The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
the International Academy HAGIA
and the Gift Economy Network
are pleased to announce, as part of ARM's 13th Annual Conference
"Mothering and the Environment: The Natural, The Social, and The Built",
the embedded conference:

A (M)otherworld is Possible: Two Feminist Visions
Matriarchal Studies
The Gift Economy
October 23-25, 2009, York University, Toronto, Canada

Go to www.motherworldconference.org for more information and for registration.

Introduction

In this time of world economic crisis it is more important than ever to find deep alternatives to a system that is proving itself to be dysfunctional. It is not surprising that such alternatives would have to do with women, and especially with mothers, whose roles of directly providing for the needs of their children form patterns of care that can be generalized.

Mothering can be seen as a mode of distribution, a vestigial or nascent gift economy, which co exists with the market but could be taken as the model for a way of organizing society as a whole. The fact that the values of care, necessary for mothering, are in opposition to the values of greed and domination, which have motivated the present economic crash, demonstrates that an economic system based on mothering could be a radical and positive alternative. The fact that mothers are now uniting in movements of consciousness and solidarity can allow us to expect that they will support a change of the economy towards care and away from exploitation.

There are a number of initiatives at present having to do with gift economies. The internet and the knowledge economy provide the abundance necessary for gift giving to function without being self sacrificial. Not only free software and the free copyright movement but Wikipedia, Freecycling, Facebook, You Tube, Skype etc. provide information and goods free. There are numerous attempts at gift giving on the material plane such as volunteerism, solidarity networks, alternative communities, free stores, yellow bikes, time banks and cooperative gifting circles. Other examples are the remittances made by immigrants to their home countries and philanthropy.This movement can be framed as a mothering movement, even when it is often implemented by men. Unfortunately it has not been clear that the unilateral gift giving, which is necessary for mothering even in a society based on market values, is the foundational logic of all these attempts. Rather studies of 'symbolic gift exchange' have suggested that the logic of debt and obbligation and the reward of reputation are what moves the participants. Even in societies which have 'gift exchange' however, mothers continue to give directly to their children and families. Symbolic exchange and market exchange can both be seen as elaborations of direct provisioning and its logic.

Matriarchal societies had and have distribution of goods to needs, as well as celebrations and festivals where different groups take turns in distributing their goods to other groups. The leadership of women, decision making by women, matrilineality, matrilocality, and prototype

of the mother are characteristics of these societies, which are not mirror images of patriarchies, but peaceful , balanced societies in which men, if they are to be leaders, must be 'like good mothers'.

Both matriarchal studies and gift economy studies generalize maternal values to the society at large. Mothering is not relegated to the nursery and there is not a break between the adult economy and the economy of childhood. Rather the importance of the relationships developed in giving and receiving is elaborated in understanding and developing all relationships in these societies. Many aspects of the world view coming from the society based on the market and *homo economicus* can be seen in radically different ways when mothering is the premise of social value. Modern matriarchal studies rejects the opinion of Bachofen and his followers who believed that matriarchy was a mirror image of patriarchy. Instead matriarchies are egalitarian societies that embrace the model of the mother as the model of the human.

The feminist vision based on the logic of the gift economy and the feminist vision of matriarchal studies support each other. The discourse of the gift economy emphasizes the distribution of goods to needs and the circulation of gifts while matriarchal studies provides concrete historical examples of matriarchal societies as well as modern societies that still function according to matriarchal principles

Schedule

Friday, October 23, 2009

7:20pm-7:30 pm **Opening Invocation** - Agnes Williams (USA, Seneca)
7:30pm-7:35pm Welcome words of Andrea O'Reilly (Canada)

7:35pm-9:05pm GIFT ECONOMY KEYNOTE SPEAKERS 1

A Maternal Humanity and the Gift Paradigm - Genevieve Vaughan (USA, Italy)

Feminist thinking in Context of African Experience in the Struggle for Space, Place and Contribution to Human Prosperity - Wahu Kaara (Kenya)

9:05pm-10:35pm MATRIARCHAL STUDIES KEYNOTE SPEAKERS 1

Matriarchies as Mother-centered Societies - Heide Goettner-Abendroth (Germany)

Listen to Your Mother - Barbara Mann (USA, Seneca)

Saturday, October 24, 2009

8:30am-9:30am REGISTRATION AND CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

A (M)OTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE
EMBEDDED CONFERENCE FULL DAY

9:30am-11:00am SESSION 1: GIVING AND MOTHERS

Legacy of Gift Giving Mothers - Debbie Winegarten (USA)

A Poetics of the Placenta: Placental Cosmology as Gift and Sacred Economy
- Nané Jordan (USA)

The Future has an Ancient Mother: the African Legacy
- Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum (Italy, USA)

From Destiny to Choices - Paola Melchiori (Italy)

11:00am-11:15am **BREAK**

11:15am-12:45pm **SESSION 2: THE GIFT IN SOCIETY AT LARGE**

Restoring the Feminine in Education, Economics and All Our Institutions
- Nina Simons (USA)

Egalitarianism and Nonviolence as Gift of Life – the KhoeSan of Southern Africa and Lang Elsie of the Hessequa in the Overberg - Bernedette Muthien (South Africa)

Giving, Taking, Giving Back, and Eco Centric Gift Economy
- Mechthild Hart (USA, Austria)

Feminism, Gift-Giving, Matriarchy - and Anarchism - Erella Shadmi (Israel)

12:45pm-1:45pm **LUNCH BREAK**

1:45pm-3:15pm **SESSION 3: ASPECTS OF MATRIARCHAL CULTURES**

The Meaning of Motherhood by the Berber of North Africa
- Malika Grasshoff (Germany, Berber-Kabyle)

The Most Sacred Ritual on Palau: Initiation of a Mother after First Childbirth
- Gudrun Frank-Wissmann (Germany)

Priestessing on the Edge of Chaos - Decolonization as revelation to matriarchal spirituality- a brief look at the Babaylan of the Phillipines, past,present and future.
Letecia Layson (USA)

Can we Learn from Matriarchal Societies? - Mariam Irene Tazi-Preve (Austria)

3:15pm-3:30pm **BREAK**

3:30pm-5:00pm **SESSION 4: ASPECTS OF MATRIARCHAL SPIRITUALITY**

Divine Motherhood: The Case of Ancient Greece - Marguerite Rigoglioso (USA)

Peacewalk through the Mother and Daughter Bear Constellations: Bearings of Love and Indomitability for our Maternal Humanity - Kalli Rose Halvorson (USA)

Yoga Ethnochoreology: Bodily Practices/ Matriarchal Collectivizing Memory
- Nadine McNeil (Jamaica)

Andean Spirituality: Maternal Thinking and Inclusive Community
- Mary Louise Stone (USA)

5:00pm-6:30pm **DINNER BREAK**

6:30pm-8:00pm **GIFT ECONOMY KEYNOTE SPEAKERS 2**

Gift Giving, Mothering, and Ancient Ways - Pilwha Chang (Korea)

The Scientific Underpinnings of Matriarchal (Mother-Based) Social Organization & Gift Economy Behaviors - Vicki Noble **(**USA)

8:00pm-9:30pm **MATRIARCHAL STUDIES KEYNOTE SPEAKERS 2**

About the Life of a Juchitecan Mother - Marina Meneses (Mexico, Juchitàn)

Khasi Matriarchal Social Structure: Tradition and Incessancy - Valentina Pakyntein (India, Khasi)

9:30pm-10:00pm **SATURDAY NIGHT CLOSING SPEAKER**

World Icons of Mothers and Grandmothers - Lydia Ruyle (USA)

Sunday, October 25, 2009

9:30am-11:00am A (M)OTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE - SPECIAL GUESTS

The Gift of Mothering - Sobonfu Somé (Burkina Faso, Africa)

Original Instructions Practised Today: Law of Peace and Code of Handsome Lake
- Agnes Williams (USA, Seneca)

Book Presentation – *Societies of Peace* – Heide Goettner-Abendroth (Germany)

11:00am-11:15am BREAK

11:15am-12:45pm SESSION 5 PANEL:POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GIFT PARADIGM FOR FEMINIST TRANSFORMATION

Mothering Values as the Source of Sustainable Eco Village Building
- Angela Dolmetsch (Colombia)

Myths of "Progress": Women, the Gift Paradigm, Gender Relations and the Patriarchal Growth of the Modern World System (1400-2000) - Linda Christiansen-Ruffman (Canada)

The Demise of Finnish Welfare? Loss of the Gift and Gender Equality – Kaarina Kailo (Finland)

The Politics of the Gift – Angela Miles (Canada)

12:45pm-2:00pm LUNCH BREAK

2:00pm-3:30pm A (M)OTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE - CLOSING PANEL

A (M)otherworld is Possible – Matriarchal Visions of a Future of Peace
General discussion with all keynote speakers, presenters, and public

We acknowledge the generous support of our York University sponsors:
Ontario Women's Health Council Chair in Women's Mental Health Research;
Faculty of Graduate Studies; Faculty of Environmental Studies;
ORU-Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS); McLaughlin College.

Special thanks to the Vaughan Foundation and the York U50 fund.