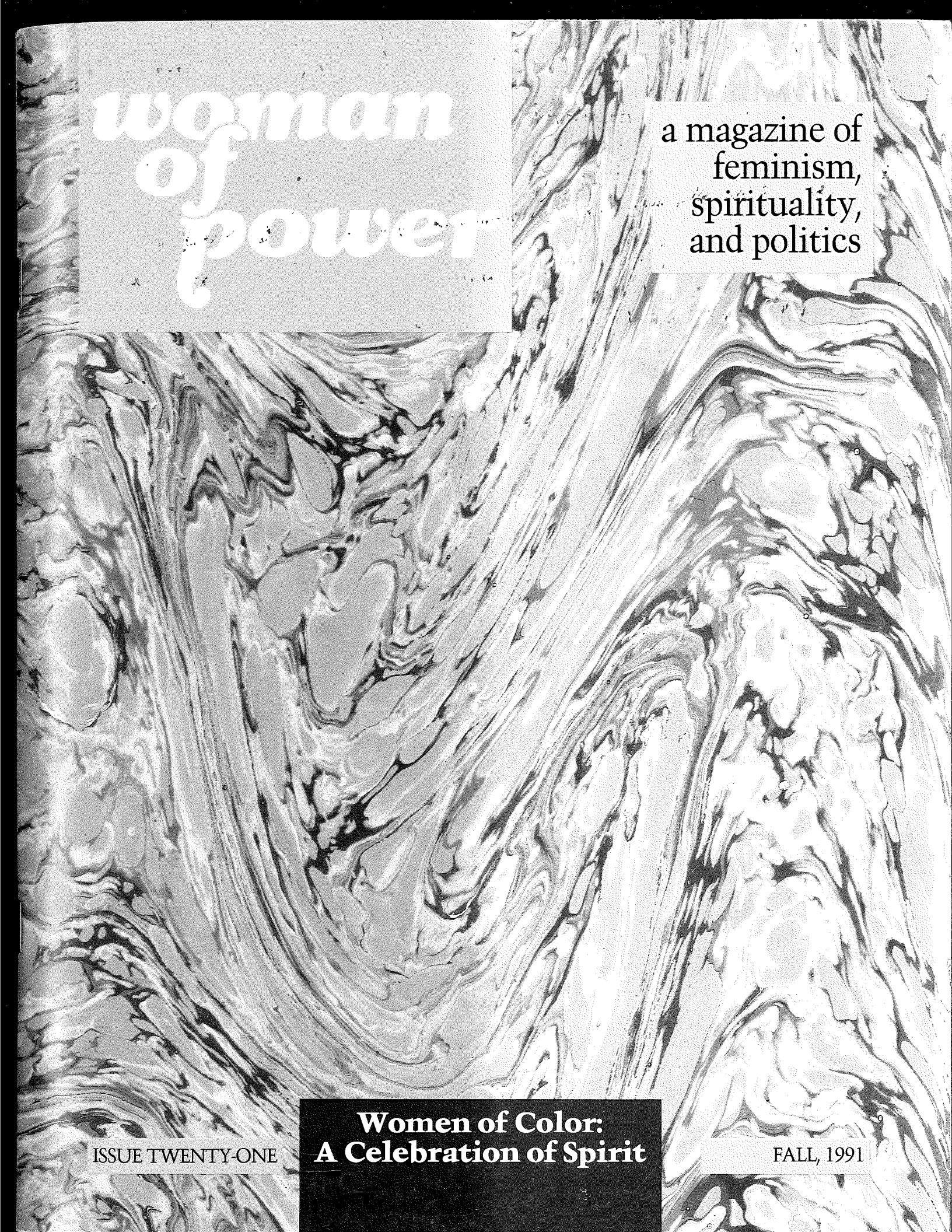

woman of power

a magazine of feminism, spirituality, and politics

Women of Color: A Celebration of Spirit

ISSUE TWENTY-ONE

FALL, 1991

"Maitreya," acrylic on canvas, 48" x 88", © 1991 by Mayumi Oda. Maitreya is an Indian and Tibetan Buddhist divinity.

woman of power affirms the collective and the individual empowerment of woman worldwide and speaks an image now emerging from women's collective consciousness. We believe that if we are to survive as a species it is necessary for women to come into power, and for feminist principles to rebuild the foundations of world cultures.

We provide a forum for the studies of feminism, spirituality, and politics. It is our view that these studies coalesce in their considerations of power. Through feminism we evolve perspectives on the power of the feminine, with spirituality we deepen understanding of our power, and with politics we use power in our lives.

Our power as women arises from our understanding of interconnectedness: with all people, all forms of life, the earth, and the cycles and seasons of nature and our lives. Through this understanding we commit ourselves to the transformations necessary for the renewal of our selves and our planet.

It is our clear intention to create a medium, a language, and a sensibility which connects us with each other as we discover new definitions of power, invent new tools for personal and collective empowerment, and image new visions of where our power leads us.

WOMAN'S SPIRITUALITY

is a world-wide awakening of womanpower whose vision is the transformation of our selves and our societies

The ancient spiritual voice of woman now speaks its long-hidden wisdom and becomes an active force for the conscious evolution of our world.

This emerging voice speaks of . . .

- *the recognition of the interconnectedness of all life*
- *the awareness that everything has consciousness and is sacred*
- *the re-membering of our selves as sacred beings, and the loving of our psyches, bodies, and emotions*
- *the empowerment of women and all oppressed peoples*
- *the creation of world peace, social justice, and environmental harmony*
- *the activation of spiritual and psychic powers*
- *the honoring of woman's divinity*
- *reverence for the earth, and the celebration of her seasons and cycles, and those of our lives*

woman of power seeks to generate harmony and interconnection by taking care that our words and images nurture and affirm our wholeness. We honor artworks, writings, and activities which enable us to transform our fears into loving, affirming actions.

This sensibility respects the integrity and uniqueness of woman while honoring her diversity. It is therefore our policy not only to refuse to print works which are racist, classist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, ageist, culturally elitist, or which in any other way further divisions among people, but to actively honor the diversity of women. We believe that the voices of all women's cultures, classes, races, ages, and nations need to be heard so that the work of personal and collective transformation can occur.

woman of power honors the work of woman as visionary as we transform our inner world, thus recreating our symbolism, imagery, values, and beliefs. We also honor the work of woman as activist as we transform our outer world, by recreating our personal lives and relationships, our communities, and our world. We welcome all women into the magical world of evolving woman's consciousness and woman's culture.

ABOUT WOMAN OF POWER

Welcome to Issue Twenty-One on the theme, "Women of Color: A Celebration of Spirit." We are pleased to welcome Asoka Bandarage as the consulting editor for this inspiring special issue. Please see the "From the Consulting Editor" statement on page 4.

We would like to inform you of three very significant changes in our organization. First, we have moved! Our new mailing address is: P.O. Box 2785, Orleans MA 02653. Our new telephone number is (508) 240-7877.

Second, in order to arrive at a more regular printing schedule, this issue combines the summer and fall seasons, and our next issue will combine the winter and spring seasons. Please see page 67 for the new dates for all subsequent issues and the deadlines for manuscript submissions. (Subscribers—you will still receive your four issues per year; you won't miss any issues! The only change you will notice will be in the dates written on the issues.)

And third, *woman of power* no longer accepts unsolicited poetry and fiction. Thanks to all of you who have shared your work with us over the years.

We hope to hear from you about our READER FUND. An $18 donation helps to cover printing and mailing costs for subscriptions to women in institutions, such as women's prisons, mental hospitals, halfway houses, rape crisis centers, and battered women's shelters.

Enjoy!∞

WOMAN OF POWER, INC.

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- ***woman of power,*** Inc. is a nonprofit educational organization. Tax-deductible contributions payable to ***woman of power.***

OBJECTIVES

- to nurture the development of women's spirituality as a world view and as a political movement
- to inspire the empowerment process of women and expand awareness of feminist principles
- to generate affirmation for the work of women who are visionaries and activists for personal and social transformation
- to report the spiritual and political work of women in local, national, and international communities
- to provide a multicultural and multiracial regional and international network for all women involved in the many traditions of women's spirituality
- to build community within the worldwide women's movement, and to establish means by which women from across the Earth can meet to share women's wisdom and bring feminist perspectives to the solving of world problems
- to explore in each issue a central theme of special relevance to women's spirituality through selected interviews, articles, fiction, poetry, photography, and other artworks
- to print high quality literary and artistic work in a diversity of styles and formats

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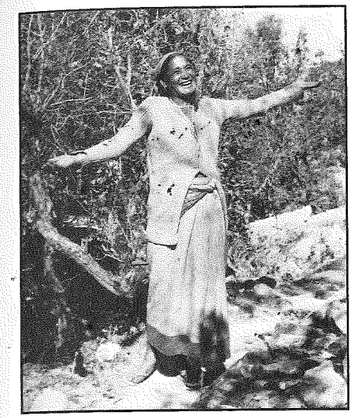

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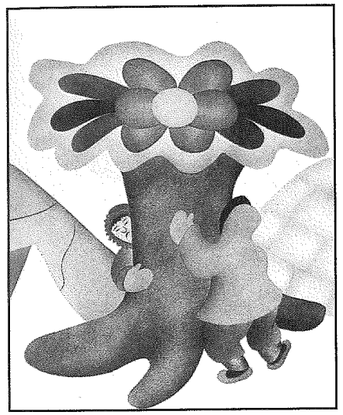

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PROFILES: "Women of Color: A Celebration of Spirit"

ARTICLES

ARTWORK, PHOTOGRAPHY

DEPARTMENTS

A Celebration of Spirit

by Asoka Bandarage

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to be associated with *woman of power* magazine and this special issue on "Women of Color: A Celebration of Spirit." At a time when information and knowledge are increasingly concentrated within the global military-industrial complex, *woman of power* magazine is a beacon of light leading us out of confusion into a new world of peace, harmony and beauty.

As in the previous special issue on women of color (Issue 4, on the theme, "Women of Color: A Celebration of Power"), here too, we honor visionary women of color living and working in the United States and other countries.The women featured here represent diverse cultural traditions—Native American, African, Asian, Hispanic, Arab-—and diverse professional backgrounds—psychologists, professors, ministers, dancers, shamans, farmers, weavers, and vendors. Yet, these women cry out in one voice for a new world, a world that is more peaceful, egalitarian, and ecologically sustainable.

The women speaking from these pages are not simply identified with their individual freedoms; they are not playing the games of New Age spirituality or abstract academic theorizing. They are social change activists. Many of them are in the front lines of political battles struggling to defend and redefine their communities, cultures and environments against the onslaught of dominant political, economic, and cultural forces.

Japanese-American psychiatrist and Jungian analyst Jean Shinoda Bolen tells us that we are living in a "liminal time," a transitional time between one age and another. Dhyani Ywahoo, clan chieftainess of the Etowah Cherokee nation, reminds us that the world is very much in need of the wisdom of women of color at this time. Marta Benavides, minister and activist from El Salvador, shows us that throughout the five hundred years of Western colonization beginning with Christopher Columbus, women of color have been resisting gender, race, and class domination in a myriad of different ways. Anishinabe activist Winona LaDuke, African-American activists Flo Kennedy and Melba Coleman, Asian-American activist Nancy Reiko Kato, Israeli activist Gila Svirsky, and other women featured in this issue speak of specific nonviolent strategies that they are developing in the process of their work.

Winona LaDuke also announces the publication of *Indigenous Woman* magazine that she and other women of the Indigenous Women's Network have recently begun. Suha Sabbagh, executive director of the Institute for Arab Women's Studies, informs us of the work her organization is doing to counter the rampant biases against Arab women in the social sciences and the popular media. Members of Patlatonalli, a lesbian feminist group in Mexico, write of their work focusing on sexual politics and women's health issues such as HIV and AIDS.

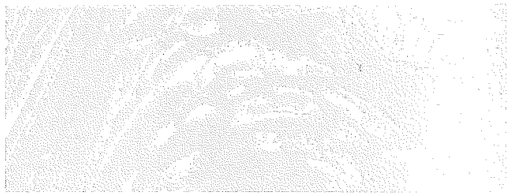
Riua Akinshegun, Karla Jackson-Brewer, Frances Dick, Joan Henry, and other visionary artists and therapists featured here share with us their personal journeys towards inner empowerment.They remind us that the struggles of women of color have never been easy; still, our courage and resilience make our lives a wondrous process of growth and expansion, a dance of life, a celebration of spirit! Feel the vitality that comes through the exquisite artwork of Mayumi Oda, Asungi, the Holman Eskimo Co-op, Shan Goshorn, and other artists gracing these pages! Feel the soul of Gloria Wade-Gayles' poetry, "Spiritually African." And please support women's income-generating projects in the "Third World" that Ann Leonard has portrayed in her photoessay, "Seeds."

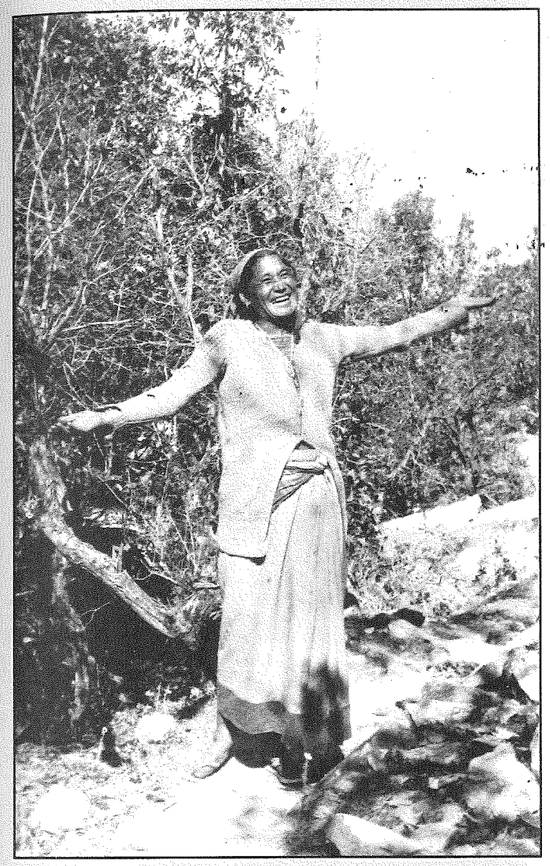
As I discuss in my article, "In Search of a New World Order," ours is a time of great confusion when ignorance, greed, and hatred prevail over truth, generosity, and compassion. Peace, prosperity, and freedom are proclaimed by a few while the majority suffer from violence, poverty, and repression, and the Earth itself is rapidly being destroyed. It is the responsibility of each of us—woman, man, person of color, white person—to use our rational and our emotional capacities to create a more democratic, free and sustainable world for ourselves and the generations to come. It is in this spirit of non-violent struggle and compassion that we present this special "Women of Color: A Celebration of Spirit" issue to you. We hope that you are as inspired by the wonderful women honored here as we have been in putting this issue together. Thank you.

In closing, I would like to share a Buddhist meditation on compassion, "Metta Bhavana," with you.

May all beings be free from sorrow.
May all beings be free from ill health.
May all beings be healed.
May all beings be free from anxiety.

May I be free from sorrow.
May I be free from ill health.
May I be healed.
May I be free from anxiety. ∞





A forest conservation worker in Nepal. Photo by CFAD Nepal.

Members of the Mraru Women's Group, a Kenyan bus service, singing "Maendeleo ya Wanawake" ("Women's Progress") in Swahili. Photo by Jill Kneerim.

SEEDS

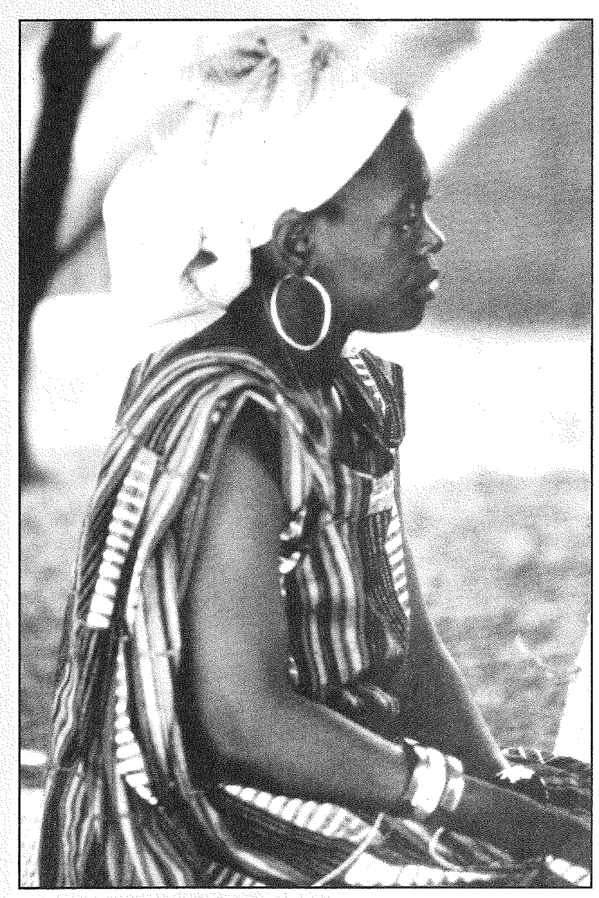
Supporting Women's Work in the Third World

by Ann Leonard

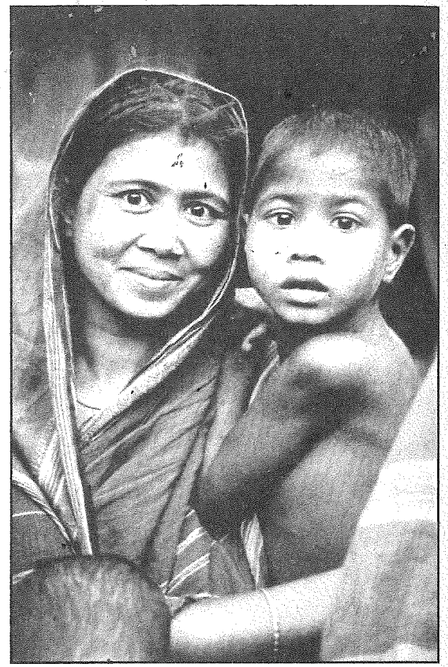
Today, as in the past, the vast majority of women in the world work. In the developed world, despite the numerous gains women have made in the workplace, most female workers still receive a fraction of the compensation paid to their male counterparts. In the less developed countries, most women earn outside the modern wage sector of the economy where their income, whether generated in cash or goods, is an important and often vital contribution to the support of their families. Yet most development programs continue to overlook women's involvement in the economy. When they do focus on women's work, it is usually to provide training for some type of home-based handicrafts activity, most of which are rarely economically viable and often serve more as a welfare measure than as a means for women to gain self-sufficiency. The United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) brought attention to these problems and to the real need for information about income-generating programs for women that will provide them with a cash income, involve them in decision-making as well as earning, and are based on sound economic criteria.

In the late 1970s, a pamphlet series of case studies, entitled *Seeds*, together with

A weaver in Guatemala. Photo by United Nations.



Member of Markala, Mali, cooperative. Photo by Susan Caughman.



Member of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Women's Committee, with child. Photo by Marty Chen.

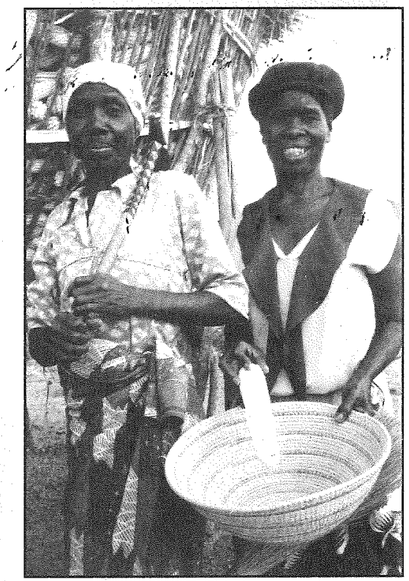
Member of Merida, Mexico, pilot project on community recycling, with child. Photo by C. Wood.

additional material that places the studies within the broader context of women and development in all regions of the Third World, was first published to meet this need. While there has been significant growth in the number and success of income-generating programs for women in the 1980s, much more still needs to be done, and the demand for information about creating and sustaining such programs is growing, from an ever-widening audience.

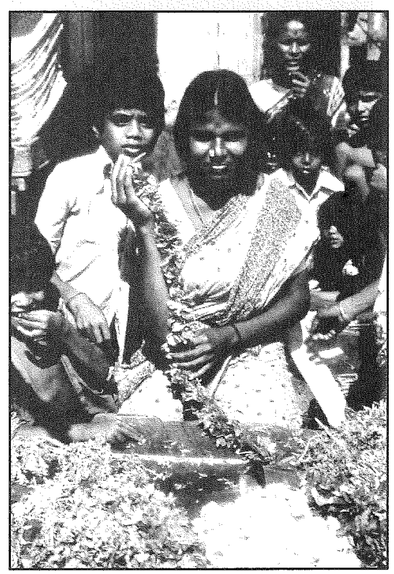
The Seeds case studies portray women's traditional roles in saving, production, and income generation in their "spare time." They also demonstrate ways in which women can build on these skills and activities to enhance their productivity and their income.

Each study represents the strongest, most unique women-generated and women-led enterprises that can be identified. In the beginning, it was difficult to locate such projects because there were few that could meet the Seeds criteria. Today more are thriving than can possibly be documented.

All the members of the Seeds Steering Committee, past and present, hope that *Seeds* will allow some of the experience gained by women working together to help themselves to reach an ever-expanding audience and thus generate a better understanding of the crucial economic contribution women make in support of themselves, their families, and their countries. ∞



Farmers in Ishekondo village in western Zambia display their maize. Photo by Janice Jiggins.



Working Women's Forum member selling flowers in Madras, India. Photo by Marty Chen.

Member of Muek-Lek Women's Dairy Project in Thailand. Photo by Kim Retka.

Members of the Women's Construction Collective in Jamaica. Photo by Ruth McLeod.

Women's group members in western Zambia display their craft products. Photo by Janice Jiggins.

SEEDS PAMPHLET SERIES ON WOMEN'S INCOME-GENERATING PROJECTS

The series of pamphlets entitled *Seeds* meets requests from all over the world for information concerning innovative and practical program ideas about women's work and income-generation developed by and for low-income women. The pamphlets are designed as a means to share information and to spark new projects based on the positive experiences of women who are working to help themselves and other women to improve their economic status. The reports are not meant to be prescriptive, since every development effort faces somewhat different problems and resources. Rather, they have been written to describe the history of an idea and its implementation in the hope that the lessons learned will prove useful in a variety of settings. They are also intended to bring to the attention of those in decision-making positions the fact that income-generating projects for and by women are viable and can play an important role in development. Nine of the Seeds project pamphlets have been published as a book, *Seeds: Supporting Women's Work in the Third World,* edited by Ann Leonard (New York: Feminist Press, 1989). For more information, contact Seeds at: P.O. Box 3923, Grand Central Station, New York NY 10163.

SEEDS PAMPHLETS: ***Kenya:*** *Village Women Organize: The Mraru Bus Service.* ***Jamaica:*** *Hanover Street: An Experiment to Train Women in Welding and Carpentry.* ***Nicaragua:*** *Market Women's Cooperatives: Giving Women Credit.* ***International:*** *Childcare: Meeting the Needs of Working Mothers and Their Children.* ***International:*** *Women and Handicrafts: Myth and Reality.* ***Mali:*** *The Markala Cooperative: A New Approach to Traditional Economic Roles.* ***Jamaica:*** *The Women's Construction Collective: Building for the Future.* ***India:*** *The Working Women's Forum: Organizing for Credit and Change.* ***Bangladesh:*** *Developing Non-Craft Employment for Women in Bangladesh.* ***Mexico:*** *Community Management of Waste Recycling: The SIRDO.* ***Nepal:*** *Forest Conservation in Nepal: Encouraging Women's Participation.* ***Sudan:*** *Port Sudan Small Scale Enterprise Program.* ***Thailand:*** *The Muek-Lek Women's Dairy Project in Thailand.*

In Search of a New World Order

by Asoka Bandarage

Asoka Bandarage *is a Sri Lankan Buddhist and an associate professor of Women's Studies at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts. She is currently writing a book and working to build a multicultural feminist Peace Institute based on the principles explored in this article. She serves on the Board of Directors of* woman of power, *and is the consulting editor for this issue.* (Photo © 1987 Maureen Murdock.)

Humanity is fast approaching the ultimate point of delusion and destruction. Yet, this moment in the history of planetary evolution is also decisive and exciting. We are being compelled to make a paradigm shift: from the dominant hierarchical and violent model of social and psychological development to a new, predominantly cooperative and peaceful model. The chain of violence that connects the world has to be changed to a chain of peace. Either we make this change, or we self-destruct.

The present technocapitalist world order holds within itself the basis of its own transformation. Modern technology allows people to see very clearly the natural integration of the Earth and humanity. Mass-communication systems have the potential to help develop a global consciousness and social movements toward a harmonious planetary community. Even within the United States, the military superpower of the decaying world order, more and more people are beginning to realize the urgency to shift from the "me decades" of the 1970s and 1980s toward a "we decade" in the 1990s. From the twentieth century, often referred to as the American (narrowly defined as U.S.) century, we must move into a twenty-first century that is truly global.

The dominant mechanistic paradigm of human and social evolution is founded upon the concepts of separation, control, and permanence. It rests ultimately upon the assumed dualism of a separate self and other. The Enlightenment tradition posits human beings as rational, with power over the natural realm. But this valuing of human capacity has itself been challenged with the rise of industrialism and the capitalist state. Thus, we see the concept that both humanity and nature must be managed by means of technology and the impersonal forces of the market and the bureaucracy. The thrust toward rationalization, specialization, and quantification in all spheres of life is constant, and efficiency is upheld as a primary virtue. Within such a world view, human nature is seen as static, and human freedom is equated with individualism.

This mechanistic world view is being countered today with an emerging organic view of humanity and nature based upon the oneness of all life and the inherent connection—interbeing—of all phenomena. Such a holistic ecological view enables us to understand our position within the cycle of nature—birth, decay, death, and rebirth—and the impermanence of all phenomena. Given this inherent interdependence, human beings can realize their full potential and freedom not through separation, but within the complex, ever-changing ebb and flow of nature that forms the community of life. A revolutionary synthesis is now emerging among different spiritual traditions, between spirituality and politics, and between spirituality and science. For example, elements of Buddhist, Native American, African, and other tribal teachings are being connected with elements of such monistic fields of Western science as quantum theory and evolutionary biology, thereby creating an ecologically based viewpoint that counters the dualistic and mechanistic paradigm.[1]

Ecological thinking sees the Earth, Gaia, as one living, breathing organism, indivisible and synergic. A threat to the biosphere is also a threat to the self and the principles of diversity and spontaneity that define and sustain nature. This perception has given rise to the key values of the Green Movement: ecological wisdom, global and future responsibility, personal and social responsibility, respect for diversity, postpatriarchal values, decentralization, community economics, grass-roots democracy, nonviolence. The antecedents of such a vision lie in pre-industrial societies which displayed a sense of reciprocity with and respect for nature, recognizing their dependence on plant and animal life.

With the transition to industrialism, much of this sense of connection to the Earth and other species was lost as humanity came to see itself as above nature.

The creation of a new world order must involve the sharing of global resources across classes, nations, ethnic groups, and the sexes.

Further, as technology became more complex and the economic surplus grew, social structures became increasingly hierarchical, divided on the basis of gender, class, ethnic, and other differences (see Figure 1 below). With the rise of modern science and technology and the global expansion of capitalism, the original ecological wisdom came to be shunted aside as superstition, myth, or ignorance. The influence of technology and the primacy of the cash nexus can be felt even on the very structure of life. New biotechnology, for instance, seeks to change the genetic bases of plants, animals, and humans. All forms of life are being mechanized and commoditized. In developing an ecological world view, we need not condemn all of technology or romanticize nature, however. Technology does not have a life of its own; human values guide its development. It need not be a tool of domination and destruction; it can also be a tool of liberation.

Nature itself is not all peaceful and cooperative; conflict and violence are interwoven with harmony and interdependence. Like birth and creation, death and destruction are necessary aspects of planetary evolution. Finding one's place in the hierarchy and fighting for it may be a basic part of primate life. Although male dominance cannot be justified on biological grounds, psychological differences that may be based on biology should not be overlooked either. The inevitable contradictions in nature and profound differences among human beings based on personality, culture, gender, and other characteristics make it difficult for us to live together harmoniously. Anthropomorphism, androcentrism, eurocentrism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, and other hierarchies are indeed built upon the mistaken beliefs in separation, permanence, and control; but they are very real and must be confronted squarely.

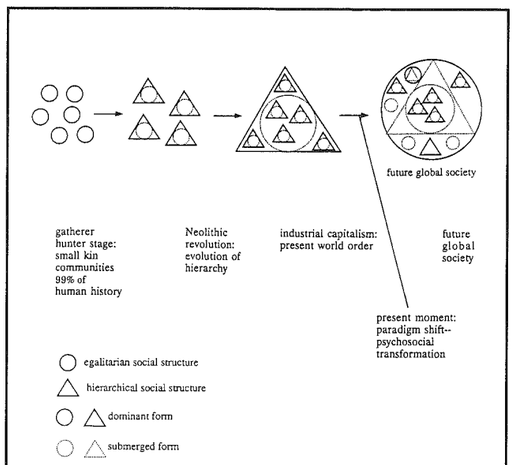


***Figure 1:* Global Social Revolution**

The challenge before us now is not necessarily to create a totally new view of life but to revive ancient ecological wisdom and adapt it to our modern circumstances, applying it to the problems of our differences and our choice of technologies. In so doing, we need to maintain the principles of both planetary unity and diversity. Unlike other species, humanity has the ability to understand the contradictions within nature and within ourselves. The ecological holistic view does not find human beings to be static, narrowly rationalist, or self-serving; rather, it sees that, lacking a fixed nature, we are extraordinarily variable, complex, and capable of conscious transformation. The resolution of the global crisis requires a profound transformation in consciousness, not further technical and bureaucratic solutions. Some call it an ecospiritual revolution. Social structures are not entities separate from human beings; and if we are to change the world, we have to change our selves and our notions that power lies in our ability to subordinate others, especially by use of violence.

The confluence of feminism, Buddhism, and Earth-based forms of spirituality and humanist psychology is helping to produce a radically different concept of power suited to the contemporary project of psychosocial transformation. Within this world view, power is equated not with domination and aggression but with partnership and compassion; it is not coercion of nature or of other human beings but a force within the self in connection with others. This concept of power is based on an understanding of the fundamental equality of all people, respect for all life, a deep sensitivity toward the oneness of life and the necessity for cooperation and balance between the different parts and aspects of the whole. The separation and ranking of the intellect and rationality over intuition and the emotions, technology over nature, the left brain over the right brain, men over women, whites over people of color account for some of the diverse but interrelated inequities that need to be redressed in the process of transformation into a new world order. The identification of the self with the human body and mind obstructs the development of empathic connections with the other. Only as human beings soften inside can we feel the pain of those destroyed by war, rape, poverty, and disease as if it were our own pain. It is said that true love is unconditional, not a dualistic emotion. The experience of love arises when we release our separateness into the universal.

In a brutal world, where people are socialized to exploit each other, how does one empower the self in the face of gross violations of one's own rights? To do so requires strong self-discipline and commitment to a universal ethical code of conduct such as that presented by Buddhist precepts and a nonviolent methodology like the one experimented with by Mahatma Gandhi.[2] According to the Gandhian concept of *satyagraha,* nonviolence is not passive resistance but an active power requiring creative confrontation. It is a power that lies in the process of discovering reality; it is a force of truth. As such, it is diametrically opposed to the power that comes from the barrel of the gun, the power that is founded upon the notions of separation, control, and permanence, the conceptual bedrocks of the contemporary military-industrial world order.

The task facing the women's movement, then, is to evolve social environments in which respect and caring undergird all relationships.

MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Human history reveals that there is a dialectical struggle between the forces of war and peace, domination and partnership, repression and freedom. In this struggle, women have managed to maintain spheres of female control in which life and human reproduction were valued and protected from conquest and destruction by men. Likewise, many other people have struggled against domination, seeking freedom from compulsory heterosexuality, from slavery, and from incorporation into the technocapitalist order.

In the modern world, feminism is one of the major philosophical and social movements taking up the challenge of psychosocial transformation to achieve peace, partnership, and freedom. The limitations of liberal feminism, which accepts materialism and individualism and seeks equality, self development, and success for women within the technocapitalist, hierarchical model, have become apparent to women burdened with the superwoman syndrome. But the conceptual limitations of liberal feminism are now being transcended by alternative visions which integrate socialist feminism, radical feminism, and those strands of feminist thought that focus on spirituality and ecology. These new visions move beyond the narrow concerns of middle-class white women to recognize poor women of color (those most oppressed by the white male social order) as the critical link in the process of global transformation.[3] The world has always had strong women like Sojourner Truth, and today we need to hear from more women such as Rigoberta Menchu, an Indian woman leader from Guatemala,[4] Elvia Alvarado, a *campesino* organizer from Honduras,[5] and Domitila Barrios, a miner's wife from Bolivia.[6]

Socialist feminists have long argued that women cannot find liberation within capitalism. There is plenty of contemporary evidence for this claim, especially within the ruthlessly exploited Third World. Similarly, the radical feminist argument that women's freedom cannot be found within patriarchal social structures is confirmed everywhere one looks, from corporate board rooms to family bedrooms, from the feminization of poverty to the myriad forms of physical and psychological violence directed against women. Some see an opportunity for freedom from patriarchal control in new reproductive technologies. But ultimately, artificial reproductive measures do not signify freedom; rather, they reinforce the growing dehumanization of our lives. The challenge is not to deepen our separation from each other and nature but to strengthen our connections while safeguarding and celebrating our differences. The strengthening of women's solidarity and women's communities worldwide is essential if women are to find greater material and psychological freedom from the pain and suffering that are inflicted upon them.

The task facing the women's movement, then, is to evolve social environments in which respect and caring undergird all relationships. The mother-child bond is often seen as the quintessential expression of unconditional love and compassion; it is perhaps the only relationship in which the interest of the other overrides the interest of the self. But in a world where so many children are without adequate material and emotional care, the social function of mothering cannot be restricted to biological mothers—it must extend to communities as it often did in tribal and rural societies. The metaphor of mothering should be used not to restrict women to nurturance and caregiving but to widen the scope of human caring to include the public sphere and greater numbers of men. But in order for human nurturance to be perceived as a strong rather than a weak activity, a basic social shift must also take place from a profit-oriented militaristic world to a people- and Earth-oriented compassionate world. Here, we can draw inspiration from the spiritual strand of feminism which identifies the Mother Goddess as a symbol of female power and also from the Sanskrit concept *shakti,*[7] which refers to the primordial female energy of the universe, connecting the Earth as mother of all life with woman as potential bearer of human life.[8]

In the struggles for environmental preservation and human rights, women, often those from the most oppressed groups, are emerging as the champions. Thus, we see women leading forest-protection efforts, like those associated with the Chipko movement in India.[9] They are putting ancient rituals to new purposes, adapting the ancient custom of embracing trees in order to protect them from timber contractors, developers, and government agents promoting development projects. In the United States, ordinary homemakers and workers like Karen Silkwood have frequently taken the lead in the fight against the nuclear industry and toxic dumping in places such as Three Mile Island and Love Canal. In Brazil and Indonesia, among other places, people who find their living on the land are pitted against giant corporations and international development agencies. While these people, like the Chipko women, continue to draw on ancient beliefs and rituals, they are, ironically, also being forced to enter into modern political battlefields—the electronic media

and the courts of law—in order to safeguard the survival of their land, their cultures, and themselves.

Other women are taking the lead in movements to preserve human life against political violence. Thus, desperate yet determined women, organized into Mothers Groups in Argentina, El Salvador, Chile, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and elsewhere, are demanding the return of their disappeared children. In Argentina, the mothers are using diapers to create barricades against the police, just as in Greenham Common women have woven webs around the missile sites! The commitment to nonviolent methods of confrontation is one of the strongest attributes of women's struggles. If this commitment is not strengthened through international support, however, feminist activists facing increasing violence and backlash around the world may be driven to take up violence themselves.

The creation of a new world order must involve the sharing of global resources across classes, nations, ethnic groups, and the sexes. Although the defeat of Communism in Eastern Europe is being cheered around the world and thousands of people are still struggling against Communist dictatorships in Asia, the reality of class struggle and the importance of Marxist analysis are not completely lost on the Third World. How can there be peace and justice in a world where over a trillion dollars a year is spent on weapons of destruction while sixty thousand people die each day of hunger? How can there be peace and justice when about six percent of the world's population, living in the United States, claims nearly half of the world's income,[10] and women, who make up half the global population and do two-thirds of the world's work, have only one-tenth of the world's income and one one-hundredth of the world's property?[11] People in the West, especially industrial workers and middle-class people struggling to maintain their lifestyle, often vent their anger and frustration at Japan or workers in the Third World. Within the Third World, however, there is increasing recognition that economic injustice, ecological destruction, and militarism are interconnected, rooted in the dominant military-industrial global order. This recognition and the struggles of Third World peoples for their rights and dignity frequently go unreported by the mainstream news media that are controlled by a few corporations. By contrast, liberation theologists in Latin America clearly understand the necessity for global redistribution of power and resources, as do the socially-engaged Buddhist peace and ecology activists working for change in Asia. Their emerging networks of engaged spirituality represent progressive alternatives to rightwing religious fundamentalism, which brings together religion and politics in order to conserve rather than transform the decaying authoritarian social order.

It is in the Third World that the struggle between the forces of repression and freedom, between the old order and the new order, is being most violently fought. Unlike in the West, where one can still speak in relative safety, in the Third World, agents of change—union organizers, environmental activists, human-rights lawyers, and intellectuals—are routinely killed or forced into exile. Environmental activist Chico Mendes in Brazil and the six Jesuit priests in El Salvador are among the most well-known recent victims. When those in power do not allow nonviolent opposition, the groups fighting for change often take up violence themselves. As a result, the world military economy and the global arms trade are further strengthened. The advanced capitalist world itself is not immune to the stresses of social dissatisfaction, with escalating violence in urban life being one manifestation of these stresses. The rise of political and economic conservatism and religious fundamentalism signals the efforts of the old order to protect vested interests against the liberalizing efforts of certain social sectors, namely, women, people of color, homosexuals, and other minorities. With repression comes the threat of violence, of ever-increasing frequency and ferocity, putting the entire planet at risk. Those who are struggling for the new world order need to do so nonviolently, with compassion and creativity. For, as the Buddha said, "Hatred ceaseth not by hatred, hatred ceaseth with love."[12]

CHALLENGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The connected problems of ecological destruction, violence, and inequality all require solutions at many different levels from the global and social structural to the individual and interpersonal. For example, planetary survival requires change from unbridled expansion to conservation at both the public and corporate levels. The excesses of middle-class consumerism must be halted and the virtues of simple living recognized. World peace requires a shift from military-civilian economies at the institutional level and a shift from hatred to compassion at the individual level; global equality requires a shift from exploitation to redistribution at the level of social structure and a transition from greed to generosity at the personal level.

A wide array of organizations and networks is working towards progressive change at all these levels. Unfortunately, they are insufficiently linked by a unified vision. For example, in the United States, the progressive movement is separated into multiple single-issue concerns: tropical forests, whales, dolphins, vegetarianism, peace, nuclear disarmament, human rights, women, gays, lesbians, the disabled, civil rights, housing, Tibet, Central America, the Middle East, apartheid, AIDS, holistic health, New Age spirituality, and so on. In part because of this fragmentation, some organizations and groups fall prey to the compartmentalizing mentality and divisive tactics of the very social order that they all oppose. Further, political groups so divided have a tendency to merely react to policies and actions emanating from those in power rather than initiate authentic actions of their own.

Focus on individual issues is essential if we are to gain depth of understanding and develop strategies with regard to specific problems. But making the connections between the different issues and struggles—for example, between peace, justice, and ecology, between politics and spirituality—is equally essential for transcending the dominant divisive paradigm.[13] Without a vision of the whole and without coalition building, progressive forces will not be able to understand their unique roles within the process of global transition. One way of approaching the difficult task of building holistic conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and rallying points is to identify the different levels of social reality, from the planetary to the individual, and the kinds of strategies for social change required at each level (see Figures 2 and 3).

Those who are struggling for the new world order need to do so nonviolently, with compassion and creativity.

A closer consideration of specific strategies will also reveal the interconnectedness on the different levels and the necessity for integrated actions. For example, nonrenewable sources of energy such as oil and invaluable life-support systems such as tropical forests need to be considered the common property of all. They should be managed by impartial international bodies committed to the enforcement of a global ecological agenda. The Third World debt that sucks out the life blood of people and leads to devastations of the land must be either scrapped or renegotiated on an entirely new, humane basis. Creative solutions like the exchange of debt for forest protection and the development of renewable sources of energy need greater support.

Peace movements in Western countries must seriously attend to and help eradicate the "low-intensity wars" in the Third World which are rooted in the West through measures like tax resistance, essential in forcing military economies to convert to civilian ones. The flow of armaments to the rest of the world must be stemmed. Citizens groups must exert pressure on Western governments to attach human-rights conditions to aid to repressive regimes; economic boycotts of goods coming from such countries will also help put pressure on governments to improve their human-rights records. Impartial global organizations need to be created in order to oppose military aggression of one state against another by enforcing the stipulations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principle of nonintervention.

There must be uniform codes of rights for workers with regard to working conditions and living wages. Mechanisms are needed to enable workers to organize across countries. A specific global agenda on women's rights needs to be developed, focusing on economic and reproductive issues common to women across cultures. Property rights, training and education, equal wages, and workers' rights have to be included in an expanded definition of women's human rights, as do regulations on population control, genetic engineering, violence against women, and the sale of women and children.

The need to create and enforce human rights, ecological, and economic policies at the global level raises some fundamental questions about the role of the nation-state in a transformed world order. Today, many ethnic groups are clamoring for their own nation-states, but these may be anachronistic in a world where multinational corporations are the dominant actors and most governments serve corporate interests and the interests of local elites. There may be a need for world government or world federalism in the twenty-first century. But how can global action and organization be managed in tandem with essential decentralization? The aphorism "think globally, act locally" captures the perspective required as we move toward a new world order. We must avoid the over-centralization and homogenization that authoritarian Communism and the capitalist market system and Western culture have created. Rather than homogeneity, global survival requires diversity: hence the importance of efforts to maintain biodiversity, bioregionalism, community self-sufficiency, cultural diversity, and other decentralizing tendencies within the environmental movement. Ecological wisdom is contained within alternative cultural traditions. Thus, in creating interesting hybrid multicultural art forms and in promoting English as the global *lingua franca*, we

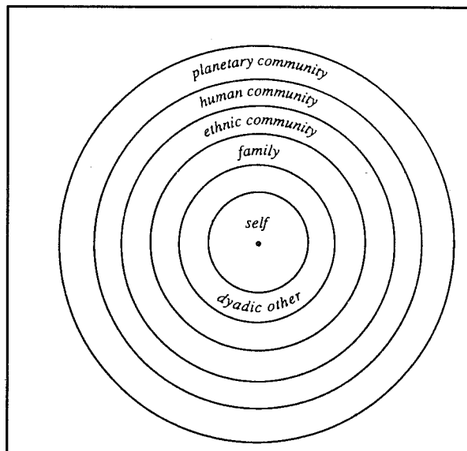


***Figure 2:* Different Levels of Social Reality**

***Figure 3:* Structures of Psychosocial Transformation**

Levels/Spheres	*Objectives*	*Strategies*
planetary community	interspecies relations/ relationship to nature	global ecological agenda
human community	global family	global human-rights agenda
ethnic/regional community	cultural foundations	multiculturalism/ bioregionalism
work/school/community/ neighborhood	ethical-moral foundations	community economics/ grass-roots democracy
family	shared living	diversity in family types
dyadic relations parent-child female-female male-male female-male	intimacy	commitment to reciprocity
individual	relationship to self/ self-transcendence	meditation

should try not to extinguish the indigenous artistic traditions and ancient languages of the world. Decentralization can also provide the political basis for more genuine forms of democracy and freedom. The Western model of democracy, relying on the individual vote, is only one model—and perhaps not the most successful one, at that; in the United States, the self-proclaimed champion of freedom and democracy in the world, for example, most people do not exercise their right to vote. Other, much older traditions of participatory democracy, like the tribal councils of Native Americans and the village councils of India,[14] need to be reconsidered and possibly adapted in appropriate settings, and new systems need to be developed as well.

Because many intermediate-scale structures, such as the neighborhood and the family, have become weakened in contemporary society, viable social structures linking the individual to the new global culture must be devised. Communities and families based on the principles of cooperation, survival, and reciprocity have to be built anew. People without material resources have always had to turn to each other for support; without mutual aid and sharing, humanity would have disappeared much earlier. But now, a sense of community needs to be consciously created, not simply for immediate physical survival but for global survival and the survival of future generations. In this respect, the community-building by Gandhian groups in Asia and the efforts of co-housing and other community-based groups around the world need greater recognition.[15] Similarly, we should support and expand self-help therapy groups that offer people afflicted with addictions opportunities for self-empowerment in supportive settings freed from the cash nexus. Such important therapeutic work needs to be linked with efforts to eradicate the social-structural roots of addiction.

A precondition of a transformed world is the redefinition of family to include more varied configurations of members and roles. The male-headed nuclear family, with its attendant myths of male protectors and dependent submissive housewives, is inimical to the social and human development of both women and men and also anachronistic in a world where reportedly one-third of households are headed by women. The building of freer social institutions and networks requires the creation of individual relationships based upon respect and reciprocity, but the development of open relationships is extremely difficult. Even those committed to change often slip into the security of the dominance-subordination model epitomized by the male-female relationship in the patriarchal family. Female-headed households and other types of extended families and nonbiological families need recognition and support from the larger communities in which they are placed.

Although as individuals we have little or no control over outside forces, including other people, we do have control over ourselves. The relation to the self is the foundation of psychological strength and freedom. As Buddhist teachings make clear, the notion of a separate self is ultimately an illusion, causing much human confusion and suffering, but the concept of the illusory self must be carefully applied. In a world where the majority of people, especially women and people of color, have been denied any sense of self and are struggling to achieve not only material survival but cultural identity, groups in power might misuse visions of organic unity and the non-self to keep the

oppressed in their places. Most people, it seems, need to develop a sense of self before they can transcend it.

Education plays the central role in all these different transformations. Educational systems now in place are constructed largely to uphold the status quo and maintain rigid and hierarchical occupational systems. Nonetheless, many individuals and organizations, mostly outside the established educational systems, are attempting to prepare students for a new world order. During the last twenty years, scholars in Women's Studies have made extraordinary progress in bringing women's experiences and perspectives into the college curriculum and academic discourse. By developing approaches like action research, educators like Paulo Freire[16] have brought social analysis closer to solving social problems. New Age educational centers, drawing on traditional therapeutic and artistic modalities from around the world, encourage people to express fully their emotional and physical selves. Great teachers such as S. N. Goenka[17] and Thich Nhat Hanh[18] are helping thousands of people to learn the techniques of meditation and the universal teachings of the Buddha Dhamma. Peace activists and educators are developing innovative methods for resolving conflicts and building coalitions.[19] New electronic media, in addition to ancient methods of communication, need to be used more widely and creatively in bringing these diverse approaches to the larger public.

Despite these many efforts, it is not always easy for an individual or group to feel optimistic or powerful. The dominant structures are *violent,* and we have deeply internalized them. Often, it seems easier to give in to anger and hatred than to develop the tolerance, humility, deep self-love, and inner peace that constructive change requires. For this reason, many feminist, socialist, and other progressive collectives have folded or given way to authoritarian models, remaining socialist or feminist only in name. The disparity between theory and method is also acute in that part of Women's Studies confined within the hierarchical academic system.

The struggle against the old order must be creative, holistic, and as joyous as possible. It must escape stultifying and obfuscating academic discourse, whether Marxist, feminist or any other, appealing to human emotional needs for connecting with one another and celebrating nature and life.

Some people and organizations are willing to change only those aspects of the old social order detrimental to their self-interest, reluctant to abandon their existing privileges. For instance, some men speak of feminism but are unwilling to open their hearts to the issues raised by feminists. Similarly, many whites speak of cultural diversity but resist moving away from the dominance-subordination paradigm in their actual behavior. Some Westerners taking on Native American or Buddhist philosophies, rituals, and names pay no heed to the suffering of Native Americans existing on reservations or indigenous Buddhists being killed by authoritarian regimes. Some radical environmentalists state that both famine in Africa and AIDS arise inevitably from ecological imbalance in the human population without examining their own ignorance, racism, and homophobia. It is indeed easier to place the blame on others, but one of the fundamental tenets of self-empowerment is that we are responsible for our own change. Since we are each unique and differently placed in the world, the kinds of changes we have to make are also different. For example, as groups, men and Westerners need to share resources more widely, while women and people of the so-called Third World need to assert their rights. Socially subjugated groups and individuals need to develop a healthy sense of self, whereas dominant groups may need to work toward transcending their egotistical selves. Then the world can become more balanced and hence more peaceful.

The struggle within each of us between the old order and the new is a constant one. If we apply Buddhist concepts to our modern circumstances, we can see life as a battle between those aspects motivated by ignorance, greed, fear, and hatred and those motivated by compassion, loving kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. We hold both a need for security, permanence, and control and a need to let go and move with the natural processes of life. Historically, there has been an inverse relationship between technological and material development and human spiritual development. The necessary concern for physical survival, as interpreted within capitalist culture, misleads people into confusing freedom with materialism. The Buddha Dhamma teaches the universal laws of nature, explaining the law of impermanence—*anicca*—which holds that all mental and physical phenomena are subject to change and that attachment to inevitably changing phenomena causes human suffering.[20] It shows that craving and constant external seeking are the roots of unhappiness, that the pursuit of permanence and security are delusions, and that freedom and happiness are within us, not outside. The dominant culture and its component hierarchies of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy are based on surface criteria; they disallow healthy inner development and balance, essential foundations for a new world order. But, today the spiritual path is merging with the political path as more people throughout the world place their political activism upon spiritual,

moral, and ethical foundations.

Increasing numbers of people are now conscious of the global human dilemma yet, caught between the old order and the new vision, they remain afraid to make necessary personal changes. The shift required at this point is not necessarily a final gigantic transformation, however. Difference and struggle, being aspects of nature, are bound to continue even after more egalitarian social structures are set in place. As we enter a new stage of consciousness and maturity, we are forced to give up our fantasies of the New Age as permanent paradise or utopia. Unfortunately, glorious sunsets and erotic embraces with soul mates are not eternal! At best, we can expect to work toward inner equanimity, our minds more poised and less swayed by adversity, as we work together toward a society where peace and harmony prevail over violence and exploitation. Even if humanity makes the required paradigm shift now, there are no guarantees that, in the future, hierarchy and exploitation will not become the dominant forces again. The forces of freedom and repression are in constant dialectical interaction.

By and large, the old model of revolution has failed. Fundamental nonviolent change, which requires slow and gradual steps, cannot be postponed. Vision and goals are important, but since the future can never be known, means must not be sacrificed for ends. Meditation, an important tool in the process of transforming consciousness, teaches us how to dwell in the present moment, flowing with the process without attempting to control its outcome; practiced properly, meditation can provide the psychological foundation for the shift to a new global order. It may not be necessary for all 5.2 billion or more people in the world to do sitting meditation, but it might be a good idea if the poor young boys running around killing on behalf of causes they hardly understand and the rich older men making money from arms sales were made to meditate instead! Seriously, dispossessed youth cannot be turned away from violence merely by offers of meditation retreats; they require food, shelter, clothing, education, and human caring; in other words, a social order that gives them a chance to live.

To truly understand and appreciate life, we have to come to terms with the reality and inevitability of death. Modern technological expansion is ultimately driven by a deep fear of death and is an attempt to conquer it. But humanity will never conquer death. The totality and mystery of nature is beyond the comprehension of woman or man. Life is precious and precarious. Caught in the daily struggles for physical and emotional survival, we easily lose sight of the brighter and lighter sides of life. The process of working for change should also be a process of global community building. The struggle against the old order must be creative, holistic, and as joyous as possible. It must escape stultifying and obfuscating academic discourse, whether Marxist, feminist or any other, instead appealing to human emotional needs for connecting with one another and celebrating nature and life. Music, theater, other forms of innovative arts and entertainment, and the creative use of mass-communication systems are vital in the human struggle for freedom and happiness. While fully recognizing that the struggle is fraught with danger, let us not forget to enjoy ourselves in the process of change. Like Emma Goldman, I, too, don't want to be part of the revolution if I can't dance.[21] ∞

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Creativity and Spirituality

Notes from an Interview with Mayumi Oda

Interviewed by Gail Hanlon

I have always wanted my art to be a celebration of the spirit. If you feel the real joy and the real spirit within you, they come out naturally. If you really go deep inside, everything is there. You feel and, if you want it to come out, it will come out.

Through creativity, through my work, I'm getting to know who I am, and I'm also creating who I am. Work is the place where I meet who I am. Especially when I was creating my book, *Goddesses,* I felt that we are all Goddesses and I wanted to articulate that feeling. Through doing that, I got more in touch with my spirit, my spiritual self.

I was brought up in a Buddhist family and I later practiced *zazen,* Zen meditation. Although at present I don't feel close to Buddhism as a religious tradition, I practice meditation every day. I think that that is the source of my spirit.

Much of the traditional practice is patriarchal, so I practice a much softer Zen meditation that allows me to see how I am rigid, where I am stuck. This leads back to the question of how to release a celebration of spirit. I have to be willing to find out who I am and to find out what are my own boundaries, what are my fears, what is making me so limited. Knowing who we are, we feel compassion; we feel deep connectedness and love for each other.

I draw mandalas the first thing in the morning after I have meditated and had breakfast. Before I do other studio work, I draw these mandalas, which to me are like picture journals. They are a way to find out where I am, how I am feeling, what is going on inside of me. Drawing has been my way of expressing my feelings.

Resources from many different cultures, things that have been kept secret within various cultures, are becoming more available, and I think that we will see that influence in the nineties. What was devalued is now valued: how we lived together as a community in the old villages, how we lived more closely with the Earth, how we honored spirit, how we felt reverence for the Earth and nature. All that we did not value for a long time now has to be reevaluated.

Each one of us has to go deep inside of ourselves to feel how we are interconnected. But we have such terror of going back to live in old ways because some of what came with that cultural tradition hurt us. So we have to reevaluate what has been the hindrance and what in the tradition has confined us; we must reevaluate and take whatever is valuable. We have to learn from it.

I think that the core of meditation practice is to find out who we are and eventually

"Isn't It About Time for Us to Ride an Ox, Too?", silk-screen print, 24" x 36", © 1984 Mayumi Oda. The ox symbolizes enlightenment; traditional paintings always depicted a boy riding an ox.

"Dakini, The Sky Goer," silk-screen print, 24" x 36", © 1986 Mayumi Oda. Look into the mirror of your mind, the secret home of Dakini.

we find out that we are all connected, not separate. And from that place we feel that we have to help each other; we have to live in harmony with each other. I think that a lot of other cultural traditions have something to offer in this regard.

Many cultures are now merging. Women and men are both trying to get in touch with the feminine. When I think about feminism in the nineties, I see that there is an immense possibility to create something entirely new, something we can't even imagine. I hope that it is even beyond what I imagine, that people will really walk with the spirituality, the harmony of each other. And in some ways it might be a very simple life, because we are finding that all our material wealth is not really fulfilling our lives. It might be a very simple, rich life—in a spiritual way, not a material way—in harmony with the Earth, if we can survive.

Patriarchal economic structure is holding on until the last minute, as we saw in the Persian Gulf war, and the establishment is giving society the illusion that we are doing all right in America. But war is also inside of America where children don't have a good education because there is no money for that. All of us have to take care of the future, not just women of color. The spiritual value that I think is important is compassion, kindness for each other. It's really based on an understanding of how we are one—one being—how we are not separated. Spirituality is not a very difficult thing—it is just an understanding of how we are interconnected. If we are interconnected, then we cannot damage the earth, and we can't damage or kill each other. We have to take care of each other because that is just taking care of ourselves. I also think that the desire for community among different groups of people is growing at this time. We are building a community in different places, in different ways. It is simultaneously happening to many of us.

Those of us in the dominant culture have to be willing to see how limited we are, how greedy we are, and how narrow we are. First, we have to face our fears and pains, then we can feel reverence for nature, the harmony it gives to us, how the spirits have been kind to us. Then we can really celebrate our spiritual selves. We can really dance.

But if we try to dance the spirit without knowing the shadow side that we all have, we can't really dance with our full grace and divine spirit. Once you have started to see the shadow side of yourself, nothing is hidden. If you can fully see, you don't feel fearful. That hidden side of the self has a lot of force, and if we work from that force we do harm to each other. Historically, people have not wanted to talk about these things—especially in Christianity and Judaism, where evil was so pushed down that people really did not realize how evil we could be. On the other hand, many other traditions have incorporated that side in Goddesses like Kali and Dakini and concepts like "hell realms," encountering your shadow side. There's a tremendous richness in the idea that you can see your hell realm. That is the kind of idea that other cultures have to offer: that we can meet and embrace our evil.

I am beginning to use art as a shamanic path. That is the work that I am doing now. I see how limited I am, whose limits these are, what I fear, how that is cultural. For instance, if I talk to Japanese people, I become a very old Japanese woman. I see how I do that to myself. So I've been trying to see how I am. How pained. How I have been afraid of this and that. It's not a most wonderful place to be but I think that the other side of the coin is that if you know this, your actions become more careful, more responsible. You try not to do harm. I've always felt as if I had a spiritual path and now I feel that I am carefully taking the steps that I have to walk.

I'm also writing a book called *Gaia's Gardens* about the way that I lived in Muir Beach, California, in the eighties. I lived close to nature—I gardened, I farmed, and I painted flowers, vegetables, people, and fields. My book is really about how I did that, and how nature healed my pain, and how I feel that I have to live with the Earth. It will also include a collection of my paintings. But as I write, my life changes, so the writing changes, and it sometimes feels as if I'm living a book.

I have also done some installations in nature—they were like prayers. At the time of the Persian Gulf war, I did something I called "Peace Tree" that involved tying paper prayers to a tree, hundreds of prayers. Every day I tied the paper prayers, the way you decorate a Christmas tree. In order to tie these prayers in a loving gentle way, so that the paper wouldn't get torn, I had to be very careful, very peaceful. So I chanted the mantra, "inner peace, outer peace." In Shinto, we believe that trees, rocks, and rivers are all spirits, so I asked the tree spirit for some help. That's the sort of thing that I'm doing now, the form in which I've been working, and I hope that in some way I am making a difference.

I believe in our strength as women, as creators. When I feel this strength, the spirits start to paint, dance, and sing with me. It just comes out of me to be shared with other people because it does not belong to me alone. ∞

Mayumi Oda *is an artist and a practicing Zen Buddhist. Mayumi was born in Japan, graduated from the Tokyo University of Fine Arts, and moved to the U.S. in the 1960s. Her work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Princeton University Graphic Collection, and the Tokyo University of Fine Arts. She is the author of two books,* Goddesses *and* Happy Veggies, *and is currently writing* Gaia's Gardens. *(Photo © C. Stewart.)*

"Wind Goddess," acrylic on canvas, 36" x 95", © 1986 Mayumi Oda. I have worked a lot with alternative energy sources, like wind, sources that unlike nuclear energy, leave no trace in the soil or the air. Clean energy requires no violence. It doesn't take anything away, and it changes our consciousness.

"Amaterasu-Omi-Kami," acrylic on canvas, 60" x 96," © 1991 Mayumi Oda. The chief divinity of Shinto religion is the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, whose name means "great shining heaven," and who is associated with sunlight, a renewable source of energy.

Living in a Liminal Time

An Interview with Jean Shinoda Bolen

Interviewed by Gail Hanlon

***Jean Shinoda Bolen**, M.D., is a psychiatrist and Jungian analyst in private practice. She is the author of* Goddesses in Everywoman, Gods in Everyman, The Tao of Psychology, *and* Ring of Power *(to be published in May 1992); a clinical professor of Psychiatry at the University of California at San Francisco; and a former member of the Ms. Foundation for Women Board. Jean's grandparents on both sides came to the United States from Japan after being converted to Christianity. "Metaphors such as 'straddling two worlds' or 'having binocular vision,'" Jean says, "describe the perspective from which my perceptions come. It is a way of seeing and being in the world that grows out of being 'other' and yet 'accepted' in my many worlds. This is the way it is for many women of color."*

woman of power: *How would you describe the work you are currently doing?*
Jean Shinoda Bolen: My work is in three parts these days: my clinical practice as a Jungian analyst, my writing, and the lectures and workshops that I present. All of them have to do with empowering or inspiring people to determine for themselves what matters to them; they learn not to give that power over to somebody else, whether it be the family or the patriarchal culture. When I first entered the profession of psychiatry, we really didn't have a notion of patriarchy. The whole notion that we were defined and limited by stereotypes came with the women's movement. And then by bridging the worlds of the women's movement and Jungian psychology, I could see that women, since I was at that point in my writing focusing on women, were greatly shaped by the archetypes inside of us as well as the stereotypes outside of us. Consciousness raising required that we be aware of both. Then women who were reading *Goddesses in Everywoman* began to use it as a text on women's spirituality, although it had started out as a psychology of women.

woman of power: *Do you think that under ideal circumstances clinical psychology could be considered a form of spiritual practice?*
Jean: Yes. First of all, my work comes out of a strong heart place and a sense that each of us has a strong spiritual center. One needs to remember that the word for psychology, *psyche* in Greek, means "soul" or "butterfly." Thus, it really is about soul growth and transformation. I think that most clinical psychologists at their best are responding to a wish to heal their patients, and that each school of thought has its own focus as to what is the cause of the suffering or the wounding that leads to the symptoms, and that each provides a different method to help. But most of them leave out the soul or the spiritual dimension, except in Jungian psychology and transpersonal psychology. We also have the twelve-step programs, which really could be considered a psychology, and which were from the very beginning influenced by Jung and carried as their charge the idea that the healing will come as the individual with the addiction gets in touch with the Self.

woman of power: *What do you see happening in the women's spirituality movement?*
Jean: I see women's spirituality as a quiet, gradual movement all over this country and in other countries as well. When the concepts are introduced, women respond because words are being given to something that they intrinsically seem to know. I feel that it is being ignored by the greater culture because it doesn't claim any turf. It is not competitive for the power that exists in the outer world. It is an interior, empowering movement that was being ignored until the concept of the Goddess became more widespread. In recent years the media has begun to write features on the Goddess movement. But what they seem to be drawn to is just the tip of the iceberg. Although women's spirituality is about the Goddess, many women wouldn't even say it is so, because "the Goddess" has many different, individual forms of expression.

I think that women's spirituality has to do with recognizing that there is a sacred dimension to the feminine, which therefore has an enormous number of definitions. But when a woman feels that there is

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something sacred in her life, in herself, which is related to the feminine aspect of herself and the embodiment of a divine quality in the Earth, in nature, in other human beings, it is a quiet spirituality. It doesn't require institutions; it doesn't require dogma. This interior knowing is what always interests me in my work, giving individuals a sense that they are the authority in their own lives and that they should not give to others the power to label, or define, what is significant and deeply human to them. I think all of this work is saying much the same thing, that we are basically on a spiritual path, and that the choices we make in life matter. Those choices are based on consciousness and following what only we can know is deeply meaningful and it is based on love.

woman of power: *Can you talk about those individual choices, about how unifying those things within yourself transforms culture as a whole?*
Jean: Well, it begins with an individual's quest for truth and freedom. It begins in the simple form with which the women's movement first began, which was the circle, within which one told the truth of one's own life. That was empowering, not only for the woman who spoke her truth but also for the women who heard it and were then inspired or empowered to do the same. In good psychotherapy that also happens: there is a safe place. I call it—and others do too, but I specifically refer to it as—a *temenos,*[1] which is Greek for sanctuary. Within that sanctuary, it is understood that one will not be exploited or judged. Whatever is said about what one has done, what one feels, or what one aspires to is received as if in a sanctuary. Then whatever is said gradually becomes more true.

The latest movement in psychology has to do with the awareness that twelve-step programs have brought to us and out of that comes the notion that the great majority of us come from dysfunctional families. The number is very large because we live in a dysfunctional society. If you're in a dysfunctional society—that is, a patriarchy within which power is the ruling principle—then truth suffers because telling the truth is not always safe. Consequently, in order to keep yourself safe, you repress what you know to be true because it is dangerous to speak it. And gradually you become inarticulate, and then perhaps numb to what it is you fear and what it is you know to be true, until you find yourself in a safe place, or *temenos,* where you can gradually acknowledge what is true.

So whether it be a women's group, or a twelve-step group, or a safe psychotherapy relationship, or, where it often happens among women, in friendships that have extended over years, there has to be a safe place where we can tell the truth if we are to remember, perceive, feel, and know what is true. The authenticity that results is a challenge to the established order, which is hierarchical and patriarchal and based on power. So as individuals first know the truth and then speak it, the greatest potential lies in the transformation that happens within individual relationships, where one person starts telling the truth and it affects the system. This process may begin with a couple, a family, or an institution. If people were in circles of truth, then it would certainly be a different kind of culture, where people wouldn't put on a persona or a false face and would be willing to be vulnerable and to tell the truth. Of course, women are better at that than men, so we will do it first.

woman of power: *Do you think that healing is taking place on a mythic level in the sense that cultural stereotypes are being transformed by the women's movement?*
Jean: I think that we are in the midst of a transformative myth right now, one having to do with the emergence of the Goddess into individual psyches and the return of the Goddess into the culture. In a culture that is patriarchal in its religion, everything that is feminine and of women is degraded, held to be inferior, and not of divinity. We have a Judeo-Christian tradition that says that men are created in the image of God and are here to have dominion over everything, especially over that which is considered of the feminine. The whole point of the hierarchy is that everything closest to God is always represented as male. Also, patriarchal culture defines some things as masculine and others as feminine and considers the latter inferior. So these qualities, which are in truth in everyone regardless of gender, are repressed or devalued in everyone.

When divinity carries a feminine face, and when there is reverence for that divinity, the mythic underpinning of culture as we know it shifts greatly, because then we no longer have a dominator culture that has power over an inferior culture. If the culture has a return of the experience of the feminine as divinity, the Earth as having a sacred dimension, and if women are considered to be in the image of the Goddess, that is, carriers of life who bring through their bodies the miracle of birth, then those very things that are considered animalistic by masculine spiritual standards become holy. And you treat that which is holy differently. So if the Goddess is coming back, as I truly feel She is, as an archetypal underpinning for healing experiences, there would be a major shift in how the Earth and women and the feminine are treated. That would be a major revolution. Actually I think of it more as an evolution.

woman of power: *What do you think remains to be done if this evolution of the Goddess is to take place?*
Jean: Enough individuals have to evolve, however many it takes to become a critical mass, until what was once unthinkable becomes the norm. For example, for about twenty years after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, everybody to some extent was aware that the potential to destroy the Earth existed. Because of the Cold War and the developing stockpiles of these weapons, it was assumed that there was nothing we could do about the inevitability of it. We felt powerless.

But somewhere along the line, individuals started to break through that numbing. An empowering myth

that helped to sustain people who toiled at what others thought of as an impossible task was the story of The Hundredth Monkey, which was tied into the notion of the morphic field, introduced by Rupert Sheldrake, a theoretical biologist. He theorized that when a critical number is reached, the behavior or thinking of that entire species shifts. The Hundredth Monkey story is based on the idea that for society to

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change, someone has to be the first monkey, and someone has to be the fourteenth, and someone has to be the seventy-ninth, for there to be "a hundredth monkey"—whoever it is that tips the scales and, by so doing, changes the thinking of humanity.

I think that that is what happened in the nuclear situation. And although we still have nuclear weapons capabilities, something has shifted in the behavior of the major powers and in consciousness in general, and nuclear war is no longer considered an inevitability.

Each of us who perceives the feminine aspect of divinity, Mother God, the Goddess, however it is that we experience divinity as female, or as also female, is contributing to the resacralization of the Earth and women, and at the same time is influencing a morphic field that has to do with the return of the Goddess into the culture. Major cultural shifts can happen within a couple of hundred years. We now know that there was once a matriarchal culture; we certainly know that it was replaced by a patriarchal culture. As we move out of this second millennium into the third millennium we are, archetypally, entering into a critical passage time, when change can happen. We're approaching that critical transition now. It is what I call a liminal time, a time between worlds, between old and new; "liminal" refers to the threshold or doorway of a place as well as a time of transition. The integration of the sacred dimension of the feminine is a major element in this transition.

Yet every transition time is fraught with the potential for transformation and the potential for destruction. There can be resistance to change because forces of repression can be activated. Look at what happened in China to the students in Tiananmen Square for whom the Goddess of Democracy was a major symbol, or at efforts to reverse the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision.

woman of power: *With respect to moving beyond patriarchal or Graeco-Roman archetypes, do you think that everything is there at that archetypal level, or do you think it is also possible that those things have been lost or forgotten?*
Jean: We have within us the potential to access the patterns that have preceded us, just as in our bodies there are remnants of the evolution that we've made. So we have gills in our necks that are literally covered over, but sometimes they're not covered over completely so that there are cysts in the neck that come from the gill space. Just as the body has recollections of the evolution, so does the psyche. We share a collective unconscious, which means that we have access to the thought patterns of life that preceded us, but we also have the potential to evolve new patterns.

That whole notion of morphic fields that I mentioned earlier provides the theory that would explain how archetypes can also come into being and evolve in us. I definitely do not believe that all we have is what we used to have and forgot. Life itself has transformational potential built into it, why should this be different? Why should we be limited in our minds so that all we can tap into is what has gone on before?

woman of power: *What do you envision for feminism in the nineties?*
Jean: I think that the spiritual dimension is the last and the most significant wave of the women's movement, and that once the model of divinity having a feminine face is brought into the culture, the culture can change. It seems to me that that is in process. I see us generating new archetypes and cultural myths, with the image of Earth from outer space perhaps the most significant new symbol. The Earth is Mother, Gaia, matter, an icon that evokes emotion and imagination. As boundaries and borders diminish and disappear, significance is taken away from artificial, tangible barriers like the Berlin Wall or ideological ones like the Iron Curtain. They lose archetypal significance, and the power of the collective to uphold them as walls lessens until they come down. The image of Earth from outer space also evokes an enlargement of the archetype of Home, which in turn enlarges the notion of hearthkeeping and caretaking. Children of the Earth are growing into maturity and taking on responsibilities. Divinity is increasingly perceived as both Mother and Father. I'm encouraged by all of this, as I think it points in the direction of evolutionary change.

woman of power: *What do you envision for women of color in the nineties?*
Jean: There is a connection between the oppression, exploitation, and devaluation of women and people of color, the ecological rape of the Earth, and the absence of an Earth Mother spirituality. With a return of the Goddess in her many and varied aspects, psychological

values will shift, and this will have enormous positive consequences for the Earth and for women—especially women of color. When god is disembodied—thought of as a powerful, white, male, sky god—the person most "other" is female, of color, and in her body. When there are female images of divinity, there is diversity and particularity. This was characteristic of Goddess spirituality in past historical times as it is now in the emerging Goddess movement. There are dark- and light-skinned images of the Goddess, and maiden, mother, or crone figures, with European, Asian, or African features.

When any female child anywhere can find qualities in herself mirrored back to her by an image of the Goddess, then her positive sense of herself is enhanced, and when others see the Goddess in her as well, it will affect how she is treated and valued. So it is with the Earth, if it is related to as Gaia or Mother Earth or Home, then it—She—will be cared for.

What has been lacking in the mythology of western civilization is a loving and powerful mother. All the mythologies are about powerless women. But when you grow up in a family where your mother is a strong and competent human being, you get a different experience of what the feminine is. All children should have a direct experience of having strong, competent women for mothers.

The values of western civilization whose roots are Greek and Judeo-Christian have set the standards for the rest of the world which the West colonized and made into a market for its products and ideas. That which is "earthy" or dark in color, female, instinctual, natural, or physical in expression is repressed, considered inferior, dangerous, and in need of control or punishment—making it "all right" to be abusive toward people so perceived. Women of color then become the recipient of "dark" projections—forbidden passions and yearnings for earthy experience, for fulfillment of dependency needs. Intelligence is not ascribed to people who are darker or female in the Third World when the so-called First World makes this an attribute of individuals who are white and male.

The power to define, name, and have dominion over others is exercised by patriarchy, with devastating consequences to those who become labelled inferior and treated as such, as well as to the Earth and all life upon it. In a desacralized, soulless, Goddessless world, everything that exists is exploited rather than cared for, because there is no spiritual reason to treat the material world with respect, love, or stewardship. "Matter," "material," and "matrix" have the same linguistic roots as "mother" and "maternal"; when humanity experiences the material world as partaking in the immanent divinity of the feminine, there will be a paradigm shift that changes perception and behavior.

woman of power: *How does your work as a Jungian analyst relate to this?*
Jean: In the dreams that I hear in my office and that are shared with me as I travel and lecture, Goddess figures frequently appear or speak to the dreamer. These dreams stand out because they are usually numinous—meaning that there is a felt quality of awe and significance in the encounter. The dream figure makes a profound impression; in the telling it is as if "she" is a capitalized "She." Often she is a large dark-skinned woman and there is a Goddess quality about her presence. Marion Woodman's comments in an interview first made me aware that what I was hearing was a transpersonal phenomenon. "For some time now," she said, "I have been hearing dreams—hundreds of dreams from both sexes—about big dark women. These . . . women are a redeeming symbol because they have contact with the body and a love for it."[2] In order for there to be the emergence of a major new archetype or the return of a repressed one into the culture, I would expect that image to appear in the dreams and art of individuals, and this is happening.

A large, dark woman is the very opposite of the standard of beauty and femininity that we see reflected all around us, where already-slender Caucasian models have their curves airbrushed out. When such images are the standard, the inability to look like this is a source of self-hatred for women who are darker and have fuller figures and ethnic features. Powerful dream experiences are real events in that they do impact upon the psyche of the dreamer and can change the attitude of the dreamer. To encounter an awesome Goddess figure in a dream is a personal and authentic experience; awakening and seeing other women or oneself as a reflection of this figure has an effect as a positive revaluation on what had been previously devalued.

We can draw our own conclusions when we have such an experience, not just in dreams but in life or even through television. For example, to see Barbara Jordan during the televised Watergate hearings was to experience beauty and intelligence and presence in a large Black woman. I wonder how many young Black women gained a role model as a result and thus became empowered with the realization that it would be wonderful to grow up to look or be like her?

Goddess spirituality has an enormous potential to affect individual psychology as well as cultural values. In this time of transition, individuals are changing—and each of us who does change brings the possibility of a shift in a cultural paradigm closer.

woman of power: *Was there anything else you wanted to say about the theme of the issue, "Women of Color: A Celebration of Spirit"?*
Jean: I would like us to link at the archetypal level with all women at the same time that we feel the uniqueness and richness of our particular ethnicity, appearance, or traditions. One of the things I see in women's spirituality is a connection that many women have to their own cultural archetypes. For example, the chief divinity in Japanese culture is the Goddess Amaterasu. In every culture that I know of, the embodiment of the wisdom that was repressed is considered feminine. I think it is possible to hold within our psyches an awareness of having a feminine identity that is both universal and unique at the same time. By being born female and inhabiting a woman's body, we share an experience with all women throughout time and throughout the world; and because of the particulars of skin color, social class, family, country and historical time, we are also in distinct and separate groups.

I know that if there is a return of the Goddess she will have many names, faces, and manifestations, and individual women will feel her presence within themselves. In my mind's eye, I see a circle of women of many races, of all ages and situations, each having a sense of herself as an extension of the Goddess, and each thus having the expectation that she will be treated with respect. By acting from this premise, these women—my sisters—can change the world. It is fitting that we say *"Namaste"* to one another in turn, by which we mean, "the Goddess in me beholds and honors the Goddess in you."

woman of power: *Do you think that therapy and spirituality can be considered as forms of consciousness raising for women?*
Jean: I think that they can be tremendously empowering. When I was on the board of the Ms. Foundation for Women, one of the things I could see was that if women's centers attended to a spiritual source, they would nurture women, inspire them, and help them to endure. It is very difficult to stand on the front lines with only outrage to sustain us. In order to sustain ourselves on the front lines, I think we really have to tap into something that truly nurtures us. Part of what nurtures us is working in the company of other women, which is clearly one of the major nurturing presences. But beyond that, there is a deeper need to be in touch with what could be called the archetype of the Self. In order to have a sense that at some really deep level this is sacred work, we need to feel the empowerment of the archetype itself as we do the work. So I think the most effective warriors need to in touch with the archetypal Self so that there is compassion as well as anger. There is a whole other level of changing the world that involves compassionate action as well as outrage in action. Outrage may begin it; but somewhere along the line, if the shift can be made to sustain that forward movement through the spiritual dimension, it will be greatly enriched.

woman of power: *What is the source of your spirit or your energy? What empowers you personally?*
Jean: When I was a teenager, I had a direct sense of God so that I did not end up questioning that there is a soul element. And then as my life progressed, that spiritual dimension continued to be a part of my life but it took different forms. I had a sense that women share a truly sacred dimension by being able to carry a new life into this world, through direct expression and experience. It was actually in childbirth, during labor and delivery, that I joined the women's movement. Before then I somehow didn't see the issues as particularly mine, but that particular experience made me aware not only of the sacred dimension of what we experience being in a woman's body, it also gave me tremendous respect for and a sense of connection with every woman who had ever given birth.

And thank goodness for all the women who wrote all the feminist anthologies in the seventies. When I gave birth to my first child, all that information was available to me along with the perspective that I had gained from working with women patients. It was a combination of all of this that brought me into the women's movement. I also felt more like Artemis than any of the other Goddesses. Archetypally, Artemis is the sister, the woman who has a woman-to-herself quality, so that, too, was part of the archetypal and spiritual underpinnings that contributed to my entering the women's movement.

And then there was my own evolution through pilgrimages to sacred places on the Earth. It is said that pilgrims go on pilgrimage to "quicken the divinity," and experience something that they couldn't experience by staying at home. I could feel in my body the energy of places that had been sacred to the Goddess, the druids, and the Christians, and that was a turning point for me. It changed me and the changes were effected on other than a cognitive, abstract, verbal level. This experience told me something about my connection on a sacred level with the Earth, that my body and the Earth were in communion at some level.

It is empowering to have the experience of knowing something deeply, regardless of whether you can explain it to anyone else. Most people have had such an experience, and many of them don't place value on it, and therefore it doesn't instruct their lives. What a mistake this is! All my work really has to do with helping people to remember and reconnect with their own sources of union with divinity and meaning, because I know firsthand that creativity, authenticity, and depth grow out of this. ∞

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Notes

1. *Temenos* is described more fully in *Ring of Power*, by Jean Shinoda Bolen, to be published by HarperCollins, May 1992.
2. See Marion Woodman, *The Tarrytown Letter*, published by the Tarrytown Group, No. 54, December 1985/January 1986.

Radical Women

An Interview with Nancy Reiko Kato

Interviewed by Gail Hanlon

Author's note: Radical Women is a multiracial, socialist feminist organization that works to foster the leadership of women. We are both activists and theoreticians, committed to working in coalition with other groups and individuals regarding common issues. Founded in 1967, Radical Women is an international organization that is the left wing of the feminist movement and the feminist wing of the radical movement. Radical Women believes that women of color and poor and working-class women will provide the leadership for feminism's third wave in the 1990s, unlike feminism's first wave, the suffragist movement, and the second wave, the women's movement of the 1960s. We believe that women, particularly women of color, will provide the leadership that is necessary to usher in the revolutionary change for which the majority of the world's people struggle. We believe that women of color, who face daily sexism, racism, and job discrimination, will lead militant movements because they have the least to lose and the most to gain from the end of capitalism.

woman of power: *Will you elaborate on your statement that "Radical change—as in going to the root or source—ain't gonna happen without women of color at the very center of the struggle, teaching, administering, coordinating, inspiring, speaking, and drawing the movements together"?**

Nancy Reiko Kato: By radical change, I mean that we have to get to the source of our problems. I believe that the source of our problems—homelessness, lack of education, major budget crises, racism, sexism, homophobia, all the "isms"—is the capitalist system under which we live. As things get worse, people don't even have the basics anymore. They are fighting among themselves for necessities, and I don't believe that this system can give these things to them, because if it could, it would. Many people are beginning to understand that the society in which we live cannot provide for them anymore, and what they want is an alternative—a radical, revolutionary alternative.

I think that women of color have always been at the center of any radical change, we're just not recognized as such. For example, in the civil rights movement, Black women were really some of the more militant participants in the struggle. From our perspective, women of color see the interconnectedness, of race, of sex, of class, and of sexuality. One of the reasons I am an activist is that I want to bring all those different parts of myself together. I think women of color understand that. We see that we want to be whole people and that the society we live in chops us up into little pieces and abuses us because of it. Women of color naturally integrate the issues of race and sex and class together because we experience all of these. I think that women of color will be at the center of the struggle because what keeps people from working together in this day and age are differences based on race, sex, sexuality, and class. And because we want to integrate all those groupings together, our role is to bring everything together and we do that from our own experiences.

I know that when I am discriminated against it is not just because of sexism, or just because of racism, it is because of both things. I understand that those things keep us divided from our natural allies and I understand that we need to work beyond such divisions. It is in my own best interest to reach out to, for instance, white women or men of color so that we can work together regarding common issues.

Women of color are already there, at the center of every social justice movement, but we have to be very firm about fighting for all of our issues. So if, for example, in the reproductive rights movement, feminists are saying that they just want to make abortion legal without talking about full reproductive rights, women of color will make those connections and insist upon them. The National Organization for Women is working to "save abortion rights," without understanding and recognizing that abortion has been unavailable for many poor women and women of color since the Hyde Amendment. Women of color are saying, "Yes, let's talk about abortion rights, but let's also talk about sterilization abuse. Let's also talk about parental consent. Let's also talk about prenatal care." If you don't take up all the issues that are interconnected at once, you're going to have a very segmented and segregated movement, because women of color are not going to put their energies into a movement that stresses only one aspect of their lives.

woman of power: *What trends and goals do you see ahead for feminism in the nineties?*

Nancy: I think feminism is becoming a lot more radical. Many feminists today are not satisfied with identity politics, personal solutions, or blaming men as the source of our problems. They are tired of merely hearing about the problems because they already know firsthand what they are. People want solutions and they're willing to act on those solutions, to take action in order to implement them. Once again, given the economic times in which we live, I think that the feminist movement as a whole and all the movements for social change are going to be forced to be more radical, and more demanding. They will be forced to say, "We need this, we want this, and you had better give it to us." I think that that is really very exciting. We really have nothing to lose. If you don't have a job, or you don't have a home, or your kids don't have an education, then you don't have a lot to lose when you demand something from the government.

I think that the core of any social movement, or forward movement, is leadership. If you don't have effective leaders, educating and advocating certain types of actions, then people either won't do anything, or they'll be distracted from keeping their eyes on the prize. We fight hard for things. We fight very hard for different types of forums, whether it is lesbian and gay rights, or reproductive rights, or civil rights, and we've seen how easily they are taken away, for example, in recent Supreme Court decisions. So now I think people understand that while we need to fight for reforms and legislation and laws, we've also got to fight for more than that. The laws are in the hands of the government and it has shown over the years that it doesn't work in our interest at all.

> *The simple truth is that radical change—as in going to the root or source—ain't gonna happen without women of color at the very center of the struggle, teaching, administering, coordinating, inspiring, speaking, and drawing the movements together.*

woman of power: *When you say that people want more radical change, what exactly do you mean? What kinds of trends have you seen?*

Nancy: In response to the budget crisis in California, a recent poll indicated that people were saying, "Tax the rich, make them pay their fair share." That is getting to the heart of the problem, people understanding who is benefiting from the budget crunch and who is not—why we don't have enough money to begin with. I think that is fairly radical. It is making demands on the system and recognizing that the government is a problem, that the political system we live under is a problem.

woman of power: *How do you envision women of color, poor women, and working-class women providing leadership for feminism in the next decade?*

Nancy: I see them stepping forward as leaders because if you're pushed into a corner, the only way out is to fight. I believe that people want to make things better for themselves, so they'll fight to do that. Sometimes it takes them a long time to get to that point. It takes a lot of different things to get people to stand up. But I believe that, generally speaking, people do stand up. When things hit you on a very personal level, you realize that you'd better act to stop something bad from happening, like losing your job, or losing your house, or not having an education for your children. You're going to take a stand.

I see that a lot these days. People are beginning to understand that they can't wait until they lose their jobs. They can't wait until the schools shut down to do something. Once again, it is poor women and women of color who are being hit the hardest. They're talking about cutting Aid to Families with Dependent Children to save money, yet these women live below the poverty line already. The ones who are hit the hardest are the ones who are going to be on the front lines.

woman of power: *Do you think that this trend will continue if things improve economically in the nineties?*

Nancy: I don't think it is going to get better in the nineties. Capitalism's whole purpose is to expand profit, and it is not able to do that because there are no more markets left to tap. In the nineties, I think we'll see a showdown. We're at a historical crossroads in that capitalism is in decline; it is almost dead, and it is going to increase its exploitation of us and intensify its attacks on us in order to survive.

So I think that the nineties will be a very exciting time. They may be a very hard time, a terrible time even, but I have a lot of optimism and faith that people will rise to the occasion and will rise up against the government, big business, and the state, and say, "We don't want to live like this anymore." They're

Nancy Reiko Kato *is the organizer of Bay Area Radical Women and is on the National Executive Committee of Radical Women. She is a trade union activist in AFSCME, a campus rabble rouser at the University of California, Berkeley, an antifascist organizer, and a defender of reproductive rights. Nancy is also the author of* Women of Color: Frontrunners for Freedom, *a pamphlet that provides a theoretical perspective on the leadership of women of color.*

*Kato, Nancy R., *Women of Color: Frontrunners for Freedom*, (Seattle: Radical Women Publications, 1990), p. 6.

willing to build a better world. I think that socialism is an alternative that people are willing to examine more closely, because a system based on equality is what is needed.

woman of power: *How do you respond to the claim that socialism is a utopian idea?*

Nancy: There are a couple of ways I respond to that. One is that if people are saying it is utopian based on what is happening in Eastern Europe, or the Soviet Union, or even Cuba, I don't believe that those are really socialist countries. I don't believe we've seen a truly socialist society yet.

The second thing is that I believe that socialism will work if you consider it objectively. There are enough resources in the world to provide the basics for everybody. If we redistribute these resources, everybody can live with a roof over their head, have food in their stomach, get an education, have a job, and be provided for. Regardless of whether or not they can work, society as a whole will provide for them. There can be true equality and liberation for everyone. We must do it under a system different from capitalism, because capitalism has shown that it is not only unable to grant us equality and liberation but in fact thrives on our lack of them.

woman of power: *What would you like to see happen with respect to white women and women of color forming deeper coalitions and working together more closely in the nineties?*

Nancy: I would really like to see more coalition building. I think that it will happen; it is already happening. When we talk about forming coalitions, we want to form them around the issues of women of color. We want a coalition that is inclusive and democratic, so that all our voices can be heard and all our issues can be addressed.

Our issues as women of color are really everyone's issues. For example, when women build a reproductive rights coalition, I would like to see women of color and white women working side by side on an agenda that prioritizes issues of free abortion on demand, no forced sterilization, twenty-four-hour quality childcare, and rights for young women to decide what to do with their bodies. We need to rise from the bottom, as opposed to rising from the middle or the top, so that everybody can rise.

woman of power: *In articles about your experience in Radical Women, you have said that one of the reasons that you found trust and friendship there was that you weren't asked to choose between your issues. Would you elaborate on that?*

Nancy: I began my activism in the Asian-American movement when I was in high school, and I always thought that there was something missing. I loved the work but I always thought that somehow my voice wasn't being heard. I didn't even know what feminism was, because there wasn't any, at that time, in the Asian-American community. Fortunately, now there is. I wasn't being taken seriously, partially because of my views, but also because of being a woman. I always felt somewhat incomplete working in the Asian-American community at that time.

And then when I found Radical Women and saw that women can integrate all these different issues, I began to realize that what was missing in my life was feminism. In Radical Women we raise all these different issues together, and I feel as if I'm in a place where I'm making myself whole, in the organization and in society generally.

woman of power: *In connection with the idea of making yourself whole, how do you think your work releases a celebration of spirit?*

Nancy: One thing that really keeps me going is that when you fight with other people against any sort of injustice, whether it is something very minor or something very major, you see the best in people. In struggle, we push each other, we come together as a group to work for something that is better for all of us. It is that real sense of collective spirit and collaboration that gives me hope that people really do want to live this way. They really do want to live collaboratively instead of as individuals doing their own thing, because there is so much joy in working together.

I think activism brings out the courage in people. You push people; you get challenged; you win things together; you work for good things. I think that that is very, very rewarding. That is what really keeps me going, having the opportunity to see people grow and change and move forward.

woman of power: *What is the source of your spirit or your energy?*

Nancy: I think it is my political beliefs. I'm Japanese American, raised as a Buddhist, and I was taught to try and make life better for everybody else. There is an element of sacrifice involved, yes, but we're here on this planet to do that. There are always things that need improving, not just for ourselves but for the community as a whole, however that community is defined. So I think I'm fortunate to come from that type of cultural and religious background and in having found a political group in which I'm really able to carry that out through political action and activism.

If you look around, everyone is trying to create a sense of community. White lesbians are trying to create a sense of community, a safe space. People of color do that and working people do that too. We have to create it for ourselves, because it is not going to be created for us. That is the important thing.

woman of power: *What empowers you?*

Nancy: Working with other people empowers me. Frankly, it is being successful too. Success breeds success. I think it is very important to take a stand and to fight. In fact, that may be the most important thing, because of course you're not going to win all the time. You learn a lot from standing up and working together and it makes it easier the next time around.

woman of power: *Can you talk about some of Radical Women's recent successes?*

Nancy: Yes, I can think of two examples. A couple of years ago, in San Francisco's Bay Area, we found out that the Nazi skinheads were planning an Aryan "Woodstock" on a ranch somewhere in the Napa region of California. We had only a week to organize people. When we arrived in the Napa area, we didn't know anybody there. We essentially went through the phone book and called up organizations or dropped in on them. In spite of negative publicity that there was

Excerpts from

Women of Color: Frontrunners for Freedom

by Nancy Reiko Kato

We are the ones we've been waiting for. The simple truth is that radical change—as in going to the root or source—ain't gonna happen without women of color at the very center of the struggle, teaching, administering, coordinating, inspiring, speaking, and drawing the movements together.

The truth is that women of color have a vanguard role to play in bringing together all the powerful movements for social justice and directing them towards a confrontation with the bankers and bosses. The reason is simple: no one needs change more than we do, for we bear the brunt of a vicious economic system that is sliding downhill fast.

Socialism: A world of difference. There is a cure for capitalism—and it's called socialism.

Socialism is not the utopian, naive, unattainable goal that the bourgeoisie would have us think it is. It is a logical, scientific, practical and necessary alternative to capitalism. As the *Radical Women Manifesto** states:

> *Socialism is a way of reorganizing production, redistributing wealth, and redefining state power in such a manner that the exploiters are expropriated and the workers gain hegemony so that a new era of cultural freedom and human emancipation may flourish on this earth. Feminism, like all struggles for liberation from a specific type of bondage, is a* reason *for socialism . . . and a* benefit *of socialism.*

Socialism reclaims the world's productive forces from the hands of individual capitalists and allows all of us to share equally in our planet's wealth. It is a democratically planned economy—we get to decide what will be produced and how it will be distributed. The society we can create under socialism can be anything and everything we want it to be because, hard as it is to imagine, it will be we—the long-silenced women, people of color, workers, and all the other outcasts—who will run the show.

Putting our ideas into action. Radical Women are the lucky ones, the woman warriors with an organization to back us up, with sisters willing to teach us, and whom we in turn teach.

In Radical Women, women of color and white women do stand side-by-side. It is an honor and a privilege to work with all my sisters in the organization—women from many races, of differing ages, mothers and grandmothers, lesbians and straight women, students, secretaries, bus drivers, electrical workers, computer operators, lawyers and doctors—who all fight racism, sexism, homophobia, and wage exploitation with the same ferocity, intensity and commitment as I do. Despite our diverse backgrounds, experiences, and cultures, we are *comrades.*

Leadership: the essential ingredient. One factor holds back radical change: the absence of leadership with the program, vision, determination, and grasp of history to bring together a disunited working class to challenge the pinnacles of capitalist power. This kind of leadership is the most precious possession of the dispossessed—a movement can never ever have too much!—and it is more sorely needed now than at any time in human history.

Leadership like this is never born. It is made—out of our individual history, experience, needs, and study. Radical Women is confident that from the ranks of women of all colors will emerge the leaders to carry the day for humanity. It's a tall order, but not impossible.

Think of it: women of color have survived almost five hundred years under the heel of capitalism in the Americas. And it has been our search for dignity, against the greatest odds, that has forged in us the anger, determination, and political consciousness that compel us to step forward to challenge this bankrupt and dying system. Together with all the others demanding a decent world, we will change the course of human history!

Radical Women is a socialist feminist organization whose national office is located at 523-A Valencia, San Francisco CA 94110, (415) 864-1278. This passage was excerpted from *Women of Color: Frontrunners for Freedom*, a pamphlet available from Radical Women Publications, New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. South, Seattle WA 98118.

*Also published by Radical Women Publications.

going to be violence, a thousand people turned out to counter-protest the Nazi skinheads, only a few of whom showed up.

But I think the most rewarding thing was that a lot of people from the community came out in spite of all the press and the police and the local city government trying to raise their fears with messages to "Stay away, stay away." Those people in Napa decided that this was an issue important enough to take risks. And I feel that I had a part in helping to make that happen. I think that, in terms of success, you gain a lot of confidence when you see that you can approach people on the basis of shared concerns—Napa is in the wine country, and a lot of the people are middle-, upper-middle-class people—and you find that you can work together. That is a success story about working in coalitions that came together literally in a week.

Another success story is one that has lasted for nine years. Merle Woo, who is one of my comrades and a good friend, has been involved in an ongoing discrimination battle with the University of California at Berkeley. In two different instances she was fired from her teaching job for being an outspoken radical and an Asian-American lesbian. We formed a defense committee and generated a lot of publicity and support and we won.

And who are we but just a group of people who believe we are right and are willing to fight? We took on the University of California, the largest employer in the state of California, and we won. We're not supposed to be able to do that. We did it because we had public support. You can win.

I also think that our fight inspired other people to fight, too, people who wanted to fight but didn't quite know how. Because of the widespread publicity we generated, people would call us for advice about similar situations. So success builds upon itself. I think those are the things that keep me going. You feel like you're doing something, that you're making a difference. I think that is what it comes down to. Whatever we do, we can make a difference.

Our history as women of color has been to rebel and to fight back against any sort of tyranny. Our history has also been one of struggle and of victories. In spite of everything, in spite of the powers that be, in spite of the terrible things that have happened to us as groups of people, we haven't been defeated in the five hundred years since Christopher Columbus showed up. We're still here, we're still strong, and we're still moving ahead. So that gives me a lot of optimism. We have five hundred years of history that says that we haven't been defeated.

Earlier I was talking about historical crossroads. This is our chance to say that we want to make a different world. All sorts of social forces are in place to enable us to do that. Internationally, people are rebelling against the U.S. government or against U.S. imperialism.

Even in this country people are rebelling. And rebelling not just against the use of imperialism in other countries, but against any sort of repressive force. There are very positive actions going on that say to me that people are ready. They're ready to live a better life. And we're putting forth something that says, "Hey, check this out." And we hope you will check it out, because we know Radical Women is not going to make a worldwide revolution by ourselves. But we feel we have very powerful ideas. If we can get them out, people will take them and use them.

woman of power: *Have you been in touch with women in any other international movements?*
Nancy: Yes. We have contacts in Canada, Mexico, and Europe. Radical Women is sending a delegation later this year to Eastern Europe to talk to feminists about what has been going on there, what they're fighting for, what they're thinking, what they're doing, and what they'd like to see happen. We also hope to give them some of our ideas about what has been happening here and to tell them what we've been successful with.

woman of power: *How has Radical Women facilitated the leadership of women of color?*
Nancy: We women come to Radical Women because we believe that the leadership of women is necessary and that we need to make social change. To break it down a little more, we believe that women of color, because of our experiences, have a vision, an attitude about what needs to be done that allows us to work together. We all agree that we want to build women's leadership. But we're also a reflection of real life, so sometimes something racist may come up, but because we all believe that racism is detrimental, we can deal with it on that level. It becomes a little bit more objectified. It comes with more of a compassionate understanding that people may be acting more out of ignorance than because they are actually racist.

If you were actually racist you would never join Radical Women, because it wouldn't be tolerated. Why would you even want to be there? The same holds true for attitudes that are ablist, or homophobic, or otherwise oppressive.

Of course, everybody has different experiences. Some people have more experience about certain things than other people. We try to teach people. If a mistake is made, we deal with it. It doesn't always have to concern racism, and if it does, it doesn't always have to be a woman of color who addresses it. So we stick up for each other. I think that is what makes it easier to stick together and work together, even if we are very diverse, because we come together on the basis of shared ideas—that is why we joined the organization in the first place—so we're more eager and willing to change, too.

We try to live our lives today as we'd like to live them in the future. We're socialists, so we try to be socialists in our everyday interactions with people at work or with family or friends or other comrades or activists.

Attitudes take a long time to change, so we have to get started now. ∞

Homegrown Juju Dolls

An Interview with Artist Riua Akinshegun

Interviewed by Gail Hanlon

Riua Akinshegun *is an artist who is exploring how to turn pain into a creative and motivational force. In 1971, as a member of the organization, The Republic of New Africa, she was shot in the spine by another member of the group and was not expected to live. Says Riua, "I became a paraplegic and was in constant pain for seventeen years. I was not a functioning person. But art saved my life. It brought me peace when I was in severe pain." Riua's sculpture, ceramic masks, traditional batik, and African wrap dolls[1] began to gain recognition as she continued to create art to channel her pain.*

In 1989, Riua had an operation on her spine that released her from her pain, and a whole world opened up to her. In June 1990, she traveled to Mali, where she had a show at the National Museum; to Lagos, where she had an exhibit at the Ayota Museum; and to Senegal. "Homegrown Juju Dolls—A Series on Chronic Pain and Healing"[2] was her latest show. She recently finished her autobiography, The Seed of My Soul, *a work coauthored with novelist Odie Hawkins.*

It is Riua's hope to teach people how to manage both spiritual and physical pain, in order to reach their full potential whatever their present circumstances. To do this, Riua draws upon her near-death experience as a result of the shooting, her subsequent suffering, and the resulting near-homelessness and continual poverty she experienced while trying to survive on Social Security payments. "Everybody has some sort of pain," she explains, "whether it is physical, mental, or spiritual. I teach people how to channel their pain through art as a creative force."

Riua may be contacted through Gwendolyn "Makeda" Smith at: Jazzmyne, 11661 Erwin Street #15, North Hollywood CA 91606, telephone (818) 762-7634. (All photos by G & B Photos.)

"Earth Mother," mixed-media doll, © 1990 Riua Akinshegun.

Going to Africa
Going to feel my ancestors
Going to walk the soil
Going to see the ocean
the slave ships crossed
Going to touch the seed of my soul

Going to know the love of my hate
Going to know what made me a new race
Going home to see my mother . . . .
—Riua Akinshegun, 1975

Woman of power: *How do you think your work relates to the theme of this issue, "Women of Color: A Celebration of Spirit"?*
Riua Akinshegun: I think I've always been spiritually concerned. I think it comes from my Indian and African ancestors. I've always been aware of my spirituality but I kept it in the background and became very focused on my political life. I think my interest in Africa was a natural progression for me after the sixties. I still feel that until Africa is taken seriously, African Americans are not going to be taken seriously.

When I went to Africa in 1975 and lived amongst the Yoruba, I really got into the empowerment of nature for the first time. It was the first time I'd ever known a religion in which the religious ritual wasn't centered in a building. It wasn't a one-day-a-week type thing; it was simply how you lived. It was every day within you: your eating, your sleeping, your dreaming. It was a whole different concept. Now I see my spirituality and my work as one. I wasn't an artist until after I was injured. I was thirty when I became an artist in Africa. I was always artistic, but I didn't think of art as

a profession, for me anyway. Somehow I think, creating my art for me was like being the tool; I'm not the creator of my art. My whole thing is: art is a healing force. You've got to give that acknowledgment back to what carried you through.

woman of power: *You have used the word "channel" in connection with your work. Do you feel that your work is channeled?*
Riua: Yes. You see, I was in serious pain for seventeen years and there were three things I could do to get out of pain. One was astral projection, or going internal. The second thing I could do to get out of pain was my art. The third was making love. Astral projection for me takes two forms—in and out of the body. The first time I experienced going out of my body was on the operating table after the shooting. When I experienced that first astral projection, I could look down at my body on the operating table and I saw the intravenous tubes and all the other tubes that were keeping me alive. I floated out into the hallway and went down the hallway and everyone was in the waiting room crying—my students and my family and everyone. And I was getting ready to go out the door but I kept thinking about everyone in the waiting room so I went back to comfort them.

My art could also get me some relief from my pain. When I go into my work, things just start happening. I incorporated the wrapping technique that was carried over from slavery here into my dolls because I wanted to put a little bit of history into the pieces. I'm just beginning to understand my last series of work. It's just coming to me now what I did, whom I created. I created three dolls in my last series, "Homegrown Juju Dolls: A Series on Chronic Pain and Healing," and it's been just recently that I've understood that one of my dolls, "Wisdom Past and Future," did all of my woeing, all of my nonverbal crying and mourning, for me. "The High Priestess" was for protection, and "Earth Mother" kept me grounded and in tune with nature.

I have arguments with the dolls as I'm creating.

Riua Akinshegun with some of her dolls.

They want me to do something and I don't want to do it; I'm stubborn and I don't want to listen. And then finally I'll say, "Okay, I'll try it." And when I try it, it just fits. I don't even understand what I'm creating. It's been a year since I created them, and I'm just beginning to understand them. That's why I have a hard time releasing them and selling them, because I don't even know them yet. When they're ready to be released, they'll let me release them. It's very difficult right now because they're still talking to me, still telling me things.

I have also made some sculptures. I think I'm getting ready to merge my dolls and sculptures together, and do some larger pieces. I'm not quite sure what the medium will be, whether ceramic or even wood, it could be anything. Because I work in mixed media, I'm not restricted to anything.

woman of power: *Did you begin to work out of the African tradition after you went there? Do you feel that you've reclaimed or somehow reshaped those spiritual traditions into your own personal tradition?*
Riua: Oh, yes. When I went there, I was not trying to deal with the religions of the African people. I was just going for art and culture, thinking somehow that was separate. But one of the goddesses, Oshun,[3] the goddess of fertility, the goddess who protects women and children, just claimed me. I have never been claimed like that before. I became a daughter of Oshun. I would go to her shrine and talk to her a lot. I was very affected by how the people incorporate all the gods into everything. I met Ogun,[4] Shango,[5] all of them.

After a while, I understood that the African people were trying to be in tune with everything around them. And I find that if I can be balanced with nature, then things will work around me pretty well. Knowledge opens up for me. I try to listen to the Earth. I try to listen to the wind. I try to acknowledge everything respectfully, because everything has power. Rocks, seeds, everything.

When I was there, I had no idea about going into my body. My pain got so bad when I was in Africa that I had to withdraw, what I call "ignoring pain." So what I learned to do there was to go inside my body. I just started listening to my pain so that it would release me. I tried to make a friend out of it. Whatever I was doing, I would go inside.

These days, since the operation, my world seems so chaotic because when I was in pain I was so much in my body, so much in the physical world, that I tuned everything else out. The rest of my life was done through a veil, through a haze. The pain taught me to live in the immediate world, and I still do that because once the door is open it doesn't have to be closed. Now that I no longer have to spend so much energy on the pain, my concentration seems effortless, especially for my artwork. I can work for hours on end. While I was inside my body, sometimes for two or three hours, I couldn't respond to anything around me. People would be in my room; they'd be talking; I could hear them; I could follow the conversation; I could see; but if I acknowledged any of it or responded, the pain would just attack me. So I would just withdraw, and when I was withdrawn I got to understand my organs. I would review my day, and I learned to take time to do that every night. What that allows me to do is immediately take out nonsense, things that keep me unbalanced, or things that I said that were not quite correct. This daily withdrawal keeps me really balanced. And that's where I get my power and my spirituality.

I teach people how to channel their pain through art as a creative force.

woman of power: *Do you think of it almost as a trance, what you had to do to ignore the pain?*
Riua: I think it's more like astral projection, but instead of going out of the body it's going into the body. During this last trip to Africa in 1990, I went to the Slave House in Senegal, the place where they held our ancestors before they were deported. It is in a place called Gorée Island outside Dakar. I lived on the Slave Island and the history just wouldn't leave me. For the first time in my life, I looked back through all those years of pain, and how I lived, and realized that even in pain I still lived a pretty healthy life. So I took my heart out and held it in my hand and just hugged it, for hugging people, for treating people well, for treating me well, for letting me look back at my life and recognize that my heart is a good place. I've never done that before, just held my heart. It wasn't just imagined, it was an actuality. It felt like something I actually did. I was sitting on my bed on the Slave Island and I was afraid but happy to be that close to my ancestors. I just sat there and rocked and smiled and I looked back at my life. Now I try to acknowledge all my organs.

We don't take enough time to acknowledge our bodies. I learned this through astral projection. When I was injured, I left my body many times during the three critical months following the shooting, and I have left it many times since. It has opened up many new concepts for me. I think we're all capable of learning them, but I think my being shot and thrown into this other world so rapidly accelerated the knowledge. I think we all have the potential to acquire that knowledge. We don't have to suffer or be near death to open those doors. I just think they open up quicker.

woman of power: *How do you think your work helps to empower women in particular?*
Riua: I wanted to do something to put an end to seventeen years of chronic pain. And when I got ready to

go into the studio to work, I kept thinking about chronic pain, chronic pain, and nothing would come.

So I looked at my life. And I saw that I tried not to live my life as a sufferer. I thought about what carried me through these seventeen years, and that was the healing aspect of it. So I changed the title of my show from "Chronic Pain" to "Chronic Pain and Healing." Most of my pieces focus on how to channel your energy. For example, my sculptures are sitting on pouches and inside the pouches are healing objects. These are woman guardian pieces called "The Guardian Woman I and II," "Malakia," even "Oshun." Those are some of the images of spirituality I pulled on to carry me through. So I did workshops with the Guardian Woman series for women. We all came together and talked about things in our lives that we wanted to focus on changing, and things that would motivate us in other ways.

For example, one woman lost her child in a fire. She was forty before she even had her first child, and she lost her. So we talked about how happy the child was, and that helped us to see that the important thing was to make the mother happy, because the child was fine. We said, "We've got to work on us." So she created a piece of sculpture that was so whimsical that every time she saw it she had to smile. And inside the pouch she put different things that had belonged to her daughter, so that she'd remember that her daughter wants to see her smiling.

I just did a similar piece on exercise. Since the surgery, I don't have as much movement, but it's okay because I have less pain. On one side, from the waist down, there is no feeling because they cut the sensory nerve and left the motor nerve intact in order to relieve the pain. So there's no muscle tone and I pull to one side, but soon I'll be going to physical therapy to work on that. Last year the pain was bothering me so much that suicide was becoming an option—I couldn't draw, teach, or read—all I did was rock constantly. Then I heard about this new technique with a seventy percent success rate, which has really changed my life. So I did this piece, and every time I see it, it focuses me on what I need to do.

woman of power: *What do you envision for women of color in the nineties?*
Riua: I hope that we get closer to nature, and I think we are already. We're strong, nurturing people. There's a serious war going on between men and women, and I hope that that begins to dissolve. In Africa, I told them, "Until African women are treated with more respect, Africa is going to be in trouble. African people will be in trouble." And I see that they are changing. It is coming to be. We must get a majority of the world's peoples to understand that women are the source of their power, to see that the concept that woman was made from man is totally illogical. We have to put the whole cycle back together.

Women of color must become friends. We have the same battles—we must become comrades. We must share our knowledge with our European sisters.

woman of power: *Do you think that your art crosses barriers, contributes to the sharing of cultures and the building of communities?*
Riua: Yes. I think that art can be a force for coalition-building between women. If art is going to continue to be the forerunner of culture, then it must be connected to changing the world.

> *I left my body many times during the three critical months following the shooting, and I have left it many times since. It has opened up many new concepts for me.*

In Mali, the artists were so excited to meet me because they said there were no women artists. At one show, some of the top artists said to me, "We're so glad you're here. Maybe the women will do art now." It is amazing how I would go around and ask, "Where are the women artists? I want to meet the women artists." First they'd tell me, "There are no women artists." "Are there any women sculptors?" "No." And I'd say, "Think hard," and they'd find me one. And then I'd talk to her.

I go there so they can see my work for several reasons. In many African countries, artists tend to repeat traditional art, so they're not dealing with new concepts. And so I hear people say, "It's great you are here because maybe they'll take this art out and do more," because my work is sort of unusual. I do the traditional work, but I also do other things. Every now and then, I can just stretch out and be free to do something totally unconnected.

woman of power: *And that was an unusual concept to them?*
Riua: In Mali it was. In Nigeria that's not so unusual; they're pretty wild and pretty frantic, and I did get to meet the women there. The women be running the stuff! It's a little different there. It really varies among the cultures, so I think it's important that my work goes to Africa.

Most of all I'm trying to encourage African women to travel and to exchange, and hopefully there will be a couple of women artists coming to the United States and living among the artists here. I want to set up a program where I can take three women artists from here to Africa, live for three months and work. It's such an education. We will do that until the women artists meet us there, and then bring them here to work with us. That's where the growth starts. And we'll start branching out.

When I was in Mali I asked whether they had any female goddesses. They laughed at me. "There's only one god, Allah," they said. I traveled with another woman who asked questions about goddesses. They just laughed at her, so I said, "No, no, they don't understand what you're asking. You have to take it back further than Islam." So I asked, "What about the traditional African religion before it?" "Oh yes, there were plenty of women goddesses."

In Nigeria, they still identify with the goddesses, with Oya[6] and others. And they're in a much more frenetic place. The movement from Mali is much calmer, more peaceful and subdued; whereas in Nigeria, it's hectic, chaotic, and vibrant. And with that comes more changes. And the market women are so strong. You go there thinking that the women are seriously oppressed, but as you get into the culture, the women really run it.

woman of power: *You were in the country as well as the city?*
Riua: Yes, I was in small towns. That's where you get closest to nature. I lived in Ife—that's a small town in Nigeria that is considered to be the cradle of civilization. That's where I learned the real tradition. I didn't realize how traditional a style I was learning until I got to Lagos, the city, and they said, "She's an Ife girl," because when I did speak a little Yoruba, I spoke in the real traditional way. In Ife, I lived among the top artists, who are like priestesses and priests because they follow the old Yoruba ways where art and spirituality aren't separate. We talked about the *orishas*.[7] To me those artists were the forerunners of the culture, and they were very open. It was there that I had the most political conversations, where I could talk. In other places, I couldn't talk about my ideal society, empowerment, women's spirituality, and all of that. The elders, for example in Mali or Senegal, would consider it sexual for women and men to talk together like that—they don't even allow women to shake hands with men or to pray. Muslim women have to pray behind closed doors. They cook all day and then they eat alone or with the children. The separation of the sexes is complete. What I did was talk among the youth where the changes are gonna come.

Africans don't know who African Americans are. African Americans don't know where we come from, and the Africans on the continent don't know where we went to. It is as if that bridge was deliberately broken, and it is real strong and it needs to be reconnected. That's why I go there and try to educate. I tell them that we're Africans, and they say, "Yes, we heard about our people being taken away." Period. It ends there. So there's a lot of work to be done.

woman of power: *How do you think women can celebrate our spiritual selves?*
Riua: By acknowledging it. By understanding it. By getting into it. Most women don't even know the power we have. If women would just look back at history and see how we've evolved, we could know that.

"The High Priestess," mixed-media doll, © 1990 Riua Akinshegun.

But unfortunately, many women don't know that.

I think women need to unite among ourselves. Somehow the African woman is not being pulled into the feminist movement. I think that when we talk about feminism, if we can include the whole picture, that will help us to draw in African women. One of the problems is that during the sixties, when the Black movement became separate from the white movement, when the feminists became separate, and the disabled became separate, even though many of the techniques were borrowed from the Black movement, somehow feminism didn't pull in Black women.

Even so, African people are not yet strong enough to separate out as women. I can't separate and leave my child alone. Or leave the whole race alone. We're dying as a race. I think that we can start being a total vision and yet understand the need to pull together for that reinforcement.

How do we celebrate ourselves? By following our intuitive nature instead of pushing it back. If we can learn to listen to our inner selves and not worry about society's interpretation of things, that will free us up. Spirituality can't be separated from breath, let alone art. I don't pray; however, I try to live my life as a prayer. ∞

Notes
1. African wrap dolls are made in the style used in the U.S. during slavery times. Bits of cloth are wound around wood or wire.
2. Juju means magic.
3. Oshun is the Yoruba Goddess of love, healing, and female energy, Queen of the River.
4. Ogun is the Yoruba wild man of the woods; a blacksmith.
5. Shango is the Yoruba lightning and thunder god.
6. Oya is the Yoruba Goddess of wine, water, fire, and rainbows.
7. *Orishas* is the Yoruba term for deities who are personifications of the faces of nature.

Building Coalitions in the Nineties

An Interview with Flo Kennedy

Interviewed by Gail Hanlon

***Flo Kennedy** is a lawyer and a long-time activist in both the civil rights and women's movements. Now seventy-five years old, Flo was one of the first Black women to graduate from Columbia Law School, in 1951. In the sixties, she was a delegate to the major Black Power conferences and later founded the Media Workshop, the Feminist Party, and the Coalition Against Racism and Sexism. She is the author of* Abortion Rap, *and her autobiography,* Color Me Flo, *was published in 1976. Flo is the National Director of Voters, Artists, Anti-nuclear Activists and Consumers for Political Action and Communications Coalition. She also hosts the weekly cable television show "The Flo Kennedy Show" (originally called "Liberated Woman") seen in New York City at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday evenings.*

Flo can be reached at: 8 East 48th Street, Suite 3C, New York NY 10017.

Woman of power: *What work are you doing now?*

Flo Kennedy: I'm doing a weekly cable TV show talking about anything I want to put on, mostly women and families. Also, until recently, I was doing a lot with the Clarence Thomas nomination for the Supreme Court. I see Thomas as someone who climbed the ladder and pulled it up behind him. I was very much opposed to him and I was being real nasty about that. I didn't make many friends about it. The establishment loves it when we're horizontally hostile.

My travel in 1991 has included the National Black Congressional Caucus, along with some college campus lectures. And I'm beginning to work on the 1992 Democratic Convention.

I think that we women ought to have more national connections. In other words, I think that New York women ought to be more in touch with Boston women. Media is very important for oppressed people because that is where people can be reached. I want to see more women in media because I feel that one of the reasons women can be so easily manipulated is that so many work in their houses, and they are not in touch with each other. They watch media but media are not very generous about giving women opportunities to talk politics. They'll let us do comedy and they'll let us do talk shows as long as they aren't on anything important involving women. That lack of communication is a part of our problem. If the man says so, women can talk about endometriosis and blocked tubes and things like that. But the women don't just get on and talk to each other, for each other, about politics. And I think that's real important. Radio and television should be more like the back fence used to be: people would talk about the kids, and disease, and female trouble, and everything. So I think that the politics of women will change as we get more into media.

I think that media are, in and of themselves, very political. Women of color are particularly excluded because we are rarely on television—in a political context. There are lots of dancers and lots of singers but there is very little politics. I think we should informalize a lot of the print media. Women writers should not write so theoretically; they should interview more women about various issues including their feelings about "inconsequential" things. We do a lot of important writing, but we should also do some "unimportant" writing and have people whom we regard as unimportant say what they think as if they were talking on the telephone.

I think that when you ask women about legislation, it ought to be on a much more informal basis. You're usually talking to women who have degrees and I think that that's bad. I think that we should forget that women have so many degrees and talk to them about whatever they think about, the way they would with their friends or their sisters or their mothers when they call them on the phone—way down low, not so high falutin. Women are so proud of their degrees and their posturing and their corporate level positions that they forget that they're just people, and a lot of the things that they care about have nothing to do with that stuff.

The attitude of the white society is exclusive where women's politics are concerned. Women are always there, but they are usually there to reinforce the premises of the culture which is antifemale in many respects. So I'm working on that—it's *all* political, but it's fun.

I think we should also focus on women in international media. I'm trying to get tapes of my TV show on feminist subjects to the women of India and Pakistan. I think we should focus on developing communication between women nationally and internationally, especially in the Middle East and Africa.

And then there is the whole abortion issue: everybody predicts that *Roe v. Wade* will be reversed, that the Supreme Court's agenda is going to be to push women's rights and civil rights, especially affirmative action, back to where they were before Jimmy Carter. And I think that there's enough truth in that to get to work on it now.

I'd like to see women talking woman-to-woman about politics. The politics of your kids, and the politics of your buying habits, and the politics of consumer boycotting. Don't forget that it was the Montgomery bus boycott that really made a turn to civil rights. It wasn't so much the government that made the change in the way that people are treated on campuses and all. I think we ought to focus on the ideas of Black women and Hispanic women and Haitian women. We need to understand that there's another whole voting group out there and we need to get their votes on our side in the next presidential election.

We've also got to focus on the way Black officials are treated. I think that New York Mayor Dinkins is being given a bum rap and my old friend from Kansas City, Barbara J. Sabol, head of the Human Resources Administration in New York, is treated so badly it's unbelievable. The trouble with these human services agencies is that they are full of people who are supposed to keep the blood off the floor so that the people at the top won't slip in it. And if you try to change the system they don't like it. There are always the people who get kicked in the ass and the people who do the kicking, and then there are the ones who apply the salve. People who are oppressed are often given their very own group to oppress. These human services people are supposed to wipe up the blood instead of applying a tourniquet.

We should focus on some of the Black women who have reached these heights. As Shirley Chisholm pointed out when she first went to congress, you get the sexism of your own group as well as that of the white establishment. We need to consider why Black women at the top get an extra dose of hostility. We need to focus on women of power, for example, Black female mayors around the country, and focus on their experience politically. Don't you think that might be fun?

woman of power: *Where would you like to see women of color direct their energies in the next decade?*

Flo: We need to fix it so that a woman of color doesn't get any more hassle than a man of color, or even a white man. I think that we've got to carry politics into every job where there's a woman of color. We also need to compare women of color who are at the top here with women in other countries, all-color societies, where the markets are dominated by women of color. I think we ought to focus on the women in the international scene as a whole, just to get an idea of what happens to the women in a nonwhite society, how they're different. Women of color should look at international politics in a different way and not buy the media's analysis of places like the Middle East. And women should be among the first ones to criticize Bush.

I also think that women in the Black community should join with the feminists. I've been criticized for being so cozy with the feminists whom most Black people see as mainly white, but it's not really true. And I think that women should become more political about everything—race, sex, affirmative action, everything—because, especially when we're not working in offices or our jobs are not real important and not well paid, we can afford to be brave in our politics. We have to understand that the most important thing that white women have to offer us is a philosophy of hostility towards people whose interests are not our interests and who don't have our interests on their agenda.

> *I don't think the feminist movement is alive and well. I think it's in a coma but we can revive it. It's like an uncooked biscuit, unfit to eat.*

woman of power: *How do you think we can form deeper coalitions between women of color and white women?*

Flo: Well, they will form automatically because Black women are going to college in larger numbers than ever before in American history. They meet and they are friends and they get to know each other. And otherwise we just have to understand that the men who are hostile to us, the white men of the mainstream society, are hostile to any movement toward the top. Many Black people are very hostile toward Black top officials because their circumstances have not changed to the extent that they had hoped. When they voted for Black candidates, they asked for more than they would have from a white man. If you vote for a white man, you don't expect much and you don't get much, and you don't get indignant. But if you vote for a Black person and you don't move from the projects to the suburbs, you blame them. I think that's a bad thing to do. We must have a greater sense of family, I think, than we have. We need to think more about the Africans and other people of color throughout the world.

Many Black women don't trust white women, but I do. I think the more we get to know each other on any basis, the better off we'll be. Coalition comes out of knowing people.

woman of power: *What trends or goals do you see*

ahead for feminism in the nineties?
Flo: I think the struggle will continue, and all struggle pays off, no matter what kind. There will be more working women, and the more working women there are, the more women will get together. The workforce is dominated by white people, so we will work with more white women every day in the office. If you work with people every day in the office, even though you're on a lower echelon, the fact remains that you get to know them. So the coalition happens automatically. Because more Black women go to white schools, there is further occasion to get together.

All people need to do is get together to know each other and like each other. It's hard to hate somebody you work with and see every single day. I think it will happen automatically. There is a great deal of coalition in the workplace and the more Black people and people of color get into the workplace, the more coalitions there will be.

In my opinion, the insider who is against your interest is a traitor whereas the outsider is the enemy. And I regard the white community as inimical to my interests for the most part. But I do think that there will be changes because we're infiltrating politics at the higher levels, and we're infiltrating the higher echelons of corporate structure and business. So we have to know more white people, and the more we know white people the more we will fight together on the same issues. There will obviously be a steady progression of coalition, because we won't be in the slave cabin while they're in the big house.

I think that in the nineties, we'll go higher but we'll get punched harder. In other words, we have plenty of high places for women—there are women of color who are mayors and heads of major agencies at the urban level and in the cabinet—but they get a double dose of dumping on.

woman of power: *Are you encouraged by what you anticipate for women of color in the nineties?*
Flo: Of course. More women of color are getting educated, getting angry, getting friendly, and marrying each other. Definitely there will be improvement and changes in friendship, love affairs, legitimate marriages, the whole works.

Oh, I think there will always be changes, but it depends on us. I think that if we play our cards right we should have some really exciting things happen during the 1992 Democratic Convention. I think we ought to informalize stuff. People like you and me have to help make it happen. We should criticize people as people and not as political people separated from the rest of us.

I like to encourage other people, and I expect other people to be active. I go to the college campuses and I talk and encourage people. The nineties have hardly started. But I like to ask women where they would like to be ten years from now, and I like to make them think about what they might be doing and how they would feel about that. Education for women has been a wonderful thing, but it has also made women stress the aspects of life that change when you have a lot of education.

I think that most magazines are involved with women who are educated, and I just think that there's so much more to life than what educated women talk about to each other. We're all thinking about the same sorts of things, but less formally educated women think and talk more about real issues. It's important that some of us try not to be so literary. I think that a lot of things get lost with a formal education.

I'd like to see women run for political office, too. Running for office makes you deal with more realistic things. If more women ran for office, politics would become more realistic about everything that women need, about the fact that although much of women's work is underpaid, most of it is not paid at all.

woman of power: *Do you see any signs of women's issues being integrated into the workplace?*
Flo: Well, I think that they are integrated but not enough. I think that the issues should be integrated on the level of what women are really doing, and I think that women should get remuneration for what they're really doing. One reason that women are paid less is that we do so much for nothing. We have babies for nothing, we nurse the relatives for nothing, and we do most of the stuff that we do in the home for nothing. That tends to devalue the work that some people get paid for by virtue of the fact that it is done for free in the home. The main point is that the work that you do in the home is not valued because no one really cares if you do it. People only notice housework when it isn't done properly.

woman of power: *Do you think that's changing now that women are making gains in the workplace?*
Flo: No, I think that it's getting even less important. Now that women are involved in the workplace, work in the home really doesn't get recognized.

woman of power: *How do you see women of color and working-class women providing leadership for the women's movement?*
Flo: Well, I think running for office is one of the better ways because the women will bring their problems to you. And the problems will be the ones they really think about. It's very important that women run for office, very important. I think that it's one of the best ways to effect change and be changed by the experience. The politician herself becomes educated by being in politics. To the extent that their concerns are different, and to the extent that they're not different, the women who come to support these women will see to it that their issues are heard. But there's very few women in politics, running for elective office. Not nearly enough. It's easy and it's fun and it's important and you can make money. I think that organizations like the Women's Political Caucus and the National Organization for Women are trying to encourage women to get into politics, and there is an increase in the number of women, but I just think that there aren't enough women doing it.

I think we'll see all kinds of changes in the nineties. But the main problem is this theory that George Bush is a shoe-in for president. That's absolutely absurd; the man is almost crazy. My position is that we've got to get rid of Bush and act as if it's doable.

woman of power: *Do you have a candidate in mind?*
Flo: Jesse Jackson is the obvious candidate. Maybe we don't want him to be the frontrunner and so we believe him when he says he's not going to run, but if we really wanted him, we wouldn't listen to him when he says he's not going to run. And let's not forget Barbara Mikulski, the U.S. senator from Maryland, or Nina Totenberg, the legal affairs correspondent for National Public Radio. Almost any woman is better than who's in now. Almost any woman you can think of is good. And I think women should devote themselves to getting David Duke, that former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan who's running for governor of Louisiana, out of politics. I think women should devote themselves to getting rid of some of these inferior men. Every woman should pick a rotten man she wants to help get rid of, and run herself. We should look for socialist women, just about any of them. I think socialism has more women who are acceptable than just about any place you can think of. I think we should go into socialist groups and encourage some of those women to run. International Workers of the World has several women. I'm not of the opinion that you have to have special women. I think you've just got to go to the right place and anybody there will be good. Any of the women in the Revolutionary Communist Party. Tell them we want them to run. Just look at how everybody goes crazy if you talk about certain issues like Communism or lesbianism or revolution.

On a larger scale, to make more connections, we should go to Cuba. Get some women out of the Mohawk group in Canada. Get some of the South American Indian women. Look among Indians in Chile or Ecuador. Don't just look in the usual places.

woman of power: *So you're talking about conferences as well as electoral politics?*
Flo: Yes, I think we ought to have meetings every month, women of color meetings, lesbian meetings, all kinds of meetings. When you go against a society to do what you want to do, you develop a certain strength. And meetings help that.

We should encourage women who set goals for themselves, goals that are unpopular. We should encourage Deborah Glick, an "out" lesbian who recently ran successfully for New York state assembly.

If you study the consumer market, you see that the main power that women have is purchasing power. Every time someone makes you mad, you can go on a boycott. Women have three kinds of power—body power, dollar power, and vote power. We should use them whenever we can. Women need to use our money to support our politics. If you don't like the *New York Post*, don't just talk about how bad it is, boycott it. I think the boycott is a good way to express women's power.

woman of power: *What do you envision for women of color in the nineties?*
Flo: I think that we need to look around for women of color who would make good leaders. Look to where people are helping to create a nuisance. And if it turns out to be women, get their names.

> *I think that we need to look around for women of color who would make good leaders. Look to where people are helping to create a nuisance. And if it turns out to be women, get their names.*

And women need to write more, to let us know who's worth thinking about. Just write more about whatever people are thinking about. When you hear about a revolt by women of color or Native Americans, get their names. Find out about them; read their literature. Every time I think of a great idea, someone says, "Oh, you can't do that, that's Communist." Well, that makes me think that Communists must have a lot of good ideas. We ought to look at what they're saying in places like the Mohawk revolution in Canada. I think we should become intensely interested in Native American struggles. We're still thinking about old stuff, and we've got to break away from the usual stuff that you see and start looking at what society disapproves of. We need to listen to people who are rebelling and learn from them and join them. Every time we hear about a struggle we haven't heard about before, we should get to know all about it.

I think women should also be thinking about money and how to get money. We don't think enough about money. Women should stop saying what people want to hear, about nonviolence and the highest good, and all that kind of stuff. If we really believe in nonviolence we should be rebelling against the tax mechanism in this country, because these taxes support Pentagon violence.

woman of power: *What do you think about the state of feminism in this country?*
Flo: I don't think the feminist movement is alive and well. I think it's in a coma but we can revive it. It's like an uncooked biscuit, unfit to eat. It's like a piece of dough lying on a counter, but if someone decides to pop it in the oven, you might just see something happen. ∞

Spiritual Attunement in a Secular World

by Karla Jackson-Brewer

Western technocratic society would have us all believe the myth that you succeed in this life by your own brute strength, hard work, and willpower. We are encouraged to regard those who achieve success as being intrinsically worthy and good, regardless of how they attained that success. We are indoctrinated with the idea of individualistic success from an early age. The ability to be self-focused, self-involved, and self-centered, at the expense of others, is prized within the competitive, capitalistic system. In school we learn the values projected by society, and we are also taught to respond to rational, linear thought, to consider it the supreme mode of expression. All other modes are discouraged and devalued, and finding the correct answer becomes more important than the process used to obtain that answer. Patriarchal, sexist, and racist society has placed some people in a position of advantage while simultaneously discarding others as unproductive, valueless beings. Women and people of color are always competing, in spite of themselves, from a disadvantaged position.

This myth of the successful, competitive individual runs counter to the natural desire of human beings to work collectively and in community. It leaves no room for a spiritual path or a spiritual life. So much energy is focused outward, by design, that there is little time left for inner-focused, receptive, nonlinear thought. The struggle to live as a spiritual person on a spiritual path is thus a formidable one.

Living in New York City provides me with a vantage point from which to see how popular culture, secularity, and competition hypnotize people into a trance of "not enough, no time." The pull of this stream of popular culture leaves us hungry, unsatisfied, and yearning to have more. People of color in New York find that they are excluded from much of mainstream society in very real and important ways, and participation in that society becomes a constant lure just outside their reach. In neighborhoods with substandard housing, fewer city services, poverty, poorly functioning schools, high unemployment, drug wars, addiction, and greater police presence, the attitude of indifference generated from outside these communities fosters indifference within them. Living not far from some of the wealthiest and most achievement-oriented people in the country encourages us to enter into a treadmill existence of chasing the golden carrot in an atmosphere of disempowerment, disenfranchisement, and defeat.

As a Black woman, I find that the daily distractions of urban living, family needs, professional responsibilities, and other demands on my time often take precedence over my own spiritual needs. I collapse at the end of the week wondering why I live my life in such a frenzied way.

Then I remember to meditate. I do the Dakini Practice* and feel the energy flowing back into my body. I become again cognizant and mindful of my purpose in life.

My path of spiritual evolution has been a winding road. In retrospect I see the spiral of my spiritual connection spinning, ever-growing, centering as I take each step into my spiritual power. It has not been an easy path. I am often filled with doubts about the direction I must take or the validity of my intuition. Once I reflect or clear myself with my spiritual rituals, I am able to be still with the oneness of my soul's essence, my ancestors, my spirit guides, and the universe.

The struggle to find and maintain a spiritual path is both rewarding and frustrating. As a Black woman, I was born into the herstory of a people familiar with the world of the unseen, the world of animistic and anthropomorphic magic. In this world, ancestors visit in dreams and visions, spirits speak in the wind, and objects hold the energy of environments and people. Information can be readily accessed by those who have developed the ability to see and hear through the veil that separates the worlds. The Wisdom Energies, the spirits of deities, ancestors, and loved ones, exist only to serve and assist us in our spiritual evolution. Acceptance of the idea that these spirits are with us and faith in the possibility of a better existence provided my ancestors with the strength to survive slavery. This same acceptance fosters the strength within me to continue living as a spiritual being in an environment that operates to deceive and destroy my spiritual light.

I have developed a spiritual way of living that reflects much of who I am as a Black woman and draws upon the many spiritual beliefs of people of color. I am drawn to spiritual practices, perhaps from an earlier life, that resonate within me. I attempt to reclaim the woman-centered spirituality that has been taken from me by patriarchy. Rituals that include water, herbs and crystals, chanting, smudging, the use of dance, drumming and sound, have been incorporated into my life. As I explore African, Asian, and Native American spiritual traditions, rituals, and teachings, I am awed by the commonalities that exist among them and the familiarity I feel with them. I honor the spiritual practices of all people, and I believe that with respect for their differences I can evolve through some of these practices. It is also important for me to discover images, archetypes, and practices that reflect my phenotypic physical expression in this life—my African origin.

I was always aware of the part of me that was unacceptably assertive, centered, and strong-willed. I learned, at an early age, that a Black female child should not be too confident in a patriarchal world that is both racist and sexist. I learned to become afraid of the power that existed in me, and I saw few models of powerful Black women around me. I attempted to hide the confident, powerful aspects of my being behind a shield of accommodation, although I had already convinced myself on another level that I really wasn't powerful at all. I wanted to believe that there were strong, powerful women in the world, but I had no concrete evidence that they existed.

As a child I was an avid reader of fantasy and mythology. I turned to these stories in search of metaphors for my development and my life. I discovered the Goddess, and in her I discovered many archetypes for my womanpower. I learned to draw on the energy of the Earth and the powerful cultural and ancestral beings who were waiting to assist me on the path to spiritual empowerment and enlightenment. All I had to do was ask for their help and surrender to their guidance. I then felt supported and knew in every cell in my being that I was not alone. I am thankful for the goddesses Isis, Yemaya, Oshun, Oya, Kali, Tara, the Dakinis, and others who have manifested in my life, calling out the many aspects of my being.

The universe is truly responsive to our needs; we only need to be open to what is offered. As I became more aware of my true spiritual nature, other women, particularly women of color, presented themselves in my life. These women acted as guardians and guides on my spiritual path. They reflected for me various aspects of spiritual expression and established the sense of community that I so greatly needed. We shared spiritual practices and information and became witnesses to each others' evolution.

We nurtured ourselves in Afrocentricity, claiming the images that provided the metaphors for our lives. We connected to and centered ourselves in our African history, ancestors, and aesthetics. We were empowered by all of those African sisters who governed, healed, created, and "stepped out of line," the women who defied the prescribed role for women, flourished, survived, and become heroes within the limitations of that role. Those women, in the present and the past, assist us in creating our metaphors; and our love of our African nature, the spirit of survival and beauty, continues to feed our souls. We learned to laugh, cry, sing, and dance together. We took leadership from one another and responded to the intuitive information that Spirit presented. We created rituals for our healing and for our celebration, and I learned that I could be vulnerable and strong, moving and receptive, silent and powerful. I learned to weave my spiritual practices into a cloak of protection and power, assuring my success against the forces of the seductive illusions of the secular world.

My spiritual development places me in the present, which is indubitably the position of greatest power. I am no longer compelled to take responsibility for other peoples' reactions to me. I am, however, responsible for the ethical use of the power that grows within me. By listening to and trusting in my intuition and my spirit guides, I continue to spin the true light energy of my being. Spiritual attunement is a lifelong activity that for me, as a Black woman, empowers my self and my community, while it honors my ancestors. It is possible to live and walk a spiritual path in the midst of chaos and ignorance. The more I employ and trust my spiritual path, the more able I am to resist the energy-sapping stream of the secular world. My spiritual work connects me to the life-supporting nature of the universe and by attuning to that I can achieve success that is full, whole, and supports all sentient beings. ∞

> *As a Black woman, I was born into the herstory of a people familiar with the world of the unseen, the world of animistic and anthropomorphic magic.*

*According to my teacher, Tsultrim Allione, the Dakini Practice is a Tantric Buddhist practice that employs the use of visualization in meditation of a powerful and sometimes wrathful female deity. The Dakinis represent the eternal flow of energy and can be called upon to remove obstacles, clarify dualistic vision, and connect a practitioner to primordial wisdom. This practice employs the most important manifestation of the feminine in Tibetan Buddhism.

Karla Jackson-Brewer *is an African American woman who lives on the Lower East Side of New York City with her three children: Jamal, 15; Sadira, 7; and Dakota, 27 months; and her husband Garry. Karla is a feminist psychotherapist in private practice working primarily with sexual assault survivors. She is an adjunct professor of Women's Studies and African Studies at Rutgers University. She is also exploring African and Native American traditions of spirituality.*

Afracentrik Visions

An Interview with Asungi on MAMAROOTS

Interviewed by Gail Hanlon

***Asungi** is an Afrakamaatik priestess and founder of MAMAROOTS: AJAMA-JEBI,* an AfraGoddess sistahood dedicated to Afracentrik spirituality and cultural awareness. "AJAMA-JEBI" is translated as "She who can never feel guilty when She takes Righteous Action," which sums up Asungi's mythic vision of our ancient Afracentrik foremamas. An MFA graduate of the University of Chicago and visionary/spiritual/activist artist, she has created AfraGoddess and political art for over a decade.*

MAMAROOTS: AJAMA-JEBI is dedicated to "Hat-Ma Kat Afrakamaat," the Spiritual Science of Afracentrik Transformative Self-Enlightenment and Development of Universal Spiritual Harmony. Sistahship includes discounts on Afrakamaatik products, spiritual and effective living counseling services, study courses, and a one-year subscription to the Forum, MAMAROOTS, *published three times a year. Single issues are available at bookstores. Non-sistahship subscriptions are only available to educational institutions and libraries. MAMAROOTS: AJAMA-JEBI is a not-for-profit organization solely funded by sistahship fees and donated contributions that support our spiritual/social development projects and publications. For inquiries on submission guidelines, Afracentrik spiritual services, and study courses, send an SASE to MAMAROOTS, 3661 N. Campbell Ave., Suite 108, Tucson AZ 85719-1524, telephone (602) 327-0987.*

***Woman of power:** What trends and goals do you see ahead for feminism in the nineties?*

Asungi: My own personal hope is that in the nineties we continue to retrieve the female center of culture, a feminism that is more about nature, children, and building a sense of world community.

We need a female-centered ideology that is more humanely based, where we recognize that we are on a Mamaship, the Earth, and that She is alive and that we have to respect Her. The path that we are on, this path of destroying ourselves on Earth, is not female-centered. What is more female-centered is respecting the fact that we live on a living, breathing entity and that we should take care of Her as we take care of ourselves, our families, our loved ones. The Earth is a "loved one."

***woman of power:** What do you envision for women of color in the nineties?*

Asungi: My focus is primarily wimmin who are Afrikan-based in their heritage and descendancy. I think we're still trying to define what that might be for us in a truly feminist (if we use that word) way. I think that we are in line with parts of the Afrikan tradition, but we are engaged in a dialogue about whether those traditions can be evaluated as feminist. This is a new concern, a new revelation for us.

***woman of power:** How do you think you can transform those traditions or recreate them?*

> *We are going one step beyond feminist and one step beyond patriarchal Afrikan analysis to look for that particular vision where the Black female has been revered as a norm, as a healthy image in the culture.*

Asungi: As a self-proclaimed "Mythologist," that has been a personal goal of mine for a number of years: to transform what I consider the co-opted matriarchy in Afrika and in Afrikan tradition, and to actually intuit, pull out, or retrieve the essential elements of the unconquered female, or feminist spirituality. I do not completely agree with what is known as Afrocentric theology because it is really very male-based.

My real intent in retrieving our pre-male-centered Afrikan cultural traditions is in line with what most "feminists," or wimmin who are about developing or practicing any kind of *truly* female-centered reverence, believe: that just because we're born into a particular cultural tradition doesn't mean that it's healthy for us to continue to assert all of its doctrines. We also seem to agree that there is some serious "humin" dysfunctionality inherent in fostering any form of patriarchal supremacy. It is not healthy for the planet; it is not healthy for humin beings.

For me it's important to discover and retrieve from the Afrikan base, since I have this vision of retrieving the original "Mamaroot" or "Mamaroots," our common Afrikan roots, of the Afrikan matriarchy. In Afrika, there is a culture that I can pull out and retrieve that is very clearly female-centered. And the Afrocentric analysis doesn't do enough of that. It's not that it doesn't do some, it just doesn't do enough for me to be healthy as an "Afra-feminist." A word that I developed in 1985 was "Afracentrik," meaning that we are going one step beyond feminist and one step beyond patriarchal Afrikan analysis to look for that particular vision where the Black female has been revered as a norm, as a healthy image in the culture.

For me it started out as a personal goal to have a spirituality that glorified me, that did not negate major parts of who I was, and that led to a recognition that not only do I need to do that, but other Afrikan diaspora wimmin and other wimmin who aren't Afrikan need to do it, too. And huminity as a whole needs to do it because the world doesn't understand our Mamaroots. Recognizing that we're one family, one people, puts us into a state of responsibility for one another that I don't think we've come to recognize yet. I hope that the wimmin's spirituality movement brings back the idea that we all belong to each other. The world belongs to all of us. What you do ultimately affects me and what I do ultimately affects you.

In order to grow, we need to create language that helps us to visualize positive images. So in a sense, part of what I'm doing is creating a language base, introducing thoughts at a level that wimmin can feel comfortable with. For example, at this point, "Afracentrik" is a word that people can understand because "Afrocentric" has been introduced. So it's easier for me to explain that Afracentrik is the Afrikan part that is female-centered as opposed to the Afrikan part that is male-centered. I couldn't have done that before.

A lot of Afrikan Americans in this country have been studying the Yoruba tradition, one of the roots of our Afrikan-American culture. Many of them have moved away from the Christian-based system to look for a more Afrikan-positive culture. I think that there are some very positive roles to be found in the Yoruba tradition, but for me the roles of the female Goddesses in the Yoruba culture are no more feminized than those in the Christian culture. Clearly in the Kamaatik (the so-called Egyptian) tradition, the images of Aset (Isis) and some of the other Afrikan Goddesses are much more liberated and have more self-autonomy.

So I ask people who are seeking our roots in the Yoruba tradition to apply an Afracentrik analysis to the material, and look at the images. Look at the Yoruba Goddess Ochun. Is this a liberated female? Is the mythic information that you're getting a liberated image? I think not. Yoruba legend, for example, is clearly intended for patrifocal veneration of the submissive natures of the Orisha, or Goddesses. I label this as mythic record of a matriarchal sistah-system's loss of its sistah-loyalty ethics as it is co-opted by a patriarchal system. These mythic stories of female self-negation, what I call "Afra-phobic mythology," are found throughout Afrikan traditions in much the same way that they're found in Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions. So I don't practice an Orthodox Yoruba Mythology of Ochun, or Oya, or Yemaya in accordance with the myths of the Cuban or Brazilian or Afro-American traditions, since I know that they have been overshadowed by male-dominant analysis.

"Iyoba Mamba: The 2nd Coming," © 1991 Asungi Productions. This Hat Maat priestess salutes and blesses you with the Afra-positive sistah-adoration gesture, "Kara Sheba Ma," which means: "I behold and anoint the Divine Self-Ordered Radiance in You." The border surrounding her is an Ifa Divination border, symbolic of her role as "Iyoba Mamba: Prophetess of the Oracle."

Rather than settle for a co-opted mythic Herstory, it is more essential for me to continue my "Mama-guided" re-creation of an Afra-positive spiritual cosmology, for example, the "AfraGoddess Series" images. While these Afra-positive depictions are definitely not reinvented in accordance with the patriarchal hierarchy of orthodox mythology, they're still celebrated as authentic cultural images by people who practice traditional Yoruba, as well as by those wimmin who seek a more transpersonal female-centered theology.

***woman of power:** What can you tell us about the publication* MAMAROOTS?

Asungi: The oral tradition is an essential part of the Afrikan culture, so *MAMAROOTS* is a place where we talk, where we share.

I was being guided by Mama to re-create Her mythic vision for myself and others, and by my frustration that there was really no vehicle for Afrikan wimmin who have a need to know more about our transpersonal selves, the AfraGoddess, and our Afra-positive Herstory. The sistahood and *MAMAROOTS*, the Triune Forum, have evolved out of my realizing that there was a need for information and for sistahs to gather together as we reawaken to our Afra-positive possibilities.

Afracentrik spirituality is really about retrieving the doctrines and standards, the "codes of being" that help us to grow as a world community and that help us to learn to love ourselves and other people in the world. To take that "light" out to the rest of the world. Part of *MAMAROOTS* is based on what I've retrieved through Mama-guided interpretive transformational research (meaning "not always to be found in scholarly books" and more akin to "intuitive focusing" used in tarot reading) out of our pre-"Egyptian" (Nubian) records, that I've renamed "Kamaatik," which I believe is a truer translation of the ancient hieroglyphic name for "Egypt." It integrates several ancient root words: "Ka," which means "black-faced" or "Sun-kissed" and "Maat," the name of the Mama of Righteous Truth and which means "sacred temple and lands" of "Genuine Truth" and much more.

For our modern philosophy I use the word "Afrakamaatik," adding the prefix "Afra," which I developed in 1985 to mean "Black female-centered as a positive norm," to "Kamaatik." The interpretation loosely means "From the Sacred Sun-kissed lands where the Black-faced Mama of Genuine Righteous Truth dwells" and is the basis of Ancient Kamaatik Spirituality. The basis for all belief systems is being in order with the Cosmic Mama, being in order with yourself, striving to be a harmonious, enlightened, wise person. Every religious tradition says that to some extent, so MAMAROOTS is just another slice of the pie; it's just another way of getting to those same Universal Truths, because I believe that all religions have truth in them, it is how we practice them that sometimes throws us off. Spiritual *is* Political.

woman of power: *What issues do you hope* MAMAROOTS *will provide a forum for?*
Asungi: The subtitle of *MAMAROOTS* is "Ancient and Modern." It is modern because I discuss modern wimmin whom I think still exemplify those goals of being Afracentrikally positive. It's not just to retrieve Afrikan Goddesses or an Afrikan system. It is also about helping wimmin to live today. Eventually it will have what I call a total Afracentrik analysis. At this point, Afracentrik is still a vision. We're asking questions about what it means to us to be Afracentrik. I want us to become a community of wimmin who are developing this idea.

Each Forum has a theme. One issue addressed the question, "What is Afracentrik spirituality?" So at this point we really are just going through the preliminaries of actually defining and setting down some ideas about what Afracentrik is, rather than assuming that everyone knows, because they don't. It may take us a while to just get through that question.

MAMAROOTS: AJAMA-JEBI is the sistahood. This sistahood is really for those wimmin who are interested in the philosophy and studying the philosophy. It's a sistahship thing! What that means is that each issue is a continuing discussion. It's a gathering together on paper, to nurture ourselves through an Afra-positive mythological dialogue.

woman of power: *Are women other than the sistahood welcome to join in the discussion in the forum?*
Asungi: I won't say absolutely no since MAMAROOTS respects any tradition/view that contributes to restoring the balance between our Mamaship and Her children. Because the Forum is available in some bookstores and wimmin's studies centers, if a womin from this non-sistahood readership offered input that truly contributed to fostering our sistah-vision and philosophical development, I would share her insights in our Forum. But again, the way a womin becomes a "Rootsistah" is by having a genuine wish to personally develop an Afracentrik Transformational Philosophy; affirming to live by our Afracentrik codes and to keep her sistahship current.

But for the most part, it's for Afra-focal dialogues between the sistahs. There is a whole part of our Forum that's just that. It's called "Sistah's Nomma-Webbing." "Nomma" means the vital power of wimmin weaving the WORD and "Webbing" means "creating from individual threads a unified network or closely woven fabric." Both are ancient representations of how wimmin used the Mama-Forces. "Sistah's Nomma-Webbing" is now about a third of the Forum and I hope it will be even larger as more wimmin begin to talk and Nomma-Web with each other.

That is a major intent of the Forum, that we communicate with each other, speak our heart's visions, talk about who we are and what we're doing and ways we are re-becoming. The rest of the Forum is my Afra-focal analysis of information that comes from the more traditional, Herstorical Record.

In one section, "SASSY-ROOT: SAY IT SISTAH," named in honor of Sarah Vaughan to acknowledge that the Afra-vision that I share also comes from and belongs to a continuum of Afrikan wimmin who've consistently managed to maintain enough personal Mama-wit vision to leave their "Sassy-Root Wisdoms" throughout the written record, I honor and share some of their "SANE and AFFIRMING and SASSY stuff."

So the sistahood is open to any womin who is sincerely looking to understand that, and who agrees with the codes and ethics and standards of sistahood listed in each Forum, codes that describe how we should treat one another and the world. They are retrieved from an ancient Kamaatik code of ethics that was the basis for all modern religions, and it outlines how to conduct oneself as a right-living, self-evolved person, such as to be "Christlike" or "Buddhalike." Any womin who is willing to seek those goals for herself, in recognition of the fact that we all come from one genetic Afrikan Mama, is welcome into the sistahood, but the focus is on an Afracentrik cultural context.

The codes also discuss developing a positive reflection in yourself as a "Black-faced One," recognizing the Mama spirit in your Rootsistahs, accepting that you must take responsibility in your dealings with your Rootsistahs, respecting others who are honestly striving for their own paths of positive spirituality and self-reflection, no matter how different from your own.

This code of ethics of our MAMAROOTS: AJAMA-JEBI sistahood is prescribed in our pledge called the "Rootsistah's Afraffirmation Pledge." Quite a mouthful to say and quite a handful to do—to live up to such a code of transpersonal standards. Our sistahood has this code of standards because the whole point is that wimmin who are seeking female-centered spirituality are, or should be, seeking standards by which to live.

woman of power: *How do you think poor women and working-class women will provide leadership in the nineties?*
Asungi: Most wimmin seem to fall into this class, so we could just say wimmin, period. Besides, like using the word "minority," to label ourselves "poor" and to accept this image is a personal reinforcement that we're inherently self-lacking. "Leadership," as it is glorified in this culture, is not a concern. Having food, shelter, job security, healthy self-esteem, physical/psychic safety and plain old sanity that comes from having our basic humin rights as wimmin affirmed are more my concern for us in the nineties. It's definitely among my invocations to Mama to remedy. I believe that it is the right of every humin being to have enough to eat and to have shelter. It's incredible that we still struggle for those basic things.

But I hope that wimmin who find themselves in "positions of power" continue to speak out about these issues, continue to maintain a sense of "self" that is separate from being in those places of "power," because that's where the real strength, the strength of character, comes from.

Clearly, the issue of class and economics is one that's going to have to be addressed in the nineties, because the wimmin's spirituality movement is, to some extent, becoming a movement where the focus is on how much accessibility to the system you have. When that happens, wimmin's spirituality becomes something you can only do if you have leisure time and money. Making travel to all the sacred sites in the world a focus for spiritual proficiency definitely puts a lot of wimmin who don't have this economic base out of the picture.

So what does that mean? Clearly this can't be the wimmin's spirituality movement we want, because the wimmin in most of our matriarchal cultural "models" (which we say we seek to re-establish) didn't travel all over the world to visit "sacred sites"—they had one right in their backyard. I think it is still our responsibility to bring about a spirituality "movement" that everybody can "afford." Spirituality is something we're all born with. It is as simple as nurturing a child, or greeting a person on the street who may need a hello; it is as simple as simply caring.

So that's a celebration of the spirit, and so is the fact that we "Colored" sistahs are *still* on the planet even discussing a spirit, that we're still talking, and that we *still* have hopes for making a change, not only for ourselves but for the world. And it's this genius of ours for "transformative re-visioning" that reflects an incredible spirit. ∞

"Semit Em Kau: Sistah Adoration Song," © 1991 Asungi Productions. These Hat Kat Kau priestesses salute, honor, and affirm each other with the Afrakamaatik gestures of Healing Sistah-Adoration.

Becoming Connected to the Spiritual Again

An Experience with an African Priestess

by Gloria Wade-Gayles

Without seeing her, I knew that the priestess from Senegal was real. Without feeling the touch of her hands, I knew that she possessed powers no textbook could explain. She was a gift from another world, I believed, the incarnation of women lost to us in the Middle Passage,[1] or the medium I had prayed for since Mama's death.

When I put up flyers announcing her visit—"Madame Fatou Sek of Senegal, an Ndepp Priestess"—it was as if I were participating in a ritual, ceremoniously sweeping the path before her with a short-handled broom, bending and bowing in reverence. I was excited but concerned. Luminaries of national and international distinction were not new to Spelman College; indeed, their visits helped the institution to prepare women of African descent for leadership in all fields. But Madame Sek was different. She had no college degrees. She had written no books. She would not come bearing gifts valued by an academic community.

Unfortunately, in America, becoming educated means worshipping that which is rational and minimizing that which is spiritual. It means believing that the world of ideas is the only important world, or at least the only world to which upwardly mobile people should be connected. And who more than people of African descent want to make gains in American society, even if doing so means dismissing the importance of a dark woman from the Motherland who has a way of seeing and being that we cannot explain?

Those of us at Spelman College who were ceremoniously preparing for Madame Sek's visit were concerned that our students are products of a media-saturated culture that desensitizes them to the spiritual world. From the media, they learn the pleasure of the now, the glitter of the material, the power of men with money and position, and the beauty of youth. How would they respond to an elderly African woman who represented the opposite of everything that they had been taught to value? We had work to do.

My strategy was simple: I would tell students about my experiences with women from my youth whose spiritual power was uncontested. I could do that easily, because I had been reared in a segregated housing project in the South in the late forties. What I remember most vividly from my youth is my respect for women, especially my elders. To me, they were powerful beings—forces who belonged, I thought, to another world but chose to live in this one because we needed them. As Blacks, we struggled for personhood and freedom in the physical world, but that was not the only world in which we lived. Women guided us to the other world, the spiritual world, where neither race nor gender was of consequence, and there they nurtured us and made us whole. We called the women wise; they were, in fact, spiritual.

My mother was one of those women. She was, and is, spiritual. In one breath, she taught my sister and me about the dangers of white men who cruised through the project in search of vulnerable women, and in another breath she taught us about the power of the inner self that is vulnerable to nothing except lack of sufficient will to be. I remember her as a woman who made decisions rooted in logic but also decisions for which there were no logical explanations—a feeling she had, a dream that woke her in the night, a premonition that came to her during the day, an encounter with a stranger whose eyes held messages, or a sign from nature.

As a young girl and even into my teenage years, I considered my mother an enigma. She was both intellectual and spiritual, two different persons in one body. She sent my sister and me to college, but she made us humble ourselves in the presence of forces unrecognized in academia. She believed in medical science but told engaging stories about strange incidents that no one could explain.

I remember one of these incidents vividly because Mama was ill. She had awakened one morning with double vision. Visits to the best doctors in town brought no cure. "You will just have to live with it," they told her. But one of the women mother met in the hospital believed otherwise. After Mama returned home, this perfect stranger called every day, at the same hour, and together she and Mama talked about the power of the spirit. This continued for weeks until Mama woke one day with the ability to see clearly. That was spiritual and I had witnessed it.

I also remember Mama's many prophecies and our disbelief, to which she would reply, with certainty, "You'll see." And we always did. That was spiritual. I remember her telling us, again and again, that everyone has the gift of prophecy; we could become connected to it by claiming it, she would say. That was spiritual. But I remember most of all her litany about women as special beings who, unlike men, do not fear the unknown. They reach for it. It embraces them; it empowers them. That was spiritual.

I shared these and other experiences with my students, and with choruses of "Amen," they told their own stories. They had known women like Mama all their lives. Their mothers, their grandmothers and great-grandmothers, women in their communities and in their churches read signs, listened to the winds, studied the heavens, related stories about strange incidents, laid on healing hands, and humbled themselves before unseen powers. Their strong sense of self as empowered Black women came, the students told me, from the spiritual power of women they had known in their youth. With that, I knew that we were ready for the visit of the priestess from Senegal.

Madame Sek was in Atlanta at the invitation of the Office of International Health of the Morehouse School of Medicine, Spelman's neighbor. The contact person was Dr. Charles Finch, an internationally known Egyptologist, whom Madame Sek had "adopted" in 1986 and with whom she would be living during her stay in Atlanta. He had come to know her personally through his study of Ndepp, the ancient Wolof religion. Madame Sek, Dr. Finch explained, is called Ndepp Kat, which, translated, means the High Priestess of Ndepp. Her Ndepp powers have attracted the attention of Senegalese, French, and other psychiatrists who seek to understand the secret of her success with mental and emotional illnesses they can neither diagnose nor cure.

> *As a woman of African descent, and more specifically as my mother's daughter, I had to renew my connection to the spiritual world.*

In conversations with Dr. Finch and his wife, Ellen, I learned that Madame Sek did not choose to be a priestess. She was chosen by Coumba Lamba, the Rab of the Ocean,[2] who is also the patron Rab of the City of Fufisuqe in Senegal, where Madame Sek makes her home. The Rab came to her in dreams and in signs when she was in her early twenties. They instructed her in the mysteries of Ndepp, giving her the spiritual power that people from around the world have sought for over six decades.

When I met her, I marveled at her. At eighty-three, Madame (a Francophone title of respect) had the energy of a much younger woman. She brought with her two of her daughters—Oulimata, who was fifty-six, and Nene, who was forty-five. She also brought with her a young man to translate from Wolof, the native language of Senegal, into English. Also with them was an African-American woman, Mama Sara, who was studying Ndepp.

When the five of them entered the small auditorium at Spelman College, I was immediately struck by the velvet-smooth blackness of their skin. The sun had been good to them. I was also struck by the colors they wore: bright yellow, orange, green, peach, and blue. I knew the colors made a statement, perhaps about different seasons, different emotions, and different energies. I was struck, most of all, by the sense of peace and calm that emanated from them collectively.

Madame Sek smiled almost continuously, and she looked at faces as if she were looking beyond the body into the soul. Speaking in Wolof, she prayed for us collectively, and yet there were moments during her prayer when we felt that some of her words were meant for us individually. When she touched us individually, she held the hands of some students and faculty longer than others, touching not only their hands, but also their arms and their heads. There was more to her touch than the laying-on-of-hands that African Americans know of and often sing about in old church songs. This was something different.

That the Rab was instructing her was evident throughout the group session with Madame Sek. When she touched the head of one student, she felt his pain: his grandmother had passed that morning. Madame Sek asked the young man to come for a special session with her at dawn the next morning. In a private session the three women held him in their arms as if he were an infant. They wept with him. They touched his eyes, his head, his hands, and his arms. Madame Sek, speaking in a rhythm that soothed even as it commanded respect, instructed him, as the Rab instructed her, about what he should do to be healed.

Those of us present at the group session were so impressed with Madame Sek, so certain of her spiritual powers that, one by one, we registered for private sessions with her. Selfishly (desperate people who are in pain can be selfish), I believed that Madame Sek had come to Spelman just for me. I needed to make contact with the spirit of my mother.

At seven in the morning, I drove to where Madame Sek was waiting for me. She instructed me to sit next to her on a small sofa. I obeyed, eagerly. I held her hand tightly and stroked it repeatedly. I think she understood. I think she knew why I was there.

She placed four cowrie shells in my right hand and, speaking through the interpreter, she told me to place the shells on a handmade straw tray. She shook

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the tray and touched the shells three times, and then she smiled. The reading began. Speaking through the interpreter, she recalled experiences from my childhood that only my mother and my aunt (who continues the spiritual tradition in my family) could have known. Each time she moved the shells, she spoke with knowledge about my life, though she did not even know my name.

There were times when the shells seemed to move of their own accord. She looked at them, and they seemed to move, making different designs that had meaning only for her. The reading lasted for less than an hour, but it covered a lifetime. It answered questions that I had asked only with my eyes. It clarified incidents from the past about which I had been confused for years. And it gave me comfort. It was not a seance; no tables were lifted in the air and no windblown sounds entered the room, but I had made connection with Mama's spirit. I knew I had. How else could the cowrie shells have spoken to me about experiences and places and people and feelings known only to Mama?

When I left the reading, I knew what I had to do from that moment on. As a woman of African descent, and more specifically as my mother's daughter, I had to renew my connection to the spiritual world. When

SPIRITUALLY AFRICAN

My mother never knew Africa
except as a place far from
the Mississippi Delta of her birth
where hunters in pressed khaki aimed at targets
that smelled the danger of blond hair and
blue eyes and privilege and power and guns
too late.

For her, Africa was a strange world of
grasslands and huts and tents
and sun-baked giants or pygmies
speaking in strange tongues
wearing ringed necks
and dancing in bare feet for
strange gods Jesus never anointed.

There was nothing from Africa in her.

They had seen to that, they thought,
centuries before her birth
when the women smelled them
and the world closed its nostrils
and ears and eyes
and soul.

Mama belonged to the new world
their guns and groins created.
A creme-colored woman of the Delta,
she wore ribbons in her wavy hair
and a trace of red on thin lips
that spoke no strange tongues
And yet

Mama belonged to Africa
Old World Africa
where the magic of
women was a gift
from the gods.

She could hear prophecies in the wind
even on a still summer night
and with a special magic that
was hers, only hers, she could
take the moon from the heavens
and lay it down to sleep
on a pillow in my bed.

She could talk to the stars
and make them laugh sprinkles
of shooting light in the heavens
and to the trees which moved
at her command to shade us
from the southern sun.

She could heal with her hands
soothe with her voice
inspire with her wisdom
see beyond the now with
eyes that had been elsewhere
and everywhere before
they were hers.

Those who claimed her
in color
in hair
in name
in place

did not know

Mama belonged to Africa

Spiritually.

by Gloria Wade-Gayles

did I first lose touch with it? How? Why? I knew the answers. I had begun losing it when I was in graduate school, for obvious reasons. In that world there was no place for strange tales and strange happenings that were, at the time, considered the workings of primitive people. As the only Black woman in my classes, I wanted to prove that I was capable of making solid A's. There would be no double standards for me. And so I played the game in order to make the A's and, in the process, began to believe in the competitive world in which playing the game is the cutting edge of "making it." I lost it completely during the civil rights movement of the sixties. In my revolutionary zeal, I had no patience with my people's spirituality, which had not, I often said, liberated us from slavery. In fact, I believed at the time that it was, in part, the cause of our psychological enslavement.

The loss of one's mother and the realization that one is getting older can bring fading horizons within reach very quickly. During the last six months of Mama's life, we spent many hours together in intimacy, and I heard again the old stories and new ones. I was a hungry listener because Mama had extracted a promise from me that I would pass on the family's history to future generations. At the center of that which I was to pass on was her belief in something more powerful and more lasting than material goods and social status. I was older now and the mother of two children whose spiritual health was as important to me as my own and my sister's had been to Mama. Even if I had wanted to turn my back on the spiritual, I could not have. Mama was gone. I had made a promise to her; I was a mother; and I had experienced the powers of Madame Fatou Sek.

I am still committed to the liberation of my people, must be and always will be. But years of serious study of African culture, especially the magic of rituals made real by Madame Fatou Sek's visit, have added a new dimension to this struggle. We need to be spiritually grounded because therein lies our strength and health as a people, and only with both can we achieve liberation. Equally important, once liberated, we would be humane people, spiritual people, who embrace rather than oppress others.

I cannot bring Mama back, but by becoming connected again to the spiritual, I can remain connected to her. I can constantly reach within myself and try to connect to the spirituality that Mama said is within all of us. I can take time to meditate, to see nature, to feel the energy in the universe. I can study more and read more about the spiritual world, even join a spiritual organization. But most of all I must do what Mama told me to do years ago: open myself to everything that the spiritual forces that govern the universe give to those who want to receive. After my experience with the priestess, I was open. I was ready to receive all of it because Mama had given birth to me—again. ∞

Notes
1. The perilous journey of slaves to the New World.
2. A Rab is one of the spiritual forces that govern the universe.

Making a Difference on "Charcoal Alley"

by Melba F. Coleman

Melba F. Coleman *worked with the Los Angeles Unified School District for twenty-seven years as a teacher, project director, and principal. She is currently an associate professor in the Graduate Education Department at California State University at Domingus Hills.*

July 1, 1987, was a momentous occasion for me. I started my assignment as a principal at 102nd Street School in the heart of Watts, the inner-city neighborhood in Los Angeles that had exploded into a rioting inferno in 1965. In fact, 102nd Street Elementary School was located on "Charcoal Alley" where much of the burning took place. I had been chosen by the superintendent of the L.A. School Board to head one of the ten lowest-achieving, predominantly Black schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

The L.A. School Board, in response to the outcry from several Black activist groups, among them the Council of Black Administrators, the NAACP, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, had devised a five-year plan called the Ten Schools Program to turn these schools around. The first step was to appoint principals who had proven success in motivating people, creating innovative curricula, and exhibiting a high degree of energy and vitality. When I was called by the deputy superintendent to serve in the Ten Schools Program, I laughed at the high-energy part, protesting that I didn't have as much energy as I once had. In fact, I told him I thought I was getting ready to embark upon my midlife crisis. I was in the perfect place for it—a cozy, middle-class, predominantly white school in the suburban San Fernando Valley—and I was having a reasonably good time.

He assured me that they hadn't made a mistake and I accepted the challenge. My husband didn't accept it very well, however. He had spent part of his childhood in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects that were situated directly across the street from the school. He had even attended 102nd Street School. When he and his family lived there in the fifties, the projects represented a small "homey" community where everyone knew each other, cared about each other, and looked out for each other. They didn't even lock their doors back then; everyone trusted their neighbors.

But Jordan Downs was now one of the most notorious of the twenty-six L.A. public housing projects, the typical crime-ridden, drug-infested, dead-end place where adults lived in quiet desperation and children, too, soon lost their zest for life. This was the picture my husband reacted to—as did many of my friends.

As a child, I lived for a short time about a mile from 102nd Street School, and I, too, had some doubts about going back. My memories of the community were vague, but I had heard and read many media reports about the area—most of them negative. My strongest reaction, however, was *I can do this.* I felt that I could make a difference, and that if one person could make a difference, then together a group of us could make a real dent in the problems at the school.

I immediately chose "We Can Make a Difference" as our school slogan. I even composed lyrics to emphasize the point, and that song has been sung at all of our assemblies ever since. It goes like this, to the tune of "The More We Get Together":

We can make a difference, a difference, a difference
We can make a difference, let's all do our best.
If I try, and you try,
And you try, and I try.
We can make a difference, let's give it our all.

We always finish with a rousing "Yea."

And so, I arrived with high hopes, high energy, and high expectations—*and the hard work began.*

For the first three months, I was bone tired. I was closing down my school in the Valley, planning and supervising staff development for teachers entering the Ten Schools Program at the 102nd Street School, and trying to remain sane (never mind positive).

In my role as 102nd Street School principal, the first difficult task was choosing my staff. The 102nd Street School was the largest of the ten schools, with an enrollment of over a thousand students, and one of the attractions of the program was the opportunity to handpick the staff, which involved countless hours of interviews. After all, we were hiring sixty teachers, more than thirty paraprofessionals, five office members, six custodians, eight cafeteria workers, and support staff (a nurse, a school psychologist, a counselor, and others). Added to this momentous task was the prospect of beginning classes early on August 21st. Despite all of our efforts, most of the students didn't come back to school until the traditional September date.

It soon became evident that enrollment was not our only problem. A large number of the students, perhaps one hundred and fifty, were exhibiting puzzling and bizarre behavior. One little girl would fall prostrate wherever she was and refuse to move. Another youngster would run through the office, sweeping things off every desk he saw. It was not uncommon for children to run out of the school gate and run home screaming, "I'm going to tell on you." In the twenty-three years that I had worked in the Los Angeles schools, I had never before observed this kind of behavior in children. I was soon to discover its source.

We initiated the Grief and Loss Counseling Program, a program that aims to give children a positive, productive way of dealing with grief and a safe place in which to experience it.

November 1987

One night in November 1987, a young man was shot and killed across the street from the school. His body lay out uncovered all night long because the coroner would not come into the neighborhood after dark and the body could not be moved. On the way to the 102nd Street School the next morning, many of our students saw the body.

When I learned what had happened, I called in a group of school psychologists to administer psychological first aid to our students. During this process, we discovered that many of the children had experienced death and dying before but that there had been no outlet for their grief. Together, the counselor, school psychologist, psychiatric social worker, assistant principal and I analyzed our list of about one hundred and fifty students whose behavior was so bizarre that we had labeled them "high risk," although we considered all of our children "at risk" by virtue of their being poor, minority, and residing in a violence-prone, drug-ridden neighborhood. One of the experiences that linked these students was that many of them had lost relatives and close friends to death—sometimes very violent death. That was when we initiated the Grief and Loss Counseling Program.

November 1988

At 1:50 p.m. one November day, the switchboard of the public-address system in the office lit up as several teachers frantically called the office at once. They had heard gunshots coming from the direction of the kindergarten yard. A man dropped to the pavement right outside the kindergarten yard, mortally wounded. I watched him die as I took charge of my staff and students, talked with police to determine when and where it would be safe to dismiss my students, defused an explosive situation between an angry bystander and the school police, and reassured everyone that everything was going to be all right. On the way home, I stopped by my church to ask my minister to pray for me.

December 1988 to August 1989

Between December 1988 and August 1989, six children and one adult died in and around 102nd Street School: a kindergarten girl skipping ahead of her mother in a crosswalk was hit by a van, and a pre-kindergarten boy and his mother died when the family car was broadsided by a truck. A fourth-grade boy died from a brain aneurism. Still others died: a kindergarten boy died of spinal meningitis; a thirteen-year-old former student drowned while trying to rescue a younger cousin; and a twelve-year-old died when he rode his bicycle into the street trying to get away from a man with a pit bull.

The Grief and Loss Counseling Program

After that first death in November 1987, we initiated the Grief and Loss Counseling Program, a program that aims to give children a positive, productive way of dealing with grief and a safe place in which to experience it. Grief and loss are heavyweight issues

Melba Coleman and students of the 102nd Street Elementary School, January 1990.

for children, and the program prepares the soil for learning—it addresses issues of the heart so that they can deal with issues of the head. The program works. The children who have experienced this program are better equipped to function in the classroom. And because they know that they have a warm supportive place to deal with the grief, they are empowered to learn.

In the Grief and Loss Counseling Program, students meet in small groups with the school counselor and the school psychologist once a week for an hour. They talk about their problems in a circle and draw pictures on the subject of their grief as a form of art therapy; the counselor reads stories to them that address the issues of death and dying; and they themselves write stories about their grief. They also plant something called Memory Gardens—they are given flower or vegetable seeds to plant at school, and watching those seeds grow helps to give them a feeling for the significance of life.

The Grief and Loss Counseling Program was one of the first we initiated for "high risk" students. One of the unique aspects about it is its success in a poor and minority community where people are traditionally quite resistant to the idea of therapy. The usual response to the idea of psychological support is that we are strong people who can take care of our own problems and we don't want anybody nosing around in our business.

But the Grief and Loss Counseling Program was quite successful: children referred themselves, parents referred their children, other schools referred their students to us, and parents even referred themselves. I think one of the reasons for its success was that the school counselor and the school psychologist had integrity and everyone knew that they could be trusted not to let out confidential information—they were not there to judge anyone or report criminal activities.

The Grief and Loss Counseling Program received a great deal of media attention, with articles in the *L.A. Times Magazine* and *Newsweek*; television interviews on "CBS This Morning" and "Hard Copy"; a University of Southern California documentary; local newscasts on three channels; and coverage on West German television and Australian radio. But other programs that address the needs of poor, inner-city children are needed as well if we are to make a difference. In spite of our successes, many of our children remain at risk, as these notes I took in November of 1990 remind me.

November 1990—Jordan and Alysha

Jordan* came to see me the other day. I asked his mother to bring him in to see me because he and a group of his friends had been seen beating up and chasing two boys on the way home from school. Jordan is now thirteen years old and in the eighth grade. When he left me three years ago, he was a bright, mischievous ten-year-old with a promising future.

I first met Jordan when he and some of his friends attempted to dash across the street in the middle of the block. Everyone made it safely across except for Jordan; a car hit him and broke his leg. I cradled him in my arms and took care of him until his mother arrived. Throughout that year, Jordan and I shared a special bond. He loved to laugh and make others laugh. He would hang onto me giving me hugs, bringing me up to date on what was happening, and making me laugh. Back then, I told his mother that he had the potential to "make it." He wouldn't be one of those depressing statistics shared by so many young black males: Jordan was special.

But as I counseled Jordan and his mom, I couldn't ignore his disinterested slouch, lack of eye contact, callous attitude, quick temper, and denial when he did choose to respond to me. Jordan's mother is a young working mother who has always been very supportive of school programs, especially where Jordan and Jimmy (a younger brother) were involved. She even has the boys call her at work as soon as they get home each day. As the conference wore on, Jordan's mother revealed that he had been giving her lots of trouble.

She told me that he and his "friends" were always in places where they weren't supposed to be. Jordan had been forbidden to go into the projects, but he had been seen there many times. Their home had been broken into twice and their belongings found in the projects. She had had to go to Jordan's current school for conferences concerning fights that Jordan had been involved in. Finally, she had enrolled Jordan in an after-school enrichment program, but on the day that he accosted the boys, he was supposed to be at the program.

What happened to Jordan in the three years since he left 102nd Street School? I question our efforts as a school staff. Despite all of our efforts, will the community forces prove to be too strong for these precious little ones to pull up and out? What will happen to the Jordans of the community?

When I saw Alysha a few weeks ago, a fifth grader when she left school three years ago, she was pregnant. When I asked her about her pregnancy, she indicated that she didn't consider it a mistake. What will happen to Alysha? How will her baby's life be different from the life she has lived? What kind of mother will she be with her marginal skills? What does she know about parenting? Were all of our efforts wasted on her?

As Year Four Ends

Examples like Jordan and Alysha remind me of the reasons I was originally assigned to 102nd Street School in 1987. The LAUSD Board of Education was responding to the unrest in the Black community about substandard schooling for Black youngsters, as demonstrated by continuous low scores on standardized tests. Despite the infusion of massive amounts of federal funds for over twenty years, predominantly Black inner-city schools continued to score poorly on tests such as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and California Achievement Program. Our mission was to raise the average test score to the fiftieth percentile within five years.

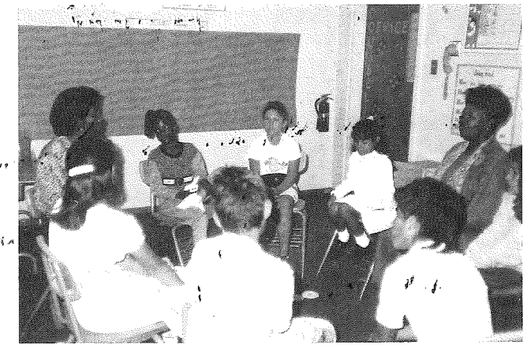
As year four of the Ten Schools Program ends, with ex-students such as Jordan and Alysha in mind, I ask myself several questions:

1. Given the severity of the problems in these schools (especially those adjacent to housing projects), should more, and different kinds of, resources have been allocated to these schools, such as psychiatric social workers and community outreach personnel?
2. Should the district have built into the program some kind of relief for "battle-scarred" teachers and administrators?
3. What other measures of success, other than test scores, should be used to determine progress in these schools?
4. Will the positive changes that we have made for some children follow them through junior high school, senior high school, and beyond?
5. Will the quality of life be enhanced for these children, or are we only making cosmetic changes that will soon fade away?
6. Are we doing all that we can for these children? Will it be enough?
7. Will the "civil war" between the Blacks and the Hispanics in this changing community negate the good we have done?
8. What effect will the continuing violence in the community have on these young children? How will society be affected?
9. Will I make it? What effect will this experience have on me? I know that my life will never be the same.
10. Will the LAUSD continue this pilot program after the fifth and final year?

I often spend eight to nine hours on-site daily doing the "people" work and one to two hours daily (and four to eight hours on weekends) doing the paper work. It is a grueling schedule at best. What keeps me going is the belief that I am making a difference, that some little girl or boy will one day take my place.

As a woman of color, I feel especially good about the innovative programs that I have spearheaded at 102nd Street School, especially the Grief and Loss Counseling Program. Private organizations that offer this kind of service charge exorbitant fees, yet we offer it free of cost to these children who are poor, minority, and attend a large, inner-city, public school in the heart of Watts. This is a real source of pride and a cause for celebration, as is the fact that I am the first female principal at 102nd Street School—not bad for a skinny little Black girl who wore glasses and played jump rope not far from here.

My work is a true celebration of the idea that, yes, there is a purpose for my life, and that I can, indeed, make a difference. Yes, I do feel that my life is ordered by divine guidance—and where it leads me, I will follow. My zest for life and my penchant for the positive have carried me a long way. I am a believer in doing what I do with passion. Everywhere I go, I want there to be no doubt that I was there. I am truly thankful for the opportunities that I have been given and for having the sense (common sense as well as "book learning") to take advantage of the opportunities that come my way. ∞



Lillian Duncan, school psychologist, far left, and Jesse Freeman, school counselor, far right, with students at the 102nd Street School, in a Grief and Loss Counseling Program session.

Students participating in a Grief and Loss Counseling Program session.

Afterword: The Grief and Loss Counseling Program is now in its fifth and final year at the 102nd Street School. Although she is now an associate professor at California State University at Domingus Hills, Melba Coleman will continue to work with the performing arts division of the Ten Schools Program on a consulting basis, and she continues to remain active and interested in the issue of children's needs in the educational system.

*Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the students.

The Institute for Arab Women's Studies

by Suha Sabbagh

In the social sciences and in the popular media, Arab women are generally portrayed as passive, docile women, dominated by men. Until recently, the image of Arab women in academic studies was either characterized by the Orientalist[1] view of the Middle East, or the product of research that failed to make a distinction between the role attributed to women in religious texts and the actual role of women in the "outside world." The extent to which Arab women have had to develop unique methods of resistance (to ensure a degree of compliance with their needs) in a society where patriarchy is so heavily entrenched has been recognized by very few social scientists.

In part, this perception of Arab women has its roots in the theoretical approach wherein the achievements of Arab women, or lack thereof, are often seen through the prism of Western feminist consciousness. Such paradigms are never value-free. Consequently, Arab women are judged and found to be wanting when evaluated according to the norms of a culture that is not their own. Since the 1960s, this situation has begun to change somewhat due to the greater enrollment of Arab women in the social sciences and their contributions to research in this field.[2]

The idea that Third World national-liberation movements have borne within them feminist movements has only recently received the attention that it deserves.[3] Since the *intifada*, or Palestianian uprising, erupted in the West Bank and Gaza, images of Palestinian women, middle-aged and in traditional dress or young and wearing blue jeans, all active participants in resistance to occupation, began to appear regularly on the evening news and in the press. But, very little research had been done on the *intifada* as a social transformation rooted not only in the political situation but also in a popular female movement. To some extent, the reasons for this silence about women's participation may be attributed to the fact that the leadership and the institutions of the *intifada* must remain underground. There is very little information in the media on the critically important New Palestinian Women's Movement, also known as the Women's Committee Movement, which calls for women's social, political, economic, and cultural liberation. With the exception of the Defense Committee (responsible for engaging the occupying soldiers), women constitute over fifty percent of all committees including the clandestine education system, medical and food relief, food production, and others, and committees that will one day form the departments of the new state, an infrastructure that women have been building from its inception. The *intifada* has also brought about some dramatic changes in the relationships between women and men, changes that need the attention of scholars interested in the relationship between feminism and nationalism in the Third World.

> *It is precisely because Arab women live under a stringent patriarchy that they have developed strong methods of resistance to patriarchy and to foreign domination.*

In response to the need for such scholarship, the Institute for Arab Women's Studies was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in September 1989. The founding meeting, which took place on March 23, 1989, in Washington, D.C., was attended by sixteen professional women from various academic disciplines. Since then, many other professional women have joined the organization.

The founders recognized the need to produce studies on Arab feminism in general and on Palestinian feminism in particular. The opportunity provided by the *intifada* to study the important relationship between political resistance and the development of a feminist consciousness was the catalyst for the formation of the institute. After the first year, the founders also expanded the program to include studies that touch the lives of all Arab women. The founders have continued to stress the need to study transformations in women's roles within the context of sociopolitical currents affecting the Arab world. Their intention is to move towards a theoretical paradigm that will take into consideration the specificity of the feminist movement in Arab countries rather than an analysis that perceives the problem through the prism of Western feminism alone. By bringing the contributions of Arab women into the mainstream of history, the program of the institute will also challenge the idea that feminism is a foreign ideology currently being introduced into or imposed upon the Arab world for the first time.

Suha Sabbagh *is executive director of the Institute for Arab Women's Studies. She is the author of* Sex, Lies, and Stereotypes: The Image of Arabs in American Popular Fiction, *and co-editor of* Images and Reality: Palestinian Women Under Occupation in the Diaspora. *She is currently editing* Gender in the Intifada, *to be published in the Spring of 1992. (Photo © 1991 Scurlock Studios.)*

The institute also seeks to facilitate research on Arab women by providing documents, statistics, compilations of articles written in Arabic, bibliographies, and other materials for researchers. During the first two years, the institute has developed a monograph series on issues facing women in different regions of the Arab world. Later, the institute will publish studies aimed at integrating women in development.

Finally, the founders hope that by providing documentation of Palestinian women's participation in this struggle, women's contributions will not be forgotten once the national struggle has been won.

Research on Arab women has also suffered from academic trends wherein certain countries receive greater attention than others. Such trends are determined by accessibility, cultural attitudes, and language barriers; and the political climate and foreign policy also frequently determine the availability of grant money. Studies on Palestinian society have often been hindered by the ongoing dangers associated with sporadic warfare and by U.S. foreign policy. By providing some of the tools necessary for research on Palestinian women, such as establishing ties with academics in the occupied territories, and eventually for all Arab women, the institute hopes to fill this gap.

Images and Reality: Palestinian Women under Occupation and in the Diaspora, the institute's first collection of five essays, appeared in March 1990. In the preface, Ghada Talhami, director of the institute, describes the history of research on Palestinian women. Before the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the political mobilization of Palestinian women was widely perceived as a male-dominated effort, and Palestinian women were considered nothing more than a mouthpiece for male society. After 1982, when images of a militarized Israel pounding the camps in Lebanon began to appear in the media, attitudes toward Palestinian women began to change somewhat and a few articles on Palestinian women began to appear in academic journals.

Other topics addressed in essays published by the institute include the problems of women who receive higher education but cannot then find suitable employment; the uneven coverage of women in the West Bank newspapers; the special problems of Palestinian women in the United States; and an analysis of the image of women in a common wedding folk song. The institute also distributes a folder of previously published articles that provide an analysis of the transformations of women's role in the occupied territories.

The Institute for Arab Women's Studies provides an alternative point of view on Arab women through its publications and lecture program. Our efforts focus on showing that it is precisely because Arab women live under a stringent patriarchy that these women have also developed strong methods of resistance to patriarchy and to foreign domination. We must now address the problem on the theoretical level, and that is a much more difficult thing to do. We must produce an alternative methodology that can take into account the specific nature of feminism in the Arab world. In this context we may borrow some notions from the liberal Western feminist tradition, while avoiding the blind application of theoretical notions that were developed in the West and are consequently not value-free. ∞

For further information, contact the Institute for Arab Women's Studies at: 1900 Eighteenth St. NW, Washington DC 20009, telephone (202) 667-4540.

Notes

1. European authors who visited the Middle East in the early 18th century set the tone for future writings about Arab women in the West. However, their views were limited because they did not have a full grasp of the role of women in Arab culture. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).
2. See Soraya Altorky and Camillia Fouzy El-Solh, *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988).
3. See Kumari Jayawarden, *Nationalism and Feminism in the Third World* (New York: Holt, 1979); and Robin Morgan, *The Demon Lover: On Sexuality and Terrorism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989).

SELECTED RESOURCES ON ARAB WOMEN

ORGANIZATIONS

Bisan Research and Development Center, Ramallah, P.O. Box 725, West Bank, via Israel.

Women's Affairs Center, P.O. Box 1194, Nablus, West Bank, via Israel.

Women's Resource and Research Center, Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees, P.O. Box 19591, East Jerusalem, Israel.

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 4201 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 500, Washington DC 20008, telephone (202) 244-2990

PUBLICATIONS

Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan, eds., ***Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*** (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1977).

Suha Sabbagh and Ghada Talhami, eds., ***Images and Reality: Palestinian Women Under Occupation and in the Diaspora*** (Washington, D.C.: Publishers Institute for Arab Women's Studies, 1990).

Fatna A. Sabbah, ***Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*** (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1984).

Women in Black Resist Violence

by Gila Svirsky

Author's note: Women in Black is a community of five thousand Jewish and Arab-Palestinian women who live in Israel and struggle to end the occupation of the territories and end the violence on both sides. Every Friday afternoon at thirty different locations around Israel, we dress in black and stand in a silent vigil, carrying signs to end the occupation. We have about a dozen affiliate groups in the United States, Canada, and Europe. This has gone on since December 1987, the start of the intifada, *the Palestinian uprising against the occupation. Women in Black was recently honored by being named one of the two annual recipients of the prestigious Aachen Peace Prize. Women in Black can be reached at: P.O. Box 61128, Jerusalem, Israel 91060.*

Despite isolated incidents, *intifada*, the Palestinian uprising, had not really reached Jerusalem until last summer when Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait tested the fragile truce between Jerusalem's Jews and Arabs. Violence finally erupted in a riot at the Temple Mount, with Israeli police killing more than twenty Moslem worshippers and wounding hundreds more. Palestinian terrorists, in an effort to even the score, stabbed to death three Jews in Jerusalem and two more in the north. Bombs began to go off regularly and, in the midst of this turmoil, the racist Rabbi Kahane[1] was murdered.

The violence spread. Kahane had long incited violence against Arabs, and his death set off a frenzy of vengeance. Stonings occurred on both sides. Jews bought and wielded guns, Arabs brandished knives, and at the market in Jerusalem, you worried about who stood next to you at the tomato stand.

Kahane's funeral was held in Jerusalem on a Wednesday. It was an ugly day. Gangsters roamed through the city looking for Arabs to kill or maim. We of the Women in Black peace movement had long been under attack by Kahane's thugs for our commitment to peace and coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis, and we knew that the death of Kahane would affect our work.

In the past, many of the Women in Black had received death threats from Kahane's people, and other peace activists had awakened in the night to find the doors to their homes on fire. The weekly vigil—one hour every Friday afternoon when mostly Jewish women, dressed in black, gathered to protest the continuing Israeli occupation[2] and to call for an end to violence on both sides—had become Women in Black's trademark. Kahane's troops had attacked our vigil, and the police had dispersed them with clubs and tear gas. Seven of us were on his official "hit list," and we knew that our addresses and telephone numbers were made public to any eager hitman. We wondered how the death of this hate-filled man would affect our lives.

The next day, a Thursday, several Women in Black were called to a meeting with the Jerusalem commissioner of police. He ushered us into his office. "I can't tell you not to demonstrate tomorrow," he said. "That is your right. But I will tell you that there is a greater chance of violence against you tomorrow than on any other Friday." He ticked off the "anniversaries" to be celebrated the next day by various extremists: two months to the Temple Mount slaughter; two weeks to the Jerusalem stabbings of Jews in revenge for the Temple Mount killings; the monthly celebration of the start of the *intifada* which occurs on the seventh of each month; and now the ritual mourning period for Kahane, to be commemorated by his supporters with seven days of violence against Arabs and "traitors" (Jewish peace advocates). The commissioner asked us, for our own safety, not to hold our weekly vigil. He said that he had had reports of plots to attack us and warned us that he could not guarantee our safety. It was not an encouraging prospect.

Women in Black is a collective with no formal leadership, and we cannot make decisions on behalf of the group, a very difficult concept for a police commissioner to grasp. We told him that we expected police protection since the police are supposed to protect those under attack, and that the most we could promise was to convey his words to the group. He didn't like our answers.

We were five women, and I, for one, left the police station shaken by his words. For three years on the vigil, I have feared the idea of someone driving by in a car and lobbing a hand grenade at us. Outside the police station, we met in the windy street and decided to activate the Women in Black phone network, to reach every woman we could that night. We agreed to faithfully convey the words of the commissioner, replete with his warnings, and to stress that the decision to attend the vigil was a personal one that each woman would have to make alone. When we split up, I felt great sadness in my heart. At home, I made the call that set off the phone network and then spent the evening thinking about the vigil.

At work the next day, I kept my eyes on the clock, waiting for one p.m., waiting for the vigil, with as much foreboding as I had ever had. At a quarter to one, I left my office dressed in black and walked down Ramban Street, glancing over my shoulder the entire way. When I reached Paris Square, our vigil plaza, I saw that it was filled with Kahane supporters wearing yellow shirts with the clenched fist insignia, shouting and gesticulating at anyone female or anyone wearing black. I circled the plaza and headed for our alternative location nearby. To my surprise, a small group of grim-looking women had already gathered.

We took signs saying "End the Occupation," and got on line. About thirty police officers had already gathered. We looked apprehensively at each other. My friend, Ethel, stood next to me and we talked quietly about how afraid we were. One woman said that she had told her daughter not to come. Another said that we cannot give up the streets to gangsters. When another woman said that she was terrified, we all looked at one another and silently acknowledged our own fears.

> *Let us create an example of nonviolence, of the ability of women to stand unflinching before aggression, and of the integrity of women as we stand together, hand in hand, and say no to all oppression.*

Usually, women join in any time during the first half hour and we are "full" only for the second half of the vigil. That Friday was different. Within fifteen minutes, we were not only full, we were many more women than usual. All of us, with our hearts in our throats, more silent than our silent vigil had ever been, stood together in determination not to be shoved aside by bullies. "What a group!" Ethel said. There were the usual curses and obscene gestures from passers-by—"Whores!," "Go home to your kitchens!," and "All you girls need is a little fuck"—but the police kept Kahane's thugs a block away. People threw things from their cars, but nothing exploded. And we continued to stand with silent dignity. How did we become like this? I wondered. How had we grown from ordinary teachers, social workers, secretaries, executives, and homemakers into such brave women? We were clearly deriving more courage from this vigil and this community than it was taking out of us in weariness. What a group! I thought, and knew that this feeling was filling all of us with pride.

At two p.m., when the vigil ended, we quickly dispersed. Typically, we didn't stop to congratulate ourselves. Our antagonists like to latch onto stragglers, and we made sure that there were none.

Our vigil that Friday was an act of courage. We knew it, even though we didn't say so out loud. But I think it should be said somewhere, for the sake of those who could use a pat on the back for all the times they have been abused, or threatened, or made to feel weak. There is no denying it: women are powerful. We will no longer be frightened away.

"Woman" is a powerful symbol. "Woman" traditionally means love, family, motherhood, nurture, and comfort; someone who holds you close and says, "It's going to be all right."

What we, together, have created in the women's peace movement in Israel is a different set of associations for the symbol "woman." It is an often antithetical set of associations: "woman" as a symbol of protest, anger, grief, mourning, warning, and—yes—power. "Woman" as power.

We had not originally intended to create these changes. We did not realize the impact our work would have when we began. But the longer we stood—week after week, in the rain and snow and hot sunlight—and the more we listened to the negative

Women in Black demonstration in Tel Aviv, 1988. The author appears carrying the sign, "End All Oppression." Photo by Rachel Ostrowicz.

reactions of people to our vigil, the more we began to understand the cumulative impact of that symbol. We are women for peace, women against the occupation, and we can no longer be ignored.

We stand on the side of the road, outside prisons, beside detention centers, in growing and visible numbers, with silent dignity. We convey a warning to all who see us that this occupation is intolerable. We shall not rest until the government of Israel sits down together with the representatives of the Palestinian people and negotiates a real peace, a peace that will bring home the women, men, and children from both sides of the "green line"[3]—those who have been drafted to do killing and maiming by our respective and corrupt leaders. We shall not rest until there is a peace that gives justice and dignity and land to both Jews and Arabs.

I came to Israel twenty-four years ago from the United States as a proud and idealistic Zionist. I came here loving and needing Israel more than I loved and needed all that I had left behind. I am not unusual—many of us throughout the Israeli peace movement came here as dedicated Zionists.

My grasp of who and what Israel is and what Zionism means to many people has undergone a transformation. I have seen how the word "Zionism" has been used by right-wing fanatics and even so-called moderates to oppress the Arabs who are citizens of Israel and the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

I wish to reclaim the word "Zionism." I declare here that Zionism means a belief that Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people, and I welcome the opportunity to share that home—in equality and tolerance—with non-Jews. Zionism must have nothing to do with discrimination or occupation or racism. It is the legitimate yearning and need of Jews to have a country of our own in light of the anti-Semitism that appears to be an ugly fact of life in the world. On those grounds and under those terms, I am proud to declare out loud before my Arab and Palestinian sisters that I am a proud Zionist.

I have lost a great deal of my fear during the course of these years of struggle to end the occupation. This struggle has been empowering to me, has made me strong, and has helped me to shed my fear. I have stood with Women in Black through stonings, spitting, and cars trying to hit us, through attacks by racists, tear gas, and curses that would make anyone look away in shame or strike back in vengeance. I have felt our collective strength as we continue to stand with our heads held high, and the fear dissipates. In its place is a surge of strength and power, of conviction and determination, of dignity and, yes, of courage. Women in the peace movement have shown enormous strength and courage, and our actions inspire strength and courage in others, bringing them into the peace movement to be courageous with us.

Finally, I would like to suggest that we, as women, lead the peace movement by setting an example among ourselves of openness and egalitarianism. Let us invite and welcome to join us all women in our society—Jewish and Arab; Sephardi, Mizrachi and Ashkenazi;[4] old women and young; women who are religious and those who are secular; women who are physically or mentally disabled; women who suffer for their beliefs and those with whose beliefs we may disagree; women who are Zionists and women who are anti-Zionist; women of Hamas[5] or the Palestine Liberation Organization or other political persuasions; women of every shape and color and size and belief. All of us must gather together in a great outpouring of strength and power for peace. Let us create an example of nonviolence, of the ability of women to stand unflinching before aggression, and of the integrity of women as we stand together, hand in hand, and say *no* to all oppression—*no* to occupation, *no* to sexism, *no* to discrimination, *no* to violence, *no* to all forms of racism and hatred—and *yes* to a feminized world of peace and moral courage. This is a vision of a world that returns us to the symbols that were once ours and should belong to all people—women and men—of love, family, nurturing, comfort, and support. This is the vision we have of the world. And this is the message that we, as women, can bring to this world by the courage and strength of our convictions. ∞

Notes

1. Meir Kahane was a New York rabbi who immigrated to Israel where he founded a political movement based on fear and hatred of Arabs. An antiracist law in Israel succeeded in preventing his reelection to the Israeli parliament. Kahane was killed on a visit to New York in early November 1990, allegedly by an Arab-American.
2. Since the June 1967 ["Six Day"] War, Israel has occupied land that formerly was under Jordanian, Syrian, and Egyptian rule. Most of the territory belonging to Egypt was returned following the "Camp David Accords," while the remainder, with its 1.5 million Palestinian occupants, is still under Israeli military rule.
3. The "green line" refers to the borders of Israel prior to its occupation of territories in the 1967 War. The line was usually green on most Israeli maps.
4. All Jews in Israel derive from one of three general ethnic origins: Sephardi, from Spain; Ashkenazi, from other locations in Europe; and Mizrachi, from Northern Africa or Asia. These three categories also represent cultural differences and are frequently a source of tension and discrimination in Israel.
5. Hamas is the Islamic fundamentalist movement of Palestinians.

Sections of this article are abridged from an address given by Gila Svirsky at the Women's Peace Conference for Israeli and Palestinian women on May 30, 1990, at Kfar Yassif, Israel.

***Gila Svirsky** has lived in Israel since 1966. She is active in peace work and has been a member of Women in Black since its inception. Until recently, she was director of the New Israel Fund—the largest financial supporter in Israel of civil rights, women's rights, and Jewish-Arab coexistence. She has published widely on political issues, and is now devoting more time to fiction. She lives in Jerusalem with her partner and two daughters. (Photo by Debbi Cooper.)*

AN OPEN LETTER FROM PATLATONALLI

Women Loving Women in Guadalajara

Dear Sisters,

Patlatonalli was formed in May of 1986 in Guadalajara, Mexico's second most populous city. The name "Patlatonalli" is a combination of two Nahuatl words, which together mean 'the energy or destiny of women who love each other."*

Patlatonalli has allowed us to go beyond the kinds of lesbian spaces that existed in Guadalajara in the past, which were places for entertainment, for getting to know each other, or for study. It has allowed us to come out as lesbians in defense of our political rights. The name of our current project is "Lesbian Feminist Work in Guadalajara." We have five focuses of work: human rights, HIV/AIDS, the struggle against violence against women, a documentation center, and human services. We carry out the following activities with respect to each one of our program areas: education, training, research, networking, and organizing.

We are a group of women who work against invisibility, repression, and self-repression. Our goals are: to strengthen our group, to defend our rights, to understand and validate our reality as lesbian women, and to struggle against our oppression. We also work to provide psychological, medical, and legal counseling, to clarify myths about our sexual preference, to address the political as well as the emotional aspects of sexual preference, to support the HIV/AIDS struggle, and to speak out against the lesbophobic media.

We work together with other feminist groups and support other grassroots groups that struggle against exploitation, oppression, and discrimination. We also promote the formation of other lesbian groups. Among the educational pamphlets Patlatonalli has written are: "The Myth and Reality of Lesbianism," "The Formation of Lesbian Groups," "Sexual Politics," "Women and HIV-AIDS," "Violence Against Women," "Lesbian Couples," "The Human Rights of Lesbians," "Self-Acceptance," "Racism," and "Lesbian Group: Patlatonalli."

In 1987, we organized the First National Lesbian Conference in Mexico's history, in which about seventy lesbians from all parts of the country participated. Shortly after that conference, we helped form the National Lesbian Feminist Coordinating Council, of which we are still an active member. We participated in the First Latin American and Caribbean Lesbian Encuentro in 1987, and were co-organizers of two more recent national lesbian conferences.

Patlatonalli has evolved through various forms of organization. We now consist of a core group of nine committed members, working closely with a broader circle of "collaborators," and counting on the support of an even broader network of "sympathizers." These include not only lesbians but also women and men of various sexual and emotional preferences.

As lesbian feminists, our primary commitment is to the lesbian community. But we also have a commitment to the rest of society, to women and men who are willing to struggle against prejudice, oppression, and exploitation. Our concept of struggle is not limited to the lesbian and gay community.

For over a year we worked out of a meeting place, which was named "Patlacalli," or "House of Lesbians," where we organized workshops on a variety of themes, including: "Lesbian Identity," "Sexuality," "Art," "Safer Sex," "Self-Defense," "Lesbian Mothers," "Relationships," "Lesbianism and Political Participation," and "Sexual Politics and Racism." Since March of 1991, we have shared a house and meeting place with the women's space, Oasis. A month ago, we merged into a single group with Oasis. Together with Oasis, we also operate a documentation center with some four hundred books, magazine articles, and pamphlets from all over the world.

We are now ready to move into another stage of growth, a project called "Global Project for Lesbian Work." We have strong local support for our work, and we are registered as a nonprofit organization with the Mexican government.

Our work is vital. We have already broken new ground by developing a lesbian presence in Guadalajara through public forums and other events that we have co-organized including a film series, plays, forums on "Lesbian Human Rights" and "Fighting Violence Against Women." In the near future, we plan to have a forum for non-sexist education.

In 1990, we participated in a number of international events including the Second Latin American and Caribbean Lesbian Encuentro in Costa Rica, the Twelfth Conference of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) in Stockholm, and the Latina Lesbian Conference in San Francisco. As members of the National Lesbian Feminist Coordinating Council, we were also represented at the Fifth Latin American Feminist Encuentro in Argentina.

In 1991, we dedicated ourselves to preparations for the Thirteenth International Conference of ILGA, and as co-organizers of the First ILGA regional Latin American Conference, which was to be held in Guadalajara in June of 1991, the first time ever in a "Third World" country. ILGA has been concerned about the situation of lesbians and gay men in Latin America. The social, political, and economic circumstances in this area of the world directly affect the life and organizations of lesbians and gay men. Groups from different countries in Latin America are faced with extreme violence, lack of financial resources, and the compulsory secret life of the majority of the members in our communities.

The First Latin American Regional and Thirteenth International ILGA Conferences met with strong and unconstitutional opposition from local authorities, not from ordinary citizens who have always respected our right to assembly. After the cancellation of the ILGA conference in Guadalajara, it was rescheduled in Acapulco thanks to the following factors: national and international protests, interest on the part of members of ILGA and some of its secretariats, support on the part of the citizens and hotel owners of Acapulco, the love of life of lesbians and gay men, the energy of the organizing committee, a donation that was made directly to the host hotel, and a willingness to conduct negotiations on the part of the federal government, the government of the state of Guerrero, and the National Commission on Human Rights.

The achievements of the conference include the strengthening of the lesbian and gay movements in Guadalajara, in Mexico, in Latin America, and in the world; the formation of a Latin American network of lesbians and gays; and a commission to oversee dues to ILGA that will take the economic realities of the different countries into account. The work of the one hundred and fifty participants from over twenty countries, the significant number of lesbians, and the support of the public and the press also contributed, as did greater strength, improved conditions for negotiation, and greater knowledge of the realities of our lives as lesbians and gays in Latin America.

As Patlatonalli, we want to strengthen our internal organization, the work of our information and documentation center, do more extensive work with our collaborators and sympathizers, demand that the different levels of government in Guadalajara respect our right to health, education, and jobs, open a cultural center for women within our building, strengthen our work with other organizations, support the formation of other groups of lesbians (we are very pleased about the formation of LILA, a new lesbian group in Mexico City), and intensify our efforts to get the word out concerning all our efforts.

In the nineties we would like to rebuild our connections with Mexican and Latina women in the United States so that together we can rediscover our common identities in spite of the border between us.

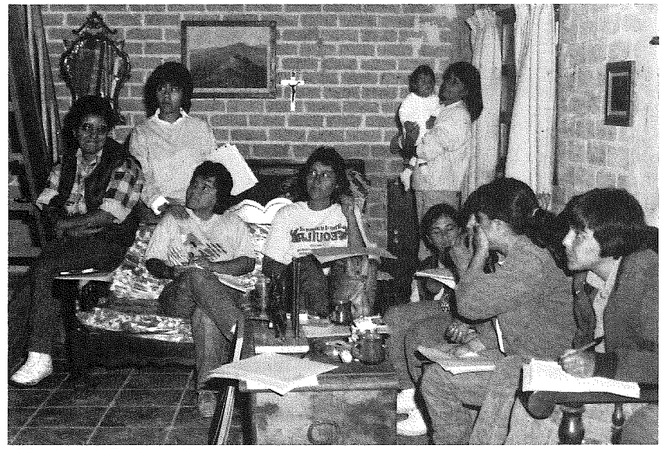
We also hope that the feminist movement will take up our demands as their own, even when we lesbians are not present, and that all women and men will take on the struggle that we have had to carry out on our own until now, the struggle to live our sexual-emotional-political option in freedom. Let us hope that in the nineties we share the poder de las mujeres! ∞

In Sisterhood,

The members of Patlatonalli

P.S. Please contact us at: Patlatonalli, Apartado Postal 1-623, C.P. 44100, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

GRUPO LESBICO Patlatonalli



Members of Patlatonalli.

*The language of ancient Mexico.

Five Hundred Years of Resistance and Struggle

by Marta Benavides

Rev. Marta Benavides *is an ordained Baptist minister who was born and raised in El Salvador. Since 1975 she has dedicated herself full time to promoting the liberation of her country. She is the director of MEDEPAZ—Ecumenical Ministries for Development and Peace in El Salvador and Central America. Because of her work, she lives in what the government calls political exile.*

THE NEW WORLD ORDER

During the Persian Gulf War, the world was horrified to learn that Scud missiles were being fired from Iraq to Israel, but were we also concerned about the cost of that war? Were we concerned that the United Nations legitimized an indiscriminate war, the war of many allied rich and industrialized nations against one Two-Thirds World* nation? Are we equally appalled to learn that every year fifteen million children die because they have not been immunized, while with the cost of just five war planes we could immunize all the children of the planet?

We, the Two-Thirds World peoples—those of color—wondered why nothing was done as the United States invaded and destroyed tiny Grenada in the Caribbean, or as the United States invaded Panama just over a year ago, or as the United States mined the ports of Nicaragua, preventing crude oil and milk from reaching that nation. We now wonder if the sisters and brothers of the industrialized nations wonder as we do.

At this point in history we are seeing the redefinition and forging of a new global international economic, and thus geopolitical, order. Those who control the wealth are reaccommodating themselves to the financial crisis suffered by many dependent nations. We must remember that this new order is merely the reaction of the One-Third World people to the demands made by the Two-Thirds World people for a just international economic order. New blocs of power are being formed. The United States, which is facing its worst financial crisis since the Second World War, is more than three hundred billion dollars in debt and needs to reestablish itself as a geopolitical and economic power. By 1992, there may be a new united Europe that might include what was previously called Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This will be a powerful and rich group. The Pacific Rim Common Market, led by Japan, expects to be a working reality by 1996, and will include Asian countries and those in Latin America facing the Pacific. This alliance contains the potential to become an even stronger and more powerful market than the European one. The North American Common Market will be led by the United States and will include Canada and Mexico, with whom the United States will have a free trading zone.

Of the three blocs, the North American Common Market faces the worst financial difficulties. One of the reasons for this is that the Latin American countries, which the United States now needs as allies, are in great difficulties as a result of foreign debt (though the United States is the largest debtor in the world) and underdevelopment, the result of five hundred years of colonialism, neocolonialism, and various forms of foreign interventionism.

EVER SINCE COLUMBUS

This is the story that has evolved for all the Two-Thirds World peoples since 1492. Columbus's venture led to centuries of disgrace, and it is due to this unequal relation between the colonizers and the colonized, achieved and maintained by force, that the "supremacy" of the "developed" nations came about. Columbus's "discovery" has only benefited the colonizers, establishing a world of inequality based on the practice of rape. Columbus Day and the "discovery" of a land where indigenous people already lived must never be celebrated. History teaches us that it has brought only grief to the majority of people of color in the world. Today we witness, after five hundred years of exploitation, the recolonization of the world!

Thus, the United States needs to establish itself as the hegemonic geopolitical power, to revitalize its military industry, to revive its sagging economy. In order to achieve this power, one of the things the United States needs to do is to gain control of the oil-rich "Middle East"and Arab regions.[1] Oil in today's world is important for economic and "security" reasons, and the United States has made this clear in its laws and foreign and domestic policies. Thus, the United States decided to go to war in the Gulf, not to secure the liberation of the tiny emirate nor for the preservation of international principles but to satisfy its needs for oil.

OTHER WARS FOR THE NEW ORDER

There are many other wars that relate to this redefinition of the blocs of power. We have the General Agreement for Trade and Tariffs (GATT), which must be understood as the war of subsidies and which is to be the World Constitution for Production and Trade for the end of this century and beyond. The issue of food is a most important one, because whoever has control of food production and distribution has power. Let us remember how Food for Peace has been used in support of governments "friendly" to U.S. policies regardless of their records on human-rights violations or their lack of democracy, and withheld in embargos from those at odds with the United States.

Because of the lack of agreement on the subsidized European farm products, we find that Brazil, for example, is now being offered European grain at lower prices than those being offered by Argentina, which has been its regional provider and partner. This could result in hegemonic control of food by the European market, as well as in the food- and development-dependency of both Brazil and Argentina, as all related services and industries will be determined by this relationship. The GATT could thus further enhance the freedom to produce and trade of those who are already on top of the ladder, without tariff and ecological restrictions, thereby lending them even more control and power over poor nations.

SAPS AND SWAPS: UNFAIR EXCHANGE AND "RECOLONIALIZATION"

In this context we must remember that peoples of color lack access to technology. We recognize that the use of biotechnology and bioengineering for food production will make our Two-Thirds World nations more dependent on grains and seeds from the "developed nations," who will control planting seeds and gene banks. Because of this, and by virtue of our economic crisis and dependency, those in control will be able to decide which country must produce what, when, for what purpose, and for whom.

The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and the Debt Swaps (SWAPS) are part and parcel of the U.S.-sponsored neoliberal, neocolonialist prescription for the financial recovery of Latin America through the Initiative for the Americas and the Association for Democracy and Development. The initiative, applied to Central America, demands that our economies open up to foreign investments, not those chosen by each country for the benefit of its people, but to those assigned by the new international division of labor and new international economic order. This is a flagrant violation of our sovereignty and right to self-determination as nations. These conditions will force the continued repression of the citizenry in order to maintain law and order. As the needs of the society remain unmet, public services become privatized and overpriced, and our economies become more dependent, the people will fight for their rights.

As part of these SAPs and SWAPS, our economies must open up to receive waste from "developed," that is "wasteful," nations, who are already sending barges full of trash and toxic waste to our nations. Immediately after Violeta Chamorro took office as the Nicaraguan president, her government began to consider buying trash to be "used" in the homelands of indigenous and African peoples on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. The waste was purported to be used to produce energy, to pave roads, or for construction purposes. Costa Rica was also advised to do the same. The program has not yet been implemented due to the very powerful resistance raised by ecological coalitions within each country. Some SWAPS are for land, which often means pushing indigenous peoples out of their homelands, relocating them far away, declaring them "residents" rather than citizens, and turning their lands into national parks/ecological zones with the provision that the government has the right to determine when to use them for emergency or national security, including oil drilling.

This is the challenge that committed feminists and womanists are facing today—the challenge of participating in the creation of a just and peaceful world and of paving the way for the future by working to establish a new international world order of peace.

Some foreign investment is for *agromaquila*.[2] This follows the same pattern as the *maquiladoras*,[3] which are the industrial factories at the borders or "free trade zones" inside the exploited countries (or at their airports or ports). Here one factory makes a piece of a particular article being produced, another factory produces another part, and then the nearly-finished product is sent to the United States needing just a small piece to finish it. Once finished, the product is sold at U.S. production prices, a practice that gives huge profits to the U.S. manufacturers because plant and salary costs in the country where the product is actually produced are much lower than those in the United States. This happens at the U.S.-Mexican border, in Taiwan, the Philippines, the Caribbean, and El Salvador. Such

*I offer "Two-Thirds World" as a new term for "Third World" peoples/nations, because the vast majority of the world's peoples are people of color. I use "Two-Thirds World" and "One-Third World" in a poetic rather than factual sense.

practices also strengthen the mainland-colony relationship of dependency and exploitation, with runaway shops[4] and environmental degradation.

The conditions in these *maquiladoras* are deplorable. The majority of workers are women who soon become ill because of the strenuous work and poor conditions. Their family life is also frequently disrupted as they move to find jobs. In the *agro-maquila,* the same procedure is followed. The foreign investor provides the capital, technology, and market, and makes all decisions, while the host nation provides the land and workers.

SPIRITUAL CONNECTIONS

We might not see the relationship between this situation and women, especially women of color or spirituality, unless we see how all of life and history are interrelated—they provide the context and background that determine the quality of life to be had by all individuals and societies.

Women must be given the right to live a fulfilled life, to become whole persons. This is the only spirituality that makes sense. The spirituality of a society must enable and allow human beings to mature, to live fully and plentifully, reaching personhood. We must not concern ourselves with the kind of spirituality that only helps one to cope with life or alleviate suffering. Rather we must seek the kind of spirituality that will enable and inspire us to exercise our power to transform society, to provide fulfilling lives for ourselves and for future generations. In order to understand these connections, it is necessary that we, as women, ground ourselves in history and facts. We must work to gain clarity of judgment to claim the world as our own, contribute to the making of just societies, and live in harmony with the environment.

This is the challenge that committed feminists and womanists are facing today—the challenge of participating in the creation of a just and peaceful world and of paving the way for the future by working to establish a new international world order of peace. We must agree on the need to fight all the forms of discrimination, exploitation, dependency, and codependency wherever they are used against any human being. Young and old, women and men, regardless of our color, race, religion, politics, or sexual orientation, are all equal and have the right to live in peace.

WOMEN AND THE ETERNAL WAR

We must be forever conscious of the "eternal war," the war against the poor who are the majority and whose conditions are worsened not only by the external foreign debt, the "lost decade"[5] of the 1980s, but also by the present recolonialization process. We are actually witnessing the implementation of triage[6], the weeding out of those considered not fit through hunger, dependency and war. It is these conditions that are making the "voluntary" military the only economic alternative for poor, young women and men of all races, another mechanism of the "eternal war."

These are the realities that we as Two-Thirds World women face and have faced since the eruption of the Europeans on the globe. When Cristobal Colon (Christopher Columbus) arrived in the hemisphere of the Americas—all of the Americas and the Caribbean—and set out to "colon"-ize our peoples and our lands, it was claimed to be for our own good, to bring us culture and civilization. Then the invaders proceeded to kill us and to take every ounce of gold. Our arts and crafts were taken to be part of their museums, and while they admired the objects, the artisans were massacred. Our women and Mother Earth were raped. They sold and bought people and land. We were forced to grow desserts (even today we grow strawberries, grapes, and kiwis for foreign nations) and cotton, while our people died of starvation. Our healing books were taken to the Vatican,[7] while contaminated blankets and addictive alcohol were given to us. The same religion that denied the personhood of women in Europe debated whether the peoples of the Americas would be able to be converted since we were less than human. In the name of God, we were placed under the spiritual guidance and care of an *encommendero,*[8] while in practice we were his peons and slaves. Today these same people offer us *maquiladoras,* occupied countries, military aid, SAPs and SWAPS, and the "liberation of Kuwait"—and all of this for our own good!

If this is the reality with which the majority of the peoples of the world live, and if at least fifty percent if not more of them are women, what then can women expect? What are our realities? How can we talk of women's rights and development under these conditions? How can we maintain control over and sustain the health of our bodies when we are starved to death, our children are often born dead, and all of us live malnourished? What are rights when there are no jobs? Foreigners determine the food that we produce for export, and we, our husbands, daughters, and sons, are oppressed so that we will cease our demands for a just and peaceful life, or we are forcibly recruited to fight against those who oppose these policies.

All over the world, poor women are told that the reason for poverty is overpopulation, so in addition to being kept hungry, they are sterilized and all forms of birth control are tested on them. In El Salvador, a program of "voluntary sterilization" sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) is considered the best on the whole continent and one of the most successful in the world. Twenty percent of women of child-bearing age have been sterilized. The same programs are applied to the indigenous women of Guatemala and, as far as I know, to indigenous women everywhere. In our countries these programs come under Planned Parenthood programs sponsored by AID, and in the United States, indigenous women receive this "service" from the U.S. public health service on their own "reservations." Many indigenous women in the United States have been sterilized, as have Chicanas, Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Puerto Ricans. In Puerto Rico, a UN-declared colony of the United States, the *"operacion"*[9] has been common practice, and the percentage of women sterilized is as high as, or perhaps higher than, in El Salvador. This is clearly a means to control our population and to ensure not justice but that our numbers are kept under control, thereby minimizing the need for brutal repression if people should make demands for a meaningful and full life.

In our countries, the people work to understand the realities in which they live, and they struggle to transform these realities to meet their needs and aspirations. People work together to make a difference no matter how difficult or brutal the situation may be. Thousands of women have become widows and single mothers, displaced persons, and political or economic refugees. One finds them everywhere trying to make a living, selling bobby pins or combs, tomatoes or chewing gum, with a baby in a cardboard box, or late at night trying to sell flowers, or colorful balloons, or even their bodies. Now there are many more poor women, children and old grandmas, standing for hours in the hot sun and rain, struggling to make a penny.

United in associations, trade unions, committees and commissions, the women educate each other, strategize, act together, and build alliances for an effective, strong, and broad-based peace movement. It is women who have been at the vanguard of the defense of life and human rights, many of them suffering torture, murder, disappearance, and imprisonment. Most women have become involved in the struggle for "peace with justice"[10] when faced with the loss of their husbands or children. They seek support to visit the "authorities," the morgue, and the common grave. Together they learn the law and how to change and apply it, to lead the marches and chants, to dialogue with the military, to take care of the office and organize and lead the seminars. Women have demanded peace for their own gender and human rights for all. Women have provided leadership and even died, as they serve on the Committee of Mothers of the Dead, Jailed and Disappeared, and as they become officers of the non-governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, or the Committee of Widows of Guatemala, or the Grandmothers and the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, who fought to find their children, victims of the dirty war of military dictatorship against the Argentinian people.

The women of Nicaragua formed their ANMLAE[11] in honor of Luisa Amanda Espinoza, a teenager who fought for the liberation of Nicaragua. In this way, together, they fought for equality for women, for constitutional laws to ensure their rights, and for better services, conditions, and education while they also fought to participate in the leadership of their nation.

The women of El Salvador united their various women's organizations in a concerted effort to demand peace and democracy, participation in the national forum for dialogue and negotiations, and a political solution to the conflict, all the while demanding their own rights and those of their children, pressing for a family code of laws, and fighting the restrictive one favored by the government. Each of these organizations provides its own development and training programs as well as services. These organizations have workers, peasants, students, and community women in their membership. All of them have been touched by various forms of violence throughout the years. Women participate in the various forms of political struggle and in armed struggle as well. Many of them are commanders, political commissars, analysts, organizers and diplomats. Women reporters write some of the best news and political analysis and this is a most important contribution to public knowledge and growth. The same is true of the peoples' struggles in Nicaragua and Guatemala, and among the people of Namibia, South Africa, the Philippines, and Palestine. In spite of many difficulties, women have chosen to be makers of the future and shapers of the world, which is truly a cause for celebration.

When Salvador Allende ran for the presidency of Chile in the early seventies, working-class and poor women were very much on his side and worked actively on his campaign. When he won, he kept his promises to them. Day-care centers were established along with community diners to ease their workload and to provide low-cost, nutritious meals. Educational training programs were also made available. This was the government that the United States boycotted because it was "leftist," the one that, according to U.S. congressional records, the United States helped to depose, in order to bring to power the brutal dictator, General Augusto Pinochet. Many women were massacred. Many were jailed and disappeared. And now many are finding the calcined bodies of their loved ones in the recently discovered common graves.

Central America imports all its technology and oil, and now, because of monoculture,[12] colonialism, and the war, even its food. The people have been forced to live under a feudal, oppressive oligarchy supported by a costly and well-armed repressive military, and these conditions will only worsen for the majority, especially the women who sustain the so-called informal economy,[13] the sidewalk, small basket sales. They are usually single heads of households, displaced widows, mostly illiterate and poor, and they represent more than half the population of their countries.

These are our realities. We must choose life, and in doing so, continue to believe that change is possible and work to make it true. We have a great heritage of faith, trust, and work. We must carry it forward!

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

What are the challenges that today's history, the global ecological crisis, and the ideology of those who lead the most belligerent nation in the world present to us? I believe that we must unite our efforts and build broad and numerous coalitions so we can exercise our power to determine the kind of governments we want and need, ones that are committed to interdependence, respect for the self-determination and sovereignty of nations, and the use of dialogue and

negotiation for conflict resolution. We must elect governments who will truly work for a new domestic and international world order of peace, and who will not dare to ignore our demands for justice and peace.

The strong stand of peoples and their organizations all over the world presses governments to effectively and decisively stand and work for a new domestic and international world order of peace rather than accept a world with the dominance of a single nation and its allies. It is only by creating these conditions that we will be able to carry out a sustainable, people-centered development. Today the concrete expression of peace is the development of the people in harmony with our environment, especially of those who have been disenfranchised for centuries.

Women who are committed to building just and equal societies and who struggle against oppression, repression, and injustice must understand this message clearly. They must reflect on the meaning and concrete realities that we face, to have the political will to achieve our objectives and principles. Today, this is our call and historical project. Women in solidarity must take all of these concerns into account to effectively work for justice and equality for women. We must unite to provide women access to and real inclusion in the totality of the political, economic, and social life of our nations and the world. Access includes opening up possibilities for learning and development, not just task making, communicating in language that enables all of us to understand each other and the issues, and breaking barriers and eliminating elitism while fighting opportunism. The more each woman knows, the more developed she is, the greater the chance she has to fight and to win against sexual inequality and to secure lasting social transformation.

CHOOSING LIFE

In countries such as El Salvador and Guatemala, we are only too aware that life is short, extremely short, and it is made cheaper by this interventionism that supports dictators, the impunity of powerful armies who protect the small feudal oligarchy, and the brutal death squads. But we, the people, love life and have chosen to live it, so we continue to fall in love and believe that it can be different. We make homes and we have children. We go to the marches to demand peace for our countries, to bring forth a new world order based on the principles of self-determination, nonintervention, sovereignty, and peaceful development. We laugh a lot, and we make jokes about our oppressors and our suffering. We suffer death and believe in resurrection. We live in exile and dream of being home, and we forge a new tomorrow in trust and with laughter.

Women must work intentionally and actively, not only to stop the low-intensity wars and the subsidies war but also to make our countries abide by international law. Our countries must strengthen rather than weaken international institutions such as the UN and UNESCO, for they will enable us to live interdependently and safeguard all that we have inherited through the centuries. Right now many countries have not signed the Human Rights Covenant on Women and Children, or the Human Rights Bill itself. The United States has one of the worst records in this respect. We must demand that our lawmakers guarantee domestic laws to sustain and defend equality and justice. We must demand that they stand behind international policies inspired by the principles of peaceful coexistence and respect for the environment everywhere. We know that the principles used to build and sustain peace internationally must be our personal, family, and national practice as well. In this way, we will consciously own the world, intentionally become internationalists, and truly make a contribution to save life on this planet and ensure the future of our species.

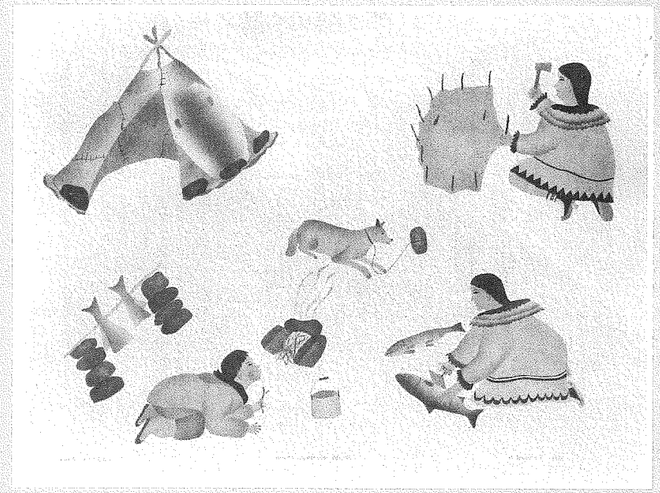
Today I rest in the trust that our peoples will continue to fight injustice and to transform our society—that the birds will continue to sing their song of life by my window in the early mornings—and that my sister, the star, will shine bright each evening. And one day I will not merely dream of being home anymore, I will plant a flower garden and fruit trees on a farm in my country. The tears of exile will be no more!

Adelante, Hermanas, Adelante Siempre![14] ∞

Notes

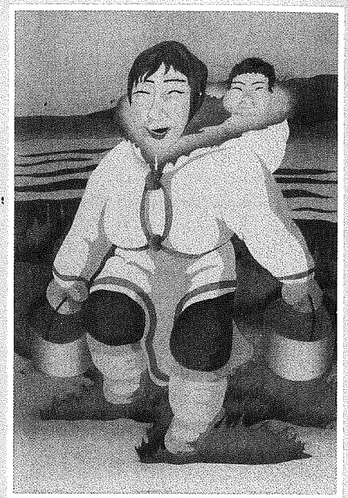
1. The largest world oil reserves are in this region. Up to sixty percent of the world's known oil fields, of which Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait are the richest, are in the Middle East, followed by Latin America with about fifteen percent, and the Soviet Union with about six percent.
2. *Agromaquila* is the process through which Two-Thirds World countries are assigned to grow food (which they do not use) for industrialized nations.
3. *Maquiladoras* are border factories that provide profit for foreign investors.
4. Run-away shops are factories that are closed down and reopened elsewhere without regard for workers' rights in order to find ever-cheaper labor pools and overhead.
5. "Lost decade" is a term that refers to the fact that during the 1980s, some countries of the Two-Thirds World reverted to 1970s levels of production and some to 1960s levels.
6. Triage is the practice of allocating services on the basis of priorities. Here the priorities mitigate against the needs of the poor, favoring their death.
7. In the recent visit of the Pope to Mexico, there was some discussion of certain medical codices that were taken from indigenous people and are now held at the Vatican. The possibility of their being returned was also discussed.
8. *Encommendero* means one who is in charge. During the period of colonization, it meant the one who was is charge of "civilizing" and christianizing slaves.
9. *Operacion* refers to the sterilization operation.
10. I use this phrase because I feel that many pacifists fail to consider the issue of justice when they talk about peace.
11. ANMLAE is the National Women's Association of Luisa Amanda Espinoza.
12. Monoculture occurs when a culture is forced to grow or survive on one crop, or crops that do not meet its survival needs; for example, in El Salvador, these are coffee, sugar and cotton.
13. Informal economy refers to exchanges for survival needs that are not officially recognized, but nonetheless play an important part in the national economy.
14. "Forward sisters, ever forward".

Special thanks to my Chicana sister, Lydia Hernandez, for her help in preparing this article.

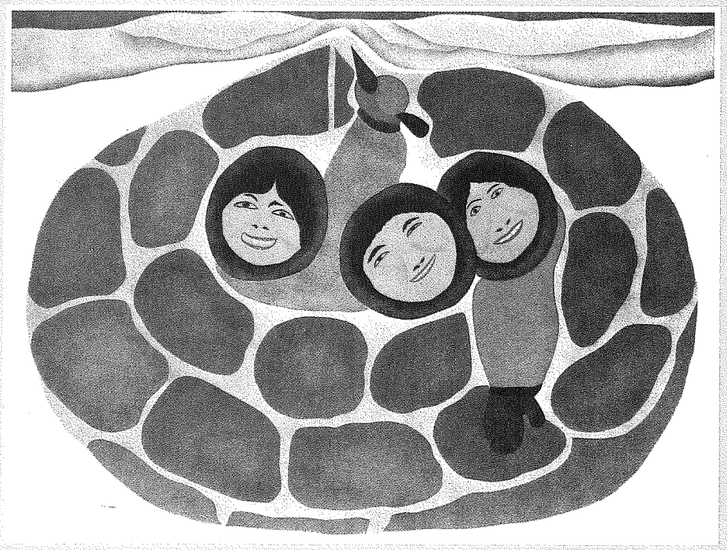


"Hanakikatigen," stencil, by Mabel Nigiyok.

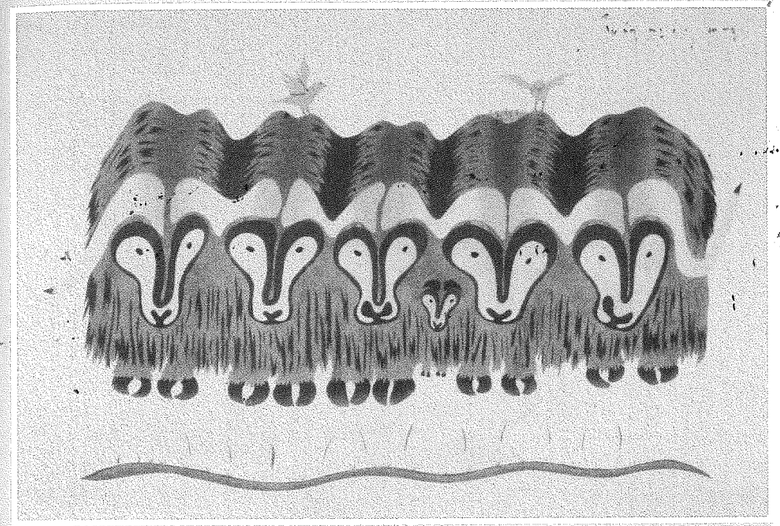
"Quarrelling," stencil, by Mabel Nigiyok.



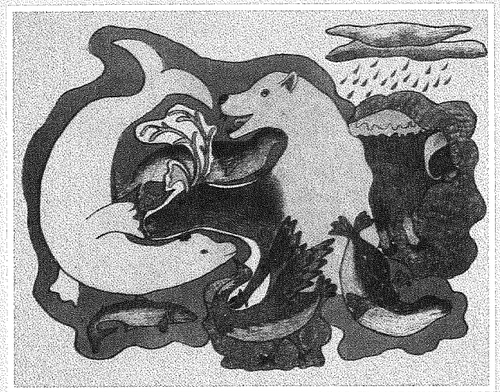
"The Pails Are Heavy," stencil, by Mary Okheena.



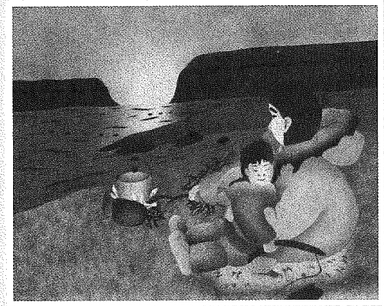
"Repairing Old Roof," stencil, by Agnes Nanogak and Mona Ohoveluk.



"Musk-Oxen Waiting for the Tide to Cross Water," stencil, by Mary Okheena.



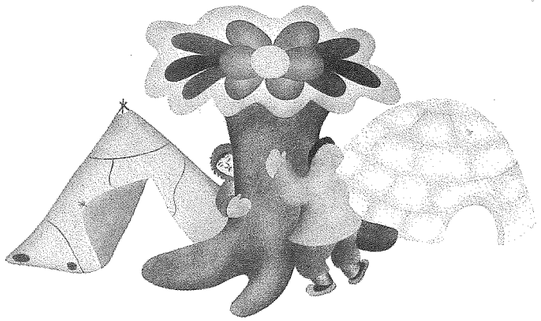
"Arctic Survival," lithograph/stencil, by Mabel Nigiyok.



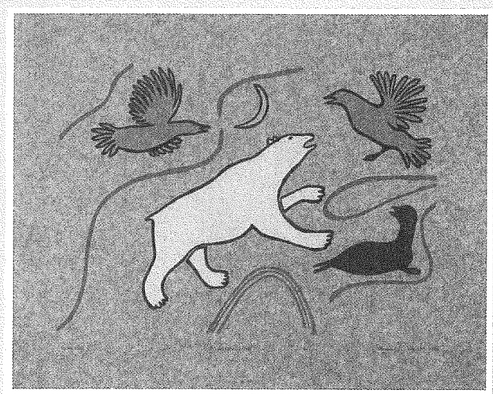
"Midnight Tea," stencil, by Mary Okheena.

THE HOLMAN ESKIMO CO-OP

The Holman Eskimo Co-op has been publishing prints by Inuit artists and printmakers for twenty-six years. Holman is located in the western Arctic, on Victoria Island, on Prince Albert Sound, the ancestral home of the Copper Inuit. In 1961, the Holman Eskimo Co-op opened as an arts-and-crafts co-op, and printmaking has since become a major source of the community's income, along with trapping, sealing, hunting, and fishing. The Holman Eskimo Co-op art collection is unique in form, color, imagination, mood, and artistic power. A common theme explored in this art is the interrelationships that link humans, animals, and the environment. The Holman Eskimo Co-op may be reached at: Holman Island, Northwest Territories, Canada X0E 0S0, telephone (403) 396-3531.



"Spring Happiness," stencil, by Elsie Anaginak and Mary Okheena.



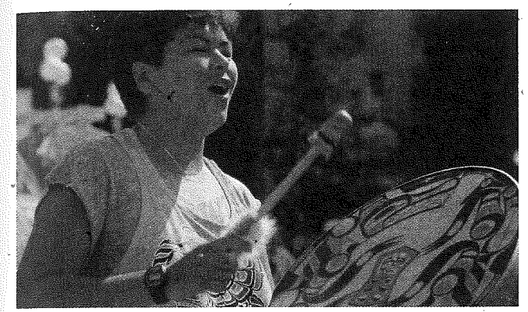
"Polar Bear," woodcut, by Agnes Nanogak.

"Awakening to the Spirit of Spring," stencil, by Elsie Klengenberg.

"Joy of the First Rainfall," stencil, by Mary Okheena.

Reclaiming the Balanced Way

by Frances Dick



Frances Dick ('Maxwalogwa) *was born in 1959 into the Dzawadaenuxw Band in Kingcome Inlet, British Columbia. In 1986, she began to create Northwest Coast designs from legends, stories, and songs that have been passed down to her by her grandmother and father, and she continues to be inspired by the richness of her history. She has a bachelor's degree and holds a part-time position as a community development worker in Kingcome Inlet. She works in the village for two weeks, teaching what she has learned of her people's cultural ancestry in the form of songs, dances, and legends. She then returns home to Victoria, B.C., to resume research into her own family history and the ancient practices of the Musqamakw-Dzawadaenuxw (the four tribes of Kingcome Inlet). She possesses infinite love, respect, and honor for the ways of her ancestors, and it is her hope that they are reflected in the work she creates. Frances can be contacted at: 103-3225 Alder Street, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8X 1P3.*

I awoke this morning from a dream in which I was talking with another woman about a moon design I had created and the significance of that design for me. I expressed my passion for the moon, and the importance of the double-headed sea serpent that surrounds the moon. To me the serpent represents wholeness and balance, our individual capacity to choose to love or hate, to be creative or destructive—the power of *choice*. Our conversation then turned to the topic of our old system past, otherwise known as the "potlatch system."[1] She stressed the importance of focusing on our culture, teaching and continuing to practice our system. I agreed that learning about and understanding our historical roots is important, but I added that our current system of celebration was not in keeping with our past. That morning, as I prepared for the day, I knew that I wanted to write about my concerns for the separation and division of my people as a result of the lack of understanding of our culture past.

It is important for me at this time to take ownership of all the opinions and feelings I express throughout this article. I write not in malice, ignorance, or shame; I write from my truth. I write from my heart.

I was born into what I consider a strong, culturally-oriented family. Although many abuses were inflicted upon me as a child, I also possessed the strong cultural foundation with which I was raised. My mother died when I was about eight years old, and I spent much of my time with my grandmother. She initiated in me the belief that I would now have to care for my father and brothers. I was taught that it was the female's role to care for the males. I felt like a big person inside a little body—there was no room for childhood years. For years I tried to do what was expected of me, but no matter what I did it was never good enough. I felt responsible for the abuses inflicted upon me. I felt responsible for my father's anger and drinking, for my brother's loneliness, and for my grandma's emotional, spiritual, and physical pain. I just felt responsible!

As I entered into my teens, I began to drink and use drugs. I was not aware that the choices I was making were the result of the unhealthy dynamics with which I had been raised, and I began to act out. I was full of rage, and I projected my rage onto other individuals or directed it at myself. I did not feel worthy of living. I felt as if I had no identity.

It seemed as if no matter what I did it was only my brothers who brought pride to my father, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. The males in my family received all the recognition and acknowledgment, and once we were in the big house[2] it was the men I saw sitting in the seats of the singers. It was the men who stood before hundreds of people to speak; it was my father and grandfather who were honored for the potlatch they gave; yet, it was my grandmother, aunties, and female cousins who prepared the ceremony. I felt as

"Kank'alanukw," silk-screen print, ©1989 Frances Dick. This print depicts the story of a wooden loon built by the Kwakwaka'wakw people.

though I were living a lie. Time continued to pass and we continued to potlatch, until my grandparents became seriously ill. When both were gone, especially my grandmother, it seemed as if our household was in total disarray.

The more I used alcohol and drugs to dull my emotional and spiritual pain and the more I withdrew into myself, the angrier I felt about having to be alive. The most painful thing for me to live with was sexual abuse; I wanted to die when I thought about it, and I hated my grandfather and cousin for doing it to me. My life continued in painful turmoil for years. The only way I knew to stop my pain was through alcohol and drug abuse but even that was no longer working, because no matter how wasted I became, I could not forget why I was drinking my way into oblivion. I knew I could no longer live as I had been living, but I did not know of any other way.

In September of 1988, when I enrolled at the University of Victoria, in Alert Bay, B.C., I was frightened and I felt very much alone. Four months before I left the reserve to go to college, my youngest and closest brother, Jesse, shot himself. I felt as though my life were falling apart. Jesse was only twenty-two. Four months before Jesse's suicide my grandmother had died. She was all Jesse and I felt we had— she loved us. I also felt that if I were to continue living in Alert Bay I would soon go crazy; because no one in my family ever spoke of Jesse, it was as though he had never existed. Only two weeks before Jesse's death, I had made a recording of the two of us discussing the teachings of my grandma. Jesse remembered so much of what my grandma had taught him. Besides remembering, honoring, and abiding by my grandmother's teachings, Jesse himself was a gentle spirit who loved all people. The young and the old were both his concern. He was wise beyond his years, beautiful both physically and spiritually, yet so filled with pain. After his death, Jesse's spirit called upon my soul to awaken my own spirit. My love for him is infinite.

After my grandma's and Jesse's deaths, I felt such a desire to express the love and respect that I possess for them that I turned to art. For my grandmother, I chose to depict the Kawadelekala[3] legend, because it is the legend that was, and is, an integral part of my grandmother's life. My grandmother was once called "the root of the Kingcome People," yet this title is no longer acknowledged. It is important for me to honor the legacy that my grandmother left for her children and grandchildren, for this legend is her. "Kawadelekala" was my first print and the beginning of my career as an artist. In honor of Jesse I created my second print, *"Kalalilam,"* which means "shaking away our tears." I also composed a mourning song to express my love for my brother even though I was breaking rules within our system in which women are not allowed to create artwork or to sing, let alone compose songs. I believe that it is totally unfair to deny women the right to spiritual expression. I also believe that prejudices against women's participation in composition, singing, dancing certain dances, creating sacred masks from wood, or depicting legends in paintings were created in response to European contact. I refuse to believe that women had no voice within the old system.

At college, in a world so foreign to the world from which I came, I still had the voices of my grandmother and Jesse to sustain me, and if it were not for them and

We, the Kwakwaka'wakw people, can unite as a nation once again. We will then acknowledge, honor, and respect our women, for it was and is they who are the strength of the nation.

the newly awakened talents they initiated in me, I know I would have died. I wanted to continue learning as much as I could about my ancestry. I spent hours listening to my tapes, transcribing them in Kwakwala[4] and then into English, learning legends, songs, dances, and names. I had by then collected many tapes, some of which were made by the museum in Victoria, which had recorded my grandmother talking about our ways, and some that I had made myself of my grandmother, my brother, and my father. As I learned more about my ancestry, I began to realize that what I was learning about my old system bore little resemblance to the system as it is practiced today; there seemed to be something of great significance missing. The longer I stayed away from Alert Bay, the more I was able to recognize the nonsense within my family and my communities and the more I realized that I had much personal work to process. My own confusion stemmed from the contradictions that had prevailed in my childhood— what a revelation! I was beginning to understand more about myself and how I came to feel so unworthy.

When I began to reflect on my childhood, I could remember feeling and seeing glimpses of spirit within our sacred ceremony. As a child, I listened to the chiefs, composers, and artists sing our ancient songs, and I watched the dancers magically glide around our sacred fire, and my spirit would come alive. But I was confused, for there stood my grandfather, receiving honor and glory for my grandmother's labor. There stood the man who had robbed me of my innocence, along with many men like him, and I was supposed to respect them. It did not seem fair. How could I feel such pride and shame at the same time?

I was beginning to realize that the missing component in our contemporary ceremonies was spirit. With the advent of European contact, and later during the era of residential schools and potlatch prohibition, our spirits as proud, first peoples began to suffocate. The Europeans' curiosity about our past ways led them to dissect and label the parts of our system. The Europeans wrote about my people and interpreted my culture from their own paradigms of perverse power and dictatorship. Destruction contaminated our ancient meanings of power, strength, and wealth. White men chose their own Indian to create what they considered stories of greatness and discovery; certain individuals that one now reads about in books, or sees in museums, films, and videos are what my ancestors would call *atila*, which means "made up." I don't think I have yet read or seen any documentation about the true chiefs of the Kwakwaka'wakw[5] nation, and many elders who deserve recognition and respect are now dishonored by isolation. They are pushed to the corners of their cultural communities, where they watch the exploitation of a system that once was sacred.

Hierarchy as "power over" is a concept introduced by and applied to my culture by the white man so that he might make sense of my system past, and with this attempt to understand my culture past, separation and division between my people began. It began with division between the materialistic and the spiritual worlds, which were no longer considered integrated.

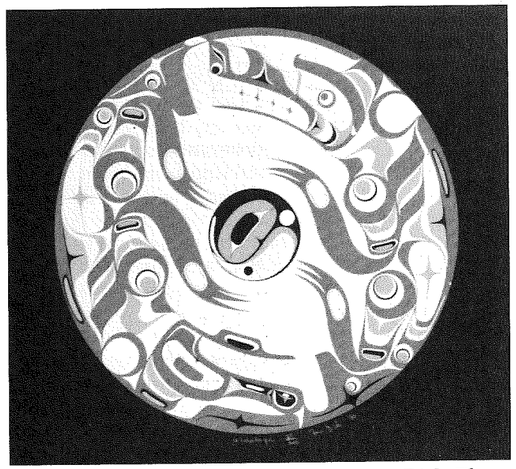
What I am learning about the old system is that there was in fact a system of ranking that was not a hierarchy as we now know it. If an individual was born into chieftainship, she or he would always be a part of that lineage, as would their children and their children's children. Certain families who were linked with mythical beings, and who over time shed their animal forms to become the first people of their communities, were of the high ranks. Everyone had her or his place within the system past, and these places within the system were as natural to my ancestors as breathing. My ancestors followed a natural rhythm of social and political order that survived them for thousands of years. The past way of life of my people was a balanced way of life; the emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual selves were consistently exercised throughout each day within the boundaries of our old system.

The introduction of money into my people's lives further contaminated and warped our system. Money became the new definition of power. As our elders and chiefs began to die, so did the true knowledge of our system. There are presently very few elders who remember the ways of their great-grandparents. The government's implementation of elected chief councilors in place of our hereditary chiefs created further separation and division among my people. Residential schools created physical division between families and communities. The implementation of new laws and environments caused my people to feel shame for being who they were, and in order to survive in the world that the white man projected onto our world, "survival" became the ultimate goal. Money, power, and striving to the "top" was what prosperity was all about, and forgetting our past was the choice we were encouraged to make. There were many who forgot the ways of their grandparents and with this came the pain and grief of having lost something important, especially for those who tried to fit into the world of the white man, for they were lost between two worlds.

When I was ten or eleven years old, the generation of people in their thirties suddenly became interested in learning how to sing and dance as their grandparents had. From this desire the Alert Bay Cultural Society was formed, and it soon provided entertainment for members of the dominant society, groups such as tourists, authors, filmmakers, and museums. Today there are many Kwakwaka'wakw dance groups, but they are often poor representatives of our system past, perhaps because many Kwakwaka'wakw dance groups are created for personal gain, to exploit our system rather than to show honor and respect for our ancestors, and this, I feel, perpetuates the division among my people.

After years of stomping out the fires of our past, the white man has all of a sudden become interested in the ways of our people. Yet our ways have been badly contaminated and dissected, and although we were once interested in educating the white man, all that remains is many fragments of a once strong and sacred way of life.

Today there is a grave lack of spirituality. Many ceremonies are given with feelings of hidden animosity for other people and their families. Within the confines of our sacred house, the big house, you may hear, "They have no right to be dancing that dance nor do they have the right to sing those songs"; "Who do they think they are?"; and "He [or she] knows nothing of our old ways." There are such feelings of negativity and anger between people. What they say is often true, but no one will speak out or take action, and the bitterness and resentment between families grows. All of this is in great contrast to the atmosphere created



"Umataya," silk-screen print, © 1990 Frances Dick. The legend of the origin of the different races is depicted here with two wolves and a Tao-like moon. The title means "coming to a place of peacefulness within oneself."

by our ancient ceremonies. One may attend a ceremony today and see thirty men sitting where singers and composers once sat, and if the audience is fortunate, ten of the men may know how to sing. Today, with most people thinking that they are better than the next family, a distorted hierarchy is in place. In the past, although there were individuals and families who possessed masks, regalia, songs, or dances, it is my understanding that there was no shame or arrogant pride in that ancient system. There was total acceptance of who one was and where one stood. Every individual experienced wealth. Our environment was wealth: air, water, trees, everything. Wealth was everywhere. People in our culture past knew that wealth comes from the Earth, and that everything comes from within and from the spirit world.

The separation and division now present amongst the communities of the Kwakwaka'wakw were created as a result of fragmentary understanding of our past, further distorted by the white man's interpretations. I feel that, within most families, fear concerning where their ancestors truly fit in the old system continues to linger, as do concerns about what that implies in today's world. These fears are created by the values of the dominant society, a society that prides itself on warped ideas of wealth and power! I believe we must look back, deep into our past, to feel whatever it is that we may fear in order to break new ground in unity and peace—not only for ourselves, but for the survival of what could be a strong, healthy, and spirited nation. There is such fear about not being on top of the totem pole, but without a middle or bottom piece there is no totem pole. Within the small communities of the Kwakwaka'wakw nation, there are hostilities that will fester until we as the Kwakwaka'wakw nation look deep into our past, acknowledge it, rid it of the interpretations of the white man, and replace it with the true meaning of our past. Only then do I feel that we as a nation can move forward in a spiritual process, in the way of our ancestors.

I am a strong, culturally-oriented woman and I am proud of my lineage, yet I believe that there are parts of our old system that are best left in the past. I am who I am, not who my grandparents were or are, but at the same time I can dance and sing in the spirit that our ancestors once danced and sang in. My people are not in a good way. We can only hide and deny our truths for so long. Soon there will be no place inside of ourselves where we can hide. Our nation will not progress until we admit that our system, as it is today, hinders us. I believe in a collective society where there is no room for prejudice against women and children, or families who happen to have a different last name. I believe that my culture can reemerge with a strong spiritual practice once again, without a hierarchical system.

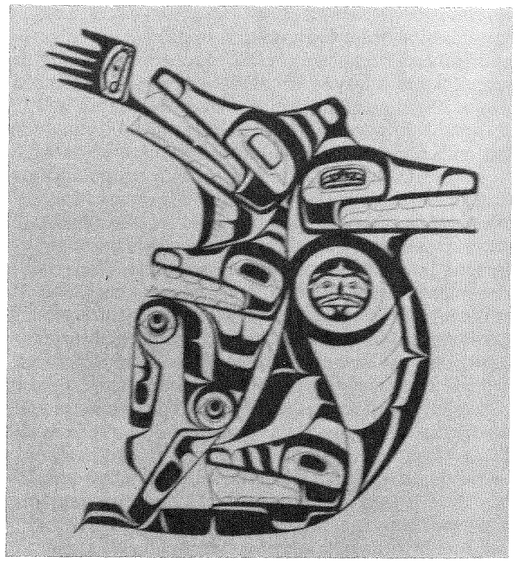
We, the Kwakwaka'wakw people, can unite as a nation once again by not judging or criticizing each other for the positions that our ancestors held in the past. We will then acknowledge, honor, and respect our women, for it was and is they who are the strength of the nation. I believe it is the women and the children who are the power sources that will bring our nation together. Today, as it was in the past, the women teach the songs and dances; women make the regalia and prepare for the ceremonies; women are developing an awareness that we must find another way; and women will find the way, to a place of spirit and truth!

It is time for a new beginning, and I will continue to work toward my belief in the spirit of my ancestors, for I believe it will guide us out of the stagnation our nation is presently in.

Gilakas'la.[6] ∞

Notes

1. I am working to change our name for "potlatch" to "sacred ceremony of the past" which I think more accurately defines it. "Potlatch" is a Nootka word meaning "to give" but the potlatch system has been incorrectly understood and defined by non-Native people. Potlatch was a celebration that the ancestors would hold for a birth or a death, a marriage, the time when a youth becomes an adult, or to clear up disputes between individuals. It consisted of reenactments of the legends and stories belonging to the family giving the celebration.
2. The "big house" is the place where we hold our ceremonies, although in the past we also lived there. It is said that when you turn in toward the big house, you are turning toward the spirit world, and when you turn away, you are leaving it.
3. The Kawadelekala legend is a creation story that was told to me by my grandmother, Anitsa, about the origin of the Kingcome people. In the beginning there is a large wolf, and from that wolf comes Kawadelekala, whose tongue becomes a hand which becomes the first human, and the Kawadelekala family.
4. Kwakwala is the language of the Kwakwaka'wakw people.
5. Kwakwaka'wakw is the indigenous name of the Kingcome people.
6. *Gilakas'la* has many meanings, but in this context can be translated as "best regards."



"Kawadelekala," silk-screen print, © 1986 Frances Dick. The Kingcome people's creation legend of the first wolf.

Supporting Our Front-Line Struggles

An Interview with Winona LaDuke about Indigenous Woman *Magazine*

Interview by Gail Hanlon

***Winona LaDuke** is Anishinabe, from White Earth Reservation. She is involved in land rights and environmental organizing in the Native community and is president of the Indigenous Women's Network. (Photo © 1991 J. Ratzloff.)*

woman of power: *Please tell us about* Indigenous Woman *magazine.*

Winona LaDuke: *Indigenous Woman* is written by and about indigenous women. It is produced by an editorial collective, and we invite articles by Native women on issues of interest to our communities. Our intent is to present issues from the perspective of indigenous women because we feel that our point of view is missing in overall dialogue in the Native community and in the women's community. Our magazine is a forum for the Indigenous Women's Network, an organization comprised of individual indigenous women and organizations working on issues that affect Native women such as sovereignty, treaty rights, water rights, environmental issues, domestic violence, our rights in communities as indigenous women, health issues, and a whole spectrum of legal issues. The intent of our organization is to work toward empowering women to participate in political, social, and cultural processes, and to engage in bettering the conditions in our communities and the conditions of indigenous women. So *Indigenous Woman* is interested in profiling the struggles of our communities, especially from the perspective of indigenous women, and in initiating dialogue on issues of importance to our community as a whole.

In our premiere issue (Spring 1991), we featured an article about the Gwi'chin who are in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the intended site of extensive oil development in George Bush's national energy plan. We also ran a story about the Innu women who successfully contested the construction of a large NATO base in Labrador and an article on Norma Jean Croy, who is serving a life sentence in a California prison for her alleged involvement in a shootout; she didn't even have a gun and she walked out with two bullets in her back.

woman of power: *What do you consider the central issues for the nineties, for Native American women and for women of color as a whole?*

Winona: Environmental issues are absolutely critical issues for the nineties. For example, we are concerned about the dams being constructed in northern Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba. These dams will devastate about 15,000 people, half of whom are women, totally changing our way of life, devastating the political, social, and economic systems that people have been relying upon for their culture. Environmentally, these dams cause massive devastation. In the mid-1970s, an area half the size of Lake Erie was put under water, which essentially changed a river system into a reservoir system. Whole species of fish were destroyed. Hunting areas disappeared. Trap lines were lost under water. Herds of caribou died. And in terms of people's lives, this kind of development forces people out of a land-based economy into a cash-dependent welfare economy. It changes the terms of their relationship to society from self-sufficient or self-reliant to that of a marginalized people, at the edges of the dominant economy. With this change come social problems such as the disintegration of the role of women. When these big projects go in, there are huge increases in domestic violence and suicide rates, as well as other social and economic problems. That's an example that is repeated across northern Canada, in Saskatchewan and all through the Arctic—a series of huge development projects that are affecting northern Native women. These kinds of projects are of great concern.

Another issue of great importance is that of toxic wastes on Indian land. There are one hundred proposals for toxic waste incinerators (or dumps or factories or facilities) on reservations throughout the United

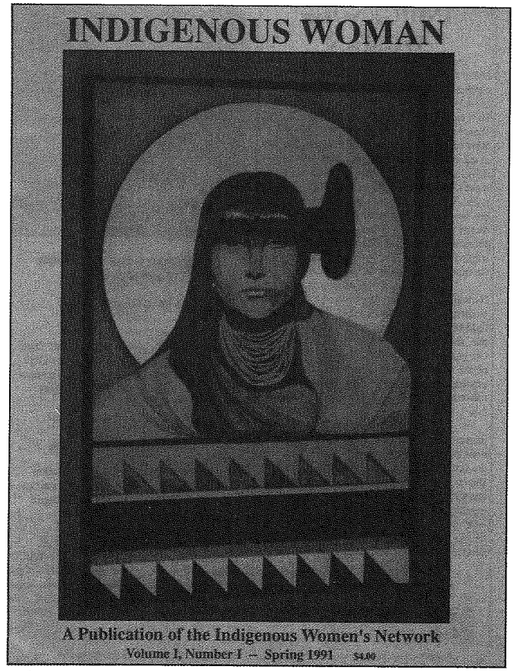
The next key step that needs to be taken is to understand the power of women to undertake meaningful social change, and to look critically and supportively at what I consider to be front-line struggles, such as the struggles of indigenous people against industrialism.

States. The whole process of "development" says to our communities that we don't have anything ourselves. It pushes something on us and says that what we know and what we've done all our lives is no good. That's the first thing. The second thing is that it introduces a lot of health problems.

Other issues that indigenous women are dealing with are the process of reempowerment, taking back power in our own cultures and own communities, and rebuilding our communities. Those are key issues and they are also indicative of other indigenous struggles.

We also learn from other women's movements, particularly the Cordillera in the Philippines; the aboriginal women's movement, the Maori women's movement in New Zealand; and the ANC and South African women's movement. We have common agendas and common issues in that we understand our relationship to colonialism—we need to be challenging colonialism, getting it off our backs. We can also share things with North American women, and there's an important dynamic that exists, but I think that our priority in our work right now is to change the conditions that are devastating our communities.

woman of power: *How do you think your work releases a celebration of spirit? What is the source of your spirit or energy?*
Winona: Indigenous cultures are rooted in spirituality. Spirituality is a part of our whole community and our whole culture, not separate. And so the majority of women in our constituency find that spirituality is an empowering part of our whole social movement. We engage actively in spiritual practice. Our spiritual practice, our relationship to the Earth, is what gives us the strength to engage in resistance.



The premiere issue of Indigenous Woman, *Spring 1991.*

woman of power: *How can women of color bring together powerful social justice movements?*
Winona: I think that it is really critical to understand that people of color as a whole have been divested of a lot, disenfranchised economically and politically for the most part. Obviously power in this country is being distributed on the basis of race and class, and women of color don't fit into that. As a result, we don't have a vested interest in the system. And because we don't have a vested interest in the system, we are in a better position to be critical of the system. We are also in a better position than a lot of other women to talk about real systemic social change because, for the most part, we are looking at the system from the outside. So because of that I think that indigenous women and women of color are in a crucial position in terms of formulating a new or alternative vision of society, from a feminist perspective as well as an overall perspective.

woman of power: *How do you think that that leadership will be different, for the women's movement and other progressive social justice movements?*
Winona: First of all, from my perspective as a woman who organizes in the indigenous community, the reality is that most of the indigenous women that I'm familiar with do not associate as much with the women's movement as they do with the indigenous movement. And that is basically because our cultural history and our whole experience comes from being indigenous people. That's our association. That's our total frame of reference.

The reality is that in our own cultures, in our own communities, when our social structures are intact, we are in a much better position than are women in the patriarchal, industrial society. The fact is that in traditional northern communities, hunting and trapping and harvesting communities, women play an equal role in the society. It's not a matriarchal as opposed to a patriarchal society; it's an egalitarian system where women and men are viewed as equals. When colonialism strikes into indigenous nations, women are marginalized from our own economies, from our own political institutions, and from our own social systems. Since we are never allowed to enter into the power structures of colonial, industrialized societies, we become marginalized, and we become essentially second-class citizens. We are given the lowest-paid jobs. We have no political power. We are divested of most of the forms of traditional wealth and social standing that we have in our own societies. Instead of trying to fight for an equal piece of this other society, most of the indigenous women that I work with would much prefer to regain, reclaim, and rebuild their own indigenous societies. And because of that, indigenous women that I work with are not, for the most part, organizing around "women's" issues. What we are organizing around are indigenous issues, one component of which is women's issues.

woman of power: *When you do work on women's issues within your community, what are some of the issues you address?*
Winona: One example is domestic violence in the Native community. The statistics in Ontario, for example, indicate that eight out of ten Native women have been abused at some point in their lives. And the statistics in the state of Minnesota indicate that eleven percent of women in battered women's shelters in 1988 were Indian women. And Indian women are only one percent of the population. Historically, however, abuse and domestic violence are not a Native problem. The root cause of the problem is colonialism. Abuse comes from industrial, patriarchal society, because of the whole distribution of power in society in which Native men are abused and consequently abuse Native women and Native families. Native men are victims of the society that is oppressing them.

In addition to the social, economic, and political realities inside our communities, external factors affect us as well. For example, 83,000 Indian men were inducted or served during the Vietnam conflict. And in the Persian Gulf war, five hundred or so Lakota men served. Indians have the highest per capita enlistment of any group in the country. We've become totally militarized by the United States. Some communities feel that military service is implied in their treaty obligations, and there is also the reality that poor people and people of color are targeted by the armed forces recruiters. As we know, the majority of enlistees in the armed forces are people of color, and when those people return from Vietnam, or from the Gulf, they're suffering from things like post-traumatic stress disorder. They are returning to reservation housing projects, which are essentially ghettos on reservation communities, and when we know that, there is no mystery as to why we have domestic violence. We know that we have domestic violence because of a colonial situation.

woman of power: *What do you envision for feminism in the nineties?*
Winona: I'm interested in the women's movement expanding the vision and the understanding of reality. There's a lot of really great thinking in the women's movement, particularly around the whole idea of the oppression by patriarchy. The next key step that needs to be taken is to understand the oppression from industrialism and, within that, understanding the power of women to undertake meaningful social change, and to look critically and supportively at what I consider to be front-line struggles, such as the struggles of indigenous people against industrialism.

I'd like to see the feminist movement and women in general make the connection between all the issues—going out there and really supporting the struggles against racism, the struggles of indigenous people, supporting our struggles as a way of dismantling the patriarchal industrial system.

woman of power: *How do you think deeper coalitions between women of color and white women can be formed?*
Winona: A clear example is in northern Wisconsin.

Indigenous women and women of color are in a crucial position in terms of formulating a new or alternative vision of society, from a feminist perspective as well as an overall perspective.

Every spring, indigenous people—the Chippewas, or Anishinabe as we call ourselves—go out to harvest or spear fish. And historically, non-Indian people who are living in communities that are rife with racism come out and oppose Indian fishing on those lakes even though Indian people are entitled to fish according to treaty law.[1] For the past three or four years people have come out and thrown beer bottles at Indians, screaming at them and holding signs that say things like, "Save two walleyes—spear a pregnant squaw,"[2] really racist things that are targeted at Indian people, and Indian women in particular. This is the Selma, Alabama of the north.

Broad-based constituencies, including church and social-justice groups and groups such as the Treaty Rights Support Network, have come forth to serve as nonviolent witnesses. This witnessing usually takes place early in the morning, around 5 a.m. when the spear fishers begin to fish. It is usually dark out and a group of Indians begins drumming and conducting ceremonies at the boat landing. The witnesses stand between the non-Indians (who have come to protest the fishing) and the Indians to prevent violence. Hundreds of non-Native women have already served as witnesses. When women talk about uniting to form coalitions against racism and oppression, this is the kind of thing that they can do. I think that they should be out there witnessing at places like the boat landings in Wisconsin. If you want to talk about racism in middle America in the north, that's where it is. I think that women should be there. ∞

Notes
1. The Chippewa treaty in Wisconsin was signed in 1854.
2. Walleyes are walleye pike, a freshwater sport fish.

Children of All Nations

An Interview with Dhyani Ywahoo of Sunray Meditation Society

Interviewed by Gail Hanlon

***Ven. Ugvwiyuhi Dhyani Ywahoo** is a clan chieftainess of the Etowah Cherokee nation and founder and spiritual director of the Sunray Meditation Society. Trained by her grandparents, she is the twenty-seventh generation to carry the ancestral wisdom of the Ywahoo lineage. Her spiritual tradition is of the Etowah Cherokee people, holding the awareness of one truth behind the appearances of all of the religions that support nonviolence. She is a musician and a grandmother, committed to fresh air, pure water, and a world of peace for the future generations.*

Sunray Meditation Society is an international spiritual society dedicated to planetary peace which offers ongoing programs of education, service, and spiritual training. Its purpose is to bring together people from all walks of life to share and apply on the individual, family, community, and international levels the ancient wisdom of peacemaking rooted in the Etowah Cherokee and Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Sunray also works with Native American and Tibetan Buddhist communities to support and preserve their cultural and spiritual heritage.

Sunray is an affiliate of the Etowah Cherokee nation and is recognized as a Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Center of the Nyingma and Drikung Kagyu schools. Sunray practices embody these three ancient and intact spiritual lineages whose common thread is teaching practical means to realize compassion and right relationship on the Earth and throughout the family of life.

The Peacekeeper Mission provides training in personal and planetary transformation; its purpose is to bring forth peace in the hearts of the people and peace on the Earth. It is rooted in the timeless Native American spiritual wisdom of Caretaker Mind and Right Relationship in the Circle of Life. For more information, contact: Sunray Meditation Society, P.O. Box 308, Bristol, VT 05443, telephone (802) 453-4610.

Woman of power: *Since much of your work involves peacekeeper training, how do you think women can be peacekeepers and still fight injustice through social movements?*

Dhyani Ywahoo: The way in which we can most articulately be peacekeepers and still bring about change in unjust actions is to remember that every human being basically needs to be respected, understood, and cared for. The light or the potential for understanding exists in each person. So the first step in reconciling the appearance of differences or different understandings is to find the place where we have a common view. Once we see where our common view is, we see the ways in which we can energize that common vision. Then we notice the different ways in which we might wish to move with the problem.

For example, in terms of the abortion rights issue, everyone wants to preserve life, everyone wants to care for life, and mostly people think that they care for children although our culture basically mistreats children and women. On both sides of this issue—the so-called pro-life position and the so-called pro-choice position—the central issue is the quality of life for all those individuals. There is a common view that we all respect life, and then the point of divergence is where those who claim that abortion should be illegal do not really address the issue of poverty and the struggles of the mother who can't afford to feed her child, or the despair of the child who is not wanted and not able to receive the benefits that she or he needs such as clothing, food, and caring family. At that point we find that there's a different path.

It seems to me that the most important issue is not abortion but how we show our care and concern for those who are feeling bereft of hope or who are unable to become part of a system that will give them dignity, a place to live, and enough food to eat.

So being a peacekeeper is essentially seeing first where we are alike. Basically, every human being wants work, a good home, enough to eat, good company, and to be respected. All around the world we are the same. And I have a feeling that even animals are like that. I know that the dogs and the horses where I live, if they sense that they are not respected, or that one is valued more than another, their feelings are hurt. Because we all want basically the same things, we can look at ways in which we can bring this about. The first step, we understand, is caring for our family, our friends, our neighbors, and our coworkers. Rather than taking a pro or con position, we find ourselves thinking more of "and" rather than "but," thinking, "We can do this together, and we can try it this way," so that the various perceptions and the different views can work harmoniously.

How do we establish communities that are loving, where women can feel secure and safe and know that their efforts will be reciprocated in an equal manner, where males will do the same amount of work in building family relationships? We see the common view. How do we assist one another in supporting life rather than in being for or against? This is one area in which people perceive injustice, yet no one is speaking clearly of how to create the field of justice, which would be to give women and children priority in education, job training, and support systems, which have been deeply eroded over the last twelve years.

There are other kinds of injustices also. There's the injustice of women and men doing the same work for unequal pay. Women's worth is not as well received or recognized as men's, although women are the ones who give birth to everyone. It is assumed that a woman supporting a family needs less to live on than a man supporting a family—that's obviously an incorrect view.

How do we change it? The changing occurs at a very deep level, by being thankful for the gift of a human body and recognizing how difficult life is to obtain and how precious it is. Change also comes when we are willing to say that we will support what's truly respectful. There are now companies that have good employment practices in terms of the treatment of their personnel, female and male, and who provide childcare. All of us can express our appreciation and support for the mindfulness that is inclusive of the whole family by purchasing products made by these companies.

woman of power: *How do you think women of color can reclaim, reshape, or create new ways of celebrating spiritual traditions?*

Dhyani: I look around and it's really quite amazing what black, red, and yellow women have been able to survive over so many generations. For thousands of years, women of color, the women who keep ethnic traditions and who grow the food, have provided a foundation for life with their care and their nurturing. We do our best to sustain our families in this industrial culture, in spite of laws that are still repressive to women and children. We continue to grow.

The voice of the woman is a voice of inclusion and invitation in that we choose to call forth the best from our children, for our children. If and when we choose to take responsibility to train the future generations, let us become more mindful and skillful in expressing patterns and means of resolving difficulties. The voice of inclusion is the voice that gives everyone an opportunity to win and every voice a chance to be heard. The best loved grandmother is the grandmother who listens to each of the children and recognizes each child's unique view and inspires the inherent gifts of those she meets to flower into right action. So the very fact that Native American culture still exists, the very fact that the indigenous cultures of Africa and the indigenous cultures of the East still exist, illustrates how the mother's storytelling, her knowledge of life and death, and her preparation of food are her most special gifts.

It is apparent to me from the numerous requests I receive from all around the world, that the world is asking in a very strong way for the teachings of women of color, of traditional women of ethnic cultures. Also, many governments are expressing the desire to have deeper understanding of means of reconciliation and I think everyone is deeply concerned for the future as they watch the ecological collapse of Eastern Europe and the Ural regions of Russia. So, as women of color, we have a special opportunity to reveal the mother within ourselves and within others through our actions, especially through our moon cycle and our relationship to the pulse of the Earth, to which women are a little more sensitive. As we talk more about this energy of cycles, and there's more scientific exploration to substantiate that our middle, right, and left brains do pulsate in rhythm with the basic ground of the Earth pulsation, more people can feel connected. When we look at all the cultures that still maintain the drumming practice, we see that this is a very powerful medicine for females and males to come again to right relationship with the cycles of the Earth pulsation. That's a most direct way in which people can see the special gifts of people of color.

> *The world is asking in a very strong way for the teachings of women of color.*

When I think of women of color, I also include indigenous women such as the Ukrainian woman who still knows about herbs and midwifery; the Bavarian grandmother who still remembers how to leave offerings for the little people, the fairies; and the Scandinavian mother who remembers the meaning of reindeer moss as a medicine. We're talking about women of color because this issue is dedicated to women of color, but at the same time I recognize that the colorful wisdom of all women around the world has been inhibited, and through that process great suffering and despoiling of the Earth's beauty has occurred. It is now time for all women of the colorful mind, who are aware of the cycles of night and day and

Dhyani Ywahoo.

the dance of the moon in her tides, to arise.

The medicine of the women of Northern Europe is the memory of the herbs and the medicine of the trees. The medicine of the women of much of Africa is the medicine of the pulse that brings the heart back to its natural rhythm. The medicine of the women of the East is the medicine of sacred ideals. The medicine of the women of the Middle East is the medicine of sisterhood. And the medicine of the red women of the western hemisphere is the medicine of survival, adaptation, and bio-resonant interaction with the environment.

woman of power: *Where would you like to see women of color direct their energies in the nineties?*
Dhyani: The most important work that we have as women of color is educating our children to take pride in their ethnic origins, tracing the roots of our family history, and reclaiming all of the children who have become lost to drugs and whose parents are unable to show them how much they care. I would like to see places of sanctuary: small, self-sustaining communities where people of color can share their myths, special teachings, and medicine so that the young children who have become lost in the cities, and lost in drugs, can find a pathway to their own inner light.

I would like to see these places of sanctuary be self-sustaining communities where we might first help the young people to detoxify, to realize that they are indeed worthy of life, and to rebuild those pathways to happiness that may have been occluded or cut away by abusive or oppressive actions. Sometimes just going to school is abusive and oppressive.

These places of sanctuary would allow young people to realize that indeed they are important, that they are our future, and that their efforts make a difference. One of the ways that this can be accomplished is through the practice of ethnic crafts, where you can conceive of an idea, visualize it or draw it, and then actually build it. This can be done in beadwork (where designs sometimes come from dreams), or painting, or sculpting, or making pots and dishes that are functional for the community's use. In this way, a young person recognizes, "I can do something."

So I think that's a first step. And then a deeper step is to reclaim that divinity; to let them know that whatever errors have been made, any of us can return to the bosom of the Mother Earth when we recognize our errors and are willing to correct them. There's a big medicine in forgiveness. When we forgive, we are saying that we recognize that the ways in which we related in the past were inappropriate. Then, in this moment, I say to you that those past relationships are over and we establish a new field of relationship. We make our sacred dance ground, a sacred space that is really made of permeable membranes rather than walls, so that we can understand and communicate with one another at a rate that is consistent with our own inner rhythms. So many people are harmed just because those they love and work with do not understand that their rhythms are different.

In our tradition we say that there are basically seven types of people and they correspond to particular stones. These seven types are: quartz, which corresponds with the concept: "I will, I see"; ruby: "I understand, I build"; topaz: "this is how it's done"; jasper: "it is done in beauty"; emerald: "the wisdom of particulars"; rose quartz: "principles and ideals"; amethyst, stone of the peacemaker: "we change and grow." For example, there's the quartz kind of person; they move straight ahead; they say, "dit, dit, dit, dit." The quartz type of person has a very fast rhythm; they say "I see, I understand" and they do it. Like the quartz stone, they amplify the idea—as we know, quartz is the basis of our telecommunication, carrying ideas all around the world. The ruby person, on the other hand, is the person who considers all things in relationship, recognizes the ideal, and is the most concerned with the possibilities. If you're a ruby person, you see how everything is related and your voice is more like, "ah-wooooooo, ah-wooooooo," and your rhythm is more like a wave caressing the shore. That "dit, dit, dit, dit" person and that "ah-wooooooo, ah-wooooooo" person may have very few meeting places. And then there's the opportunity to recognize the places where you can meet and cultivate them.

It is now time for all women of the colorful mind, who are aware of the cycles of night and day and the dance of the moon in her tides, to arise.

I've just come back from a really wonderful visit with Native American women in the Taos area and we were talking about these same things. How can we help our children? How can we help the Earth? And we recognized immediately that the first thing is appreciation. We made prayers and offerings to the Earth and the sky, the Above Beings and the Earth Beings. The Above Beings we call *adawis;* they are angels. They are our most refined wisdom potential. We made offerings that this wisdom potential may take root in our lives. We made prayers and offerings to the Earth that the roots of wisdom may grow and that we may show our appreciation for the gift of life. We let ourselves reconnect with her pulse through spiritual practices and through purifying ourselves. And then we began to consider: How have the children become lost? How have things become so confused? And we saw that it's because they're taken from home; there are many hypnotic suggestions offered to them by the dominant culture and we must show the children how to recognize their own minds or they will become confused. So we did such practices, and we agreed to teach these practices to all the young people we meet—some of the women work with large numbers of young people. And we also cultivated the universal language of the heart, so that even when the words are not easily heard or trusted, because the child's trust has been stomped on, we can still reach one another's hearts through this pathway of reconciliation.

There is a lot that we, as women, can do, and it seems to me that the first thing that we have to do is reclaim our children. We can think of solutions like these places of sanctuary, and whole communities where first the children come, and then, when they are ready, their parents come to learn how to reparent themselves in order to parent their children. Too often children are hurt by parents who were hurt as children, and the greatest menace then is letting the children lead us. So the children show us that they're ready to be healed and then the parents recognize what steps they need to take in the healing process.

The Taos women and I have this dream that we call Children of All Nations, places close to the city where children can come and begin talking. And as they're ready to put aside their attachment to substances that are defaming the inner light, ready to leave the city and put aside blame of others, ready to take responsibility for bringing their own wisdom forward, they will be able to come to a place of sanctuary. After having regular visits and tutoring and counseling close to the city, they would go to a village where they would begin growing their own food, doing crafts work, and learning whatever it takes to fully communicate in this world. That means learning computer sciences, math, writing, and the philosophies of many cultures. The myths or the stories that are told by each of the indigenous groups will also be included because they provide a special path for healing. So this is our hope, that we can make a difference in this way.

woman of power: *You have often talked about making connections between different traditions, such as the Tibetan, African American and Cherokee. How can we foster or affirm those connections?*
Dhyani: First we need to realize that every ethnic culture and every religion is based on the principles of nonharm and respect. They are all basically expressing one truth, and the truth takes many forms according to the culturalization of the people. We can also further foster good communication and respect for difference by seeing what are the common factors, what are the hopes, and by ongoing dialogue. However, because the rituals of each religion are distinct, they ought to remain as they are. There's no need to mix different rituals together because that can be dangerous. It's like mixing different herbs together—one does that with great care. It is better to understand the particular view that arises in each of the world's religions and to understand that whatever our family of origin, it enabled us to get this far. We can affirm those connections, understanding something about the religion we're born into, and then make clear choices about what is the appropriate spiritual practice to uncover that potential wisdom we all have.

Woman of power: *Do you have any advice for political activists about how best to follow a spiritual path and do political work?*
Dhyani: It seems to me that there's really no difference between spiritual path and political action. When we act out of compassion and consideration for the present and future generations, that is the wisdom of a compassionate caretaker. The most important thing I've learned over the years in terms of political action is that there really is no "them"; it is about "us." We're all part of the dance and I find that it has not really been effective in my life to point out the differences or the injustices with anger. I think that to talk from the place of what is appropriate and beneficial for everyone in the long run makes for a more clear path of communication.

People have a lot of energy and it's for us to give them a clear direction. One of my colleagues in San Diego works with Chicano gang leaders. She gave them some land and said, "Here, make a garden. You can grow food and you can feed whoever you want with it," and that gave the young people so much pride. They made their garden and they feed whomever they want and they are fighting less with each other. We can seek support from one another, so that those kids who once fought one another now weed a garden together, because basically people want to do something good. I would like to see a sense of volunteerism applied in our culture. It would be wonderful to volunteer with our neighbors to correct the problems in our neighborhoods. Even in the inner cities, people can volunteer and build gardens together.

The garden is also our own minds. We can also weed seeds of confusion from the garden of our minds, seeds of feeling victimized, and seeds of feeling that there's something to fight. There's something to change and something to improve. The moment we feel we have an enemy, then that enemy has power over us. The moment we begin to see our views converge, we can find a common pathway. That's making something more clear.

woman of power: *What is your source of spirit or energy? What empowers you personally?*
Dhyani: Just about everything. My maternal and paternal grandparents are my heroes in that they overcame great odds and still maintained their inner integrity. That was a good model. I realize now that they wove the basket that is my life, and they helped me to weave a very sturdy basket.

Then, as I grew older, I realized that if my gift was to come through, I needed roots. I needed to have children myself. I understood that. The first child, a daughter, was born alone. I delivered her myself. I was in a labor room and the nurses changed shifts and forgot about me, and it was good because I couldn't have had her with them there. And that was very, very

special. That tying of the cord, and her looking into my eyes, and us holding each other. That really confirmed for me the belief that there is reason to live and reason to make things better, for her and for those who would come after her.

Then when I had my second child there was another awareness, because she had a difficult birth and was deprived of oxygen for a very long time. I was told that she was retarded and blind, but I said, "I don't accept this." They said that I should institutionalize her because she was going to be severely brain-damaged. I said, "I don't think so," and after a month I took her home and I would swing her around and rock her, turn her upside down and rock her, turn her this way and that way and rock her. Then, when she was about two years old, we realized that she could see. At about two-and-a-half, she began to walk; and at three she talked; and then at twenty-one she graduated from college with honors. So we can always make a difference. Of course, she made new pathways in her brain and the swinging her around helped her.

With the third daughter I realized: ah, how wonderful, how wonderful, here she is and I can see all her ancestors in her. So tiny and so strong and so perceptive. And then, eighteen years after her, I had a son. From the beginning he was looking and wanting to know and calling for explanation and wanting to act. And with my grandchildren, I see wondrous things too; each one has a remarkable view and unique way of being in the world, and I can see how all our relations flow in them, so that really makes me feel very good.

I also have the good fortune to do the kind of work I do, which is to tap the wisdom in everyone's heart, and to show others how to do it, too. I have the good fortune of meeting incredibly dynamic and bright people, many of whom have come through what appeared to be insurmountable obstacles and found their truth and are able to live it. So I'm fortunate that I continually meet good people, just as I met the women on the reserve in Taos and had a good time, a good feeling in that community, and in the larger community, too, with non-Native people. In this way, I see my family everywhere, and what was not perfect in my family of origin, I see ourselves, in the moment, perfecting. That's wonderful. Also, the multiracial diversity of my family members really gives me a sense of relationship with any kind of person, any race, any religion. I'm very thankful for that.

woman of power: *How do you think white women and women of color can form deeper coalitions to work together more closely in the nineties? How can that trust and friendship be fostered?*
Dhyani: This is a really important question. I know that a lot of my Native sisters are very shy and uncomfortable about non-Native women. And a lot of my Black sisters are very shy and uncomfortable, and also my white sisters are shy and uncomfortable. The pathway of understanding is to first appreciate our diversity and to learn as much as we can without being intrusive about our different cultures. For example, in Native tradition, we have a special relationship with elders. We don't particularly ask questions, we sit and listen so that whatever is a question within us becomes revealed within us through the process of our being together.

I know that for some of my Euro-American sisters this can seem unbearably slow. And so we learn to respect our different rhythms and to gain a bit more trust. Trust is built over time. The most precious area of establishing trust is working together as equal partners without either one having the idea that they have something particularly special to impart to the other, an attitude that causes, I think, some unhappiness and can sometimes resemble preaching. Exploring our ethnic dance, whether it's a Polish polka, or dances to Yemaya,[1] or the dances of Tara,[2] or the Buffalo grass dance,[3] is a way in which we return energy to the Earth and awaken our minds a bit more to recognize just how deeply we are all related.

woman of power: *Where do you see the spirituality movement going in the next ten years?*
Dhyani: I think people will go back to respecting nature, to being as self-sufficient as possible, and to simplifying their lives as much as possible. As I was saying earlier about Children of All Nations, I think that this idea of a village of sanctuary, or peace villages as they are called in our tradition, is very important. Cooperatively, people are finding land and forming co-ops with those who have other skills—food growing, water management, educating young ones, house building, crafts that can be traded with other groups—and such co-ops will provide great help to people who are returning to the land, because the cities can no longer sustain the vast numbers within them. And as we see the economy going through further changes, people are simplifying out of necessity. If we have some land with a few friends where we can grow food and live in a cooperative way with respect for each other's privacy, that's a good beginning.

woman of power: *Are you encouraged by what is now occurring in the spirituality movement?*
Dhyani: Let's put it this way: I'm hopeful. I also recognize that those who have previously denied a relationship with the Earth as a living being are now beginning to wake up. They see that the weather patterns in the Ural regions of Russia are being altered in such a way that the very winds have changed and great areas have become desert. I sense in many people the large fear that arises when you see that your previous view was out of balance. I pray now that people will have the courage and the willingness to bring it back to balance. ∞

Notes
1. Yemaya is the Yoruba goddess of water, birth, and awakening consciousness.
2. Tara is the Buddhist goddess of compassion.
3. White Buffalo Woman is an example of compassionate form who gave rituals such as the Buffalo grass dance to the people to renew their hearts and to renew the prairie grass.

THE CAULDRON *New Women's Works*

In each issue, THE CAULDRON *will highlight a selection of women's books, tapes, albums, crafts, and other materials that we have received in our office, and which in our opinion support our feminist and spiritual philosophy. We won't be writing reviews, but will print a short description of as many items as time and space will allow. If you'd like your work to be considered for listing here, please send a copy of it to our office at:* woman of power, *P.O. Box 2785, Orleans, MA 02653. Thank you!*

WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY

Created in Her Image: Models of the Feminine Divine, *by Eleanor Rae and Bernice Marie Daly. Crossroads, 1990, $18.95 hardcover.* Presents a gender-free model of the Judeo-Christian religious system and explores new images of the Feminine Divine.

The Feminine Face of God: The Unfolding of the Sacred in Women, *by Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins. Bantam Books, 1991, $20.00 hardcover.* Examines the personal spiritual experiences of more than one hundred women, leading to the development of Goddess consciousness.

The Moon in Hand: A Mystical Passage, *by Eclipse. Astarte Shell Press, 1991, $12.95 paper.* Rituals, exercises, meditations, and stories organized around the four directions of ancient traditions.

Sophia—Goddess of Wisdom: The Divine Feminine from Black Goddess to World Soul, *by Caitlin Matthews. Mandala Press, 1991, $27.95 hardcover.* Reveals the mysteries of the Goddess Sophia that underlie the esoteric streams of orthodox religions, Qabbala, and alchemy and reemerge in feminist theology, New Age, and Goddess movements.

Harper's Encyclopedia of Mystical and Paranormal Experience, *by Rosemary Ellen Guiley. HarperCollins, 1991, $35.95 hardcover, $19.95 paper.* An A-Z guide with more than 500 entries describing the histories, theories, and explanations behind alternate realities, metaphysical phenomena, mystical locations, techniques and traditions.

Grandmothers of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook, *by Paula Gunn Allen. Beacon Press, 1991, $14.95 paper, $19.95 hardcover.* A retelling of twenty-one Native American spiritual stories traditionally told by female shamans.

FEMINIST/POLITICAL

States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age, *by Charlene Spretnak. HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, $21.95 hardcover.* A reclaiming of the core teachings and practices of the Great Wisdom traditions.

Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism, *edited by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres. Indiana University Press, 1991, paper.* Exposes the parochialism of Euro-American feminism as well as male-dominated narratives on the Third World.

A Reader in Feminist Knowledge, *edited by Sneja Gunew. Routledge Press, 1991, paper.* Comprehensive collection of contemporary essays on feminist orthodoxies and differences with essays by bell hooks, Linda Gordon, Mary Daly and others.

The Past Is Before Us: Feminism in Action since the 1960s, *by Sheila Rowbotham. Beacon Press, 1991, $14.95 paper.* A history of the women's movement in England from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s by a prominent socialist feminist.

Into the Amazon: The Struggle for the Rain Forest, *by Augusta Dwyer. Sierra Club Books, 1991, $10.00 paper.* A powerful indictment of the forces of "progress" and the Brazilian government that profit from the destruction of the forest and the people who live in it.

The Encyclopedia of Amazons: Women Warriors from Antiquity to the Modern Era, *by Jessica Amanda Salmonson. Paragon House, 1991, $21.95 hardcover.* A comprehensive, cross-cultural reference on history's fighting women: Amazons, gladiators, pirates, warrior queens, maenads, furies and avenging goddesses.

Between Feminism and Labor: The Significance of the Comparable Worth Movement, *by Linda M. Blum. University of California Press, 1991, hardcover.* Explores the larger political implications of the comparable worth strategy for gender pay equity.

Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life: A South African Autobiography, *by Emma Mashinini. Routledge, 1991, $13.95 paper.* A leading Black South African labor activist documents her lifetime of struggles and victories against apartheid.

The Private Life of Old Hong Kong: Western Women in the British Colony 1841-1941, *by Susanna Hoe. Oxford University Press, 1991, $13.95 paper.* A historical reconstruction of the experiences of Western women, as recorded in letters, diaries and other private sources.

Woman-Defined Motherhood, *edited by Jane Price Knowles and Ellen Cole. Harrington Park Press, 1990, $14.95 paper.* A feminist examination of motherhood, including the issues of mother-blaming, mother-hating, adoption, infertility, and relationships between mothers and their children.

Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics, *by Janet Biehl. South End Press, 1991, $10.00 paper.* A critique of the internal contradictions of ecofeminism, which proposes social ecology as an alternative framework for action.

Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle, *by Elaine Showalter. Penguin Books, 1991, $9.95 paper.* An analysis of cultural attitudes toward sexuality at the end of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries using historical narrative, film, and textual analysis.

Women, Aging and Ageism, *edited by Evelyn R. Rosenthal. Harrington Park Press, 1990, $14.95 paper.* Explores issues of deep concern to women at midlife and beyond, including menopause, sexuality, social isolation, violence, equal opportunity, and the feminization of poverty.

Women, Politics and the Constitution, *edited by Naomi B. Lynn. Harrington Park Press, 1990, $14.95 paper.* A collection of historical, empirical and theoretical essays on women and constitutions, both state and federal.

Vagabonding: Feminist Thinking Cut Loose, *by Christina Thürmer-Rohr, translated by Lise Weil. Beacon Press, 1991, $10.95 paper, $22.95 hardcover.* A persuasive critique of women's roles in male society, advocating acceptance of the existential rootlessness of all women.

The Ship That Sailed Into the Living Room: Sex and Intimacy Reconsidered, *by Sonia Johnson. Wildfire Books, 1991, $12.95 paper.* A personal odyssey through the intricate world of relationships that challenges conventional romantic assumptions.

On Peace, War, and Gender: A Challenge to Genetic Explanations, *edited by Anne E. Hunter. Feminist Press, 1991, $12.95 paper.* A critique of theories connecting sex and aggression that dispels sexist rationales for war.

FICTION/POETRY

Zeta Base, *by Judith Alguire. Naiad Press, 1991, $9.95 paper.* A lesbian love triangle plays out against the impending disaster of the death of Earth's sun.

Daughter of the Mountain, Un Cuento, *by Edna Escamill. aunt lute books, 1991, $8.95 paper.* A *mestiza* witnesses the explosive growth of her southwestern border town and learns spiritual survival skills from her Yaqui Indian grandmother.

America and I: Short Stories by American Jewish Women Writers, *edited by Joyce Antler. Beacon Press, 1991, $12.95 paper.* A collection of stories about the conflict between Jewish heritage and female identity.

Take Back the Night '92, Lunar Calendar, *by Full Womoon Productions, Box 1205, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, 1991, $10.00.* A popular multicultural lunar art calendar featuring women artists and writers.

Dream On, *by Chrystos. Press Gang Publishers, 1991, $10.95 paper.* A second collection of poetry and prose pieces dealing with lesbian eroticism, the long-term effects of incest, abuse within relationships, the genocide of Native peoples, and healing.

The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969-1989, *by Bonnie Zimmerman. Beacon Press, 1990, $14.95 paper.* Charts the remarkable wave of lesbian fiction that has emerged over the past twenty years.

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GREEN TERRESTRIAL offers herbal medicine workshops, women's weekends, high-quality herbal products, wisewoman apprenticeships. Contact Pam Montgomery, Box 41-WP, Rt. 9W, Milton, NY 12547. (914) 795-5238.

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TRIVIA FALL 1990 SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE features interviews with Paula Gunn Allen and Nancy Spero, essays by Canadian writers Marlene Nourbese Philip and Lee Maracle, a critique of a feminist right-wing ethic, a woman's symbol language, and a one-act play by Carolyn Gage. Published twice a year. Subscriptions: $14 year individuals; sample copy $6.00. P. O. Box 606, N. Amherst, MA 01059.

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CONFERENCE FOR CATHOLIC LESBIANS (CCL) is a national organization for women of Catholic heritage. We offer a network of local groups and contacts, a quarterly newsletter, *Images* (sample copy $3); and sponsor a bi-annual national conference (Boston area, July '92). For information, please contact CCL-WP, P.O. Box 436, Planetarium Station, New York, NY 10024, or (718) 921-0463.

THE DISABLED ARTISTS' NETWORK is an information exchange and living bulletin board of disabled artists in the visual and sculptural arts. Services include: introducing artists to one another, exchanging information about opportunities available, working on public education. DAN is collecting information about shows, competitions, galleries, opportunities and services for professional artists who are disabled. Send a SASE or a cassette for those who are print or visually handicapped to: Disabled Artists' Network, P.O. Box 20781, New York, NY 10025.

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The Call Is to You

by Joan Henry

Author's note: Native words do not always translate into European languages, as the essence, spirit, and meaning are often inherent in the very sounds. The richness of one word may take several dozen other words to approach its meaning; however, where permissible and possible, terms used here are elucidated in the glossary found at the end of this article. Wado.

Our people call this time we now live in the Time of Purification. The prophecies of our people, Apachu, Tsalagi, Hopi, and others, speak to these years around 2000 as a time of upheaval, burning away of dross—an essentializing, even among ourselves; but it is also a Time of Returning, the beginning of a new World or cycle of Heavens, a time of prevailing enlightenment and *dohi* (serenity). It is the returning of that which has never been lost; the regathering of ever-widening Circles of Women for the growth and healing of Earth Mother, generating outward from these nurturers and bearers of the nations to enfold and include all that lives, all of which is part of her.

Teachings of the Tineh are very specific about the importance of women at this time. Apachu medicine is very separate-but-equal, honoring that not only does each one, woman and man, have a clear and different function, equally necessary (is there not Sky Father as well as Earth Mother?), but that each one walks with a female and male side to be equally honored in this life (are not Sky Father and Earth Mother also Sky Mother and Earth Father?). Our *Hitome* are women warriors, but our wisdom knows that war is the court of last resort. So also knows our Earth Mother, who summons women of all races to act upon this wisdom in all things to accomplish the rebalancing from a male predominance to which our world has swung, a retuning, reharmonizing.

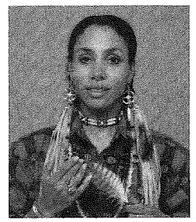
Just as our bodies shift and rebalance, preparing for the step into womanhood, and we actively honor this passage with the White Shell Woman or Sunrise Ceremony, this young Earth, say the prophecies, shakes out her shawl and moves towards her coming pubescence. We are called to acknowledge our cellular connection with her and to usher in this great Cycle of change, carrying on the dances, the songs, the circles of right intent—the old ways.

This knowing in the bones of Native women pervades our lives even on the busiest New York City street; however, the rampant run to Native people for answers to this Earth Mother's "crisis"—we call it her maturation—must be checked and tempered by the finding and carrying of one's own lineage. How to do this amidst the struggle of daily survival? There are roads to bringing the old ways into today's life.

Talk to your ancestors. Learn what they know. Feed them the fruit of your attention, your prayers, your honoring. They are anxious to share their lessons with you. By your questions you help to close the Hoop for them, allowing them the giveback of the Grandparenting Time, which is their place on the Wheel as your elders. Alive, your visits ease the dimming of their days. Know that you carry their cells within you and can reach out to them for help, even across the borders of the Nightland. Prayers can go there.

Searching out the historic relationship of your ancestors to the land is one beginning. My halfside often reminds me that everyone's ancestors once came from and lived on the land. *Da Naho.*

Honor your knowing. Take time in each day to recognize your place within the Great Mystery that gives us our lives. Speak and listen to your own within. My southern grandmother's simple morning prayers grounded her daily in the sacredness of herself and every action. An altar is a good thing, but remember that it is only a reflection of the Sacred Space within you. A regular time and place with your feet on Mother Earth, if that is possible, can build a powerful connection to the Mystery, done with an open heart and an open mind. The Spirit-That-Moves-In-All-Things living in each one of us grows strong with feeding.



Joan Henry *(Tsalagi/Tineh), is a composer, poet-lyricist, artist, educator, dancer, and lead singer for the Native American jazz group Noyeh-Ongeh (Mother Earth). She lives at the foot of Panther Mountain in the Catskills with her sideby, Dennis Yerry, and their treasured three-and-one-half-month-old son, G.C. Anali'heliga. (Photo © 1989 H. Wilson.)*

Walk your medicine. Be true to your gift, and give it away. We are taught that we are in this Earthwalk to give the life that was given to us back to the Earth Mother, both directly and through her children, all living things. It has been the way of my mother, as of her forebearers, not to put herself forward in a loud and verbose way but to go quietly and firmly about the doing of her life's work—the action, walking her talk. This I honor and emulate. My own *nuwoti* is the gift of music—word, sound, tone, and dance. Together with my halfside, this is our life's work and giveaway—working for an understanding of the culture, worldview and sensitivities of Native American people—that the People, and all people, might learn and live in beauty.

Through the music of Noyeh-Ongeh, a Native American jazz group, the languages so precious to our people, in many cases so nearly destroyed, are continued and shared. Through this, our children are inspired to take up and learn or relearn the tongues of their ancestors, that these might live. Our adults are revitalized as the sounds and rhythms of old find life in their marriage to the contemporary, reaffirming the ever-present process of spirit in our lives. Our elders are reassured that their lives have been understood, have had meaning, and that they and their ways and teachings will not be forgotten with their passage into the Nightland.

And I have always been a dancer—professional, traditional, concert, liturgical. Native people have never stopped dancing, socially or ceremonially, knowing that we dance for our lives. (In our speaking, "sing," "dance," "pray," "help" all spring from the same root.) This, our commonness, reaches across broad tribal differences. Dance communicates the vibrations unheard by our ears; it is the song of the Silence. We are taught that this dancing with intention heals the Earth Mother. Even at powwows, there is always a friendship dance. When we share these dances, participant and observer are both healed, and Mother Earth is healed. To the bringing of this knowledge and the return of the dance for Mother Earth, I am committed.

We each must know and walk our own medicine.

What is your gift?

Seek out your sisters. This begins close to home; it does not require a trip to the reservation or the jungle unless your family happens to be there. Become aware of the circle of women within your life; create an active support system among yourselves. Reach into your community to help it become strong and self-healing before your quest for sisterhood takes you far afield to situations that require greater understanding. Then extend your community to others.

The call is to you.

When the paint first came to me, I was scared. Didn't feel ready. I couldn't reach my mother by telephone to ask her advisement, though the message was strong. When I finally gave up conventional methods and called her in the way she taught me, I had an answer. A go-ahead. And I did—I painted one of my brothers for a ceremony of taking-a-relation.

When I told my mother this story on returning home, she laughed, and she said, "Now it is time for you to wear your third braid." And she told me the rest of what I needed to know.

What was asked of me then, by time, situation, and Spirit was a leap of faith and knowledge, an active returning to the ways our ancestors taught us, needing no telephone to contact the Mystery or my mother, or my grandmother's grandmother in the Nightland.

What is asked of you now, Native and non-Native women alike, is no different.

The call is to you.

I give away this gift to you as it has been given away to me, freely.

It has been spoken. May it never be broken.

Hia Osidv. ∞

Glossary

***Da Naho*:** roughly translated this means "It has been spoken" in the Seneca language.

Earthwalk: the journey of our lives on Mother Earth.

Grandparenting Time: the last years of life, the caretaking time, elder time.

Halfside or **sideby:** she or he who walks and works beside you; wife, husband, and so on.

***Hia Osidv*:** roughly translated this means "This is really good, just right" in the Tsalagi language.

Hoop or **Wheel:** refers to the Sacred Hoop of Nations or Great Medicine Wheel; it may be thought of as the circle of life for all things.

Nightland: where we go when we leave this Earthwalk.

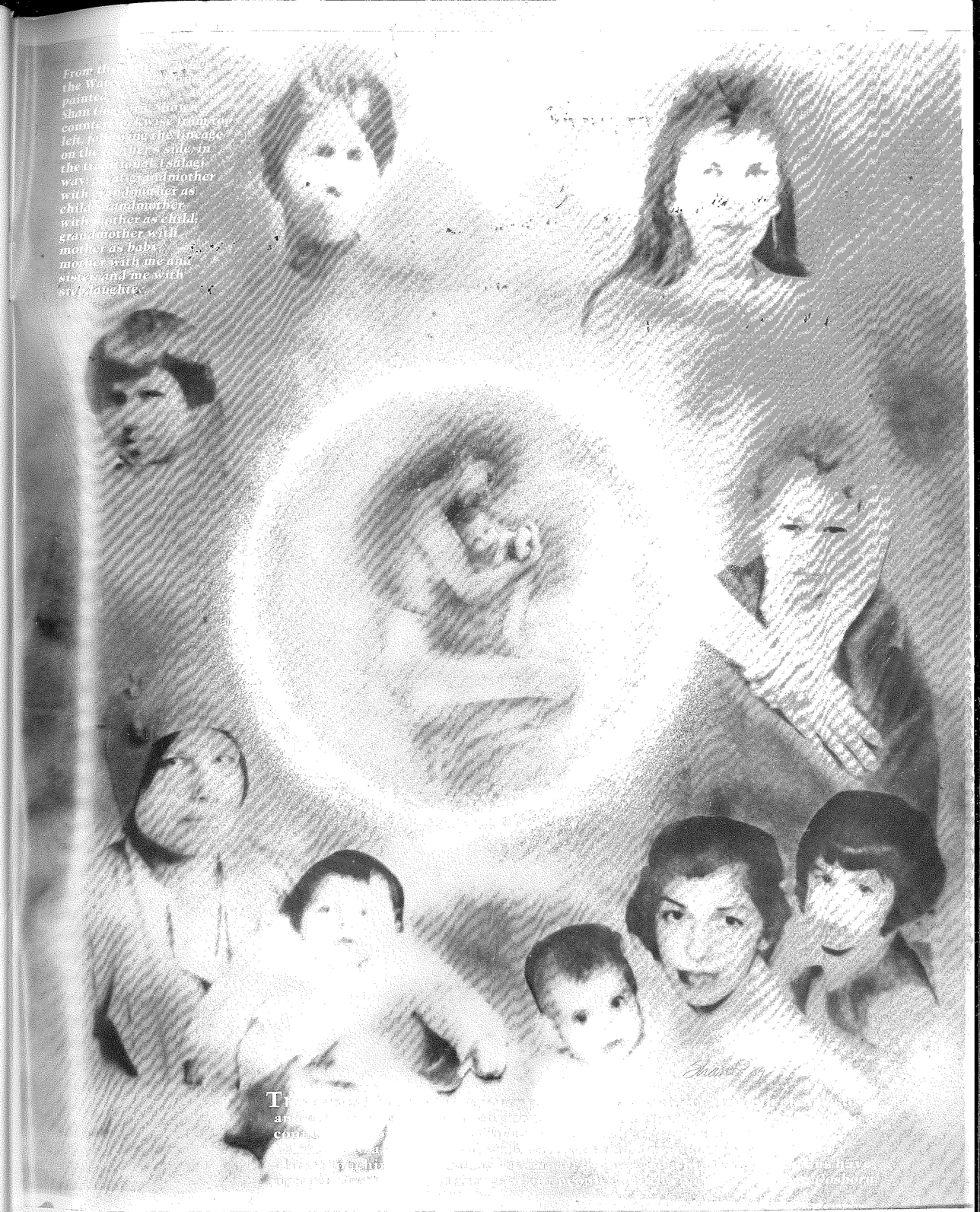
***Nuwoti*:** roughly translated this means "medicine" a rich and complex concept that here may be thought of as "gift" in the Tsalagi language.

The People: most Native American names for our own tribes translate into some approximation of "The People," "Real People," "Principal People," "First People," and so on.

Sacred Space: refers to the vibral core, the living center of each being, which roots and connects all things.

***Wado*,** a Tsalagi word most commonly used to mean "Thank you."

White Shell Woman Ceremony or **Sunrise Ceremony** is an Apachu puberty ceremony, one of our most sacred. Boys have a similar ritual, but this one is really a celebration of womanhood, menarche, and adolescence, a welcoming, testing, recognition of that transformation/transition.

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