

# IWD Celebration A Success!

by SARA MURPHY

*"It is us -- the women on the assembly lines, in the shops and offices, on welfare and on unemployment lines -- who are most directly affected and who are the most willing to fight for full equality for all women..."*

The critical role of working class women in the struggle for women's equality rang out loud and clear throughout the evening of March 12 at the PWOC's International Women's Day Celebration. "It seemed to speak to *everyone*," said one Black hospital worker who attended.

There were close to 300 in the audience; close to half of these were national minority people, with representation from both the Black and Spanish-speaking communities. All age groups were there -- folks brought their parents as well as their children, and ages ranged from 3 months to 73 years!

The audience was also about half men -- the leaflet which built the event emphasized how men had much to celebrate on this workers' holiday. One woman remarked, "It was really the first time I saw men and women celebrating International Women's Day *together!*"

Those attending included political activists, workers and rank and file organizers, community organizers, members from city-wide campaigns to end school segregation, and to end apartheid in South Africa, activists from the women's movement, the Black Liberation movement, and more. Friends of the PWOC from cities across the country were there. Such a large multi-national gathering of a broad spectrum marked a real step forward for the PWOC and for the struggle against sexism.

Debbie Bambino, the Emcee for the evening, welcomed the participants, and speaking of the long and arduous road ahead of us, emphasized the need for a new vanguard party of the working class to lead the way.

A Puerto Rican sister from El Comite, a working class organization in NYC, gave a statement of solidarity.

Starting off the entertainment was Lady Fay and Company -- a Black musical group. Their first number was particularly



striking, especially to the factory workers there: it said, "Hey, Mister Boss Man, Why we goin' so FAST?!" as the line continued to speed up. The workers got their answer at the end of the number with a lay-off slip.

Choreography with narration by the Third World Women's Creative Workshop and Teatro Alma Latina premiered two original poems by Rosemari Mealy-Whitehorne. One depicted the growing unity of women clothing workers as they defended a sister from a racist attack. The other, which climaxed the evening's event, was a moving tribute to the courageous struggles which the women of Chile and South Africa, "From Santiago to Soweto," are waging on behalf of their peoples.

Other cultural events of the evening included music by Richard Watson and a poster exhibit. Music by Beverly Grant of the Human Condition was one of the highlights of the celebration. A fine musician with a powerful voice, Grant and her bass player sang of the illusion of the American Dream so many of our parents believed in, of the police murder of a Black child in NYC, of how male supremacy and the pressures of working class life led to the breakup of Janie and Charlie, and told how "Default is de fault of the de rich." The audience joined in to sing "Together we can move mountains, but alone, we can't move at all!"

Mark Klimo, active in a rank and file caucus in the auto industry, gave an analysis

to all who were present as to why men need to support equality for women. He exploded many of the myths which teach men to help bosses in keeping women down -- particularly that women don't need decent wages because they are only working to "help out."

He directed his remarks especially to the working men present, and showed the utter falsity and danger of the myths which say "Women can't do men's work" and "Women don't make good union members." He cited the facts that women literally ran all of heavy industry during the Second World War, and said "If a job is too heavy for the average woman, *nobody* should have to do it!"

And if women in unions like the UAW don't make "good union members," it is because of the sexism of their union leaders and brothers, because hospital, clothing and office workers, who are mostly women, have been in the forefront of union organizing drives for many years.



## QUIET VICTORIES

Today is a day that we celebrate -- the quiet victories of the women in the shop

For Mar and Bea

For young Sin Yee and Maria Ruiz

For Mrs. O'Malley -- who walks with a cane, eking out a living in spite of the pain

this is the day we celebrate

For Lottie Brown and Ida Jones

came up from the South, got stuck at Cohen's

this is the day we celebrate --

Today is a day we celebrate, the tolerance of the women in the shop, whose foremen are like drivers

Always

Pushing too far, forcing the workers to demand pay, which never comes out equal to their rate --

this is the day we celebrate

This is the day we celebrate for the women who stood tall in the face of the loss/ the day Bea was called "nigger" igniting a fire which almost triggered a bloody riot.

And, had it not been for Maria Ruiz, explaining away in her own language

"La unida se necesita. Vamos a llamar una huerca, si se no se excusa por su acto"

It's unity we need, Let's call a strike, unless he apologizes for his act --

And Grace chimed in --

Tall, graceful, Black and Painfully thin --

'We have nothing to lose, our dignity is at stake' --

Some more reasons for why we celebrate --

Rosemari Mealy-Whitehorne

