



### 3 S'porean women on Nobel list

NEWPAP0020050629e16u00001

1199 Words

30 June 2005

The New Paper

English

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Nominated for contributions to society They are part of project called '1,000 Women For The Nobel Peace Prize 2005'

COULD a Singaporean win a Nobel Peace Prize? Better yet, could three?

Well, it's a possibility this year.

Three Singaporean women - Mrs Bridget Lew, Dr Wong Ting Hway, and Dr Noeleen Heyzer - have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize this year.

Yes, the same Nobel Peace Prize won by icons such as Mother Teresa, the 'Saint of the Gutters' who cared for lepers and destitutes in Kolkata, and anti-apartheid leader and former South African president Nelson Mandela.

But the three Singaporean women are not being nominated as individuals.

Instead, they are part of a unique project called '1,000 Women For The Nobel Peace Prize 2005'. (See report below.)

All three Singaporean women have contributed enormously to society, but in very diverse ways.

Dr Heyzer, who is in her early 50s and based in New York, is the executive director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Unifem) which provides financial and technical assistance to programmes promoting women's empowerment and gender equality.

Mrs Lew, 56, is the president and founder of Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (Home), a civic group which champions the rights of foreign workers here.

Known as 'Sister Bridget' to many of those she has helped, Mrs Lew was formerly chairman of the Commission of Migrants and Itinerant People, a volunteer organisation to help foreign workers, for six years.

Dr Wong, 31, has used her medical skills to help out in war-torn countries such as Angola and Nepal, treating malnutrition and rehabilitating war victims or refugees.

WORKED WITH RED CROSS She has worked with organisations such as Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), and was the first Singaporean doctor to work with the International Committee of the Red Cross in 2003.

Dr Heyzer was a banker and a university lecturer in Singapore, and had worked at the International Labour Organisation and other international organisations before taking the lead position at Unifem 10 years ago.

She's worked in conflict zones, including Rwanda, and is a leading advocate of HIV/Aids causes.

In the nominations, Mrs Lew and Dr Wong are flying under the Singapore banner, while Dr Heyzer is an 'international nominee'.

Despite being nominated for such an important award, the nominees remained humble about their achievements.

They said there are probably many others in Singapore who have worked hard for peace, but have not had their work recognised.

Said Mrs Lew: 'There are many other women in Singapore probably more deserving of this award... working quietly, behind the scenes, maybe doing more things than me for very long years, but perhaps their work was not captured by the media.'

The nominees feel so strongly that their honour should be shared with other Singaporean women who have worked towards peace and social justice here, that they - with Unifem Singapore's help - are organising a series of activities which will be announced later. The nominees agreed that there seems to be a growing trend of volunteerism in Singapore. But there are gaps.

Mrs Lew, for instance, pointed out that there are too few working in the area of social justice, like helping to fight for the rights of migrant workers.

Dr Wong also encouraged more people to come forward to help others in a sustained manner rather than offer one-time help to the needy.

Said Dr Wong: 'It is easy to forget that, to make a difference, there is more impact if you work on something over a period of time, watch it grow, even if it is only a little bit at a time.'

So what do the nominees think about their chances of winning?

WHAT THEY THINK

Mrs Lew said: 'I don't even think about it, because being nominated is already a great encouragement for the work I'm doing. In my work, success or winning is not something I look for.'

Added Dr Wong: 'There are many people out there, both men and women, who have made outstanding contributions to peace, and they do it because they enjoy it and believe in it. 'Whether it's recognition of one, 1,000, 100,000 - it doesn't matter. Ultimately, we all do our best to be at least a drop of water in the tide of change.'

The prize winner will be announced in October and the award given at a ceremony in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, in December.

Project to honour women all over world

THE '1,000 Women For The Nobel Peace Prize 2005' project aims to collectively nominate and honour 1,000 women from all over the world for their efforts to promote peace.

The names of the 1,000 women are being simultaneously released around the world today.

'By submitting the nomination, the initiators of the project want to use the example of the 1,000 women to show how impressively and tirelessly women are working and struggling all over the world against poverty and violence, and for justice, education, political rights and security,' the project committee said in a statement.

The Nobel committee has been consulted and it has been confirmed that such a nomination is possible, said the project's South-east Asia co-ordinators Paulynn Sicam and Karen Tanada in an e-mail to The New Paper.

Last year, the Swiss-initiated project sought candidates for the nomination from all over the world. More than 2,000 women from over 150 countries were proposed.

In October 2004, the project team selected 1,000 of these candidates using strict criteria, including the sustainability of work, long-term commitment, and use of networks.

The 1,000 women were proposed to the Nobel Prize Committee in Oslo in late January this year.

The catch is that the Nobel Prize can only be awarded simultaneously to three individuals at most, or to an organisation.

Hence, three women were chosen in December last year to represent the 1,000 women. The three are not being named specifically because their nomination is symbolic, reported Arab News on Saturday.

If the group wins, the three will receive the prize in the name of all 1,000.

Said a statement on the project's website: 'With the exception of 12 women, the recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize, since it was first awarded in 1901, have been men.

'Peace work done by women is highly undervalued. As their work is taken for granted and usually unspectacular, it is neither acknowledged nor remunerated.'

Hence, the nomination of 1,000 women seeks to alter this situation by raising the profile and awareness of the 'exemplary' work of these women.

It will also promote documentation and research of these women's peace-building strategies, to inspire others.

The concept is certainly appreciated by its nominees.

Mrs Bridget Lew, one of the Singaporean nominees, feels that the project is a 'very good and wonderful idea'.

She explained that the project works to link all these 1,000 women together in a network and promotes unity, so each person feels 'less alone' in her work for peace.