

Foreign women say they are gaining rights at home

By Alice Hrnicek

Statistics indicate that not one in five foreign students on the UNL campus are women. According to Linda Becker, international student adviser, there are 688 male and 126 female foreign students.

Interviews with four foreign women students from Af-

ghanistan, Nigeria, Tanzania and Hong Kong suggest that while conditions are improving for females in their countries, attitudes still have a long way to go.

Shukria Popal, an Afghanistani graduate student in education and architecture, said women in her country have only recently gained rights.

"Women became unveiled only 25 years ago," she said. "Before that they didn't go to school."

Education through the Afghanistan university level is now free for all students. The government supplies scholarships to outstanding students and there is no discrimination between sexes in awarding them.

'Depends on culture'

However, she said, a number of advantages are working for the women in America.

"So much of it depends on culture," she said.

"In the U.S., when a woman is married and her children are grown, she can continue her education. Back in my country this doesn't happen."

Although there are no restrictions on the type of jobs women can perform, she said, most lean toward teaching, medicine, civil engineering and clerical work.

"Most prefer to be teachers because then they only have to work half a day."

Popal believes there is a large disparity between the U.S. and Afghanistan in attitudes toward sex.

"In America, a woman is seen as a sex object," she said. "A woman is like a puppet. Men are using women. But in Afghanistan, there is more respect for women."

Higher moral standards

The difference could be attributed to a higher moral standard in her country, she said. There is little rape or other sexual crime in Afghanistan.

"Sex is not free. Women are valued. A man has a lot of respect for them."

She said standards are higher because women live with their parents until married. Dating doesn't begin until a much later age and most are "simple relationships," unlike in the U.S.

One inhibiting factor has been the Islamic religion, Popal said. Religious priests prefer to keep women from working in positions commonly occupied by men. The attitudes of the religious leaders are contradictory to the basic Moslem law.

"At the time Mohammed was born, men and women were working side by side," she said. "Slowly people got the idea that they were unequal. But that isn't true. In our holy book they are equal."

More repressive

The situation for women is perhaps more repressive in Nigeria, according to reports from Yetunde Soyeye, a graduate student in food science and technology.

"Parents put more restrictions on ladies than men whatever they do," she said. "Men can take care of themselves but women are easily influenced."

Because Nigeria is still a developing country, there is a need for educated people, she said. The government supplies scholarships to go to another country such as the U.S.

Men receive more financial help because "women depend on men," she said.

"Men are very ambitious and want to take care of their family when married. Now there are such restrictions on what women can do."

This leads to a fear by the parents that something might happen to women who are sent abroad, she said.

"Parents are afraid that their daughter will be befriended by a man and won't return to the country to take care of them."

"My brothers can go out anytime and come back," she observed. "But because I am a woman, I am restricted. My parents don't want me to get into trouble."

"Even now when I go back I will live with my parents till I'm married," she said. "They feel they have a responsibility to care about me."

Likely to be lonely

In Nigeria, the belief is that women sent abroad are more likely to become lonely because men can find company more easily, she said. For her own part, Soyeye has not had a hard time meeting people.

Another advantage for women in the U.S. is education-

al opportunities. There is little chance for graduate work in Nigeria.

"If I go home I know I will have a better job which will put me at an advantage."

Margaret Mkuchu, an undergraduate student in horticulture, sums up her native country Tanzania as a "traditional society in which there are things men can do and women cannot do."

If a single woman receives a scholarship to go abroad she is free to go. However, if she is married she must have the consent of her husband, Mkuchu said.

As in the U.S., she said, everyone is allowed to go to school. But this is a change which has only come about recently.

"My grandfather didn't let his girls go to school," she said. "He assumed that while they were married, they would want to help the family and so he only educated the boys."

Jobs opening

Job opportunities are finally opening up for women, she said.

"Women used to not be allowed to join agriculture because there were some that thought they couldn't do it."

There have also been changes in attitudes toward dating.

"Nowadays it's okay for a boyfriend to date a girlfriend if he is staying alone."

The attitudes are not as free as those in the U.S., though, she said.

"Here a woman is independent. In Tanzania she is not independent until she is married. If she never marries, people wonder what's wrong with her."

Because she has grown up during the transition of attitudes, she believes the changes have affected her.

"There have been more opportunities for women. Women can defend themselves."

Little discrimination

In Hong Kong, larger families usually send over males before females depending upon their wealth, reported Bernadette Lo, a graduate student in food and nutrition.

But she stressed that there is "not much discrimination back home, Hong Kong has been Westernized to a certain extent."

"There is much more opportunity for women (in the U.S.), even for men," she said. "You can do almost anything you want if you try."

There is no discrimination in education in Hong Kong. "Only a limited number can get in the universities. Everyone must take a public exam and be evaluated."

The reason more men travel to the U.S. to study, she believes, is the traditional attitudes that "guys are the breadwinners who take care of their families."

There is no discrimination in immigration laws, except against poor people.

UNL students trying for GM prize money

A group of UNL business students will determine the best way to market and advertise the 1979 Chevrolet Chevette as participants in the 1979 General Motor Intercollegiate Marketing Program.

The competition, offered to 20 leading business schools across the country, is designed to offer a real-world marketing advertising experience to students in these disciplines.

The UNL team, headed by Dr. Ira Dolich, chairman of the marketing department, will be competing for a top prize of \$5,000 for the university.

Team entries consist of an oral presentation plus a written treatise, judged on the quality of the market research and creative strategy.

Members of the top five teams will go to Detroit in May to present their winning ideas to senior General Motors management and to share in awards totaling \$12,000.

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