

1995 FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN BEIJING, CHINA

GENDER EQUITY VS. SELF-DETERMINATION OF WOMEN

Indigenous women challenge women from throughout the world to begin serious dialogue on the premise of gender equality. Underlying the issue of gender equality is the assumption that women simply want an equal share of what men have, ie. our fair share of the seats in the corporate board room. The "gender equality assumption" merely serves to perpetuate the existing power structures of the industrialized countries. The feminist movement in the United States and elsewhere must begin an open dialogue on the different cultural precepts inherent in indigenous women and women of colour's right to determine for themselves their political status, economic, and social development needs. Following are basic discussion points to begin this critical stage of building a truly inclusive global women's movement.

"Self-Determination" is a concept established in international law as a fundamental human right. Most of the nation states in the UN have already endorsed this concept. "Gender equity" is not established in international law, nor have nation states committed their support for the concept.

The UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights guarantee to all people the right of **self-determination**. These international standards state:

All peoples have the right to **self-determination**. By virtue of that right they may freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and political development.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The global strategy for the women's movement should be enunciated in terms of the self-determination of women, rather than gender equity. The primary assertion is that the right of all peoples to self-determination which is well established in international law cannot be realized while women continue to be marginalized and prevented from becoming full participants in their respective societies.

"Self--determination" is an inclusive concept which incorporates issues of vital concern to indigenous women and women of colour. "Gender equity" is a narrow concept which focuses on