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COMMUNICATION FROM MISS KOHEDA KARI AND OTHER STUDENTS
AT THE AHIOMA TRAINING CENTRE, MILNE BAY, PAPUA,
CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF NEW GUINEA

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Ahioma Training Centre,
via Alotau,
Milne Bay, Papua
29 July 1968

The President,
United Nations Trusteeship Council,
New York USA

Dear Mrs. Anderson,

We are writing to you from our Centre, which is a Centre for training female Welfare Officers from all over Papua and New Guinea. Earlier this year some members of the United Nations visiting mission paid us a social visit, and so we were very interested to learn about the impressions and report of the Mission.

We understand that the Mission was disappointed because they did not hear very much from the women of New Guinea during their tour round the Trust Territory, and we have discussed the reasons for this in our Civics classes at the Centre. We are happy that the U.N. wants to have the views of women, and feel that if the Missions meetings had been arranged more according to New Guinea custom they might have heard more from the women.

In most Papuan and New Guinean societies women would not be expected to get up and talk in public in front of men. The men would consider this wrong, and so would the other women, and criticism, quarrelling, jealousy and loss of friends would follow.

Another thing is that in both Papua and New Guinea, men's work is always distinct from women's work. Politics and community affairs have been introduced

first to men, as they were traditionally the leaders in this field. Consequently politics, public affairs and an interest in the development of our country are regarded as men's affairs rather than women's. Most women do not understand that they can, and should participate, and would not know how to begin.

Another factor is that women in the Territory are usually very busy. They always have been, and those now living in the towns have to work hard looking after large numbers of children, washing cotton clothes, keeping up improved standards of hygiene, without the aid of modern and expensive equipment. For the men, on the otherhand, the introduction of the axe and the doing away with tribal fighting has meant that they have plenty of time for politics etc.

We would like to make the following suggestion in connection with the United Nations visiting Mission. We think that the women would be willing to speak up if they could meet separately from the men, and speak to a woman U.N. representative. You might consider this is old fashioned or something, but this is our custom. We are hoping too that before that next United Nations visit the women will have learnt more about how they take part in community affairs, and will then be willing to express their views, which we believe may be different in many ways to those at our men.

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) KOHEDA KARI and thirteen other students
