

The Renaissance Woman

RENAISSANCE

Volunteers of America—
"Everyone Has Something to Give"
Page 4

**A Renaissance of
Volunteerism—**
The Points of Light
Are Getting
Brighter and Stronger
Page 8



**Exporting the Free
Enterprise System—**
A Closer Look at the
Caribbean Basin
Initiative
Page 13

Looking out for 1997—
The Hong Kong Transfer
Page 22

Renaissance Women—
Lupe Anguiano
Dr. Veronica Maz
Kimi Gray
Page 18

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Women Who Are Asking What They Can Do For their Country:

Kimi Gray, Dr. Veronica Maz and Lupe Anguiano

Kimi Gray—Housing and college scholarships

After years of fighting against problems like drug dealers, leaky roofs, and bureaucrats, Kimi Gray has made her home a nice place to live. She is the miracle worker everyone is talking about, who believes in taking charge of your own community. Kimi Gray managed to bring down the crime rate in her neighbor-

"I've always worked with young people—always—because they have their dreams, and they're our future." —Kimi Gray

hood, which was the highest in the city, from 12 to 15 reported crimes to 2, and sent more than 600 kids to college; she led other members of her community to host projects of their own, including counseling for drug abuse, teenage pregnancy prevention programs, and a Youth Enterprise Program, which encourages teenagers to use business skills in a positive way.

Kimi Gray confronted architects in 1986, who had been hired by the city to renovate her home, the Kenilworth-Parkside public housing complex in Northeast Washington. The architects presented Kimi and

other residents of Kenilworth with a plan that did not include a new heating plant and plumbing. Kimi told the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development to refuse to let the agency reimburse the \$500,000 that the city had already paid the architects. HUD respected her wishes; Kimi won her battle.

One of Kimi Gray's first projects was College Here We Come. She says, "Some students came to me and said, 'Miss Kimi, we want to go to college.' What did I know about going to college? Well, I've always worked with young people—always—because they have their dreams, and they're our future. So I said, 'Let me check it out.'" Kimi Gray took their dreams and showed them what they could accomplish. The local Community Action agency helped her set up meetings with the teenagers about financial aid. She organized groups that helped the kids get jobs, tutoring, and helped with filling out college applications. College Here We Come provided the money that the students still needed even after scholarships and financial aid. Kimi Gray donates the proceeds from her speeches to College Here We Come.

With all of her uncommon accomplishments, Kimi Gray's success results from hard work and a practical philosophy: when people have control of their community, then they will take responsibility for it as well. Next year, if the Kenilworth project

has completed renovations according to schedule, the residents will buy the project from the city for one dollar. They will receive money from the city to help pay for expenses, but the residents will still have to struggle. Judging from their past efforts, though, they have a good chance of succeeding. The residents already manage their own property with the Kenilworth-Parkside Management Corporation. They hire their own maintenance crew, they decide on the

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finances for violating rules; they even have their own day-care center. The amount of drug dealing in the neighborhood has gone down tremendously, the rate of teenage pregnancies has decreased, more residents are paying their rent, leaky roofs are being fixed on time. Kimi Gray has taken over the role that the government once had in her life, and it's working.

Elaine Walsh is a contributing editor for Renaissance magazine. She is a senior English major at the Colorado College.

Dr. Veronica Maz—Homeless shelters and volunteer organization

Veronica Maz is a self-professed "social entrepreneur," a full-time volunteer, and the founder of three District of Columbia homeless shelters. Dr. Maz recently shared her formula for philanthropic success with *Renaissance* magazine: "I'm a scrounger. I started every single project without any money at all," she says. In addition to personal incentive coupled with a little bit of ingenuity, Maz credits the success of her volunteer efforts to strong "leadership and guidance."

In fact, her newest venture, "Genesis," is an organization which recommends a more structured, goal-oriented system of volunteerism. Such planning, she hopes, can increase the private sector's effectiveness in ventures which assist the hungry, homeless, and others exposed to our nation's social ills.

"Volunteers don't know all the things they can do," she says. "You talk to a person who's written poetry, raised a family, knows more about psychology than the psychologists." These types of people, she says, "will come down and fold clothes, and bake things, and that's wonderful. But they actually don't use their skills. You have to structure some sort of skill training—you have to draw them out."

With a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh and twenty years of volunteer experience behind it, Dr. Maz's advice carries much weight among volunteer advocates in both the public and private sector. Maz was recognized by former President Reagan for her efforts and has received the Giraffe Award for Volunteerism ("the one you stick

your neck out for"). Recently chosen for the International Woman Award from Directions, International, Maz is the first North American to receive this recognition.

She is also the founder of three Washington area homeless organizations: S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat), a shelter for men; House of Ruth, for homeless women; and

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Veronica Maz

Martha's Table, which, among other things, provides food and guidance for homeless children. Maz is optimistic about the success of volunteer endeavors: "Any one person can do tremendous things. You just have to go out and take the first step, and then other people will start walking with you."

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Maz recently took the first step in gathering support for a congressional resolution which would designate the week of October 8 through 14, 1989, as "National Week of Commitment to Helping the Homeless." The bill, which she drafted herself,

was introduced in the House by the late Congressman Mickey Leland and is being sponsored in the Senate by Senator Alan Cranston.

She is also planning an assembly this spring for people throughout the country to meet and discuss ways to increase the effectiveness of volunteer endeavors. Volunteers from different regions will share their plans for successful, structured operations, and will also select six major social problems to target and tackle nationally in upcoming years.

Maz is thrilled with the current enthusiasm for volunteerism in this country. "Years ago, people weren't involved. But now," she says, "it's the thing to do." She praises the efforts of people like Susan Baker and Mrs. Sam Nunn for their visible support of volunteer efforts. She also cites several reasons for the boom in volunteerism. "There is definitely a religious foundation" to volunteering, she says. All of her projects are assisted by religious people—Christians, Jewish, Muslims—"there is that basic goodness in every single faith." Increased leisure time has also contributed to flourishing volunteerism in America. "People are looking for meaning," she notes. "They have all these material things, but they're looking for something deeper."

Although it is a positive sign, that "something deeper" which has created an abundance of volunteers indicates that direction is needed now more than ever. Maz compares the structure of a productive volunteer agency to that of a house. "Once we know the directions, the targets, then we have to work out the specifications. Is it going to be a bungalow? Is it going to be two stories?" Once you know this, she says, "then you know you need an electrician, a plumber, a
(Continued on next page)

Renaissance Women (Continued from page 19)

carpenter. It's exactly the same with social problems." You can't, she analogizes, build a house with twenty carpenters and no plumbers. Similarly, there needs to be a distribution of skills among volunteers if they are to expect long-term accomplishments.

Veronica Maz is certain that with the proper funding, skill distribution, leadership, and direction, volunteers can tackle any social problem, whether it be homelessness, hunger, or teenage pregnancy. She is encouraged that the rising trend in support of private sector volunteer initiatives will continue. "Volunteers," she says, "do it from their own goodness." And volunteerism, she adds, "is like apple pie—you can't say no to it."

For more information on Dr. Maz's organization, write to: Genesis, Inc., P.O. Box 39159, Washington, D.C. 20016 or call (202) 528-1836.

Amy Verkest, an intern at Renaissance magazine, is a senior majoring in English at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan.

Lupe Anguiano—Education, alternatives to welfare, employment opportunities

"I used to be afraid of tomorrow." To Rosemary Campos, the world was her enemy. Now it is a place to live out her dreams.

A sixth grade dropout, and with no hope for a future, Rosemary heard about Lupe Anguiano's project from a community newspaper. After her husband had abandoned her and their children, Rosemary was at her wit's end, with no place to turn. The Women's Employment and Education Model Program helped her target her professional skills and with Lupe's help, she was trained to work with construction equipment.

Rosemary passed her GED, and was the first woman to be hired by a San Antonio based construction

company. She is now a certified heavy equipment operator and part owner of her own company. She makes more money in one week than she used to have in one month to support her five children through welfare.

"I am very proud of my work, and my kids are too."

Lupe Anguiano took a dream and turned it into a reality. She wants to reform the welfare system so that it may benefit the many women who dream of escaping it. Her main focus is to help these women find new dignity and success in their lives.

Lupe found that the women receiving Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) did in fact want to work, but were unable to if they collected AFDC. The women generally hated welfare, were eager for jobs, and wanted to be free of the system. Lupe also found that these women lacked information, skills training, and were in need of child care and transportation. They wanted to be self-sufficient and self-supporting. To obtain this wish, they needed to get off welfare and into the workforce.

Terri Martinez was one of those women. Alone with three children after her husband abandoned her, Terri wanted to get off of welfare and pursue a secretarial career. Through Lupe's program she was sent to adult education classes at a high school in her area and was later hired as a secretary for Southwestern Bell. Terri is currently a manager for the company.

In November of 1973, the "Let's Get Off Welfare Campaign" was the starting point for the Women's Employment and Education Model Program. It was later renamed National Women's Employment and Education, Incorporated (NWEE). Lupe made AFDC welfare reform her priority issue; she dedicated her future, her savings, and her time to a cause she knew was worthwhile. How was she to convince a doubtful nation of her genuine convictions?

Lupe went to San Antonio, Texas, moved into the housing projects with women, and introduced her program to them. The women greeted her warmly and chose to follow her training, freeing themselves from welfare. Relentlessly following her heart, Lupe put all her money into the project. She had nothing left but her drive to help these women who were desperate to gain their independence from welfare. With help from the private sector, Lupe got in touch with companies which would be hiring within a month. She then trained the women in the job that would be opening, and they were interviewed with other applicants.

NWEE includes a three week readiness program, with a one year follow-up. The women are taught everything from writing resumes and interviewing to good grooming habits. Transportation and child care is also provided. The program stresses counseling for the woman not only before a job, but also during the stressful times while she gets accustomed to working again. When NWEE proved successful in San Antonio, reform in other states was also attempted.

Los Angeles is now the new target for the project. It is the model demonstration site, where Lupe is implementing everything she has learned since 1973. NWEE wants to make Los Angeles the "perfected model". It's goal is to eventually invite the public, private sector and other social services in to see how well the program is working. NWEE could also show the community that jobs are available, and if program staff can work with the women, their budgets, and their experience, successful job placement is possible.

In Los Angeles, the program has received support from many corporate sponsors such as the Southern California Gas Company, The United Way, Xerox and Prudential Insurance. Barbara Bush, very active in the organization, has given much time and assistance to NWEE, and is one of many on the Honorary Board of

Governors. The Board of Directors includes representatives from companies such as Southern California Gas Company, Hughes Aircraft and McDonnell Douglas-West and is being supported entirely by private funding.

According to Lupe: "The key is that you need to start with jobs first, and use existing personnel hiring systems . . . subsidizing employers doesn't work."

Lupe is very pleased with the program's progress. It is the first time in Los Angeles that it has obtained good relations with the Welfare Department, which shows that the department feels NWEE is effective. NWEE has benefited over 3,500 women, and 88 percent are still working today. That equals a promising future for these women.

Thanks to Lupe's program, Anna is now enjoying a position specially developed for her at Lincoln Hospital in New York City. Anna heard about NWEE from a friend in a local housing project. A mother of two children, Anna traded in her welfare check for the salary of a file clerk at JC Penney's. She later landed the job at Lincoln Hospital where she had volunteered as a child and was well remembered as a hard worker.

Lupe's dream is to take the program to Congress, and show that it is indeed very successful. She would

like Congress to realize that welfare needs restructuring. The best outcome for all involved would be to change welfare from income maintenance to education and training with one year follow-up until a woman stabilizes herself. Eighty-five percent of welfare recipients could be moved into employment under the program. While it would help a woman maintain pride and dignity, it would also mean a \$20 billion dollar savings to the welfare program. The money saved in income maintenance would be used to support the woman in her job training.

Today, the majority of public assistance programs are based on charity rather than on education. This can be very damaging to human pride and dignity. Lupe Anguiano recognized that women did not want charity; instead they wanted job training, along with emergency assistance until they were secure in a job. She has selflessly dedicated her life to helping these women on welfare get into the job-force.

Lupe Anguiano, born in La Junta, Colorado, was the fourth daughter of migrant workers who fled Mexico after its Revolution. Her parents gave her the determination to succeed; her mother taught her that everyone is capable of love, happiness, and success, but one needs the desire to attain these traits.

Education was very important to her parents, as she and her sister were the first in their family to graduate from high school. Her family always stressed the importance of God in their lives, and Lupe later discovered she wanted to be a nun. After graduating from junior college in Ventura, California, Lupe entered the Victory Noll Convent in Indiana. Her convent assignment was teaching elementary and secondary education.

She found the most satisfaction from teaching, for she felt she could help by motivating and challenging the children. As Lupe grew more concerned with the community and its problems, she felt the Church hindered her abilities to express her personal beliefs. Lupe felt she had to follow her calling to help others. On July 8, 1964, within one month of her request, Rome granted her secularization. This relinquished her duties in the church after fifteen years of service. She began working immediately with the community, and has not stopped since.

Lupe received the Wonder Woman Award in New York for her dedication to her work. She received Reagan's Volunteer Action Award for helping make America "a better and more generous land." And, in San Antonio, Texas, Barbara Bush and Governor William P. Clements honored Lupe for her efforts in the advancement of women.

Because of Lupe's sincere involvement with people, she has come a long way. But the road has not been easy. She has been discouraged many times, but her firm beliefs, and the joyous rewards of seeing grateful women have kept her hanging in there. She will not give up, no matter how hard it may seem to convince local and national governments that her cause is operable and reliable. Lupe Anguiano is unquestionably a Renaissance Woman in the heart of a challenging nation.

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International Leaders Recognized

Welcome to our friends from Central America and the Caribbean who are participating in the seminar sponsored by Women of Our Hemisphere Achieving Together.

Congratulations to the recipients of the Outstanding Leadership Awards for Women of our Hemisphere:

H.E. Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica,
Mary Eugenia Charles, Dominica

Muni Figueres de Jimenez—Costa Rica (Represents President of Costa Rica in matters pertaining to Trade)

The Honorable **Nadine Maye Hogan**—Director of ROCAP U.S.A.I.D.