



*A photo-essay by Deborah Barndt*

# *Woman As Migrant*

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*Women have always been integral to social change, sometimes taking an active part, sometimes merely carried along in its wake. In either case, women are on the move — physically, psychologically, socially.*

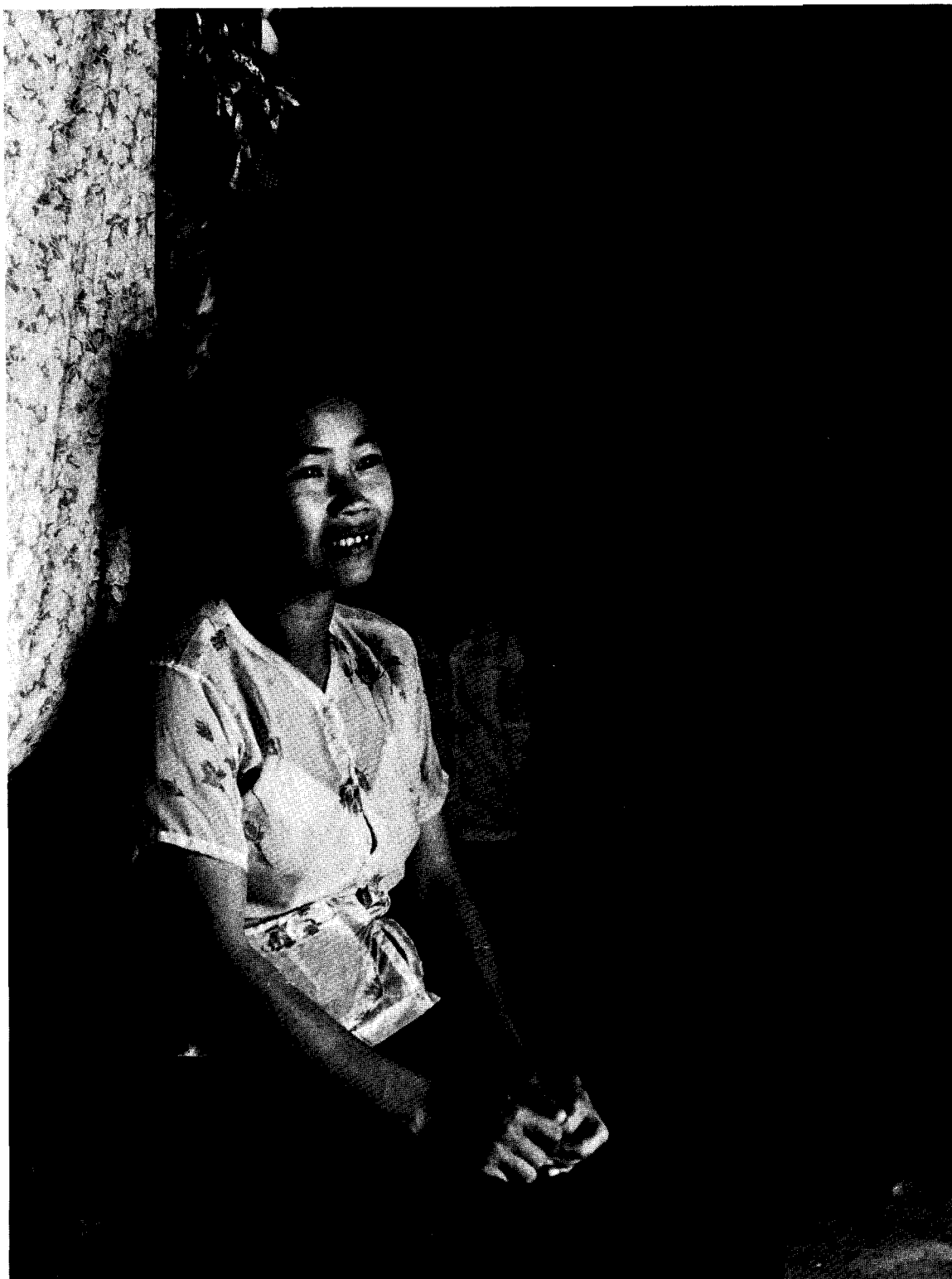
*For some women the journey may only be to the market place down the valley or to the large plantation where they must work. War has forced others to move to safer yet alien places. All over the world, industrialization of agriculture and of the economy in general has driven women off the land and into towns and provincial cities to seek work, though they have often not found it. More opportunities may exist in the larger cities, but they bring other demands of a market economy.*

*Women in third-world countries are forced to respond to a global economy that they often cannot see or understand. In a few cases these dependent countries have challenged the forces of power and taken control of their own destiny; women have had an active part in these struggles.*

*Of the millions of women migrants today, those who make the longest and most dramatic move are those who leave their countries to build new lives in a foreign land. They leave for economic reasons, political reasons, or both. Some arrive in Toronto to live in a large city for the first time, to go out of the home to work for the first time, to speak a strange language for the first time. They are drawn into the economy as producers and consumers.*

*They have different responses to this new experience — some work hard to integrate themselves into a new culture, others work hard to keep alive their own traditions. Some become resigned in the face of established forces, others act upon such forces. In any case, women as migrants are part of a process of change and they make a particular mark on it.*

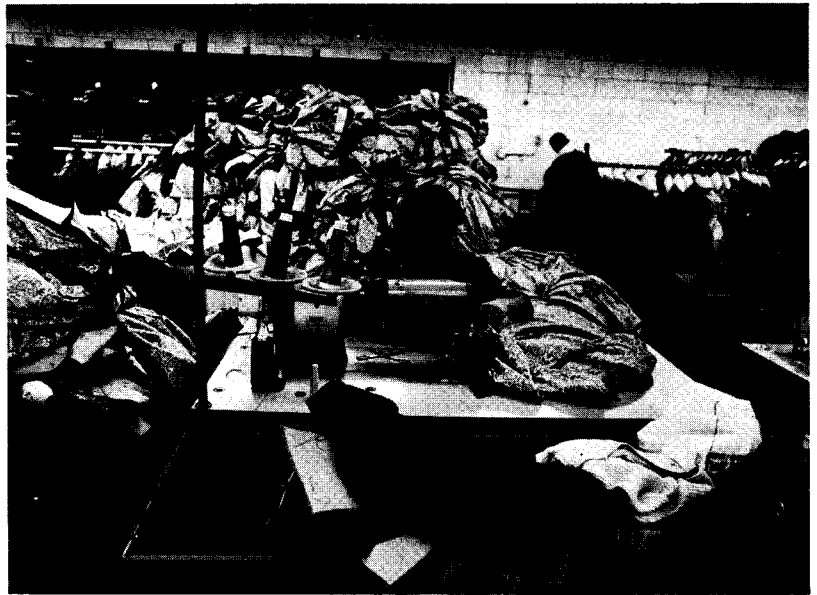
- ◀ *The Octavalo Indian women of Ecuador have maintained a strong cultural identity while being successful in the market place, both in their own mountain home and abroad.*



*Refugees have been forced off their land  
for political reasons.  
Pictured here is a survivor of the Tet offensive,  
in a makeshift home in Saigon, Vietnam.*

*Immigrant women in Canada  
must respond to the pressures of advertising  
and the media — to buy, to look like,  
to become like Canadian women.*





*These immigrant women  
may have come to Canada to seek a better life.  
Many work for the first time outside the home  
as isolated producers  
in a consumer society.*



*Many women draw together in their own communities and try to keep alive the traditions of their own people, like this Italian woman in a Holy Week procession in Toronto.*



*Immigrant women have to break two barriers,  
as women and as immigrants,  
to enter into the work world  
and to become active participants in the society.*



*These Latin American immigrant women in Toronto maintain their traditional role as mothers while taking on an active role in protesting foreign intervention in their homeland.*

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*The seven photographs seen here are part of an exhibit entitled "Woman as Migrant," consisting of 18 photographs of women in Latin America, Asia, and Canada. The series begins with images of women who have moved only a short distance from their roots, such as the Ecuadorian market women who must only go down the valley to sell their goods. The last six photographs (five of which are included here) show immigrant women in Toronto who have had to move great distances from their homelands for economic, political, and familial reasons. In the final photograph women are seen responding collectively and actively to events in the continent of their birth, reconnecting themselves to their roots.*

*The photographs and text are the work of Toronto educator Deborah Barndt. The series also reflects her journey over twelve years as a migrant who has lived and worked in several countries. The exhibit has been on display in Toronto, Halifax, and Fredericton. It is available for further showing and for use in conferences and other women's events.*

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