressive than others;
- disparage and aggression towards those men who try to implement non-stereotype gender roles;
- more severe punishment (compared to women's) for illegal actions;
- 'militarization' of thinking;
- disparage towards their own health;
- shorter life interval (compared to that of women);
- increased risk of traumas (compared to that of women);
- internal prohibition for weakness;
- increased responsibility for material maintenance of the family;
- increased requests for career growth;
- discrimination of a man during the divorce - when resolving material claims and the further life of a child...

This list can be continued.

To solve their problems, men theoretically can address to a social service or to a consulting psychologist, but it happens really rarely. The first structure does not have enough resources for an effective assistance. Besides this, it is necessary to note that even high qualified psychologists sometimes do not have methods to analyze men's gender problems.

## APROPOS ANECDOTE FROM THE PRACTICE

An early morning phone call.

- Hello! Is this the Men's Adaptation Center?
- Yes, how may I help you?
- Do you really help men?
- We try to.
- I need to meet you as soon as possible. But let's meet outside.
- We meet in the street.
- Are you that Khanas, who helps men?
- I want to answer, but he interrupts me:
- Can you give me some money to buy beer? I feel really sick after yesterday's party...



Khursheda BOBOJANOVA,  
Tajikistan

**dreaming**

# BE PERSEVERING

and protect your own rights



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

Certain women limit their daughters in order to please the society

approaches - that of my mom and that of my grandma. Some women limit their daughters themselves in order to please the society, such as simply neighbors and some relatives. It is impossible to condemn these women, as some of them had never seen anything other than the life in their kishlaks.

The other episode occurred when I was studying in the grade school. My classmate, Jamol, was the third son of his parents and lived in my neighborhood. Once, we, the girls of the class, saw that Jamol was sweeping his yard. At school, we began teasing him saying that he was acting as girl. He began crying and the teacher told us that we were not right and that there were no girls in Jamol's family and that he only helps his parents.

Today I know how wrong I was, and know that my teacher was wrong as well, as she believed that sweeping, cooking and cleaning is women's duties only.

After I graduated from school, the family started thinking about my farther education. My father kept always saying that it is important and absolutely necessary that we get proper education. Previously, it was no problem to send the kids to study in different towns and cities. Despite my mom was a housewife, dad earned enough money to send the kids away, as the education was free of charge then. But when it was my term, everything changed, and my mom appeared to be strictly against me studying. Finally, once upon a time, my family members all met together to decide my fate. They came to the conclusion that I should study at a university. My father supported and blessed me, finally. I applied to the department of Eastern languages; it turned out that I entered it without any protection or additional expenses. Now, I am in the fourth year of my studies there, at Khujan state university.

These are only three episodes of my life; but even in these four episodes I can make one main conclusion: everything depends on your wish and your aspiration, regardless your gender.

I always considered that I lived in a democratic family. My parents never preferred brothers, they treated us all equally. There are six of us in the family, three sisters and three brothers. All of us received higher education, we all equally worked at home, and dressed the way we wanted. Our grandmother, who is the labor veteran and the member of communist party even now, had a great influence on us.

I remember one episode. I turned six and asked my parents to buy me a bicycle as a birthday present. My mom got just mad and said that it's not the way a girl should act - riding a bike. "what will the neighbors say!" - she stated. But grandmother just went to the store and bought the bike for me.

Today, after I grew up, I understand that it was a victory over old circumstances. I can distinguish two

Nina YERKAEVA,  
Kazakhstan

## way to equality

# WILL THEY MANAGE IT?

There is no time to sit down and think. But on the New Year eve I can give myself this luxury. But each time I ask myself why did I enter gender problems, I ask myself another question: have I actually entered this field??

*I grew up in the family, where there were no men except for my father. There were four women and only one man. In my early childhood I learned to work with spade, pitchfork and other agricultural tools - I was digging potatoes, cocking hay, preparing dung.*

This work was taking place in parallel with pure women's duties, such as cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking and other. Mother used to say that if we do not do this job, neighbors would say: "This is the house of sloven girls. All her entire life, besides working at home, my mom was a dressmaker. By holidays, we always had plenty of work to do. While hemming dresses, we had to find time to milk a cow, to make dough, to bake bread. Our childhood was happy, and every duty was considered as a necessity.

Thinking about my past, I realized why I am so enduring. When I got I got married, at first I really enjoyed doing laundry for my husband, even washing his shirts and socks. It was very unusual for me - washing clothes not for your father, but for the person of the same age you are.

My husband grew up in the family where all alike jobs were considered as women's duties. This is why he was not really surprised or happy about my efforts. During first few years of our marriage, he used to help me somewhat, but later he gave it up. His argument now is that we have children, who are assumed to help their mother. Insensibly, all responsibility was forwarded to me.

Both our sons grew up, but their model of behavior is the same as their father's. I did not really know what to do, but finally I learned how to do "nothing" at home, how to find "no time" to get family work ready, and how to be "tired" of that work.

At first, it was not all so easy. I remember my 11-year-old son, whom I told how to make dough, so that all of us would later make vareniks for dinner.

About five years passed since I stopped getting up two hours before everybody else in order to make breakfast; I do not rush to the grocery store from the office; neither do I wash men's socks and panties.

A happy end, you say? Not really, unless I put period under this line. But I can not do so, because it would not be a full story about my life.

Now I see the way my kids build relations with their partners and I believe that they will have to repeat my life.

My older son dates a really great girl. She is also likely to do for him everything he accepts. But I really hope that he does not need this kind of self-sacrifice. I hope he learned how to do things himself. Is it necessary to explain her the situation? Or will she understand it all herself? How much time is necessary for her to understand?

My other son's girlfriend wants him to court her, as it was described in old novels. What is their future?

My daughter's situation is a bit different; the guy is the one who has stereotypes about a woman and a family, while she is a very independent and an obstinate girl. What will happen with them?



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

Nadezhda BZHEZINSKAYA,  
Kazakhstan

## my story

# I ESCAPED FROM AUL BECAUSE OF POVERTY AND DESPAIR

I am now only a housemaid, but I am able to buy a New Year present for my son

A villager woman becomes really old, sometimes when she turns 40. This is the time for her to become an old woman both physically and morally. Because of the fact that she gets up at 6 every morning, and works exhaustingly until sunset.

In a village, there are no other kinds of work, other than that in your own agriculture.

In average, there are 2-4 cows in each house; there are milked by hand. The milk is supposed to be properly prepared in order to sell it later as a cream or sour cream. Regular milk is too cheap to sell.

After you send your cows to the pasture, you take care of birds: chickens, ducks and geese. Besides them, there are goats, sheep, pigs. And you also make breakfast for your family, which is another headache for you, as the choice is very limited. It's a paradox, but a villager's meal is way more poor than that a city resident has everyday. After feeding your folks, you work in the garden. All your equipment there is a spade, a chopper, a bucket, and a watering-can. Neither there is much progress in the house: we heat through the wooden stove, no water pipe or sewerage system. In these circumstances, even an elementary laundering turns out to be a problem. The work that would take a town woman some 30 minutes, is likely to occupy a villager's day.

In a village, there is practically no medical care. Majority of locals are exhausted, sick with anemia, Graves' disease, breast cancer

At the same time, the government keeps allocating budgetary funds to auls, during the third year already.

Someday, I came to my parents' village house to believing that it would make my son healthier. Today, I found enough strength to escape from the village house; from that fresh air and natural products. In the village it was considered that I do ort work (as the family labor does not count), here I work as a housemaid. I am glad that I found this job however, I have a higher philology degree. This enables me to buy a New year present for my son. He wants to get a globe.



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

Tamara OVNATANYAN,  
Armenia

## images

# 'OLD WOMEN' AND THE GENDER

Ten years in the field of gender studies is a considerable term. We would like to present you those active members of CaucAsia coalition that have been working in the field of gender during more than 10 years.

Armine, Anait and Lilit are all **CaucAsia** Coalition's members.

### Armine Mkhitarian

Only two weeks passed since Armine Mkhitarian became the first candidate of economic science, who upheld thesis in the field of gender economy in Armenia. The topic of her thesis surprised the scientists. Interesting, but the scientists had no claims regarding economy itself, but they really disliked its relation with the gender at first.

One of the members of the scientific council said: "the fact that we ask the competitor so many questions is also the gender problem."

As Armine says, gender problems is the part of her life; and professional activities. She teaches Basics of Gender Theory at Yerevan State Medical University. She also heads Yerevan center Dialog.



### Anait Arutynyan

On Nov. 29, in Yerevan the presentation of Anait's book took place. The book entitled Century of Great Women tells about the social activities of Armenian women in 19 and 20 century. Anait Arutynyan is the journalist, candidate of philology science. She collected the facts at the archives and libraries reading old newspapers. Today she says that it is likely that hundred years from now, researchers will find nothing about women of the 20-th century in Armenia. Anait says that she 'met' gender when working as a copy editor at a local Armenian newspaper. Once she was invited to the conference organized by the Association of Women with University Education. That is when she first heard the word 'gender.'



### Lilit Zakaryan

She began working at gender problems when she was the candidate of historic sciences. Lilit Zakaryan presently teaches students at the Yerevan Northern University, focusing of gender issues. Some of her former students now work in the leading media sources, and Lilit believes that the knowledge she gave the students is very useful at their present workplaces.

Lilit says that she integrated gender issues into her teaching programs, which contributed to her career growth. She says taht followers is the main subject for pride to her: "The course Basics of Gender Studies, which I used to teach, is now taught by my student."



photos by  
Galina Petriashvili,  
Georgia

Harda ROOSNA,  
Estonia

## a cry from the heart

# YES, I WILL BE A FEMINIST!

*to release women from the complex  
of good behavior and teach them  
how to resist discrimination*

These stories made me so angry that I told myself: I will be a feminist!" To tell you the truth, feminism seemed to me a way to take revenge on unscrupulous men.

Some ten years ago, I was studying in Tallin Pedagogy Institute and lived in a hostel with many other women. We were all adult enough, we had husbands and families and worked as teachers. We were good friends and spoke with each other about our lives quite frankly. I do not know why, but the girls somehow appointed me as a psychologist, and told me various stories.

I learned a story about a professional boxer, who beat his wife.

The story about a 30 year old man who raped a 16 year old girl at the holiday of solstice.

The story about the husband who went for a walk with the baby, and forgot the baby in the carriage outside, in freeze, for several hours.

And many different stories.

These stories made me so angry that I told myself: I will be a feminist!" To tell you the truth, feminism seemed to me a way to take revenge on unscrupulous men.

In 2002 I participated in the conference on gender in Sweden. The conference touched the issues like equal opportunities at the labor market and alike. I had several argues on this topic when I returned back to Estonia, but as it was difficult for me to prove my point of view to the opponents, I was not sure that gender problems did exist in Estonia.

In 2003, at the conference Women, Men and democ-



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

**There can be dozens of reasons behind the fact that women are the majority among those who cleans restrooms...**

**But in reality, there is the only one reason: men simply do not want to do it.**

racy a lady from Finland asked me: "how is life in Estonia, regarding gender?" I answered: "I don't know, but they say we do not have any problem in this regard." She looked at me and said: "Do you think so? Oh, than you have plenty of gender problems!"

My biggest problem in the argues with opponents was that I could not find proper arguments to motivate the necessity of having women in power. But at that conference political scientist Ivi Masso said: "The number of women in your country is even bigger than that of men. And we have democracy, don't we? This is why we have the right to be equally represented in the bodies of governance." This statement was so simple and genius, that it made me even happy for a couple of days.

But despite of this logic, our male MPs continued sayng rubbish, such as bringing examples of animals' behavior. They wanted to convince all of us of the necessity to have a woman as that who takes care of children and cleans the house. While men are just born to be in the power.

Finally, I realized that sometimes it is more effective to apply to gender instead of demonstrating frontal attack.

Gala PETRI,  
Georgia

## social fantasy

# N I G H T M A R E

- You know what? - he yelled. - tomorrow I will leave this terrible place. I don't want to live with you anymore. Tomorrow I will go to my father's.



photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

I parked the car and looked at our window on the third floor. They were lighted: "He doesn't sleep," I thought about my husband dearly.

I was trying not to make noise, when I entered dark entrance room. My husband and two our kids were looking at me from the lightened kitchen.

- Again? - the husband said.

- Okay, sweaty, let's talk tomorrow. It's too late. - I said.

Husband breathed nervously and turned his head to the window.

- Mom, you are not right, - the older daughter said, - dad was very nervous all evening.

- Why did not you call at least? You know that we are nervous about you when you are late,- my husband said.

- Comon! Same thing again!.. - I said, - we only decided to spend some time together. I haven't seen the girls for ages, and you know that. Natalie bought a new car, Ivanidze goes abroad for the business trip, Nino is just about to finish her PHD. We celebrated all together...

- Girls, girls.. You always find time for your friends, - husband sobbed, - when had you seen the kids last time?

- Here they are, I see the kids.

- The dinner is cold I did my best cooking tonight! - the husband turned his head to the window again..

- Okay, sweaty, - I mumbled trying to kiss him. He jerked aside and said crying:

- You smell like alcohol. You don't love me anymore, not like it was before...

- Oh, no! Here we go again, - I said with annoyance я, - All I do is work, I come home tired and what I see is you with your stupid tears. I am tired of it, dear.

- Tired of me?! Perfect! Here it is a woman's gratitude... You know what? - he yelled. - tomorrow I will leave this terrible place. I don't want to live with you anymore. Tomorrow me and the kids will go to my father's! Hey, kids! Go to bed! The kids left.

- Have you again met that guy? That colleague of yours? A blond one?

- Who is blond? - I asked indifferently.

- You know.

- Yes, he was at the party, big deal!

- And you drove him home, right?

- Yes! - I got mad. - How could I let the boy to stay alone outside in the night!

- I knew, oh, God, I knew that. I could imagine! - The husband began crying. He cried, cried and cried, until I realized that it was not a cry but the ring of the alarm.

Seven a.m. "What kind of dreams do I see," - I told myself when going to the kitchen to make breakfast.

- Hope you come home earlier today, darling? - I asked the husband.

photo by Harda Roosna, Estonia



HAVE A HAPPY  
AND SUCCESSFUL  
NEW YEAR!

**The edition was prepared by:**

Galina PETRIASHVILI (editor) - Georgia;  
Alma BEKTURGANOVA-ANDERSEN - Denmark;  
Maria OSIPOVA - Belarus;  
Polina MILORADOVICH - GEORGIA;  
Nurjan TULEGABILOVA - Kyrgyzstan;  
Umida AKHMEDOVA - Uzbekistan;  
Nina YERKAEVA - Kazakhstan;  
Rano BOBOJANOVA - Tajikistan;  
Tamara HOVNATANYAN - Armenia;  
Svetlana SHAKIROVA - Kazakhstan;  
Harda ROOSNA - Estonia;  
Vladimir KHANAS - Ukraine

**Photo:**

Umida AKHMEDOVA, Uzbekistan;  
Diana PETRIASHVILI, Georgia;  
Galina PETRIASHVILI, Georgia;  
Harda ROOSNA, Estonia

**Design:**

GMC design-group, Georgia

**Translation:**

Diana PETRIASHVILI - Georgia (GMC)

**CaucAsia**

**INTERNATIONAL COALITION**



**GenderMediaCaucasus**

**JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION**

17 Ioris Str. TBILISI, 0103, Republic of Georgia  
Tel./fax (995 32) 77 60 18; mob. (995 99) 90 11 24  
e-mail [galapet@ip.osgf.ge](mailto:galapet@ip.osgf.ge)