

FILOMENITA MONGAYA HØGSHOLM

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Filomenita Mongaya Høgsholm, M.Sc., B.A., is Executive Director of Worldscan Publishing, Founding Chairperson of *Babaylan*, the Phil. Women's Network in Denmark and Editor in Chief of *Abakada*, quarterly women's magazine tackling the issues of gender, integration, development, etc. She has been for several terms Editor of *Cosmo*, the monthly newsmagazine of the International Women's Club of Copenhagen, since she joined in the early '90s.

Gender and **ethnic equality** are at the core of Filomenita's work as journalist, editor, and lecturer* while she straddles the advocate and activist role in organizing for women and ethnic minorities, i.e. immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, by using the vehicles of culture and media, whether on or off formal workplaces.

Her latest project was *Celebrating Asian Women*, a one-day conference and dialogue that tackled stereotypes and informed on Asian women, held at the National Museum (September 2003) under the auspices of the Images of Asia Festival. At Danish Red Cross, her latest employer, she was Managing Editor of *New Times*, the asylum seeker's paper, which former *Integration Minister Bertel Haarder* praised in these words, "if New Times did not exist, I would have invented it." As longest sitting Editor of New Times (1998 to 2001), FMH was behind the significant changes that made the paper the unique and bold experiment in freedom of expression for the disenfranchised, Europe's asylum seekers; the paper held thus in high esteem, mostly abroad, but which later, Denmark, with its dismal record on asylum matters, is finally aware of.

In 1994, her editorship of *Soldue*, the ethnic minority women's magazine brought in the only prize ever awarded to an ethnic publication in Denmark, the Grassroots Prize. FMH was *Primus Motor* of Denmark's ethnic minority women's cultural and political manifestations in such milestones as the **Nordic Forum** in Åbo (Finland, 1994; Oslo, 1988), the **UN Social Summit** (Cph, March 1995 and the **UN Conference on Women** (Beijing, September 1995).

FMH has been appointed to several Danish governmental as well as civic committees, eg. the Women's Comissorium, Ministry of the Interior (1994-1997), EU Committee chaired by ex-Prime Minister Anker Jørgensen to tackle Racism and Xenophobia during the EU Year against Racism in '97, etc. As founding member of the network on "Public Broadcasting for a Multicultural Europe", and the London-based *Akwaaba* on arts, culture, development, FMH has filled out a significant role in promoting community relations in the European and international context.

As Speaker at the World Congress against Violence held in Dublin in 1997, she shared the Final Plenary with Taslima Nasrin, exiled Bangladeshi doctor and feminist author. She inputted during the Global Congress on Women and Politics (1997) and during the Centennial Congress on Women, Herstory and Nationbuilding (1998). She regularly inputs into conferences in Denmark, and farther afield in Europe and internationally on issues of women, migration and other related topics.

*As roving journalist Filomenita Mongaya Høgsholm has had the privilege of interviewing internationally prominent men and women: of the latter, the list includes: eg. UN women conference secretary general **Gertrude Mongella**, **Corazon Aquino**, the first woman President of the Republic of the Philippines who ousted the dictator Ferdinand Marcos; the Russian astronaut and the first woman in space **Valentina Tereschkova**; **Charlayne Hunter Gault**, currently with CNN but who made history as the first black woman student at the University of Alabama, and the first broadcaster ever with a full-hour newscast coast to coast (*Lerner Hour*, PBS), the novelist **Toni Morrison**, first African American Nobel Prize winner in Literature. Among the number of prominent women in the Muslim world she has talked to are: Egyptian novelists **Nawal al Saadawi** and **Salma Bakr**; feminist educator **Aziza Hussein**, journalists **Mona Amis** of Al-Ahram (Cairo), most prestigious newspaper in the Arab world; **Rana Hussein** (Jordani journalist famous for her reporting on honour killings); **Rafiah Salman al Talei**, Omani journalist and budding politician; the Yemeni feminist and mass media expert **Raufah Hassan**, the al-sharqi dancer Tunisian **Layla Haddad**, documentary Algerian film maker **Assia Djabbar**, griot Mauretanian singer **Malouma Bint al-Meidah**, top Indian actress and parliamentarian **Shabana Asmi** and of course feminist writer with a fatwa on her head, **Taslima Nasrin**, from Bangladesh. **Filomenita Mongaya Høgsholm** continues to meet Muslim women who make a difference through her networking globally.

Biographical Note:

Born and bred in Asia, Filomenita Mongaya Høgsholm (FMH) was media-educated in Manila and New York (Master of Science in TV-Radio-Film at Syracuse University and Bachelor of Mass Communication and Journalism at University of the Philippines. Upon marriage to a Danish engineer with whom she now has 3 grown-up children, she moved to Denmark in the early '70s and has worked since as journalist, editor, translator, documentary film maker and cultural coordinator/publicist. Briefly, she worked with the BBC in London, and Leiden University in Holland in the 70s. In the late 80's and early 90's, she collaborated with European colleagues on among others book and other cultural projects, exhibitions as well as organizing conferences on the topic of Migrants in Europe. FMH has produced documentary films, some of which have been shown on Danish TV. She holds the distinction of having been Editor of Soldue when it won the only prize ever awarded to an ethnic magazine: the Grassroots Prize in 1994.

Under the Images of the World'2000, FMH organized a south-north-south women's meeting, which addressed the problems women face in a globalising world. She also authored the report of the same title, Dialogues in Dignity, published in 2001. She made possible the first ever celebration of International Migrants Day in Denmark on December 18th 2001: a memorable evening with myriad immigrant artists and politicians.

In 2002 during ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) she held a Forum on Women and Migration with international inputs. Also in 2002, FMH enjoyed a sabbatical where she earned a Diploma in Adult Education teaching. For many years she has been a student at Copenhagen University on music, minorities and later, Middle Eastern studies with focus on gender (C. Niebuhr Inst., KUA).

FMH's extensive interface and net of contacts in the women-culture-development axis is a result of her 2 decades of working with women projects cross-culturally, whether as part of the competences at her employments, or as pure civic interests. Thus in 2003, she spearheaded "Celebrating Asian Women", her project under Images of Asia consisting of a Dialogue held at the National Museum on Media Images of Asian Women as these help or hinder their integration into Danish society, where ethnic fashion shows were featured showcasing culture-development themes. At the end of the day, the seeds for an Asian Women Network were firmly planted. She is preparing a monograph on Philippine Islam, as well as an anthology of Filipinas in diaspora remembering their childhood in different parts of the Philippine archipelago.