

ID of the program of Women's Studies

- **Vision or reality which comes from another and different**

The idea of Women's Studies in BiH was a challenge for civil democratic scene since it proceeded from the needs and interests of women who were invisible, manipulated and systematically deprived by the social and political power. The program of Women's Studies is an alternative to traditional educational institutions which provided knowledge that contributed to subjectivization and empowerment of women in BiH. Since the knowledge is the most important carrier of power, especial attention was paid to gaining knowledge and feminine acknowledgement which come from specific women's experiences.

The program of Women's Studies "Žarana Papić"- Žene Ženama is the first interdisciplinary study about women's themes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, established in 1998 in Sarajevo, through which we intended to express our attitude toward women's position, their subordination and invisibility.

Mapping of the women's themes in wide content- from social and humanist science to art, helped Women's Studies to be recognized in public as studies on women, feminism and women's knowledge. It was different from other educational programs by its content, concept and goals meant for qualification for scientific work and activist engagement. The focus was on free choice and own creation of all interested ones in order to assure safe space for openness in redefinition of the ideas within the scientific disciplines such as: literature, history, sociology, anthropology and criticism of misogynic tradition in philosophy. We reexamined the practice, theory and treatment of women in institutions, especially in regard to human rights, violence against women and women's health. We paid especial attention to the language in order to uncover specific characteristics of the relationship between sexes and ways of presentation of women in media and art. Women's Studies «Žarana Papić» affirmed activist knowledge, feminist principles and personal approach to understanding and accepting another and different attitude from enrooted stereotypes and prejudices about women and feminine roles in family and society.

With its activities, the program of Women's Studies provided directions for establishment of Gender Studies within curriculums of the University of Sarajevo.

- **History of women's engagement in BiH- privileges and obstacles**

Awareness rising of women in BiH about their role in society started in 1919 when the feminist association called "Association for education of women and protection of women's rights" was established. Women's movement has culminated in struggle for women's rights in 1942 when two million women in BiH established the Anti- fascist women's front, which made possible for women to have the same rights as men in regard to selection of the profession, being paid for their work equally as men, using one year of maternity leave, having right to legal abortions and possibility to divorce by mutual agreement.

By defining these rights, the communism did not eliminate patriarchal culture and its relations, but redesigned it by building the image of conscious, emancipated women- mother, worker, and self- manager.

Women became double burdened.

The first multi- party elections in 1990 showed real women's position in public life. 2,92 % of women were present in u BiH Parliament and during the war their political role was just symbolic.

Gender equality was marginalized in regard to other problems that the country faced as consequence of war and post- war peace- building.

Understanding of gender differences in BiH presents disharmony between ideals conceived by men and principles of subordination and obedience opposed to women. Disharmony or contradiction between revolutionary speeches of politicians about equality of women and their rejection to accept women out of the framework of the traditional roles motivated a group of women activists in "Žene Ženama" to initiate the program of Women's Studies in BiH. The initiative was based on redefined concept of definition of women's human rights which asked for women to be treated as free and creative human beings, able to develop all their potentials- sexual, moral, political, and intellectual. This personal concept, accepted by women in general, was seen in public as the first public resistance of women in BiH against existing relations between sexes. Most of women were unaware of multiplicity of male/ female worlds and overlapping between languages, cultures and customs. Most of women, as well as traditional scientific disciplines, transferred "blind" knowledge about gender/sex as symbiotic pattern defined with patriarchal culture, religion and country.

Safety of patriarchal family, religion and men in daily life was shaken in first workshops based on human rights held within the program of Women's Studies.

Through participation in educational program of Women's Studies, women understood that political and normative regulation of equality between women and men necessarily meets the problem of differentiation between formal and real equality. Real equality must be sensitive to violation of personal integrity, social deprivation and access to resources.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, changes have started to take place for women and in society in general. Women do not see these changes as giving up from traditional duties, but as possibility to choose a different way for achievement of real gender equality. This is not an unexplainable women's effort to occupy somebody else's (masculine) space, but it is a clear attitude based on long- range discovery of multiple meanings of subordination and discrimination of women in time and space of BiH reality.

- **Dedication as the identity and belonging**

Why we entered the space of the Women's Studies program may be best explained by the story of one of the initiators of the program of Women's Studies "Žarana Papić":

„Suffering of women which arose in the war, made me admit to myself that I have no right to be inactive. I wanted to gain new knowledge and use it for good purpose. I knew I was not able to do it by myself and that is why I sought for like- minded women. I wanted to use my strength for the battle for social justice, against separations and discrimination. I did not want to be destroyed. "Žene Ženama" were the safe place in which I could think about

myself and others. In that place I was getting free of my fears. Maybe my driving force was keen desire, or curiosity, striving to explain the feelings, events or need to make true and tender friendships which will start a new era in our work. Public research of our problems contributed to better understanding of the feminism in this region. It helped us to overcome the existential cowardice based on subordination and encouraged us to take over the burden of the establishment of new relationships between women and men. Therefore, we decided to create spaces in which our free thoughts will be turned into responsibility for diversity..."

- **Activities or feminist education for critical consciousness**

A) Lectures- Basic Educational Program

144 interactive workshops from October to May 2000/2006

Courses

- ❖ Introduction to Women's Studies -ABC of feminist theory, gender/sex, and sexism/prejudices/stereotypes about gender, gender/nature/society, experience/identity/power, sex/class/race/ethnicity, theories and methods of Women's Studies, women and politics, gender and language.
- ❖ Criticism of patriarchal models of monotheist traditions- official traditional discourse of monotheist heritage/ reform movements of feminist orientations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam/feminist theology hermeneutics of holy texts of Torah, Bible and Koran/ andocentrism, misogyny and sexism- deeply impressed on pages of annotations of Holy Books.
- ❖ Women, Democracy and Women's Human Rights- classical models of democracy/ consociation democracy, status and rights of women/Gender politics in Europe, Council of Europe and European Union/Temptations in countries in transition/ Concept of citizenship and human rights – women's rights/Exclusion of women from concept of citizenship, women's human rights and discrimination of women/ Citizenship in BiH/Women's activism within NGOs and women's activism in development of democracy/BiH, women's activism and women's models of political participation./ Convention on elimination of all ways of discrimination of women and women's status in BiH/ Women's human rights in BiH.
- ❖ Women and Philosophy- Feminism, philosophy and democracy/Philosophers about women: deep dualisms/First, second and third wave of feminism/ Democracy and criticism of individualism. Difference between women and men as male diversity/ Sexual difference as natural one/Femininity as derived and secondary one/Men and feminist society/Ethics of care & Ethics of justice/Criticism of universalism and rationalism/Feminism and new kind of dialogue/Media and sexuality/Women in media/Transformation of consciousness/Feminist culture.
- ❖ Women, Theories and Literature- analyses of rhetoric strategies in feminist discourses /Discursive analyses of identity procedures within socio- cultural practice/Patriarchal hegemony through imaginative (and phasmatic) constructions / Models of feminist criticism – *for* and *against* the theory/Theory of performative. (J. Butler)/Theory of power for women/Concept of "being second one" in feminism.
- ❖ Women and Art- introduction to feminist approach to history of art/Art/Gender/Ideology/feminist art/Reconstruction of feminine identity in art in post war period/Woman's body and sexuality.
- ❖ Women and Health- health and gender inequality/ illness as paradigm of women's situation/social- psychological determinants of women's health/women's body, symbols and social surrounding.

B) Workshops and roundtables within the Educational program in local communities

24 workshops and 12 round tables from 1998 to 1999

4 round tables and a seminar from March to August 2004

- ❖ Education for civil culture and democracy- workshops and round tables: Does a woman have right to live a life free of violence? Women's identities, Woman, sex, gender- strategies of new researches, Women in transition, Violence against women, Women and power, Male identity, Religion and patriarchy, Trafficking in women, Identity, power and experience, Culture of living, Body language, Women and media/Gender perspective as a source of critical cognition/How the society and culture influence definition of male and female roles;
- ❖ Women's Studies in the University, collaboration with Faculties of Philosophy and Faculties of Law in Banjaluka, Tuzla, Bihac and Mostar: Women's cognition, theoretical problems and ethic interventions, Women's subject: Feminism Democracy, Identities: Theories and social constructions, Women's Studies- educational activities/Civil responsibility in local communities- gender perspective.

C) Research projects

- ❖ Magazine "Patchwork"
- ❖ Women's human rights- violence against women in BiH- national study
- ❖ Translations- "Women, Men and Violence"; "Women's Studies" Joy Magezis

D) Library

The library is aimed for students, members and associates of the organization "Žene Ženama". The library includes more than 1000 books and magazines in area of Women's Studies- documents relevant for history of feminism.

- **Why is the program of Women's Studies important- motivation and reasons**

In past eight years, "Žene Ženama" have shaped women's politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina through different programs aimed to stimulation of women's education through women's studies, providing help for women in post- traumatic situations and building the space full of tolerance, multiculturalism and dialogue in divided communities. Women's Studies "Žarana Papić" are focused on education based on themes of women's studies programs and capacity building for public engagement. Besides continuous annual educational program, we organized a Conference on women's role in definition of women's studies in region, seminar on civil engagement and responsibility, many round tables for students of the Universities in Banjaluka, Tuzla, Bihać and Mostar, for women from civil initiatives, political and public life, as well as many workshops for students of the program of Women's Studies. Besides the students of the Basic Educational Program (120), more than 1200 men and women participated in different activities of the program of Women's Studies. Within the program, two books were translated and two issues of the magazine "Patchwork" were published. Strategic direction of the program of Women's Studies since 2003 has been the integration of women's and gender studies into University system in BiH. The program of Women's Studies in BiH "Žarana Papić" was organized and led by women activists and academics experienced in creation of the multi- dimension approach to women's knowledge and activism.

- **Where are we now/ plans for the future**

Public spoke about feminism as of the fantasy or hatred toward men. The feminist idea and practice, through activities of the program of Women's Studies, have changed lives of thousands of women. Feminist politics is the base of women's politics in BiH- against sexism, subordination and marginalization. Men and women learned that it is necessary to free themselves of sexist way of thinking, violence and hatred in favor of equality, justice and truth- that we were all born as equal. Feminism is both for women and men; it touched their hearts and changed forever the culture of their lives. The context for women's networking aimed for protection of women's interests was created. Reexamination and change of the opinion was the first step toward establishment of strong women's networks which advocated for reality of political solidarity for women's problems. Women's networks obtained support of academic circles in Sarajevo. Feminist idea and theory entered the classrooms and started to be applied in academic researches. The program of Women's Studies was a place for learning about gender and women from objective perspective. In October this year two- year master studies- Gender Studies will be initiated within the Center for Interdisciplinary studies in University of Sarajevo; this institutionalization will draw academic attention to women's work and women's knowledge. This will be important change for all of us and we believe that the institutionalization of feminist idea and practice will strengthen women's movement in BiH. "Žene Ženama" will continue with feminist education through the Educational program in local communities, since the academic concept is inaccessible to most of the citizens. Through the workshops we wish to create mass educational space in which knowledge and experience will be shared through the themes: The concept of the woman citizen and civil responsibility; Active citizenship; Gender stereotyping; Tolerance, gender equality, violence against women. The aim is to connect women from civil initiatives with women from academic circles through common programs and priority themes of women's education, women's politics and civil culture.

- **Why did I enter a world of feminism or world of "enthusiastic politics"**

I imagine myself very often lying on shoulders of Scarlet O'Hara, a strong woman who influenced my life more than my mother. I could not understand this for a long time, and there was no one to ask, since my mother always kept quiet, carrying a fear of collective history as a secret which should be afraid of. She was and still is quiet and strict, with her internal life, which no one has ever peeked in. As a good daughter of patriarchy, she respected efficiency and productivity. She never asked herself why is it good to care about others but not for yourself, why she never played with her children on the floor, thinking it is a loss of time. I always thought that her problems were caused by the culture that we lived in, which used to make somebody else's problems priority to our own ones, and then I knew that I will live my life in different way. Searching for the truth, I read everything I could get to my hands. I believed that the answers to all questions could be found in books. And maybe my grandmother influenced this thrill with books by explaining through tales what was unexplainable in daily life. Why we can not change the world even when we know it so well, or what when we are excluded for having different opinion or speaking about our own truths?

When I started to notice that our family life influences my well- being, I urgently had to reexamine everything what I believed and knew about myself. And that is how Scarlet O'Hara came into my life, and set me free of the fear of public truth- that I should not accept maternity and care for children only because somebody else thinks that that is my only right duty. I accept that "Tomorrow" is a new day which offers a space for normal daily life full of joy, even then when you are humiliated with prohibition to think or speak. I realized that I had a choice to be privileged in my patriarchal sphere and to create a life for myself which will be based on joy instead of subordination.

My mother, my aunt, as well as many of my friends, have walked on thin ice for hears and lived double life where it is clearly defined what is acceptable public behavior, and what is silence and subordination to collective history, which we should be afraid of and which should never be publicly discussed. Eternal dilemma: "Sin of silence or Risk of speech" still keeps women in fear, like it is a matter of life and death. Our brothers, fathers and husbands jealously wish to preserve our intimacy and modesty. That is why women like my mother, in order to survive, become saints or idealists and they never think about themselves and relationship between woman and man, because they do not see the traces on their own skin. I longed for something different; I just did not know which space to enter and free my ideas and spirit.

I never felt lonely listening to stories about social injustice toward women in the culture I have lived in, because the mosaic of my life still has not started to fall apart.

My strongpoint was in my consciousness, in picture of me that I see and recognize. When I was young I was resisting to facts and events which raised me to be shy and I longed for another and different, which indicated exceeding and revolt.

I never chose between woman in private life and woman in public life. I never thought I should be a superwoman who should play both these roles right.

And then, miraculously, or led by providence, I found a book "The book about a city of women" by Christine de Pisan, where I discovered continuity of women's tradition of resistance called feminism. That is how feminism became my free space for articulation of my thoughts about human rights and male/female relations, and I was in my late forties. Is it a coincidence or

destiny that women in their forties join feminist movement? Maybe that age is crucial for raising awareness about process of changes of our own identities in private and public life.

Definition of the program of Women's Studies, for many women and for me, was personal engagement for what is called *feminist politics through power of knowledge*. Experience of surviving in difficult circumstances and divided communities was turned into a new knowledge and new sense of life. We criticized male politics which produced violence at national level and that way we expressed our clear attitudes toward discrimination and marginalization of women. Thanks to the program of Women's Studies, our feminine BiH autobiography was recognized as experience and theoretical thinking of women feminists, activists and academics about peace engagement and women's subjectivity within complex relations between women's emancipation, nationalisms, democracy and feminisms.

- **Why do I stick to the vision of sorority**

My relation toward feminism and politics of feminism is not simple nor one-way oriented. It is not based on bipolarity of ideologically confronted positions, but it is a clear personal attitude toward discovering and understanding of the layers of multiple meanings of notions of war, peace, pacifism, violence, identities, gender equality, language and culture in daily life. I needed direct way of education, without opposed conventions in its expression, without theoretical mimicry and global-strategy constructions which eliminate *the other* and *different*. This kind of education was offered only by women's studies and feminists. Feminists spread different knowledge and their words are based on their personal engagement, which opens ways to new inventions regarding resolution of daily women's problems. Feminists are recognized by their experience of war, life roles, political speeches, different models of engagement, their ways of using discurs as well as the ways of criticism. All our texts, as well as public appearances, correspond to the internal communication voice which speaks about empathy in women's experience, about strengths and weaknesses of identification positions and about choices.

Women through women's networks are interested in constitution of women's political subject in order to step out from the position of "pseudo-subject" and to take the control over their own lives. Our history in past ten years was full of examples of creation of new feminine identity positions which influenced politics of power and national security.

Women are very active in civil initiatives and they are important participants in democratic processes in their parallel worlds of peace, justice and security, with intention to clarify to the public the reality of women in BiH time and space.