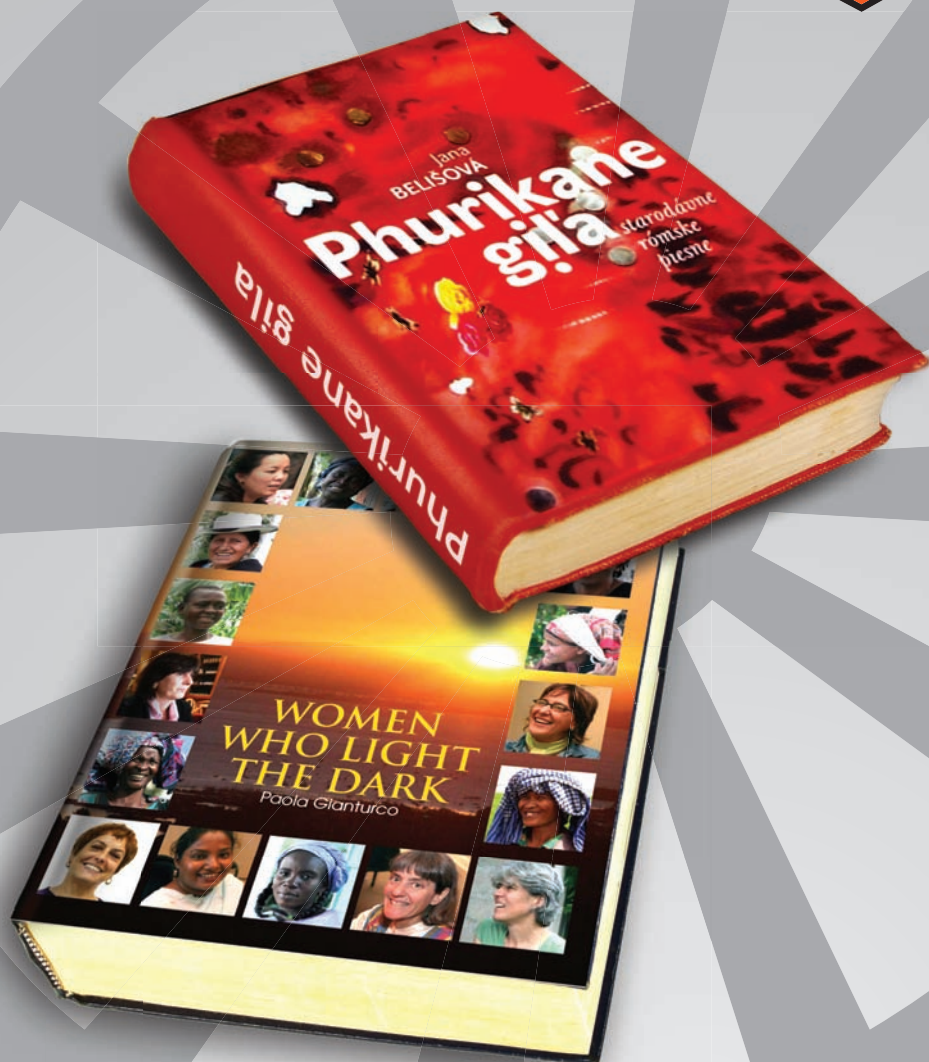


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Redakcia Amenca si dovoľuje uverejniť rozhovor s Paolou Gianturco v anglickom jazyku z dôvodu medializácie na internetovej sieti a zahraničným priaznivcom projektu Amenca. Projekt Amenca je realizovaný vďaka finančnej podpore Veľvyslanectva USA, Bratislava a s finančnou podporou Christian A. Johnson Endeavour Foundatoin, New York.

The woman who lights the dark on the visit in Banska Bystrica

I would like to introduce you Mrs Paola Gianturco, an American photojournalist and philanthropist who is helping to women worldwide financially and with her skills and friendship.

She visited many countries with her camera and took amazing pictures depicting women who work for others and try to achieve better living conditions for those who are poor and disadvantaged.

I was privileged to meet her during her trip to Slovakia and assist her with her dream to show how three strong Romany female leaders work for common goal in Central Slovakia. In her newest book, *Women Who Light the Dark*, she portrays them and describes the admirable work these women do everyday for their communities.

Amenca: Your book maps women's NGOs in the world that must fight against so many borders, political systems, and human prejudices. How did you feel when you saw those challenges, those strong women in the world?

The problems are profound. Many people find the problems too daunting and discouraging; they lose hope. But local women all over the world are proving that they are very powerful. Even women who have almost no material resources DO have imagination. They can tell stories, dance, sing, draw, write poems. So they are using what they have—creative arts and creative strategies to cause important change. And they



are succeeding. As I documented their work, I was inspired by these women. They made my heart sing! They gave me hope.

Amenca :Were your journeys very dangerous, or it was very easy to come into those communities?

Most places were easy to visit but some were dangerous. I arrived in Morocco the day 10,000 people were demonstrating against the publication of the Danish cartoons that depicted The Prophet. I was in Nepal during the civil war and there were violent demonstrations: royal soldiers were shooting citizens in the streets; guerilla fighters were hiding in the woods. In those situations, the women's groups I visited took care of me.

Amenca: Where did the idea come from to create this book?

Over the past 12 years, I have documented women's lives in 40 coun-

tries. Everywhere I go, I see small groups of local women helping each other tackle intractable problems: sex trafficking, poverty, domestic violence, illiteracy, disease, discrimination, malnutrition...the problems are the same everywhere.

But few people seemed to realize that women are working effectively to solve those problems. I thought: in a world so full of bad news, good news could be heartening. At a time when the international women's movement faces challenges, it could help to be reminded that positive change is already underway. And since women's organizations never have enough money, I thought maybe a book would inspire others to get involved.

Amenca: You were in Cambodia, Kenya, Brazil, and for the first time, came to discover to world of Romany women in Banska Bystrica. Did you observe differences between those NGOs

and those in BB?

I discovered similarities among the NGOs everywhere. They were all run by local women who had developed solutions that were culturally appropriate and, as a result, were very effective. What intrigued me most was that the women were using their own creativity to address the problems. They envisioned strategies and tactics that were unique and effective.

Amenca: What was your impression of Jolana Nátherová, Ivana Cickova, Helena Jonasova and Andrea Buckova?

My impression: these four Roma women are formidable! Each has invented creative ways to solve serious problems. Jolana runs a preschool for Roma youngsters and a program for Roma teens whose parents are alcoholics. Ivana places Roma children with foster and adoptive families that are both Roma and Gadjé. Helena's organization tutors Roma children and gives them experience in summer camps in the mountains. Andrea co-created and managed an art project that was an unprecedented collaboration between minority and majority women.

Amenca: We heard that your publisher said there are no more copies left in their warehouse. Are they reprinting so everybody in the world can understand that women in the Americas, Slovakia, Asia and Africa are the same: strong women who are fighting for their rights? What do you feel about that are you happy?

I am delighted that 5,000 books sold out in four months because that means the Global Fund for Women will receive a big donation soon! I am contributing 100% of my royalties from the book to GFW, an organiza-

tion that exists exclusively to give grants to organizations run by women who are working on human rights.

In fact, GFW provided seed money to start the Slovak-Czech Women's Fund as part of its effort to encourage local and regional grass roots philanthropy around the world.

The book publisher is reprinting *Women Who Light the Dark* so the second edition will be available in March 2008. Then, even more people will be able to learn about these impressive women!

Amenca: What is the reaction from women in the USA when you talk about women who are living on nothing---and they learn that they are able to help other women who are experiencing so many difficulties?

Of course, it's hard to tell what people think when they read the book at home or read the chapter excerpts on the website.

But I have presented slide lectures in 11 US cities, which have been attended by about 1,700 people, so I do know how those women respond.

Often, people in the audiences get tears in their eyes when they hear about little girls being raped in Zimbabwe, women being sex trafficked in Cambodia, wives being beaten everywhere, babies starving in Slovakia.

But when they learn how brave local women are working to solve these problems, they are inspired to help. Many want to donate time, money and support.

Amenca: Have you received any positive reactions from donors or organizations, about the work of Romany women in Slovakia?

I hope this is happening! I list the contacts for all the Roma groups in

the book both on the Contact Us page of the project website (www.womenwholightthedark.com) and the bibliography of the book. My hope is that readers will contact the groups directly.

Amenca: Why did you decide to come to Slovakia?

Two reasons: to document the impressive work of the courageous Roma women who are fighting centuries of discrimination—and to feature the grantees of the Slovak-Czech Women's Fund, which is the only local or regional Women's Fund included in the book. Grassroots philanthropy is an important international trend, and I wanted to be certain that readers are aware of this new model.

Amenca: What would you like to say to our readers about Romany students who are willing to help their communities in their environment, who would like to become ambitious and help their mothers, and to become positive examples in society?

Thank you to the Romany students...and to the staff of this magazine!

The work now being done by women and girls every where, will change life—not only for your families and communities...but, over time, also for your country, and for our world.

Amenca: Do you feel that conditions of Romany women in this tough society (or any women) will change in future, given their difficult living conditions?

Yes. Small changes kindle larger--and larger--changes. And small changes are already underway...everywhere.