

I challenged them when in Bologna after the Beijing conference they organized a big seminar—bringing Beijing home. And, they were all talking about, and I refer to all of those who were there, all the Italian women who were there—who were famous feminists who were intellectuals. They said it was a very interesting experience for them to be in Beijing and to have met women from the African region, women from India, women from all over the poor countries and that they should do something to support these women. I was very upset and I grabbed the microphone and I said “hey, we’re here ... we’re here” and I don’t know. I can’t remember anymore what I said but I just went on ... And some of them were crying and many of them apologized actually.¹

These are the words of Charito Basa, NGO activist, founder of the Filipino Women’s Council, and holder of the prestigious *Cavaliere della Repubblica* award.² Basa’s words echo those of many migrant women in Italy who are frustrated by their invisibility as they stand in the same spaces as Italian women but go unnoticed.³ Migrant women in Italy are long-time activists—many have been working for women’s rights for more than twenty years—but their paths have intersected with native leaders infrequently. Migrant and native self-organizing since the 1970s has occurred in separate spaces, especially in autonomous women’s associations. The creation of independent groups for Italian and migrant women can be linked to two main factors. First, migrant women have had to confront the difficulties of integration, that is, of having access to the same rights and services as native citizens. Second, Italian and migrant women do not necessarily perceive of gender oppression in the same ways. This paper will demonstrate that Italian women failed to consider fully the implications of decolonization, globalization, and migration on their feminist theories and practices even when they began to reflect on differences of ethnicity and culture. As a result, they missed opportunities to develop a mature, anti-racist and multicultural feminism. In what follows, I will analyze how and why this occurred.

Few studies have looked in detail at the relationship between migrant and Italian women outside the framework of the employer and employee. A sizeable body of work on gender and migration pertains to female domestic workers.⁴ Some notable exceptions are worth mentioning. Jacqueline Andall and Heather Merrill have written about the multiethnic women’s associations *Donne Senza Frontiere*, *Libere Insieme*, and *Alma Mater*, all of which

date to the early 1990s. Andall was highly critical of the way Italian women approached native-migrant organizing and argued that: "while migrant women saw the association as a vehicle through which their specific problems could be resolved, the Italian women were more interested in the significance of having a mixed women's association."⁵ According to Andall, neither *Donne Senza Frontiere* nor *Libere Insieme* ultimately dealt effectively with the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and culture. *Alma Mater*, on the other hand, is regarded as a highly successful association founded by Italian and migrant women together. Merrill has argued that this Turin-based group represents the truly groundbreaking results that can occur when migrant and Italian women merge their experiences into a modified form of feminism.⁶ Andall and Merrill's work is significant in opening discussions of relationships between Italian feminists and migrant women. Both scholars, however, limited the scope of their studies to just a few associations and to the contexts of Rome and Turin respectively. This paper broadens and deepens analyses of migrant and native women's relationships and extends the discussion to some of the first contacts made among activist women.⁷ With this goal in mind, I first provide a general overview of the development of the postwar Italian women's movement and of migrations to Italy since the late 1960s. I then discuss some of the earliest contacts between migrant and native women before turning to an analysis of the significance of their relationships in the final section.

Movements and Migrations

A mass movement for the emancipation of women began with the Italian Resistance as World War II concluded. Women on the political left and right fought for the liberation of Italy and then turned their struggles into a mass campaign for women's suffrage, which they obtained in time for the first democratic elections in 1948. True to the postwar divisions that characterized Italian politics in the early years of the Cold War, women's self-organizing took the form of two large autonomous associations. The *Unione Donne Italiane* (UDI)

represented the interests of women of the left, and the Centro Italiano Femminile (CIF) appealed especially to women with a strong Catholic identity. Both associations worked for much of the pro-woman and pro-family legislation passed in the first two decades after the war—obtaining, for example, protections for working women, greater access to educational and employment opportunities, pensions for housewives, after school programs for children, and the right to divorce. Although the UDI and the CIF did not always agree on the specific principles behind certain legislation, both associations worked on putting forward a new image of the Italian woman as a worker, wife, and mother who required greater economic and social equality with men to build a stronger nation. The large women's associations established a model for future generations of women's activists by refusing to be absorbed into the political parties, trade unions, or religious organizations. Women's sections inside other structures had less freedom to act on behalf of the interests of women than did the UDI and the CIF.⁸

When the workers' and students' movements erupted in the late 1960s, many young women were frustrated not only by the political systems but also by their minor roles in extra-parliamentary politics. To allow them to focus more on the issues they retained had gone unnoticed by the parties, extra-parliamentary groups, and the historic women's associations—especially in relation to women's public roles and sexuality—this generation of women formed new autonomous associations and commenced innovative practices such as *autocoscienza* [consciousness-raising] to understand women's oppression. Many of the feminist groups operated within specific local contexts and had small memberships, ranging from a few dozen to several hundred women. Italian regional differences, especially political ones, also influenced the perspectives and activities of the women's organizations. For example, in Milan and Verona, psychoanalytic groups, such as Diotima and the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, tended to dominate feminist discourse, whereas in Emilia-

Romagna Marxist-feminist groups and the UDI attracted more members.⁹ Roman feminists, on the other hand, took a very practical approach to organizing, and led especially by associations such as the Movimento di Liberazione della Donna [Women's Liberation Movement], an affiliate of the Radical Party, took to the streets and initiated national campaigns for the passage of abortion and anti-violence legislation.¹⁰

Underlying philosophical tensions and disappointments in the political arena kept women's associations from uniting in a coherent national feminist movement. By the end of the 1970s, women had an abortion law and greater access to careers outside the home, but they did not have a unified voice. Many women's associations disbanded, but others grew in the early 1980s, shifting their focus from distinctly political goals to an emphasis on *fare cultura tra donne* [making culture among women]. Larger women's associations such as the Orlando Association in Bologna and the Casa delle Donne [Women's House] in Rome created study centers, archived materials related to women and gender, and stepped up efforts to reach out to their communities, turning even to local administrators for support.¹¹ Today, most Italian cities house a women's center that can trace its origins to the postwar organizing of autonomous women's associations.

At the same time Italian women were organizing for their rights, Italy turned from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. Between 1951 and 2001 the number of foreign residents in Italy jumped from approximately 129,000 to more than 1.2 million.¹² The migrations of foreign-born ethnic Italians and the return migrations of Italians living abroad, including those from Italy's former colonies, accounted for population increases in the immediate postwar period. However, as Italy recovered from the war and grew into an advanced capitalist democracy, it became an attractive site for women and men responding to strife at home and/or looking for greater economic opportunities abroad. Some postwar migrations resembled those of other European countries such as France and Germany, in

which young, north African men found work in manufacturing and agricultural centers, and once established, sent for family members to join them. However, a large component of early migrations was of women migrating on their own to work as domestics in Italian homes. In certain populations, women accounted for as much as 90 per cent of total migrations.¹³

Eritrean women were the most connected to the decolonization process and often followed Italian families to Italy and continued to work for them. Many other early female migrants arrived in Italy because of Catholic organizations that recruited women from Cape Verde and the Philippines to fill the increased requests for domestic workers arriving from the parishes of larger cities such as Rome and Milan.¹⁴

Researchers have generally accounted for the migration of domestic workers to southern Europe as representative of two related failures in the host societies—first, the failure of the feminist movement to redistribute tasks in the home and, second, the failure of the state to provide needed social services. As more Italian women entered the workplace, they were not freed from their domestic responsibilities. “Liberated” women came to rely on migrant domestic workers to allow them to find employment outside the home and to participate in demonstrations, consciousness-raising, and other feminist activities without neglecting their families. Southern Italian women no longer met the demand for live-in domestics, and the unregulated labor of migrant women allowed the underground economy to flourish. It is the relationship of employer to employee that defined the earliest contacts between migrant and native women. Migrant women responded to pulls in the world economy that the native women helped to create. Whether or not the liberation of native women was actually won through the labor of migrant domestic workers is still a matter of some debate, especially since many feminists did not employ domestic workers and rejected middle-class standards of housekeeping. However, it is clear that the arrival of thousands of foreign women in Italy escaped the attention of the women’s associations and that the

framing of pertinent gender issues was restricted to the Italian and western contexts. Italian women missed an important opportunity in the 1970s to get to know women from nations as far apart as Peru, Cape Verde, and the Philippines, and as a result, their associations reflected a limited cultural context.

Italian Women's "Associationism"

Andall has written extensively on the relationship between migrant and Italian domestic workers in the domestic worker trade union, the ACLI-COLF. She argues that during the 1970s, the trade union developed closer ties to the workers' movement than to the feminist movement. Her premise is that migrant women's interests, in any case, were subordinated to a primary class identity of worker, followed by an emphasis on gender equality. Questions of citizenship, ethnicity, and culture rarely entered into discussions between migrant and Italian women.¹⁵ In fact, trade unions have generally held little appeal for migrant women since migrants typically have just a minimal interest in the broader ideologies and political perspectives in which trade unions operate and do not share full political rights with Italian workers.¹⁶

Nonetheless, it was within the trade unions that some migrant women first worked side-by-side with Italian women and formed their plans for self-organizing. For example, Maria De Lourdes Jesus, founder of the Cape Verdean Women's Association in Rome, was active simultaneously in the mixed-sex Cape Verdean migrants' association and with Italian women trade union activists from the CGIL. Her work in both organizations in the 1970s led her to the conclusion that what was really needed to represent the interests of Cape Verdean migrant women was an association created by and for them. With help from the women of the CGIL, De Lourdes Jesus took an opportunity to begin organizing on the basis of migrant status, ethnic identity, and gender. She did not propose the creation of an Italian-Cape Verdean association nor the greater participation of Cape Verdean women in the Italian trade

union. Instead, De Lourdes Jesus did what many migrant women's leaders would do after her—organize an association based on gender and a self-defined vision of identity. She explains:

I participated with Italian women in the associations and in the demonstrations for women's rights and so I already had there female support struggling for women's rights. Going through this with these other women, I wanted to bring this debate inside our community with the Cape Verdean women.¹⁷

In most cases, country of origin, ethnicity, or language group formed the core identity of the first autonomous migrant women's associations. De Lourdes Jesus says despite her involvement with the Italian women, she did not fully share their vision of women's emancipation, which she believed was constructed on a western model of equality between the sexes. Moreover, she did not see a commitment by the Italians to integrating the concerns of migrant workers into their programs.

As I have already stated, independent women's associations were key sites for Italian women's activism throughout the postwar period and operated with greater autonomy than did women's sections in the political parties or trade unions. It would seem that the women's associations would have had more appeal for migrant women than these other bodies. After all, few migrant women had an interest in the political parties and trade unions because they did not have the right to vote. Excluded from formal modes of representation, migrant women sought alternatives for voicing their concerns as gendered foreigners. Some of the places they turned to included religious institutions, charitable organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and mixed-sex autonomous migrant associations. Few of these structures were able to address effectively a full range of migrant women's concerns that were connected both to migrant status and to being female. Many of the members of even the pro-immigrant organizations made the assumption that migrant women would work as live-in domestics, and as a result, that they required little assistance with housing, employment, or immigration documents. This was not the case, however, and migrant

women frequently found themselves in circumstances in which they did not know where to turn for help.

Few migrant women turned to the Italian women's associations. A few exceptional migrant women, most often those women with a history of activism in their own countries and who were holders of advanced degrees, became curious about Italian women's groups and visited their centers. Three such women are Saida Ahmed Ali, Graciela Boqué, and Charito Basa, all migrant leaders and long-time residents in Italy. Saida Ahmed Ali, a Somali immigrant who completed her law degree in Italy, began frequenting the Casa delle Donne in Turin to see if Italian feminism might offer her some ideas on social activism:

I started to study on site. I began to go to the centers, the Casa delle Donne, to understand. At first it was more of a curiosity to compare social work in Europe and Africa. Also, in Somalia, my mother had always been an activist even if she was a professional. My mother worked as an obstetrician while at the same time she was a point of reference for her community. Therefore it was my curiosity to make a comparison.¹⁸

Over the years, Ahmed Ali developed very positive relationships with Italian women that would later result in the founding of the Alma Mater multicultural women's center. She, like her mother, continued to work on behalf of her community in other capacities, however, because Somali concerns about the war at home and integration in Italy were not priorities in the women's centers. Argentine born Graciela Boqué, one of the founders of the multiethnic migrant women's association Candelaria, began meeting with her co-nationals at the coffee bar inside the Casa delle Donne in Rome. She liked the space for its architectural charm and because it was a historical and exclusive place where women congregated. However, meaningful dialogue between the Roman feminists who used the building and the migrant women who gathered there opened only very slowly and with great difficulty. Boqué says that the feminists' shared history of the center at times shut them off from interaction with women from backgrounds that differed from their own. The Candelaria association now has an office in what has become the Casa Internazionale delle Donne [International Women's House], but that position took years to obtain:

My fundamental scope was to integrate into the Casa and, all that it signified [for women], an international perspective. The work was not easy and it continues not to be easy. A little because the women of this Casa have a little bit of a homogenous story among them—it's been thirty years that they are Roman feminists, and so even if our group is great and very interesting, the cultures of the world are not always incorporated.¹⁹

Charito Basa, founder of the Filipino Women's Council in Rome, says she had many Italian friends who were active feminists, but that she saw that:

The Italian's women's movement was really suffering at that time. I mean, it never went ahead after their liberation ... It was also kind of weak as a structure. They could only be sent to us and say 'oh, we were like that 10 or 20 years ago.' That was not the kind of help we needed.²⁰

Like De Lourdes Jesus, all of these migrant women's leaders were cognizant of the Italian women's movement and even developed important relationships with Italian feminists, but they did not suggest immediately that they unite their interests. Instead, migrant women leaders founded their own associations and began to work on the task of gaining access to political, social, and cultural rights. It was clear that without basic rights, inequality would always frame their relationships with Italian women.

Meanwhile, Italian women were noticing more foreign faces in their communities. Through their associations, they began slowly to open communication with migrant women. This was the case in the older women's associations as well as in the newer feminist collectives. The historic UDI and CIF have a two-part relationship with migration. Beginning in the mid-1940s, both organizations were already active supporters of Italian emigrants working abroad and used their political influence to increase protection for emigrant workers. Fifty years later, in the mid-1990s, the UDI and the CIF began to show an interest in migrant women to Italy. The years in between included instances of developing rapports with women's associations around the world. For the UDI during the first years of the Cold War, most international correspondence took place with women of the Soviet bloc, and in the 1960s and 1970s, the UDI cultivated relationships especially with western European women's groups. The CIF meanwhile worked with Catholic women's organizations on an international level. A few instances of the in-person participation of

women from the developing and non-western worlds appear in documents from the UDI and the CIF's national conventions in the 1970s and 1980s, but the precise nature of the contribution made by foreign women or any evidence of contact continuing after these special events remains unspecified.

By the mid-1980s, non-western women appeared on the pages of the UDI and the CIF's major publications, *Noi Donne* and *Cronache e Opinioni* in stories about problems connected to globalization and development. It was only in the 1990s, however, that both associations began to reflect on the implications of immigration to Italy. The UDI's greater awareness of non-native women in Italy is reflected in the association's name change from *Unione Donne Italiane* [Union of Italian Women] to *Unione Donne in Italia* [Union of Women in Italy]. However, the association made little contact with migrant women, preferring instead to focus their efforts on the problems of women in the developing world and not on the meaning or impact of the "new" migrations. For example, the UDI took an active interest in the struggles of women in the aftermath of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, supporting affected women with financing while attempting to bring more worldwide attention to the atrocities committed against them. In Italy, however, the UDI relied on established pro-immigrant organizations to assist refugees. For example, the CGIL trade union and UNESCO are named in a UDI document listing ways to help women in the former Yugoslavia. Other than a mention of being part of a network to exchange information, however, the UDI did not appear to have concrete plans for the women who migrated to Italy.²¹

Local chapters of the CIF included migrant women in their programming, establishing for example, job training courses geared toward foreign women. The CIF, in its tradition of Catholic outreach, tended to approach migrant women with a spirit of Christian charity. Alba Dini Martino, for example, wrote in an editorial about immigration that:

Our Association of women of a declared Christian inspiration, realistically located in the present, but with a glance projected to the future, cannot but accept the most difficult and urgent challenges that confront us today in a continuous effort of interpretation and response in the “consciousness that God entrusts woman with man, with human beings...especially because of her femininity” (quoting John Paul II). Among the challenges to address, as we can see, the many problems and aspects tied to immigration cannot be put in parentheses.²²

Yet, at the same time, the CIF has not always used its Catholic foundations to appeal to migrant women—a serious lapse since most female migrants to Italy in the 1970s and 1980s were from Catholic countries. It was only in the mid-1990s that the national CIF began to devote more attention to immigration. The first full issue of *Cronache e Opinioni* devoted to this theme appeared in 1998. The women of the UDI and the CIF have yet to really explore what could be gained by entering into a more profound discussion with migrant women. Unfortunately, neither the UDI nor the CIF connected emigration to immigration early in their histories and, as a result, the women have scrambled to try to reconcile the past hardships faced by Italian emigrants with those now encountered by immigrant women in Italy.

The smaller Italian feminist associations have also begun to cultivate relationships with migrant women's communities. For Italian groups with a heavy emphasis on the provision of social services, such as telephone hotlines, legal counseling, and job training, the challenge has been to bring migrant women into their centers and show them the advantages of working with a women's—rather than with a pro-immigrant—association. Sangiuliano in her study of the Centro Donna in Venice noted that staff members actively recruited migrant women to the center by spending time in the public places in which migrant women were known to congregate and telling them about the services available through the Centro Donna.²³ Several of Sangiuliano's interviews reveal that migrant women were not impressed with the “emergency” approach used by many organizations and therefore were open to seeing what alternatives the Centro Donna might offer them. Although some migrant women

used the space just to check their e-mail or to recharge their cell phones, many of them began attending seminars and returned to the center with some regularity.

The Orlando Association in Bologna and the Coordinamento Donne Lavoro Cultura [Coordination Women Work Culture (CDLC)] in Genoa are two other Italian women's associations that can trace their histories to the social movements of the 1970s and that have recently begun to work more closely with migrant women. Orlando has been developing relationships with migrant women's associations in Bologna since the early 1990s and is approaching migration and development as interlacing matters. The association's leaders point out that "Orlando was born not only with the conviction that 'the personal is political' but also that because of globalization that the personal is international, planetary."²⁴ As a result of this vision, Orlando has supported the development of autonomous women's associations outside Italy and continues to add more programs to the center's activities that consider gender in a global context. The CDLC, which traces its origins to trade union movements in the mid-1970s, has also entered into a discussion of globalization, migration, and gender since the 2001 G8 summit held in Genoa. Migrant women participate actively in the center and co-organized a large convention called *Donne in Viaggio* [Women Traveling] in 2003 to tackle areas in which gender and migration are implicated.²⁵

Relationships between Migrant and Native Women

The main obstacles to effective communication between native and migrant women in Italian-led women's associations stem from the fact that these groups developed over the past three decades as sites for Italian women's activism. As migrant women's leader Pilar Saravia puts it:

[Coming together] didn't happen because, as Italian feminists, they have their own dynamic. We have other dynamics. Our first identity isn't to be feminists. Ours is that of immigrants. We have to work; we have to take care of legality, of legislation. They think about other dynamics.²⁶

After years of ignoring migrant women, Italian feminists began to approach them from the vantage point of the "benevolent colonizer." The direction of the women's centers is

overwhelmingly Italian, and despite the good intentions of their leaders, work with migrant women appears in some sense to be “tacked on” to other initiatives. Italian and other continental European feminists have certainly not ignored the problems faced by women around the world, but they first framed certain questions from a European point of view. For example, French and Italian feminists in the 1970s were highly critical of the failure of American and English women’s movements to effectively incorporate race, class, and sexual orientation into their theories and practices.²⁷ They interpreted the American women’s movement, in particular, as a movement for white, middle-class, heterosexual educated women. European women, some feminists proclaimed, had been much more attentive to the needs of working class women and lesbians, while American feminists had allowed a great chasm to form between white and black women. At the same time, however, continental feminists paid little attention to the issue of race in their own nations. In France, where official policy on immigration was to assimilate foreigners, race as a category was erased. French feminists dealt with questions of women’s differences primarily from non-racialized standpoints.²⁸ In Italy, where official policy on immigration was to pretend it was not occurring, Italian feminists failed to take notice of the faces of the women of color around them.

Ironically, it was at about this same time that many European feminists began to participate in the international women’s events that got underway with the First International Women’s Conference held in 1975 in Mexico. As a result of their contact with women from the developing world, European feminists during the 1980s incorporated a global perspective into their studies of gender oppression and women’s movements. Italian feminists’ reading lists expanded to include Trihn T. Min-ha, Cherrie Moraga, and Rigoberta Menchu; women’s centers hosted more events on women of the Third World. Despite all of their good intentions, however, the Italians constructed separate worlds of women and did not see that

they overlapped in western Europe. As a result, the Italian feminists did not really incorporate their newly acquired awareness of women around the world into usable theories about gender and identity in Italy. Greater attention to the persecution of ethnic minority women or to the dire realities of women living in poverty added a dimension to the feminist production of knowledge. However, Italian women mostly looked past the lives of migrant women until finally confronted with the reality in the 1990s that immigration had affected their communities, lifestyles, and futures. It was only then that the Italian women's associations shifted their focus and brought migrant women into their centers.

It has not always been simple for migrant women to enter the Italian women's spaces and assume a leadership role. Moreover, in the continued spirit of learning about gender oppression worldwide, migrant women who are invited into the Italian associations are often called upon to "testify" about their experiences and to reinforce certain perceptions about globalization, racial inequality, or world politics:

It has become one of the major obstacles in growing together or knowing ourselves. We know them because they are mostly our employers in general terms, but they don't know us. They don't know our apartments, the quality, our backgrounds. They only hear our stories when there is somebody who is going to testify. You know. In some conferences when migrant women are called upon to talk about their experiences—to testify. That's it.²⁹

Migrant women frequently deliver speeches about the conditions they experienced in their home countries that led them to migrate and explain why they chose to come to Italy, in particular. Migrant women are rarely given an opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the treatment they received by governmental or non-governmental organizations once they arrived in Italy or to go into detail about the discrimination and hostility they face in their daily lives. The Italian women are quite open to hearing about personal experiences of migration but not necessarily to confronting the reality that migrant women's lives in Italy are not necessarily free of hardship—a hardship that derives in many ways from an Italian immigration system that makes integration difficult:

In Italy, there's a lot of talk about security, but also the immigrant has to talk about security because without it, without the *permesso di soggiorno* [resident permit], it's as though you don't have your feet on the ground. You are insecure because you can't think about other things. This sends us years and years back in time. Even us as an association—if instead of thinking about things on a higher level, I have to take time to go resolve other immigrants' problems, I don't have time to organize other initiatives.³⁰

When migrant women have to struggle constantly just to live on a day-to-day basis in the country they hoped would offer more opportunities, they may quickly lose interest in discussing what led them to migrate.

By calling on migrant women to serve as examples for their political goals, Italian women constructed the dynamic of the compassionate maternal educator. The more experienced, established, and liberated Italian women had a duty to come to the aid of the less fortunate foreigners. It was sometimes difficult for the Italian feminists to conceive of gender oppression and women's emancipation from a vantage point other than their own. In their events programming, for example, the Italian women sometimes had a tendency to focus on sensational issues, such as trafficking or genital mutilation, that they believed concerned migrant women. Italian organizers therefore overlooked many of the matters migrant women actually wanted to address, such as careers and family, especially since migrant women were not included in the planning process. Ainom Maricos points out how this attitude inhibited effective communication between migrant and Italian women in Milan:

We contested some attitudes that are a bit paternalistic from women, who claim to be evolved, that they had to teach us some things. We were asking for an equal relationship. However, that was truly difficult to put into gear. There was reciprocal diffidence. On our side, there was the impression of being observed by experts who then had to arrive at conclusions or to plan projects to "assist" us that we had to undergo passively. Frankly, there was little space for real confrontation.³¹

In other words, for the Italian women cultural exchange meant listening to migrant women's testimonies and then attempting to help them and their "sisters" in the developing world. Cultural exchange rarely meant a mutual sharing of experiences or making meaningful comparisons.

In fact, women from mostly female migrant groups attempted to remind Italian women of the distinct cultural differences that informed their experiences of gender in their

home countries and as female migrants in Italy. They pointed out the great strength and courage that it took for them to leave their homes. Mrs. Fana of the Eritrean Women's Association says Italian women have much to learn from migrant women in this regard:

It's not easy for a woman to leave her country for one where she doesn't speak the language. To live in a foreign country without anyone, relatives, normalcy. Italian women can learn from us because we are strong; we are patient.³²

Moreover, migrant women have argued that women from the developing world are not necessarily "backwards" in terms of gender roles and should not be treated as though they are the hapless victims of patriarchal societies. For example, Cape Verdean women have thought it worth noting that despite having fewer opportunities for higher education, a significant number of their co-nationals have been successful at reaching prominent positions in the government. Italian women, although in proportion better educated than the women of Cape Verde, have not assumed as many leadership roles.³³ In the Philippines, women were privy to many educational and professional opportunities, perhaps even surpassing those available to Italian women, but social and economic pressures dictated that they provide more material goods for their families even if it meant living away from them.³⁴

Stereotypes of women's lives in developing countries and of "the immigrant" have been difficult to overcome, however, especially since they are frequently reinforced as migrant women tell their stories. Italians have not fully reconciled their lengthy history of emigration with their recent experience of immigration, and this failure to deal with the past may actually contribute to the limited way in which they ask for the contributions of migrant women. Scholars such as Donna Gabaccia have shown that Italian emigrants were not solely desperate southerners escaping poverty, but that particular image continues to embarrass Italians while it informs their own approach to the new migrants entering Italy. For example, migrant women are much more likely than Italian women to be severely underemployed. Eastern European women and Filipinas often enter Italy with professional degrees and extensive qualifications but end up working as domestics or *badanti* [home care workers].³⁵

They have great difficulty moving out of the sphere of domestic work and into jobs with higher pay and greater social esteem. However, since the Italian perception is that migration occurs only in desperate circumstances, Filipinas or Ukrainians who lament the squandering of their skills are often criticized for being ungrateful or for not embracing their new roles. This, too, has had a negative impact on relations between migrant and native women.

Italian women's associations may not ultimately be the best structures to advance the interests of migrant women since there will always be the perception that they are, in fact, centers created and led by Italian women. Nonetheless, the Italian women are beginning to recognize their neglect of considerations of the role of race, ethnicity, and citizenship in relation to gender and are working to mature strategies that are more sensitive to inequalities among women. If European women want to construct viable anti-racist and anti-sexist strategies while all the Europeans struggle to redefine their identities in relation to the nation-state, Europe, and the international arena, they will have to do so with the inclusion of migrant women's experiences. To continue to ignore migrant women's experiences or to suggest that migrant and Italian women have little common ground is to allow gender and racial oppression to continue to work in nefarious ways.

Notes

1 Charito Basa, Phone interview with author, December 7, 2005. I interviewed her in English and fully transcribed the interview.

2 This award recognizes outstanding service to the Italian state and is conferred by the President.

3 I am aware of the problems associated with using terms such as migrant and native. By migrant, I mean foreign nationals with permanent or temporary status in Italy. By native, I mean Italian-born and ethnic Italian citizens. In some cases, I prefer to use the term immigrant because migrant suggests a transitory status and has been used by the government to justify an incomplete integration of foreigners. On the use of the term migrant see Laura Agustín, "Forget Victimization: Granting Agency to Migrants," *Development* 46 (September 2003): 30-36.

4 See for example Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*; Parrenas, *Servants of Globalization*; Helma Lutz, "At Your Service, Madam! The Globalization of Domestic

Service," *Feminist Review* 70 (2002): 89-104; Giovanna Campani, "Immigrant Women in Southern Europe: Social Exclusion, Domestic Work and Prostitution in Italy," in *Eldorado or Fortress?: Migration in Southern Europe*, eds. Russell King, Gabriella Lazaridis and Charalambos Tsardanidis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Gabriella Lazaridis, "Filipino and Albanian Women Migrant Workers in Greece: Multiple Layers of Oppression," in *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe: Women on the Move*, eds. Floya Anthias and Gabriella Lazaridis (New York: Berg, 2000), 49-79.

5 Jacqueline Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: The Politics of Black Women in Italy* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), 266.

6 Heather Merrill, "Making Space for Antiracist Feminism in Northern Italy," in *Feminism and Antiracism: International Struggles for Justice*, eds. France Winddance Twine and Kathleen M. Blee (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 17-36.

7 For a more complete discussion of women's associations in Italy see my forthcoming *Immigrant Women and Feminism in Italy* in press with Ashgate Publishing.

8 Wendy Pojmann, "Emancipation or Liberation?: Women's Associations and the Italian Movement," *The Historian* 67, no. 1 (March 2005): 73-96.

9 Teresa De Lauretis, ed. *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice*.

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), Anna Rita Calabrò and Laura Grasso, eds., *Dal movimento femminista al femminismo diffuso: ricerca e documentazione nell'area lombarda* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1985), Centro Documentazione delle donne a Bologna, *Il movimento delle donne in Emilia-Romagna: alcune vicende tra storia e memoria, 1970-1980* (Bologna: Edizioni Analisi, 1990).

10 Valeria Moretti and Marina Pivetta, eds., *Il mio segno la mia parola: rabbia, amore, confessioni, appuntamenti, disegni nella casa della donna in Via del Governo Vecchio* (Rome: Edizioni quotidiano donna, 1979), Movimento di liberazione delle donne, "Bozza di piattaforma dei principi del movimento di liberazione della donna," in *I movimenti femministi in Italia*, ed. Rosalba Spagnoletti (Rome: Edizioni Samonà e Savelli, 1971), 62-70. This is a collection of documents written by Italian feminist groups.

11 The Web sites for the Orlando Association and the Casa Internazionale include comprehensive descriptions of the centers' histories. For Orlando in Bologna go to www.women.it and for the Casa in Rome see www.casainternazionalelledelldonne.org.

12 Asher Colombo and Giuseppe Sciortino, "Italian Immigration: the Origins, Nature and Evolution of Italy's Migratory Systems," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2004): 49-70. Comprehensive statistics on immigration to Italy are available from annual studies conducted by Caritas, the *Dossier*, and data gathered by ISTAT, available on their Web site at www.istat.it.

13 Giovanna Campani, "Le donne immigrate in Italia," in *Stranieri in Italia: Caratteri e tendenze dell'immigrazione dai paesi extracomunitari*, ed. G. Cocchi (Bologna: Misure/Materiali di Ricerca dell'Istituto Cattaneo, 1990) gives figures of 60-70% of Filipinos and 90% of Cape Verdeans; Macioti cites 80% of Filipinos in Maria Immacolata Macioti and Enrico Pugliese, *L'esperienza migratoria: Immigrati e rifugiati in Italia* (Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, SpA, 2003).

14 On Cape Verdean women's migrations see especially Marina Bozzoni, Giulia Della Marina, Emilia Ferraro, and Chiara Pasti, "Il mito del ritorno delle donne capoverdiane," in *Ghetti etnici e tensioni di vita*, ed. Roberto De Angelis (Rome: La Meridiana Editori, 1991), 97-123. On Filipinas see the recent study completed by the Filipino Women's Council, Charito Basa and Rosalud Jing de la Rosa, *Me, Us, and Them: Realities and Illusions of Filipina Domestic Workers. A community research project by the Filipino Women's Council* (Rome: Ograro, July 2004).

- 15 Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*, 236-237.
- 16 Alessandra Angelini and Giovanna Casciola, "Il ruolo del sindacato nella difesa dei diritti degli immigrati" (presentation, Reti. Migranti e Native/i: reti di esperienze, reti di accoglienze, Università degli studi "Roma Tre" Dipartimento di Filosofia, June 27–28, 2005).
- 17 Maria De Lourdes Jesus, Phone interview by author, February 5, 2005. I interviewed her in Italian and fully transcribed the interview. The translation to English is mine.
- 18 Saida Ahmed Ali, Phone interview with author, February 15, 2005. I interviewed her in Italian and fully transcribed the interview.
- 19 Graciela Boqué, Interview with author, offices of Candelaria, Rome, Italy, June 17, 2005. I interviewed her in Italian and fully transcribed the interview. The translation to English is mine.
- 20 Charito Basa, Phone interview by author, December 7, 2004. I interviewed Basa in English and fully transcribed the interview.
- 21 UDI, "Seminario delle donne provenienti dalla ex-Jugoslavia (Arrica, 14-15 febbraio 1992) Relazione del gruppo di lavoro per la solidarietà e la ricostruzione."
- 22 Alba Dini Martino, "L'immigrazione, una sfida alla democrazia," *Cronache e Opinioni* (April 1998): 3.
- 23 Maria Sangiuliano, ed. *Le altre: Donne migranti a Venezia* (Venice: Stamperia Cedit, S.r.l. 2002). This was published by the City of Venice and printed by the Stamperia Cedit. I obtained a copy directly from Sangiuliano. It is available in limited quantities from the City of Venice, the author, and the Centro Donna.
- 24 Orlando Associazione di donne, *Il convento e la città. Donne e Uomini nella Mondailità. Progetto-Programma 2005/2009*. Bologna, September 2004, 34. Available from their Web site at www.women.it.
- 25 Coordinamento Donne Lavoro Cultura, ClicBra, Ecuatoriana di Solidarietà Liguria, Encuentro Entre 2 Mundos, Hermanas Mirabal, La Semilla, and Terre des Hommes, eds. *Donne in Viaggio: Testi del Convegno*. Loggia della mercanzia. October 11–12, 2003 (Genoa: Comune di Genova, 2003). Comprehensive convention publication, including text of presentations.
- 26 Pilar Saravia, Interview by author, June 24, 2005, offices of Unione Italiana del Lavoro, Rome, Italy. I interviewed her in Italian and fully transcribed the interview. The translation to English is mine.
- 27 See for example Elaine Marks and Isabelle De Courtivron, *New French Feminisms: An Anthology* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).
- 28 Anne Golub, Mirjana Morokvasic, and Catherine Quiminal, "Evolution de la production des connaissances sur les femmes immigrées en France e en Europe: Ou du difficile déplacement des frontières," *Migrations société* 52 (1997): 30.
- 29 Charito Basa, Interview with author, offices of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy, June 22, 2005. I interviewed her in English and fully transcribed the interview.
- 30 De Lourdes Jesus, Phone interview.
- 31 Ainom Maricos, Interview with author, offices of Il Tropico Cooperativa di Servizi, Milan, Italy, July 8, 2005. I interviewed her in Italian and fully transcribed the interview. The translation to English is mine.
- 32 Mrs. Fana, President of the Eritrean Women's Association, Phone interview by author, December 19, 2004. I interviewed her in Italian and fully transcribed the interview. The translation to English is mine.
- 33 Maria De Lourdes Jesus, (Speech at conference L'altra Africa: il G8 al femminile. Padoa, Italy, April 30, 2004). Available for download at www.arcoiris.tv.

34 Wendy Harcourt, "This Place Could be Our Place? The Experience of Filipinas in Italy: Interview with Charito Basa," *Development* 45 (March 2002): 117-120.

35 *Badanti* is from the Italian *badare* for to look after and refers to women employed in private homes to take care of the elderly or infirm. See Grazia Naletto and Luci Zuvela, *Smiling: Skilled Migrants and Labour Market Integration* (Rome: Lunaria, 2004).