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Crashing Embassy Row's 'Men's Club'

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After devoting her life to studies and a career, she says, **Corinne McKnight**, the ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago, "got reckless and married" four years ago. Her groom had just retired, but divided lives do not always work out for women who want to be ambassadorial and maintain equilibrium at home. Most are single or divorced. The pressures to perform at work while taking responsibility for the family are hard. "Men are involved, and women are committed," McKnight explained. "The difference is in your bacon and eggs: The hen was involved, but the pig was committed."

For those keeping track, the number of female ambassadors here is the highest ever, 10 out of 172. McKnight, 58, is their doyenne, and all say they worked twice as hard as their men to "arrive."

Five of them gathered at Howard University on Tuesday, invited by Prof. **Marilyn Sephcole**, and enthralled students with their experiences and wisdom. "Diplomacy is like banking: It is about building up a deposit of goodwill to use when necessary, communication, consensus building and a good grasp of detail," said Singapore's Ambassador **Heng Chee Chan**, diminutive steel lily of the diplomatic corps. "I fought intensely and I felt passionately. I was never in the forefront of feminist groups. I am a feminist by being."

"Women who do not appear aggressive fare better," she advised. "You must be firm and know where you are going. You need not be outwardly aggressive." This year she negotiated the purchase of up to 77 Boeing 777 aircraft from the United States at \$12.7 billion. Chan was the first Southeast Asian woman to be named a U.N. representative and an ambassador to Washington. Chan said she realized she had crashed the "men's club" when she was promoting a Cambodian war settlement at the United Nations. An awed Saudi ambassador surprised her by saying: "You have worked so hard, I would like to give you Saudi Arabia's sponsorship."

When she joined other ambassadors from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for a conference in Canada, Chan said, the moderator was "flummoxed" when the envoy of one of the "Asian tigers" with the unisex name stood up. "Your highness," he blurted out, spinning around. "Your excellency will do," said Chan, shaking his hand.

Pakistani Ambassador **Maleeha Lodhi**, speaking recently about the numbers of female envoys, joked that "we are getting into the double digits. Soon we will go up to half, but a real measure of progress will come in a few years when there will be six or eight men up on this podium telling us what it feels like to be male diplomat."

When Prime Minister **Benazir Bhutto** tapped her, Lodhi said, she accepted only after being assured her selection was not about womanhood or tokenism, but professional criteria. But on her forays to Capitol Hill, where she has lobbied against the Pressler

Amendment, which imposes sanctions and an arms-sale ban on Pakistan, U.S. politicians still address her aides as "Mr. Ambassador," or look twice "to see if there is a male somewhere" with her, she said.

Bulgaria, Macedonia, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Swaziland, Lesotho and Uganda also have female ambassadors here.

The Echo of American Buzz Words

■ Costa Rican President **Jose Maria Figueres**, 42, practices a new brand of Latin American leadership. "Everyone carries their own weight, and we don't give anyone a break. Isn't that what a global economy is?" he asked Washington Post editors and reporters Wednesday during a five-day trip to the United States. The son of Jose "Pepe" Figueres, the architect of democracy in Costa Rica, the graduate of Harvard and West Point exudes vigor and vision: "Today democracy has to mean moving forward, putting food on the table," he said. "It has to mean a good health system, access to a good education. I see the region addressing these issues."

"How do we compete in that global scenario without losing cultural trends embedded in our past?" he asked, stressing the need to invest in people. Figueres seemed in command of the American idiom, using the buzzwords of development: "strategic social investment," "bio-diversity" and "eco-harmony."

Returning With Some Good News

■ **Pascoal Manuel Mocumbi**, the prime minister of Mozambique, has changed jobs from his days as foreign minister, when he came here with bad news from his southern African nation's war. After four years of peace, he now comes with "something to deliver": reports of a recovering economy, of corn production approaching levels of self-sufficiency, and of women in business and politics.

"We should no longer be regarded as a country of crisis but as a country of hope," he said last week. In addition to talks with officials here, he courted financiers in New York and Texas firms interested in oil and gas exploration and hydroelectric projects. Hundreds of thousands of Mozambican refugees have returned to farming now that major roads have been cleared of mines, he said, and rebels are active, but only as opposition in parliament.

Helping the Hill Understand

■ **Hiroshi Hashimoto**, Japan's Foreign Ministry spokesman, flashed a folder with seven fact sheets, simplified with explanatory graphics, color codings and highlighted themes, on the significance of the Japanese-U.S. security alliance. The kit was worked up to appease befuddled U.S. senators and representatives, he explained. He told Washington Post reporters and editors last Friday that Defense Secretary **William J. Perry** has asked for a feasibility study on a floating offshore base as one of three alternatives to a base on Okinawa.