

# sinister wisdom 47



## Tellin' It Like It Tis'



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## The Writers

In our call for submissions we wrote:

*Issue 47 will be edited entirely by a collective of Lesbians of Color. We are a diverse group of writers, artists, community activists and readers. Our responsibility as editors is to serve as advocates for and supporters of the women who submit work for consideration.*

We were ecstatic by the response. We received more than 400 pieces from over 90 authors/artists. We were privileged and enriched to have the opportunity to experience the lives of so many Lesbians of Color through our work. The pieces submitted are clearly with ourselves at the center encompassing many aspects of our lives. Our cultures were integral parts of our work, not tacked on borders framing who we are. Our writing reflects our relationships with each other; reclaiming our culturally specific herstories, mythologies, rituals and healing circles; and creating our own spaces rather than pushing our way into places that would have us only marginally. Although it is necessary to write about that which oppresses us, we ultimately resist further colonization when we are able to envision beyond that — to define ourselves not as other but as primary to our lives.

Our goal was to publish new voices and visions and our priorities for selection were diversity in writers, subject and style. It was quickly apparent that 160 pages were insufficient to represent all lesbians of color. We did an extensive mailing to women's bookstores, support groups, literary groups, etc. Our best outreach was done word of mouth — telling somebody to tell somebody else about submitting for the issue. With such an overwhelming response, still there are groups of lesbians who are underrepresented in these pages.

## The Process

The eight of us came together in July of 1991, virtually as strangers. We had no idea the journey this process would take us on, both individually and collectively. We never laid ground rules,

never decided on consensus as a process, and never agreed not to disagree. Our process took its own form.

We knew how we wanted this process to be different. As writers, many of us had experiences with editors/critical readers where our words were chopped beyond recognition, our voices distorted, our selves stripped away from our pieces — our work forced into the rigid linear structure of "standard" English. Our responsibility as editors was to preserve the voice of the writer, the vision of the artist, to ensure that this is what is presented to the reader. We hope this is what you will find.

We came to the process open as few of us identified as editors although each of us identified as writers. By the end, we each came away feeling assured of our editing abilities and clear that we have something valuable to offer on an editorial committee. For many, the editing process helped in our own writing. Lesbians of Color taking risks with their works and their selves encouraged us to take risks with our own writing. You will find the works of some of the editors in this journal.

The group process was empowering. Many of us were apprehensive before we began given difficult experiences we had working in groups, including groups of women of color. We acknowledged the ways in which our internalized oppression manifests as mistrust and underestimation of one another, and that issues of leadership have often been volatile. Within any diverse group, individuals may perceive and experience leadership differently given differences in race, ethnicity and class. Emerging from our experiences with authority cultivated in racist and sexist frameworks, we often realize our difficulty both in taking leadership and supporting leaders. We neither want to be abused/silenced by leadership or become abusive as we assume leadership positions. We have often confused leadership with the abusive use of authority. Some of us felt we didn't want to be attacked or alienated if we took positions of leadership.

What we experienced in this group was quite the opposite. Most prominent was our deep respect for each other. Individuals took on leadership in various areas and were trusted and empowered to make decisions. We did, nonetheless, struggle around various pieces that were submitted and issues they raised, and we had strong differing opinions. We discussed: the definition of lesbian content, SM, whether writing about men had a place in a lesbian



journal, the responsibility and consequences of how we use language — discussions that often leave us angry, hurt and unable to work together. We were able to move through and resolve disagreements because we made room for difference. We walked away with more respect for each other. We are indeed healing ourselves within our communities.

As we got to know each other better, we moved our meetings from a small office behind a bookstore to our homes. As we moved into our personal spaces, so too were we able to bring more of ourselves to the process. Food was central to comfort of the space, the more comfortable we got, the more expansive the food got. Eating together positively impacted on our work. Though we seldom gathered around a kitchen table, we created that space which nurtures with offerings of our homes, of food and of ourselves.

### **Our Future**

We were disappointed that we could not print more of the work that we had received. Although we realize the absurdity of trying to capture the richness of our voices in 160 pages, we did not leave this process disempowered. We began to explore the possibility of starting our own journal, written and edited by Lesbians of Color and found an interested publisher.

We hope this issue will encourage and inspire Lesbians of Color to continue to write, to create, and to send out work. Look for us in the future. We want to know what you think about this issue. Please write us.

### **The Editors**

**Akiba Tiamaya:** Hello world I am feeling sooo good my broken wings re-grown gonna soar beyond the skies heart and spirit rejuvenated my wounded spine now healed new fingers on my hands eyes clear and looking to the stars feet strong and flat on the ground with roots reaching to forever ... I am a 49-year-old black woman of African, Native American and Irish ancestry; a Two spirited, healer, writer/poet, artist, warrior woman living on the edge.

**Aly Kim:** I'm a 37 year old double virgo Hawaii-born Chinese-Korean lesbian (of 22 plus years), lover of life, humor, computers, food and friendship, dedicated to seeing Pacific/Asian lesbian history being preserved through art and writing.

**Cristy Terese Mei-Ling Chung** is a biracial Pacifica Asian Lesbian deeply and passionately committed to social change. A writer, organizer, artist and social worker engaged in eliminating violence against women.

**Jamie Lee Evans** is a self-defined mixed-blood Asian radical cultural feminist lesbian. She believes in new feminism led by women of color and hopes that the revolution will come soon. She's currently co-editing an anthology with Kate Miller considered by Aunt Lute Books, entitled, *Coloring Outside the Lines: Writings by Mixed-Blood and Multiracial Women of Color*.

**Laura Orabona-Munter** I am a 40-year-old mixed-blood lesbian. Born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, I was raised in the depths of rural Michigan. I am an electrician. My writing has appeared in "*Haciendo Caras, Making Face, Making Soul*."

**Maya C. Valverde** is a Chicana-Yaqui Native American from Arizona currently living in Oakland California. She is a journalist, videographer, photographer, artist, mother of two young adults and expectant grandmother. She's had several articles published, including the book *Coming Out Colored/Salir a La Luz*. She is currently working on her life stories and moving to Humboldt County California, location of her new film "*Girlz in the Woodz*."

**Sauda (Lillian) Burch** I am a Black, nappyheaded dyke transport from Chicago making my way in Oakland, CA. I am a writer and activist on my return trip to the Mother. I edit regularly for *Sinister Wisdom* as well as *Ache'*: A Black Lesbian Journal. I am currently working on a novel, most of which is being written as I sleep.

**Xochipala Maes Valdez** I am a Chicana writer/artist whose family has been rooted in Southwest soils as far back as our conscious memory takes us. My creative process is a way for me to remember what lies in my unconscious memory as it has been passed to me through the blood of my peoples. My work is a tribute to my ancestors.



## The Swimmers

Two brown girls we  
steal away steal away  
through the darkness of my room  
you take my hand

Naked we run  
to the shore of my bed  
to the ocean of my sheets  
leaving the land of ghosts  
behind

We dive deep  
mouths open eyes closed  
down down  
salty waves wash past our lips  
over our tongues

you circle round and gently tug  
a tiny mussel between your teeth  
you suck her in  
a warm whirling eddie rushes through  
my fingers tangled in your dark hair  
how long can we hold our breath?

side by side you stroke my cheek  
you beckon me south but  
I drag you up  
for one more taste of the night  
to fill our bellies with stars

Two brown girls  
we raise our heads  
our voices shine like stones  
in the moonlight

We swim in secret  
against the current  
with both eyes open  
we dive  
again

Donna Tanigawa

## Pau Trying Fo' Be Like One Haole Dyke

**B**efoah time when I was one kid from da Leeward side mah haole teacher from da mainlan' wen correct da way I wen talk in front da whole fort-grade class. 'Ass right. It was one beeg ting fo' me. She wen say to me dis: "You want to r-e-s-e-r-v-e the seat, Donna, not kapu it." Not kapu 'um. Dis stuck in mah head fo' da rest of small-kid days. She wen say dat I neva like kapu tings, only reserve dem.

Maybe wot mah teacher wen tell me—no kapu tings—was bachi fo' me. To kapu someting in Pidgen is to make 'um your own—to claim 'um. Da ancient Hawaiians had kapu laws for anykine sacred an' forbidden stuff. Deez days, island-folks kapu everyday tings. (Dat ting is mine afta I kapu 'em, li' dat.) As a 9-year old I wen want to kapu da chair. (Neva mind da bambucha kid wen take 'um first!) Dis kine haole tinkin' fo' reserve tings wen make me all jam up in da head.

Plenny times I tink of all da tings I could have made kapu in mah life, but neva. O wow li' dat. Tings like mah chi-i-sa-i body. Mah no-sked lezbeism (only da men can be mahu). Mah Japanee roots and stuff. Mah local Pidgin talk. I wen grow up hea' in Hawai'i witout any fo' real kine kapu laws of mah own. Cheez, dis wen really trow me off. Maybe dats why it was so hard fo' me to claim da tings dat important in mah life—mah desire, mah voice, mah self-identity. Omahgooness, yeah?

From dem hanabata days I was one nice, quiet Japanee girl. A squid, li' dat. I wen talk plenny Pidgin. Good fun, you figgah. Dis was local-style for us ovah hea' in da islands. Only in da classroom I wen talk da kine Standard English. But all dis wen change to da max wen I wen go to one priveet haole school in town. Ovah dea' I wen try fo' be like one haole. (I know, you like slap mah head, yeah?) Neva have too much local folks at dat place. Only lita' bit locals dea, tokens. Dis made me so nerjus.

So fo' one long time I wen' tink dat I could be like one haole. I forgot dat I was one island femme. (Only get butch and femme in Hawai'i, but da haole dykes no like dis, li' dat.) I shame fo' say dat



I usedtato tink dat I could be mo' bettah dan da oddah local kids. I wen talk hybolic. Cheez, I wen even try fo' look like one bananao o' one kotonk. Da haole teachers wen tell me ovah and ovah again dat I no need talk da kine Pidgin. Garans dey got huhu wen I wen talk Pidgin to dem in da hallway o' classroom. I got chance fo' be like one haole, I thought. Neva mind I one rice eye an' got local ohana. I no joke you, dem haoles at da school neva laugh at me. (Dey felt good dat I wanted fo' be jus' like dem, eh?) Yeah, dey only wen try fo' cut me off from mah tita friends.

Maybe it not too bad fo' be like one haole and talk funny kine, I thought in dem days. I was so haolified by da time I wen finish high school. Someime good, but. You know I wen say to da ono wahines, "How are you today?" Only I was trying fo' score wit dem, of coss! Catch trills, yeah? I neva usedtato say "Howzit, tita!" Honest kine, I wen tink dat I could be so haole. Maybe go mainlan' fo' college. I wen try so hard—to da max, li' dat.

It's one good feeling fo' talk story wit you about dose wanna-be-haole days, seestah. Ovah hea' in Hawai'i people tink dat it's akamai to keep your skin matching your guts. Dis stay akamai, no? But it seems like all ovah da world folks tink dat to be haole is da smart ting, and dat to be da kine of color means dat you one lolo in da head. I no understan' why dey tink dat da haoles mo' bettah dan da folks of color. I no lie you.

One day mah butch seestah wen have me look inside da mirror ovah her lu'a. She wen ask me wot I wen see in da glass. It seem like I wen tink fo' days. Das one Japanee, not one haole staring back at me. O wow lau lau! Den mah seestah wen say no bulai yo' self. You one buddahhead not one kotonk. An' den she wen ask me, "Whea you was born?" Den da question, "Who's opu you wen come from?" Eh, I was born hea in Waipahu da stink sugar mill town. I was made inside mah moddah's opu, li' dat. Den she wen make like I was making like one haole, and we wen bus' out laughing!

So, no mo' haole kine stuff fo' me. Allas, hah? I no stay shame about mahself. So wot I one local-kine Japanee. One femme, li' dat. Mo' bettah be one local dan one noddah wanna-be-haole, yeah? Da ones who like be haole make bad rep for us. From befoah time dem haoles wen tell us dat dey goeen make us look dumb. Hahdly, eh? Us local-kine dykes. We know da truth.

I got to keep in mah head dis mah kuleana, not deirs. Da kine an' be honest wit mahself. 'Ass why hard to be one local-style dyke in Hawai'i.

I like talk story wit you a lita' bit more seestah? Last semestah I wen walk out of mah class because da teacher, one haole, when decide fo' kapu da topic of Terd World Lesbian Feminism in America. She not one Terd World wahine. Betcha she not even one dyke, no? I wen feel good slam da door. I nevah care dat dis was one graduate seminar. Dis kine haole will nevah understan' dat I was trying fo' keep da kine enryo. Yeah, I still mad an' piss off at her, li' dat. But I know dat no matta wot da teacher says about me—inarticulate, hostile, naive—she will nevah understan' me or all da oddah da kine dykes of color. At leas' not da anger inside our guts.

You know mah grandmoddah wen always tell me, "Do-nachan, wassamattayou?" Shi-ka-ta ga nai. No can help. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No more ga-man for me. No more plantin' da anger at da bottom on mah opu wit da rice and takuan.

No worry seestahs. I no stay habuts. No say dat I one pua ting. Only wase time, li' dat. I know I wen learn from dis. Wit dis kine stuff I can live in dis haole world. I nevah foget whea I came from. An' who I am. Da mirror is always dea fo' me.



## Finding Out the Secrets: An Interview with Eva Ayala — Mexicana Lesbians in the U.S.A.

Evangeline Ayala Rios sits on my sofa, comfortable in magenta polo shirt and blue shorts. A year younger than I, she hails from my Mexican mother's home state of Chihuahua, and I am curious to know more about her early experiences on this side of the border.

"So, del la Peña, what do you want to know?" Eva rarely calls me Terri. She likes to twirl her tongue around my surname; I never mind because she is one of the few who pronounce it correctly.

"Tell me how old you were when you came to the U.S. and how you met other lesbians."

She surveys me briefly. "I came here when I was sixteen years old, and I found other lesbians through my lover's father."

Used to her frankness, I am nonetheless surprised by this turn of events. "Did you come here with your lover?"

"No. I met her here through a heterosexual wedding. She was one of the bridesmaids."

Laughing, I aim the tape recorder closer to her, not wanting to miss any of this.

Eva smiles and keeps talking. "I really fell in love with her right away. There's an old saying that if you drink water from someone's glass that you find out their secrets. So I used that line with her. She said 'oh, good.'"

I imagine Eva whispering intimately to a pretty Latina in a fancy bridesmaid's dress. Too shy to be so bold, I vicariously enjoy her story.

In the mid-1960's she was 18 years old and became involved with that first lover, a Cuban woman. The woman's father, a waiter, knew several actresses who frequented the restaurant where he worked. Some of them were Cuban lesbians, and the father gave Eva and his daughter tickets to a play in which several actresses appeared. Attending that play introduced the two young women to the Latina lesbian community.

At that point, I interrupt to redirect the conversation to Eva's life in Mexico before arriving in this country. She seems unfazed by my change of direction.

"Tell me a little bit about Mexico — about what it was like to come out there."

She looks at me askance, and I hurry to clarify.

"How did you know you were a lesbian?"

She pulls back her shoulders and faces me. "Oh, I always knew. I was a feeling I always had. I was always attracted to certain friends of mine." She explains that she noticed her other friends did not seem to share her feelings. "So I would find my feelings very unusual. But then again — it wasn't so hard for me because in Mexico, it's different. You're able to be close, to touch, to kiss — and it's 'normal'. It's not something 'homosexual'. There you can walk down the street holding hands, or hug somebody in the street and kiss in the street. "Nobody thinks anything of it."

Her dark eyes grow intense. "So it never bothered me to do that in the street. As far as my feelings were concerned — I thought I was in love with some of my friends. And, well, I guess to disguise and be like all the girls I had a 'so-called' boyfriend. Nothing serious," she assures me. "But then he introduced me to his sister *then* we got serious."

Eva and I laugh together.

"So I was going out with him *and* his sister, but his sister was, I think, kind of confused." Eva eventually released herself from that entanglement, but she did not stop being attracted to other girls. "I had other intimate girlfriends. We'd go to movies and kiss and touch and stuff like that. It was never a problem, and it never needed to be discussed."

I lean towards her. "But you couldn't say anything to your parents about it?"

"No. Not to nobody." She shakes her head vigorously. "And the girlfriends I had — whatever feelings we had — it was never questioned. It was like any normal type of thing."

"But they probably weren't lesbians, right?"

Eva runs quick fingers through her hair. "They weren't lesbians, no." She says her Mexican girlfriends were jealous of her affections. "But I took it as maybe curiosity on their part because it was never discussed. But, on my part, it was not only curiosity, that's how I felt, how I *really* felt."



"For you, it was serious — but for them, it was just something they were going through."

She nods. "Growing-up feelings, I suppose you'd call them. And this was how I met other girls."

"When you were in Mexico, Eva, did you actually meet other lesbians? Or were they all [the girlfriends] not really lesbians?"

"They weren't lesbians," Eva scoffs. "As far as I know today, they're married with kids. So it's my belief that they were never lesbians."

"So when you came here and you met this woman at the wedding, had you been involved with anybody yet?"

Eva has a faraway look in her brown eyes. "No. She was my first time, sexually. First time." She takes a sip of water and is silent for a few moments.

Not wanting to probe, I decide instead to zero in on her family's reaction to her Cuban lover.

"Eva, when you got involved with this woman, did your families know about this?"

She sighs and gazes at me. "My family knew, but it was very, very difficult. They didn't like her at all because..." She breaks off, as if searching for appropriate words. "Coming here, it seems like people don't seem to understand why other women get close to each other and hold each other and kiss each other and call each other nice things like 'honey' or whatever. They always take it in a negative way." Her oldest sister's negative attitude, in particular was a constant problem.

Eva explains that her older sisters and brother remained in the United States when her parents had returned to Mexico in the 1940's. The youngest in the family, Eva and her two older brothers were born later in Guadalupe, Distrito Bravo, in the State of Chihuahua. A railroad worker, Eva's father died a few years after her birth. Because of the family's poverty and Eva's ill health, her mother encouraged the attention a local childless couple focused on the girl. This couple's home was on the way to Eva's school, and she would stop by often to visit them.

Eva looks at me. "Eventually, I stayed and visited longer. And before I knew it, I stayed nine years."

I recall my own Mexican grandmother's proclivity for housing relatives' children. If the need arose, my grandmother never asked questions; she simply took in the children. I meet Eva's gaze. "Did you stay there until you came here?"

"Well, they died," she murmurs. "That's why I came here."

Her own mother died later. Eva explains that one of her older sisters visited Chihuahua and suggested that she immigrate to the U.S. At first, the teenager balked, but then she changed her mind.

Eva shrugs. "So I figured, well, I would take it as an adventure. I told myself, 'What harm would that do? I'll go anyway. What the hell.'"

However life in Whittier, CA, a city in the eastern section of Los Angeles county, did not run smoothly. Eva stayed with one sister for a year, then the other for a year. Her sisters' children were Eva's age, and the teenagers were incompatible.

"They were tossing me around." She rolls her eyes. "I was impossible to live with."

"Plus the language barrier," I interject. "Eva you didn't know any English."

She grimaces. "The language barrier was awful."

"How did you manage to learn to speak English so well?"

Eva tells me that after numerous fights with her sisters, she secured a full-time babysitting job, working for an Anglo family. Before long, she moved into that family's spare bedroom.

"I said, 'Oh Jesus, how am I going to talk to the kids?' But the good thing about it was they were little kids." She smiles. "And I realized it was a great opportunity for me to talk to them because I wanted to learn the language. This woman [her employer] was very nice to me. She said, 'Since we can't talk to each other, I'm going to buy two dictionaries, one in Spanish, one in English. What I can't say, I'll look up. What you can't say, you look up.' Believe it or not, the kids were like a school for me because we were all learning to talk. It took me one year to start talking, all in all, you know. And I was amazed that I could."

Eva also enrolled in evening English classes, and eventually became a student at Fullerton High School.

"What year did you go into?"

"Well, I took a G.E.D. test to see how much I could deal with. So I just took the classes that I needed to. The only thing was, the language was a pain in the ass," Eva adds with a laugh.

"Well, it's not an easy language." Because I understand Spanish far better than I speak it, I marvel at her language facility. But I also realize that necessity often makes the most difficult task possible. "When you were in high school, did you meet any lesbians?"



"Never," she says adamantly. "If they were, I wouldn't know."

"They were kids. They probably didn't know either."

"Not only that, they were mostly white and ..."

I remember she went to high school in Orange County, home of Disneyland and assorted right-wing politicians. "Were they racist?"

"Very much so."

"Did you have problems with that?"

Eva shrugs. "They never talked to me. But I thought they didn't like me. People don't like you — they don't like you."

"Coming from Mexico, you weren't used to that."

"We don't have that," Eva agrees. "It [racism] doesn't exist with us. So I didn't like that at all. And they started doing things to me."

"Like what?"

"Well this woman [the employer] bought me a motorcycle."

Recalling this occurred in the early 1960's, long before the current popularity of motorbikes, I start to laugh. I wonder if her swaggering walk stems from those adventurous days. "Wait a minute, Eva. Were you the only girl who had a motorcycle?"

She smiles. "Yeah, I was the only one. And I had a helmet."

"And you were wearing pants to school?"

"Yeah. I was wearing Levis."

My laughter becomes more raucous.

She catches my drift.

"I must have looked..."

I manage to sputter, "You must have looked butchy."

"Or different or something," Eva agrees.

"Well, wearing Levis and riding a motorcycle..." I make a sweeping gesture with my hands.

She nods repeatedly. "Yeah."

"And those kids were white," I remind her.

Eva finally begins to protest. "But I had *long* hair..."

"Yeah but still..." I try to stop my laughter, signaling her to go on.

She gives me an exasperated glance. "I didn't look, well, anyway..." She pauses to regain her bearings. "One day, they put dirt in my gas tank."

My laughter stops abruptly. "Oh, God."

"And one time I came back from my break and I'd left my helmet inside. They painted it. They dirtied it really nasty. And I came in and I didn't know who to ask. They looked like they didn't want to talk to me anyway. So I figured it out. I told this woman [the employer] what they did to me. She said, 'I think there are a lot of mean people in this world. I don't know what to tell you. I don't know what you're going to do.' And I said, 'Well, I'm getting a little bit sick of this.' You know, I would cry because I didn't have anyone to tell it to in school."

After her motorcycle was vandalized a second time, Eva decided to take action. "That was the tops. That really upset me a lot. I said, 'I'm going to move. I don't have to put up with this.' Besides, I was very lonely."

"Do you think they did these things because you're Mexicana and a lesbian? Do you think they knew?"

Eva shrugs. "To me, I don't think it was because I'm a lesbian. I think it was mostly because I'm Mexican. I could tell by their ways. It hurt."

"Sure, especially at that age. Not only that, but you'd never dealt with this before."

By then Eva reminds me, she had met her first lover at the wedding. "We would see each other once in a while; she lived in Los Angeles and I lived in Orange County. I decided to move to Hollywood and finish at Hollywood High. So I got a job working in a little store in Hollywood."

Eva and her lover found an apartment for \$95 a month. She went to high school while her lover worked in a downtown factory. Their bliss, however, was constantly interrupted by her lover's parents. They considered Eva a bad influence.

"The turmoil kept going. In the meantime, I graduated from Hollywood High."

"Did you have any trouble in that school?"

Eva offers a wide grin. "Oh, no. It was wonderful there. My teachers were gay — I loved it! My biology teacher was gay! And, my God, I had a ball! There were gay kids. There were Latino kids — kids from all over the world, for heaven's sake — Peru, Mexico, Southeast Asia. I had a ball in Hollywood. The only thing that wasn't okay was that her parents interfered a lot."

This first relationship ended some years later when Eva's lover left her for another woman.



"So then what did you do, Eva?"

She looks away. "Then I was devastated — totally devastated."

While living alone, Eva reveals, she became a fitness freak, jogging, keeping a healthy diet. And in time, her broken heart began to heal. She had other relationships with women, some long term, some stormy.

Eventually, she enrolled in a two-year medical assistant course, completed it, and worked in that field for several years. Eva's lover at the time, a Mexican-American woman, urged her to seek non-traditional work to increase her income. One of her regular patients, a black woman bus driver also encouraged Eva to change careers.

These women's support spurred her to enroll in the the LA Unified School District's bus driving course. Once she had some experience, Eva secured employment with the Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines. Since 1979, she has driven the Big Blue Bus for that seaside community. Over the years, she has not only coped with sexual and ethnic harassment, but also with flirting passengers of both sexes.

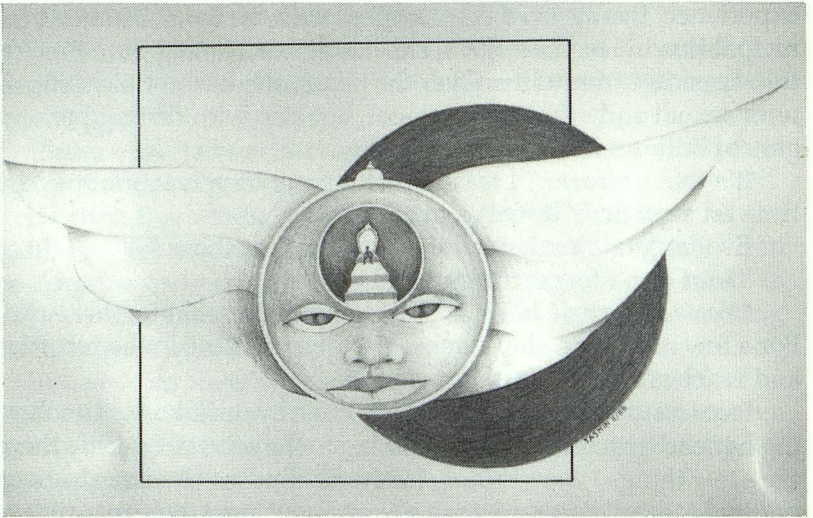
"It's that uniform," I tease, recalling my own reaction the first time I'd seen her. "It makes people crazy."

Eva laughs. "Yeah. And the black leather shoes."

"And don't forget the gloves."

"*You're crazy de la Peña.*" She looks at me, shaking her head. For a few moments, she watches the tape whirling in the recorder and reaches for the glass of water.

I make sure she does not pick up mine by mistake. Remembering her earlier remark about drinking in the secrets, I decide there are a few things I want to keep to myself. She knows enough about me, and today I have found out plenty about her. I pick up my glass and smile at her over the rim.



*untitled*  
Yasmin Sayyed



## Breaths on My Mirror

Imprinted in the mirror lives the likeness of you  
I can not bear to claim as my own.  
The way you hide your fear of venturing close to the core of  
your truth ...  
your likeness that evokes suspicion,  
and challenges,  
and accusations of  
untrustworthiness ...  
likeness that shifts and stretches  
shrinks and misshapes to afford amnesic self-ignorance  
and self-obscurity.

Imprinted in the mirror,  
just below or above the face of truth  
resides the countenance  
I fear recognizing ...  
A likeness that wears arrogance and snobbishness ...  
the linings of shame and insecurity,  
the over-compensating,  
and striving for illusions of togetherness ...  
the flip sides of humiliation and self-annihilation,  
the micro-dots of confidence ... pleading for room to spread,  
like legs agape ... knowing new,  
wanting more ...  
deeper, sweeter knowledge.

Your imprinted image clings like an acid etched shadow ...  
beyond which stands my naked lungs  
coughing and wheezing ... begging  
for both voice and self-compassion.

My passages to self ...  
squeezing and pushing,

whimpering and pleading ...  
then screaming and thumping against the echoes of their shadows,  
for expansion and recognition,  
for expression and regard  
for extrication and reclamation.

"J'accuse". You stare intently through the image-eyes,  
and I at you  
staring at me,  
staring at you.

"J'accuse ... "  
accuse you for daring to breathe,  
daring to claim life's essential,  
daring to take enough air to laugh and howl as you do so  
shamelessly.

I accuse you of breathing on my mirror,  
acid etched shadow,  
of dancing  
with broad, sweeping movements,  
of laughing  
with deep, from home, inhalations.

Smashing and crashing ...  
foot stomping, tantrum throwing children  
want to scream and holler  
and spit red-dot-in-the-eye-rage,  
for a lifetime of constricted breathing.

Seemingly motionless air squeezes past life  
without being for it,  
or of it  
much less in it.

I accuse you,  
accuse me,  
accuse you of restricting me,  
of possessing me,  
of retarding my progress,  
of inhibiting me ... my genius.



I accuse you,  
accuse me,  
accuse my parts split off and held under house arrest,  
with attack dogs posted at the gate,  
for over forty years.

I accuse you of being in my face ...  
when my face wants sight without vision,  
voice without telling,  
breath without living.

Beyond the image,  
anew with recognition,  
I see the cringing child, so damaged by intimates  
that intimacy hovers, predatorily,  
with razors and swords ...  
and threatens freedom,  
imposes silence and eclipses truths ...  
just by whispering tenderly.

In the mirror you are not you,  
but the distortions I wear  
like tinted, refracting lens ...  
twisting, distorting,  
making unreal anything real ...  
making attack-worthy anything distorted in the frames of my eyes.  
Self-possessing my lungs ...  
refusing them expansion,  
self-possessing, like a jealous lover, my passages to self,  
I accuse you, accuse me;  
fear you, fear me;  
run from you, form me.

In the mirror, past a lens of perception inherited by repeated  
traumas on a fledgling self  
lies the truth ... touch her,  
I tell myself ...  
tell you.  
When your image is close enough for me to see the whites of  
your eyes,

I give you my-this-will-make-her-run-propaganda.

If you run ...

if you back-up ...

if you pause ...

if you flinch ...

if you blink ...

I say: See, she can't be but poison for me ...

see how she runs,

see how she has no heart authentic enough for intimacy,

no legs sturdy enough for path-work,

no feet sure enough for planting themselves in her won footprints ...

laid out by destiny ...

See how she has no courage to face the fire ...

and turn my back to fire ...

and self.

You touch my heart and I feel fear of pain.

You do not bring pain to me,

do not lay it at my door,

do not endanger me.

The reminder that pain lies within is borne anew by the contact  
of loving.

You say "I love you"

I think I am hearing a lie ...

and watch to see if you are watching me as I watch you waiting  
to catch me slipping ...

so you can jab my heart with your sword,

and slash my jugular with your razor ... as you run.

Love and pain, in these refracted lens,

are tragically wedded in

common vulgarity.

I see your divorce of self,

feel it as a betrayal

curse your inauthenticity

and choke on my own.



When I am estranged from my self,  
I see you,  
a stranger in my mirror.

I damn your presence,  
then rejoice in the limited intimacy.  
I smell fear in my sweat  
and think you stink.

You are my sister,  
not my adversary ...  
my mirror-image,  
not my tormentor ...  
my lover,  
my amnesia eraser.  
You are a gift ...  
I feared unwrapping  
a lesson ...  
blessed to come.

When I fear facing the me of you,  
I want you out my face.  
Your breathing on my mirror,  
illuminates  
the breaths I've yet to take.

May the me of you,  
and you of me  
each find ... and touch  
and have  
the life ...  
the vision ...  
the voice ... we each seek  
and may the voices speak the language  
and hearts  
of the Goddesses that walk in the footprints  
that are truly our own.

## Post Script:

I wrote this piece, *Breaths on My Mirror*, for my work with Bishop, and Maryel, and Andrea, and Renee and all the other sisters who have been in my life, and in my face, in my mirror, in my breath and in my heart.

I wrote it for Elizabeth, De Ann, Akiba, Paula, Joreen and all the other sisters who have whispered, and shouted, and sometimes shook their fists at me while saying "Tell the truth, tell the truth, tell the truth, Yasmine."

I wrote it for Amana, who reminds me to be true to my art, and creativity, and the truth of the wellspring thereof.

I wrote it for my birth-sister, Zenni, who holds up the mirror with unyielding courage and integrity, and for my aunt Alfie, who illumines hope and enfoldment with unswerving accuracy, and for my grandmother who both honored and wounded ... and who elucidates, in my mirror, self-contained contradictions for me to see and understand, and my mother, who was injured and has a propensity to give that pain to others ... and who magnifies similarities for me,

and for my birth-sister, Kim, who could not bear the pain of looking in the mirror, who believed the images to be the entirety of her self ... and whose death ignites the lamp posts of my path.

I wrote it for every sister who ever wept alone, believing she was alone, and every sister who hurts, or was hurt, or wants to hurt, or is so afraid of being hurt by another sister that she refuses to know the heart and aches and wondrousness of another Black woman.

May we all rise ... to meet the fear we see in the mirrored-eyes, and pass though it ... to meet ourselves.

Blessed be!



## Learning to Live With AIDS

In 1985 I had done volunteer work for the AIDS Foundation. I was part of a team of translators for our brochure advising people to take the HIV test. I never thought at that time that I should take the test. Two years later I found out I was HIV positive.

After a long period of sickness my doctor suggested I take the HIV test. Two weeks later when he entered the examining room to give me the results he looked like he had lost a friend. He looked more scared than concerned. He told me he was moving to Tracy and a new doctor would be assigned to cover for him. That was that. I received no counseling, no referrals and no hope. I was in shock.

My world was completely turned around. I walked out of the doctor's office and went to work in a daze. I did not want to tell anyone. I called the Foundation for help but no services for women were available. I was confused, scared, alone and did not know what to do. I told my lover that night and asked her to take the test. She refused as if it had nothing to do with her. Everyday I asked her to take the test. A month later she said she would. She said she did and never went to get the results. A few weeks later she said she had taken the test and the result was negative. I never knew if she actually took the test. Our relationship was difficult and she got involved with an ex-lover of hers. During the last five years she has not called me. I have lost contact with her since.

How am I surviving? To tell you the truth by the grace of a higher power. First I sought medical treatment. Doctors did not know anything about women and AIDS. I began to relearn biology and figured out how viruses live in the body. I had to understand what was going on in my body. I found out I carry a virus that deteriorates the immune system and that many thousands of people have died of this virus. I have a grip on the physical manifestations of HIV in women. Women suffer from disseminated yeast infections — yeast grows rampant in any area of the body — pelvic inflammatory disease, fatigue, irregular menstrual

cycles with pain, not just from menstrual cramps but also from the systematic weakness and anemia which accompany the hormonal changes that occur in the body at that time.

I sought therapy and went back to work for a clinic and trained professionals how to treat people with AIDS. Now I work as a consultant. I developed the Margarita Benitez Fund with the purpose to raise funds for people with AIDS who believe in holistic healing but can't afford to pay the high cost of alternative therapies. Currently, I am taking a Science of Mind course on learning how to apply the creative power of thought to the healing process. The mind can expand to maintain a healthy attitude in spite of physical symptoms. After three years I will be a certified licensed practitioner and help others heal themselves with the power of creative thought.

My lover relationships don't last very long. The strength needed to live with a lover who has AIDS requires honest and emotional maturity. It is a big step to make a conscious commitment to put yourself in the middle of an epidemic that most people choose to avoid. I choose to be celibate and watch what happens. I have been present with myself and watched the course of the virus in my body. I tried to understand what the hell the medical profession is doing about it. Let me tell you. Very little progress has been made in the last decade in researching a cure for AIDS. This discourages many of us living with the virus to just give up. But I cannot do that! I get recharged with anger and my survival instinct kicks in and makes me hold on to continue living my life the way I deserve to live. The people living with AIDS who survive the longest have taken charge of their lives and their medical treatment. Doctors have been very cruel, giving patients short terms to live. Many have gone home to die. I was given six months to live one and a half years ago. I have never been healthier and more aware of caring and loving myself.

In the Latina lesbian community I have a group of friends who support me and are with me no matter what happens. They show their support by calling and checking on me and fixing the best chicken soup in the world. I am invited to events and parties and that makes me feel I am not forgotten. I am close to these Puertorican and other Latina lesbians who are sensitive, loving and caring.

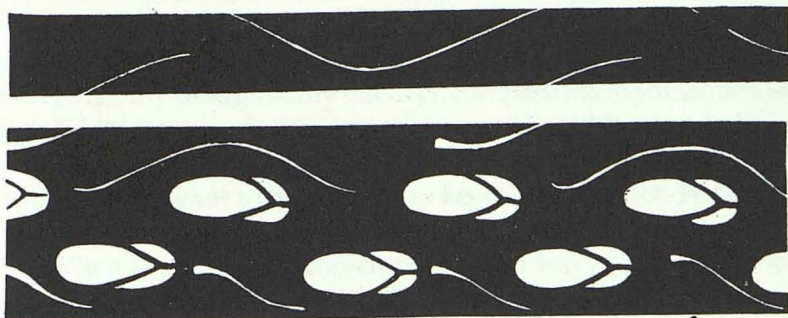


I dream of a lover who is not in denial about AIDS. Women can love and live with each other and for each other. I want a lover who can love herself so that she can love me. A lot of the recovery work I have done on myself is about loving myself, nurturing the woman that I am. Sometimes a friend calls me to say, she is sorry she hasn't called in months. My response is, "I am glad you called now." By the time we finish our conversation she says, "I feel it is my loss when I don't talk to you."

I wanted to write about my experience because it is another way of healing myself. Sharing the pain and the love makes life easier to experience. Life is the birthright of every human. The potential to live a long healthy (in every sense of the word) life lays in the path we follow in our lives. When one lives in a society where human beings are secondary to profits, that right is taken away and the potential to live a healthy life is threatened.

Those of you who know me have complimented me in my endeavors. I raised a family, educated myself and gave back to the community the support, love and understanding I found there. For those who do not know me, I also learned from many of you. I have trained myself to survive my adversity.

I wanted to be remembered in life. I want to be honored in life. If we share our pain the load gets lighter and love grows where there was isolation. My goal in this lifetime is to live a long, productive life.



C. CHUNG

Zori's  
Cristy Chung

Charlene NoBears O'Rourke

**W**e walk, We fall  
We dust ourselves off We  
Get up We walk We fall  
We dust off, We fall again.  
We do not want to crawl,  
We are adults, are we not?  
We want to walk proud  
With dignity, We step  
Another step only to taste  
The earth!



## Writing Process: Stitching Pieces of Myself

*excerpt from a work in progress*

Often my writing process feels like I am sewing together pieces of old garments that I thought were discarded from my memory. Things that are of no use to me or anyone else. Old things, scraps, dry rotted fabrics, the frayed edges of dresses that are ripped beyond repair. There is no easy way to catch the parts, sew together a straight, neat seam and render a smooth line. It is frustration. Patching. Patching that leaves me disgruntled. I ask myself, "why not find a new pattern, stronger fabric, be done with old stuff?" But this is easier said than the doing of it. "Why revision a story that I have lived, that my mother told me? Why remember? Re-member things that, perhaps, never happened?"

My writing process is chaos. Wondering. Wandering. Days of trying to find the words that are impacted with the meanings of a particular situation, emotion, power to resonate beyond my understanding, beyond what is written on the pages. I do not know what I want to say, how to say it. For days a word, a phrase, a memory stings the edges of my mind, a bitter taste on the tip of my tongue. The universe inside my self wants to turn itself inside out. I struggle in the transition to bring thoughts to words and put them on the page. I procrastinate. I refuse to put pen to paper, click to typewriter, electrical current through the computer. I tell myself, "I can't do it now. I'll write tomorrow when I know that I'm thinking. I work better under pressure." Writing is fear. Someone will judge my thoughts, my intellect, compare me to someone else, invalidate my meanings, my experiences. I have blood, skin, bone, years invested in these words I refuse to vomit up. I will be exposed and naked. I want to tell. I want to keep it all a secret. For me, to write is to free myself from myself.

When I write I am a traveler in known and unknown territories. "Have I been here before?" I ask myself. "Is this the place of my childhood—revised? Is it the childhood I wished for, that I never lived?" Perhaps it is.

As a child my mother brought me here to this place that feels familiar, yet is foreign. This place of black words, woman words, grandmother's memories, mother's childhood, memories I have appropriated as my own. In truth, I do not know this place, but I piece it together. I construct it. I make it mine. A patchwork of dislocated events, sayings, "old foggie" notions "mother wit," which the mother in me calls up to contextualize, make sense of. My mother calls them up, the mother inside me, the one who wears my face, looks through my eyes, uses her words. She is obsession, living inside my body when it is necessary. I search the inside of my head, the space between my eyes, the terrain underneath my skin to find the connection between us that makes her memories mine. With precision, I enter that blackness deep inside my marrow, my stomach, my woman selves and locate the memories of all the women who are the skin, the blood the womb of me. Their voices speak to me, through me. We speak in a synchronization of memory that creates a discourse of song, weeping, denials of things almost forgotten. They tell me, "speak the words, sing the songs, tell the stories. These things must not be forgotten, though to remember is to be in pain." I obey their beckonings, decipher what meanings I can and write. Often I do not know where I am going, what I will learn, but I write. I am an agent in the ordering of our madness, lived and denied.



Aly Kim



## Mrs. Matsuda

What she must have been feeling.

Thanksgiving day for a Japanese woman who spent her adolescence in a concentration camp. Her father hunted rats for the family to eat. Her mother did not smile.

Turkey and stuffing, fried rice, sushi and cranberry sauce.

By the time she reached sixty, no one could know all of her pain.

In the end, it was an unworthy husband that she ached for. A Japanese man, one of a handful in this half town, half spread-out farm. He left her for a simple white country girl.

She herself had been a country girl once. A large Japanese woman from peasant stock. she was no lotus blossom. She bore him three fine children. Cooked him fresh rice each evening, gave him the food of his homeland. Kept his home clean.

She laughed from some place deep within.

She did not try to find another man. She pretended that the blonde, Heidi-like creature didn't exist. She pretended that her husband was away working.

What else could she have done.

It seems that there is always a flower that grows easily in the sun. It is neither beautiful in shape or bold in color. Some would call it a weed. A common flower, it withstands the pollution of it's air, the drought, and the insects. By all accounts the weed/flower is a hearty breed.

A weed/flower in one part of the world is an exotic in another. Sometimes it lives in a different climate, and sometimes it dies, but it always struggles valiantly. It is a survivor. You have to respect it.

Mildred took her own life. A very Japanese thing to do. But her method was pure Nisei: she hung herself just like in a Western. For the first time, she claimed her life for her own.

# Mrs. Matsuda

(number two)

I have been told that all Koreans hate the Japanese.  
I am not Japanese  
Mildred was.

She gave me my first bath.

1.

I remember her well:

She is a tall woman, tall for a Japanese woman. She looks like a woman from the country: short, thick trunk; course black hair. The shape of her body reminds me of that of a worker. It knows hard work.

We are in her kitchen and she is preparing different kinds of sushi. She makes the kind my mother likes. The kind with lots of stuff rolled up in the seaweed and rice: smoky eel, pickled ginger, the sinewy threads of campio.

2.

Mildred was Japanese and an American. She was American even though she was Japanese. The comprehension of this fact took her all through grade school and into junior high. she was an American. She could wear red lipstick, beaded sweaters, heels; could speak softly or loudly in English; could dream in Japanese.

She was born here. She was born Japanese.

Unfortunately, World War II coincided with Mildred's teens.

We spoke about that period of her life only once. She told me that it really wasn't so bad. "Really, it was kind of fun, like camping."

And then she told me that while she was in the camps she lost that feeling of Americanness, of belonging. It changed her.

She never spoke about it again.



3.

I think about Mildred when I make Sushi. The preparation I do is from pure childhood memory. No one ever showed me how.

4.

I have been told that all Koreans hate the Japanese.

Korea was a colony of Japan for over three decades.

My mother was forced to speak Japanese while in school and around Japanese officials. She does not speak Korean that much these days.

In America my mother speaks Japanese with Mildred.

They eat similar food, the two of them: rice and fish and vegetables. Sushi, Kim-Chee, Mochi, Tea.

As a child, I am not sure which food is Korean and which is Japanese.

5.

I have had nightmares of being taken to a concentration camp.

It is night time and they come for me at my home.

They knock on my door to take me away.

I am terrified.

And although it shames me,

I cannot stop myself

as I tell the American soldiers

I am not Japanese.

Lynn Scott

*This piece came to me about Big Mama, my Grandmother, 17 years after her passing from this life. I'd brought a chair that belonged to her out from the confines of my basement for my partner/friend to use at her computer. In the days that followed, my senses began to recall the smells of her clothes and her kitchen, the sight of her cooking, sitting, moving around, and sometimes laughing. I also remembered the loud silence that often surrounded her and sent me to places of confusion and, then, mental escape. The stories of our times together began to unfold. Here is one of them.*

## 1873 Alcatraz Avenue: Where I learned about toilet paper and Nat King Cole

**1873** Alcatraz Avenue was the bottom-rear apartment in a four-unit building just inside the Berkeley border. Big Mama, Daddy's mother, and Auntie Earline, her daughter, moved there after Jan died. Jan, my only first cousin, died at seven within six weeks of being diagnosed with kidney disease. Two years younger than me, she was the closest possibility I had of having a sister, and now she was gone. It appeared to me that after the funeral, which I didn't attend, the adults just picked up their mood and got on with their lives, though I noticed Auntie Earline was in her room a lot when she and Big Mama still lived on Grove Street, where Jan had lived, too. I tried to imagine a happy Jan, in a white gown, living in the cloudy landscape of heaven. I was afraid when I thought of a young healthy child, like me, suddenly dying of illness.

They moved into the Alcatraz Avenue apartment and also began to pay much more attention to me. The opening gesture was the evening when Big Mama said, "Lynn come here," and I followed her voice into the bedroom. Holding a small green suitcase in her grip, she said, "I want you to have this." It was Jan's record player, a very big possession for a child in the 50's. I'd always thought Jan was so lucky to have such nice toys and had been quietly envious. Now, I was being given *the* record player. I felt so happy as I held it and began to make it mine, but thirty



seconds later, when I emerged from the bedroom, I felt like a traitor. My two brothers, Freddie and Michael, were sitting on the couch waiting for **their names** to be called to receive **their inheritance**. No more names were called, no words of consolation were spoken. We rode home, the three of us in the back seat of the station wagon, in our muted pain.

When my family (Mama, Daddy, my brothers, and I) visited at Big Mama's and Auntie Earline's on Friday evenings, one or the other would often ask if I could stay overnight or for the weekend. Usually, the answer was yes and Daddy would bring me extra clothes the next day. I was excited about the attention I was getting. I also felt guilty being chosen over my brothers.

Big Mama's and Auntie Earline's apartment was small, but had two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen with a small dining area and a bathroom. They kept the drapes drawn and used lamps day and night. The furniture and accessories were beautiful. Beauty and style were Auntie Earline's thing; that's what she spent much of her nurse's salary on. I loved beauty, too, and I adored my beautiful Auntie with her dazzling smile, hearty laughter, fine clothes and her sharp hairstyles. I never saw her sad. When I was near her I could feel her vibrancy and enthusiasm. When she talked to me she looked right into my face, called me loving names, and told me I was pretty. She was so brilliant and I wanted to be like her. The trouble was that she sometimes worked double shifts, sleeping during the day, and she also had a busy social life, so I didn't see her as much as I wanted.

I loved Big Mama's soulful, tasty cooking. She used lots of onions which Mama never did because Daddy *said* he didn't like them and she made the best cobblers and turnovers I'd ever tasted. There wasn't much to do in the apartment except to watch TV, write or draw, and listen to the adults talking to each other or on the telephone. Sometimes, I took a tennis ball and played in the driveway.

I really liked it when one of Big Mama's or Auntie Earline's friends were over because the conversations were so for real. I was never bored listening. Daisy, Big Mama's longtime friend, was one of my favorites. Daisy came with her bottle and her blues music. Big Mama would cook chicken and dumplin's, or oxtails, or neckbones, and they talked for hours about the women and men in their lives who had names like Luellcerine, Opal, Leola, Earl, Dot, and

Lofelia. I loved watching Daisy's lips, so full and always moist. I knew that whoever was kissed by her lips would know they were loved.

One Saturday, I was seated in the dining room, my back to the stove, with high hopes that *this* hair pressing session and *this* kind of grease would keep my hair straight for weeks. The TV was positioned so that Big Mama could watch while she worked on my head, and I could watch, too, without risking that fateful move that would get me burned on my face, ear, or neck by the hotcomb. The Nat King Cole Show came on and, simultaneously, the phone rang with a friend on the other end reminding us that one of "our own" was on television. As we watched Nat's flawlessly suave performance, Big Mama said, somewhat harshly, "What color is that man?" I gave what seemed to me the obvious answer, "Brown." Again she questioned in an even harsher tone, "What color is that man?" Hesitatingly, in a softer voice, and against what I believed I saw, I said, "Light brown?" I don't know what I expected, but the venom in her answer left me speechless. "That man is BLACK! He's as black as this here frying pan!" Having expressed her scorn for his blackness, she seemed satisfied and said nothing more. I said nothing either, but I fell into a net of questions — how did she feel about me and my skin color? Even more, how did she feel about Auntie Earline and her skin color which was darker than mine? her brother, Uncle Ed? Daisy? Jan? Mama? everyone who was not her and Daddy's color? How could she be so disgusted with the talented "first Negro to have his own television show"? Not even Nat King Cole was above Big Mama's colorstruck wrath.

Time passed on my 9-year-old's calendar — week or months — I don't know. Auntie Earline got married to Uncle Godfrey. There was some partyin' going on — a wedding shower, bachelor party and the reception. There was more joy and laughter than ever before on Alcatraz Avenue. The apartment was filled with silver and golden wrapped gifts and with family and friends dressed to the nines. Auntie Earline promised me her yellow chiffon wedding dress and matching yellow silk high heels. I could just see myself wearing them, being as pretty as she always said I was. It seemed that the event had everyone high.

Auntie Earline and Uncle Godfrey moved to West Oakland and I saw my adorable Auntie even less than before. Big Mama still

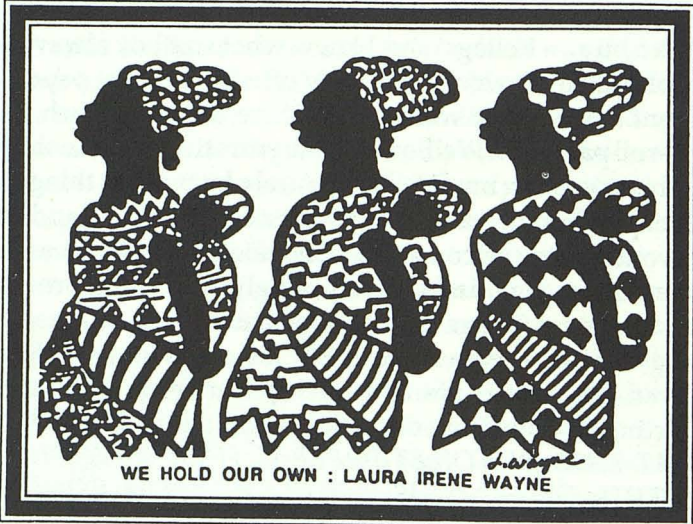


invited me to spend some weekends with her, but the apartment was darker, colder and lonely feeling. When I stayed over, Big Mama still opened the sofabed for her and I to sleep on together. I never understood that. There were two bedrooms, two beds, but she always wanted us to share the sofabed. I didn't like her toenails. They were too long and I was afraid she'd scratch my legs in the night. That never happened, though; she didn't even try to sleep particularly close to me. I guess she just liked talking to me until she fell into a snoring sleep.

On a certain Saturday morning we were out of toilet paper. I pulled some pedal pushers over my ashy legs, slipped into my Keds and a sweater, wove the straight parts of my hair into the matted portions with my fingers, and took the dollar bill that Big Mama had laid on the coffee table. Stepping out into the Berkeley fog, I felt proud to be "going to the store." At home, my older brother, Freddie was the one to do such things. Crossing the Avenue and only glancing at the fantastical window of the Stagecraft Theatrical Store, I headed for the small grocery store in the middle of the block. I was not going to take too long, I was going to buy just the right thing, and bring home a receipt and the correct change. Finding the corn flakes was easy. There was only one brand to buy — Kellogs' and I knew what size box always sat on the table when we were having dry cereal. The toilet paper was a different story. There were three different brands, each in their single-roll packages. Well, over all the years that I'd gone shopping with the women in my family, I'd surely learned on thing — buy the cheapest brand! I picked up the least expensive roll and carried my two items to the counter. I remembered to ask for a receipt, counted my change, and stepped smugly out of the store. Back at the apartment, I first gave Big Mama her change and the receipt, hoping that she'd give me a tip for the excellent job I'd done. I removed the corn flakes and toilet paper from the bag, never suspecting that anything other than a compliment would follow. "WHAT-KIND-OF-TOILET-PAPER-IS-THIS? WHY-DID-YOU-BUY-THIS-STUFF? THIS-IS-THE-CHEAPEST-ROUGHEST-THING-YOU-COULD'VE-PICKED! GO-BACK-AND-BUY-SOME-MD!" I was crushed because I'd thought I'd done everything to a "T," with such careful thought and good intent. Further, how did

I get to be 9-years-old, sitting and shitting everyday of my life and not know the difference between toilet papers?! I slumped back to the little store, nervously made the exchange and shamefully returned to the apartment. We went on with our day with no more words about the incident.

A year or so later, Auntie Earline and Uncle Godfrey broke up, and shortly after that, Auntie Earline moved to LA. We helped Big Mama move into Daisy's house on a rainy Halloween night, and I didn't spend the night with Big Mama anymore until I was twelve, when she moved into another apartment on Grove Street. We still slept together on the sofabed, her toenails were still too long to my liking, and we still talked until she fell into a snoring sleep.



*We Hold Our Own*  
Laura Irene Wayne



Deborah M. Aguayo-Delgado

## Stoop Summers

Sprawled across the stoop,  
(el Barrio's patio)  
heated brick slabs  
rust tinted bits  
scraping our suntanned shoulders,  
piss laced city pool water  
stinging my eyes.

Lighting foil wrapped sparklers  
Mami bought for a precious  
thirty-nine cents some July ago,  
I turn my face  
catching more of your whispered Spanish hymns,  
feeling your brown wrinkles softly hanging,  
laughing at the webbed chair  
aluminum legs slanted  
begging relief  
from holding you up.

I wonder,  
did you notice me  
watch the gold flecked shadows  
flit across your eyes,  
inhaling the cinnamon drifting  
from between your breasts  
as you stroked my belly  
and played with my half undone braids.

I wonder,  
if you know  
how transfixed I become  
watching the blackboard sky crackle  
or that I learned to love  
women from you.

And  
if you can see me Abuelita,  
do you think you could  
still hold my hand  
when it thunders?



Pacal Barraza



## Island Dream

Long ago before the whites came,  
you watched me  
from afar  
as I paddled my "banka"  
up on to the shore  
returning from a fishing trip.  
You noticed the way  
my muscles  
tightened  
as I drove my paddle  
gently through  
the ocean waters.  
My brown skin  
perfectly baked from  
the tropical sun,  
my rich black hair  
dripping with sea water  
and sweat —  
You noticed the  
intensity of my Pinay —  
Filipina eyes —  
the way I was one with  
my canoe  
                    with my paddle  
                    with our mother sea.  
You waited for me  
to ride the wave in,  
and you watched as  
I slipped my "sarong" off  
and lay on the sand  
to rest.

You noticed the way  
my breasts were  
flawlessly molded —  
"Parang Mayon Volcano,"  
and inisip mo. "Kay ganda."  
— How beautiful — you thought.  
It was then you could wait no longer  
so you approached me.  
"Malacas na babae, kailangan ko kita."  
Strong woman, I need you.



Charlene Koskalaka



## Pipe Carriers

**J**ust before I was to blow my mind  
Over the hill they came  
Laughing loudly and  
Carrying the sacred bundle.  
Four women of different age  
Becoming silent nearing the circle.  
After the medicine man wouldn't let women  
    touch the pipe  
As it passed along  
And another said  
We could touch yet not smoke,  
Our time was not yet,  
And still they came  
Carrying chanupa to the fire  
For the blessing and the prayers,  
Pipebearers all.  
And we thanked the earth, Grandmother,  
Grandfather, Great Spirit and all our relations.  
Ho!

Heidi Li

## The Song of The Late Summer Courtesan

**M**y name is Fook Ying Woo. I am twenty-two years old and a lesbian — a dyke to the core. I am also a prostitute or what some call a “whore.”

People can call me whatever they want. They have called me many things, since the day I was born. A no good disgrace. An ungrateful daughter. A stupid girl. A concubine slave. A slant-eyed woman. An evil dragon lady. A yellow-skinned cunt. A silent menace. A chink. A sneaky bitch who'll slit your throat when you're looking the other way.

As one customer of mine once said, “You're a hole to fill any way I want.” He's right. For the right price I will pleasure as you wish, let you think whatever you want, but no amount of money can buy me — allow you to reach the depths, the insides of my soul.

Very few have ever seen or touched my soul.

I am many things to many different people. But my life did not start out this way.



I was born during the Year of the Ox. I grew up in Philadelphia's Chinatown. My family still owns and runs a small bakery there right off Mott Street.

I am the oldest of three daughters. I am of “mixed” background. My dad's family is originally from the south, from Canton Province, China. He grew up in the city slums of Hong Kong and emigrated here at twenty. My mother was born in Taiwan. She is the illegitimate daughter of a native Taiwanese woman and an exiled, northern Chinese PRC (People's Republic of China) official. To this day she does not know who her father is. He never married my grandmother and disappeared shortly after mom was born.

Grandma “Ah Boo” sent her only daughter to this country to find a husband. My mom was only sixteen. She and dad met in a gambling club in New York's Chinatown. She'd been here only three days, sleeping on the subway trains at night. My father was



twenty four and working twelve hour days in a Chinatown bakery. The night after they met, they went home to his small rooming house flat. Within a week, they were married.

My mom wrote home. Soon afterwards, Ah Boo sent money to them, \$5,000 U.S. dollars. This was half of Ah Boo's life savings from working in various Chinese-owned sweat shops in Taipei.

After four years, my parents had saved enough money to move to Philadelphia and open their own bakery. The shop space they rented was very small. The two bedroom apartment behind it, not much bigger. Half the money saved had to be put into converting the place into a decent bakery. Business was slow at first. Philly Chinatown was not very big back in the early 1970's. Not many Chinese lived there at that time. A few rich ones came from the suburbs to buy oriental goods and food. A smaller number of whites, mostly a trickle of tourists, would come in and buy the baked goods.

Business gradually picked up over the years as more working class Chinese settled in Chinatown and some middle-class ones moved into the surrounding areas. From the time I was seven, I was needed in the shop to run small errands or just keep my Mom or Dad company.

Up until the time I left home, we all lived in that apartment right behind the bakery. Running that bakery was hard work. Dad started baking each day at three in the morning. Mom closed up the shop each night at ten. Seven days a week this went on. Since I've left, I've heard they've slowed down a bit, but not very much.

We were born shortly after the shop was opened. I was the first. My sisters, Kwock Ying Woo and Po Ying Woo, followed two and four years later. As we got old enough, my sisters and I all helped out: running the register, restocking the baked goods, cleaning the counters, and wiping up and washing down the shop during the evenings, weekends, and summers. We never got paid. We never asked to be. It was a family run business. My parents were glad we all lived within seconds behind the shop.

To this day, my dad does not forgive my mom for not bearing him a son. He has never complained, but we all knew. My mom has always worked hard at the bakery, trying to do the best she can to earn his forgiveness. Throughout the years, I've seen him staring at her still beautiful reflection in the shop mirrors, wondering to himself whether he'd chosen unwisely.

Each time he would look at her reflection, she acted like it didn't bother her. She just kept silent and worked harder.



When I was ten, a bookshop opened up about one block further down on Mott Street. It was the first one that sold "classic" Chinese literature, not just Chinese magazines and paperbacks from abroad. It also carried a couple of English translations of some older classical texts.

Hua Mei's parents, the Yuans, thought that the bookshop would make them lots of money someday. Hua Mei herself never understood this. Her mom always told her that running a bookshop meant you were educated and loved books. Wealth and prosperity would come from such steadily increased knowledge. Mrs. Yuan was a proud woman. She only read the "classics" the store ordered, never the new stuff.

Hua Mei's dad never touched a book. He sat in the store day after day and watched the t.v. or read the Chinese papers. He smoked his own hand-rolled cigarettes. The store was always musty even that first day it opened.

I remember walking into the bookstore that day sent by my mom to welcome the new family with some sweet rice cake. It was the middle of August, only a few more weeks before I'd be back in school again.

Hua Mei was sitting on a stool behind the counter. Her dad was also seated, his face turned downward toward a newspaper. He did not look up as I shut the door behind me. I felt uncomfortable going in there. I might have turned around and left immediately if Hua Mei had not looked at me right then and smiled. She had a real serene, almost sad smile that said a thousand hellos and goodbyes in the same flickering. I smiled back at her, set now on not turning back and running out.

As I approached, I looked right at her. She was pretty, but thin. Almost too thin. Everything about her—her face, her body, her arms and legs—seemed narrow and frail.

Her features bordered on delicate. Her face was a clear mix of both her mother's Shanghai lineage and her father's Toishan roots. Hua Mei herself would one day say to me that those of us of "mixed blood," whether we were ugly or beautiful, were devastating for



most "pure" Chinese to look at. We made them think too consciously of times long past ... our first Mother's and Father's forgotten and lost history.

As I reached the counter, I saw that Hua Mei's black hair was braided into two thick strips. She was proper looking, even in her faded yellow, summer dress. She looked my age, perhaps younger. I knew that day, Hua Mei and I were going to be close friends. From the way she'd smiled at me and the way I'd smiled back. From the way we'd both looked at each other. We both knew.

I spoke in English to her, "Hi, my name is Fook Ying. My mom asked me to come over and welcome your family. Here are some rice cakes from our shop. We hope you like it here in Philly."

Hua Mei accepted the cakes and showed them to her father. He mumbled something to her without hardly looking up. She said "thank you" to me in Mandarin.

Then she asked me, "Do you understand any Chinese?"

I responded, "I'm fluent in Cantonese only ... by choice. My mom is part northern Chinese, but she won't speak any Mandarin with family, only customers."

Hua Mei said in English, "I can speak both, but I prefer Cantonese too. Out of respect, I speak Mandarin with my mother, but usually speak English only when I am not around either of my parents."

"That makes sense," I said.

The whole time we talked, Hua Mei stared at me intently. Like she'd seen me somewhere else before. Knew who I was. After we'd been friends for a summer, she told me it was in her dreams where she thought she'd first seen me.



Apparently, Hua Mei always had these dreams, ever since she could talk. The dreams were unusually vivid. Too eerily real she said.

While asleep, Hua Mei dreamt she was a courtesan from many centuries ago who'd exiled herself to an abandoned Daoist temple in the northeast mountains of China. Riding on horseback, she'd fled from the illustrious court of the Emperor Ching, then eminent ruler of the farthest northern province.

As a courtesan, Hua Mei had done many sexual favors during her lifetime for other rulers and brave men, including various dalliances with their first wives and concubines.

But one day, the Emperor had come to her and said, "You are beautiful, the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. You are also quite smart. I have listened to your every word, pondered your thoughts, and read your scripture writings. You shall bear me a child — a son fit to rule this dynasty. My present heir is sickly and stupid. I chose badly with my first wife. Her child is not fit to rule. Yours will replace him."

For several weeks after that the Emperor came to Hua Mei's rooms. He entered her on numerous occasions, intent on his seed bringing forth fruit. The art of seduction was no longer desired of her. Her body merely bore the harsh assaults of their passionless coupling. Sometimes, she cried for him to stop. He refused, saying he would not stop until her body accepted the roots of his seed.

After nearly two months, Hua Mei awoke one morning in her chambers and vomited. She knew now she was to bear the Emperor's child.

Every day thereafter, she expelled the wrenching sickness from her guts and the rumors spread. The Emperor's first wife, his concubines and consorts all whispered about the forming child.

The Emperor's first wife, dai Ching, was most angry with the Emperor. She secretly vowed to destroy Hua Mei's unborn child. During the early evening hours, dai Ching walked along the corridors of the palace, her lilting footsteps echoing outside the doors to Hua Mei's rooms.

Nine months passed. Neither the Emperor nor any other members of his court entered Hua Mei's rooms. Her belly grew big and cumbersome. Her skin stretched tight. She despaired, because she did not feel love, only fear for this life growing within her.

The child was finally born. A dragon son. He cried angrily, heralded by the Emperor and the early Summer winds. The night of his birth, Hua Mei's torn insides bled the blood life. Both mother and child's eyes shone with an enraged glow. The struggle of life and death had been momentarily received into both their weary bodies.

That night, the Emperor Ching came to Hua Mei's chambers. He named the boy Hong Wei, "Red Sun," and then took him from Hua Mei's nursing breast. Hua Mei's heart bled with rage, with the knowledge of her own defeat. She cried and no one heard.

Twelve days after the boy was born, he was formally presented to the Emperor's court. All the wives, concubines and consorts



listened attentively as the Emperor Ching proclaimed his new son. The air was very still, no sound but the Emperor's proud, insistent voice could be heard.

With utmost ceremony, the Emperor placed the boy into dai Ching's outstretched arms. His voice resonated, "Take this boy as if he were your own. He is the one I have chosen to succeed. You are my first wife and I trust you will do no wrong."

The boy was received. No more words were said.

Throughout it all, Hua Mei stood far back from the processional, never moving from her spot in the ceremonial order. She looked at her son from afar. She wondered if he would ever grow, if his life would ever extend beyond the confines of these palace walls.

Two days later, Hong Wei's little body was discovered, flung far over the East Garden wall. His throat had been slit and his little eyes plucked from his head. The Emperor's third concubine was charged with his death. Within hours, her head was sliced from her being by the Emperor's highest ranking guard.

Hua Mei heard the news. She knew the emperor would come to her shortly, demanding that she again bear him a child. She could not accept the burden yet again.

She fled that very night to the far northeastern mountains.



Now, Hua Mei was alone. She wandered the abandoned temple gardens, sometimes circling the edge of the chrysanthemum-scented lake nearby. Each day she would explore the same spots in solitude, wishing for earthly, or perhaps festive, spiritual companionship to join her. She mourned the death of her pitiful little son, knowing isolation was the price she must pay for her own self-banishment.



One day, Hua Mei heard footsteps while meditating by the southern side of the lake. Fear eclipsed her heart. The late afternoon summer sun fully exposed both her movements and form. She could not flee.

She rose and waited for the footsteps to approach her.

A tall, young woman emerged from behind the darkened blossoming leaves. Dressed in a red silk gown full of embroidered folds, her figure entered through a shadowy southern opening by

the lake. Her long hair unrestrained and flowing, she appeared dressed in the clothing of a highly favored courtesan. A long sword, wrapped in a heavy sheath, hung unmoving from the side of her hip.

Hua Mei looked at the young woman's face and saw that it was beautiful. Rich with expression, the lightly painted eyes were both sad and expectant, equally yielding and withholding as they looked directly at her.

The young woman's lips were full, reddened by the color of ripe summer berries. Her face appeared angular yet rounded by firm sensual lines.

To Hua Mei, the approaching form seemed both female and male in appearance. The young woman's lengthy torso and sturdy limbs were expressions of a curving softness that touched every part of her being. Yet her movements were like that of an uncaged tiger, full of restless energy, ready to spring forth into explosions of unrestrained movement.

Hua Mei looked down and saw that the young woman's feet were not bound.

A voice suddenly spoke out, "I am looking for a place to take shelter for the night. Is the temple abandoned as it appears to be?"

Hua Mei replied, "The temple is empty. Only old quiet spirits remain. I am presently its only human companion."

"The temple is most fortunate, but why must you alone grace its forgotten solitude?" the young woman asked. She had stopped her approach and was now but three feet from Hua Mei.

"I see no reason why you should not stay for as long as you wish." Hua Mei replied.

At this point, Hua Mei said the dream would diverge, venturing into many different possible outcomes.



Sometimes, the young woman would explore the temple and the surrounding grounds and then depart. Other times, she would stay only the night, accompany Hua Mei in early morning meditation that following day, before taking leave on the rested, bare back of her mare.

Sometimes, the dream would change and the young woman would stay. Days and nights would pass. Neither would speak a



word during that whole time they were in each others' presence. Then one night, while laying on their bamboo mats upon the still, temple floors, they would begin to speak of their lives...uncover each other's histories.

Hua Mei would recount the events preceding her journey to the temple.

The young woman would listen attentively and then speak of her own life. She had been captured by rebel conquerors and taken from her village in the south. Her own mother had been born and raised in a far off island in the oceans. When still very young, her mother had been brought to the mainland to bear the children of a southern farming lord.

During her childhood, the young woman was told many tales of her mother's native island and its people - tales of the boundless healing powers of the island and its waters, of deeply revered journeys into the elements, of numerous spiritual and physical joinings amongst native women and men brought together amidst the various plants and animals. She listened attentively to accounts of the transformative gifts of the sun and the moon and all the surrounding planets, each guided by the greater spirits of the universe.

At night, when the young woman's father was already fed and asleep, her mother would share these secrets with her in untamed whispers — her voice remembering as she gazed upon her only daughter. Over and over again, her exhausted, weary mother would recount these wonders, until the sun rose in the sky. Until the rooster bellowed and crowed its way into another waking day.

The young woman was raised to be a laboring girl, strong and unbending like the land. Her feet were kept unbound so that one day she could pull the plow in the fields along with the ox.

Her whole life was spent in the fields. Out under the hot sun or the torrent rains, her father would stand over her, beating her when not happy with her day's work. He always said she must labor harder. As she grew older these beatings grew more frequent. Her younger brothers became big and strong like her father, and in silence they worked the land alongside her. When angered, they too began to beat her when she failed to do as they pleased.

Finally, at the age of fourteen she was sold to the high Court of the Emperor Xiao. Her father received two oxen in exchange. The

young woman was taken by cart to the Emperor's palace located at the northwestern edge of the village. Her feet were a disgrace, but the Emperor found her face most pretty to look at. In the midst of his passion, he would often say to her that if he cut all her toes off she would be perfect. She became his most favored courtesan. Many evenings she was summoned to his private chambers to pleasure him as he wished.

One day, there was word of agitation in the Northern Provinces. The Emperor Xiao laughed and said nothing would come of it. He continued to summon her to his chambers. Each time before their lovemaking began, she was bathed in wild flower scents and dark oils by the Emperor's own private palace eunuches.

While the young woman was in the Emperor's chambers one night, screams and cries were suddenly heard coming from the outer rooms. The Emperor immediately rose and ran to the window. Looking into the palace garden, he saw heavily clad figures with raised swords rushing their way into the main palace entrance.

The Emperor turned to summon his most trusted guards. His stately figure cloaked in confidence, he strode into his outer chambers. The heavy doors burst open. The rebels had succeeded in their surprise attack. Two of them grabbed the Emperor and pushed him toward the floor. In one fell swoop, his head tumbled forward onto the marble tile.

The young woman quickly hid behind the inside chamber curtain, her naked form wrapped in rich, heavy material. The two rebels shouted victoriously and ran from the Emperor's chambers concerned only with the prized head in hand. The young woman emerged. As she reached down to pick up her red evening gown, blunt, powerful hands grabbed her neck. She tried to break free. Her lips began to turn blue.

She looked up at the dominating figure's face. The rebel leader's visage stared back at her in both surprise and disgust. It became clear he would probably squeeze the life from her if she continued to resist. She stopped.

His hands still around her throat, the rebel leader hissed to her, "You are a most welcomed surprise — I will take you back with me to the north. I will present you to high Emperor Yao as an offering from the spirits who have blessed our conquest."

The rebel leader then released the young woman from his grip.



Her hands were immediately bound and she was placed on a horse beside him that night as they began the ride north. The dead Emperor's head was placed beside her, its' bloody eyes the same color as her gown. A group of twenty soldiers accompanied the rebel leader and the captured young woman. Their colorful armor and brightly lit torches dotted the long trek north bringing news of victory.

Days and nights passed. The rebel soldiers beat the young woman each day, but did not touch her inside, fearful of the retributive wrath of the Emperor Yao. However, years of beatings had left the young woman stronger than the rebels thought. Each night, she plotted her escape as the group moved farther north.

One evening, all the rebel soldiers except their leader left to hunt wild, white horned deer. The rebel leader waited until the hoofs of their horses could no longer be heard, before approaching her.

He spoke in a contemptuous voice, "You are a palace whore! Duty compels me to bring you to my Emperor, your forbidden womanly parts untouched by my common flesh. But you are still a whore...no better than a filthy dog unfit for eating!"

The rebel leader stood before her, his figure tall. He smiled at her beauty, fully reassured by her restraint.

"I could violate your flesh now and who would know? Only you and I and the spirits ... and perhaps the Emperor. I could kill you now, slit your throat, tear your heart and stomach from you, and who would know? I could do a lot of things, but I'm not that reckless!"

The rebel leader continued to smile, aware that the young woman was powerless. With her hands bound together in front, a thick knotted rope loosely extended from her arms to the trunk of an old, rotting walnut tree.

The rebel leader stood inches from the young woman's kneeling form. Even through his garments she could see his male member hardening. The worn leather belt that secured his sword hung low over his hips, running around the full length of his torso. Although it was becoming full, his groin remained partially obscured, harnessed by the wide strip of leather.

The young woman whispered to him, "I can take you here," she pointed to her face, her lips, "and you would not be betraying

your beloved Emperor or the spirits ... but you must first remove your belt if you wish to be pleased."

The rebel leader's eyes narrowed. He stared at the young woman, a feeling of pure hatred coursing through his being.

"Stupid whore, how do I know you won't kill me if I take my sword and belt off?"

"My hands are still tied," she responded, "I cannot harm you if you do not untie them."

The rebel leader did not move. The young woman's words, her promise brought a suffocating stillness upon him. His eyes faltered. Suddenly, his angry gaze fell to the ground and he relented.

"You remove the belt," he said, "but if you do anything to trick me I will grab your neck and break it immediately."

The young woman brought her bound hands up and began to undo the belt. It came undone quickly and slipped to the ground, its heavy metal weight released. The young woman made sure to let the sharp tip of the sword fall into the dust by her left hip. As she glanced down she could see the handle of the sword resting before her knees.

The young woman looked up and saw the rebel leader watching her every movement. She pulled his hardening member from the folds of his silk gown, exposing it to the dusky air. Without hesitation, she took it between her lips and the rebel leader's eyes closed.

She looked down at the pointed steel blade of the sword laying on the ground. Her bound hands trembled as they slowly twisted to one side. She reached downward for the handle within inches of her knees. She continued to nurse the rebel leader. Her fingers gingerly grasped the base of the sword. Both hands began to secure their grip on the rounded metal. She looked up again and saw the rebel leader's eyes were still closed.

She closed her own eyes. Breathed in deeply as her hands turned upward. Without hesitation she plunged the sword upward, far into the rebel leader's bowels.

He screamed in terror and pain. His eyes flew open in fear, his gaze glazed from the instantaneous shock of human flesh pierced by metal. The young woman released the rebel leader from her lips as he began moving backwards, his arms outstretched. The rebel leader tried to grasp at her hair, her face, but he could only gasp. Blood drained from his body as he fell finally to the ground.



The young woman stood up. She looked down at the bleeding figure. She felt no remorse. Only sadness at the cruel choices she had to make. In a few more moments, the rebel leader would be dead. She would flee now, free for this moment.

The young woman removed the sword from the dead man's body once he had stopped breathing. She secured the belt on her own hips, placing the blood stained sword back in its sheath.

She then mounted the tan mare after removing the dead Emperor's rotting head from its side. In order to outsmart her captors, the young woman rode north instead of south for several days and nights hardly stopping. On the seventh day, she finally came upon the abandoned temple in the mountains where she found Hua Mei resting.



When Hua Mei first told me about this portion of the dream I cried. It was not a dream but a violent nightmare full of pain and destruction. Ghastly stories of an old order that had destroyed both itself and its people mercilessly. Hua Mei said that perhaps she had read too much ancient Chinese history at an early age upon her mother's insistence, and these dreams were only a reaction to the horrible images of history which she'd already gleaned in her young life.

But from what she told me, I know the dreams had started when Hua Mei could first talk, not when she began reading somewhat later.

We were only eleven years old when Hua Mei first told me about her dreams. I thought they were terrible dreams for a kid her age to be having. Things far too adult and ugly seemed to fill her sleeping hours. I didn't understand the possible meaning of these dreams for myself until I was older.

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This piece is a work in progress and is the opening chapter to one of two complementary novellas. Although somewhat historical in both its reference and placement, this piece is a work of fiction and should not be relied on for any sort of historical "accuracy" and/or "correctness." In it, I have utilized what I know to be the "romanization" or "pinyin" method of translation/spelling for a number of the individuals' names and other Chinese words.

## Dajenya

**b**orn  
black  
and white  
female  
baby child  
raped  
denied  
ignored  
loved  
sometimes  
beat  
into madness  
challenged  
by life  
to survive  
everything  
dope  
gave comfort  
enough to live on  
sex  
was a distraction  
search  
ing endlessly  
for reason  
meaning  
love  
to the rescue  
not obsession  
love  
compassion  
saved  
my life

i am a  
survivor



## The Enemy

Bra  
Girdle  
Dress shields  
Panties  
Stockings  
Hold my mother hostage  
before her clothes become  
her captor to the world  
Bent all the way over  
Foot in right hole  
Foot in left hole  
Now pull  
Fingers tense and resentful  
Full body unwilling to yield  
to this foreign force  
Force  
that spandex, lycra  
polyknitted cotton content  
piece of rubberized slavery  
up those calves  
Past the knee  
soft like dough  
Up, upward to the thighs  
Screaming and pleading  
Bleeding  
from this external enemy  
waiting to become one  
with the internal enemy  
Hate  
She rests a moment  
Long enough for  
perspiration to form

causing dreaded sweat stains  
God bless dress shields  
looped and fastened tightly  
around her arms and shoulders  
There is safety now  
There is safety now  
It is 1969  
The country is on fire  
Fighting for equality  
Fighting for justice  
Fighting for freedom  
Fighting to fit into clothing  
designed for a thin, flat  
white woman  
Fighting large breasts  
that spill out of her  
eighteen hour bra  
Protruding buttocks  
defiantly protest  
Thighs demand their right to be  
Walter Cronkite delivers the numbers  
How many killed  
How many wounded  
My mother marches  
Clenched fist held high  
Buttocks held high  
Breasts held high  
Tummy tucked and  
Thighs constrained  
Fighting for freedom  
Fighting for freedom



## Sustenance

She says:

I am her conch stew, fungi and callaloo  
i am her ginger beer and mauby brew  
i am her tamarind and soursop  
her mango meat, when the sun's too hot.  
she says i am her sustenance  
i am her guava girl ... papaya pearl  
her smooth, raw honey colored, lover girl  
indeed, i am the most favorite fruit  
on which her woman hunger feeds  
and all my juicy-sweetest parts  
where her hot tongue hungrily darts  
are deep, banyon-root deep ... inside  
i am her roast fish and johnny cake  
her tripe soup, and well done steak  
her pigeon peas and rice, king fish slice  
i am her opened up green coconut  
i am her head flung, drink down, cool  
smile-sweet sip ... that i fill  
her mouth, and ooze on out her lips  
brazen, wet down to her nipple tips  
says i am her supple sugar cane  
shouldn't nobody be so sweet so  
make her body heat so, bush-tea burn  
beg ... for kisses ... to kill the pain.  
i am her fig, her cinnamon stick  
tongue flick, salt lick, sweat slick  
legs on her bare back grip ... wild  
beast sounds from her throat rip  
ahh ... she says i am her flan  
her lozenge, her triple-layer ...

chocolate cake, her cherry apple-raisin bun  
and any part of me she tastes  
she always have ... big fun  
says i am her fate, her life's plan  
i am her woman ... the rest be damned.  
she says, i am her sustenance.



*Ms. Takuan*  
Cristy Chung



*Author's Note: This work is excerpted from a longer essay I am writing about the many visions and voices of South Asian Lesbians, currently living, working, or passing through the United States; women who, like me, are looking for ways to bridge exile and return by transforming the very concepts of home and community. This version presents a montage of journal entries, prose, and internal dialogue that offers the perspectives of one South Asian Lesbian — Black, Feminist, Nonimmigrant — looking at the complexities of multiple returns to geographic homelands and psychic locations; returns with other South Asian women who are making some of the same journeys; returns from/to/and from lovers' arms to reflections of self.*

## Journey In Progress

### RETURN I

Sometimes memory can soften the glaring sun of a late morning in July into a delicate mood light, filtered through white muslin aged with buttermilk stains. It can get a mug of Maxwell House to taste like coffee stretched to frothing perfection by vigorous vendors balancing boiling liquid between two enamel cups at roadside stalls in KL/Pune/Madras. And if the air in my apartment is simultaneously heavy with sandalwood incense and Shivkumar's<sup>1</sup> santoor rippling through the speakers, memory can even transform sound: traffic noise on Sixteenth Street becomes rickshaws on Bhandarkar Road, cardinal calls become koil cries, and neighbors' accents, South Asian.

On unplanned mornings like these, when certain variables fuse to spark a certain energy, memory is not shaped by the actual remembering of how things are, but by a pit-of-the-stomach desire for what I call home. In the realm of such memory rain-washed mud turns to golden dust, filth on roads seduces, public toilets lose their fecal stink, crowds feel like welcome lovers. Yet ... mud is sticky, filthy, noise and crowds enrage me. Nostalgia breeds illusions.

Out of the tiredness of always being different, I have spun romantic fictions of what home is like. I struggle with the "illusions" I have conceived and reject my exaggerations of a glorified home-land. But the pull is strong. I am there, not here, yet, also here and there. It is as if the boundaries that keep me from all of my homes have suddenly collapsed, and I am in a space where external geographies have ceased to exist.

Perhaps, then, these "illusions," these mis-memories are deliberately created to compensate for separation from my internal geographies. Perhaps, they are an exile's attempts to return home in a time frame that makes re-turn impossible.

I look past the trees in the  
park and hear the song of  
koils mingling with the  
sputter of scooters.  
I taste rich Madrasi coffee  
on the back of my tongue  
and smell jackfruit ripening  
on the tree.

Desire transforms what is into what I will it to be. There will be time to analyze, time to politicize, time to reject illusions. This morning, however, I push open memory, blur mirage with reality, and ride nostalgia "home."

## RETURN II

It's self indulgent to talk about the personal, identity, me. There are more urgent struggles for us. Rapes, dowries, ejaculations on crowded buses against backs buttocks & thighs, female lung disease, infant mortality, multinational fuckovers, government sellout. Who AmI ... WhoAmI ... don't you already know? Sounds like an American malady to me. An excuse to sit around and chat about ID-entity.

### JOURNAL NOTES:

*But I am a woman who loves other women. How will I survive erasure by my communities, radical and progressive as you may be? To talk about myself/yourself to ourselves is to keep you from making us nameless. This is part of my struggle.*



### RETURN III

Return to KL ... Colombo ... Delhi ... Trivandrum ... to settle for the dubious title of un-sexed, de-womanized woman after risking deportation from America for daring to name my Self. That will be SelfMurder like the murders of those who never left or those who returned and had no community. I must make a way for others to do their own returns. For eventually, I will do mine.

### RETURN IV

He was Gay; she was safe with him. It was a plot to keep their parents off their backs and the INS off hers. Faked a marriage, foolproof, she said. Compiled the photo album, opened joint accounts, did the happy couple act — one for them and one for Them. Then, he wanted a piece of her. He was afterall, Husband. She told him to go to hell. He hit her across the face. She filed for divorce. Now, some of her family is talking to her and some of them are not, but she is loving women more openly. Until, that is, They send her Home.

### JOURNAL NOTES:

*Imagine the psychological and emotional dilemma of a Lesbian who realizes that having left "home" to avoid marriage, she now has to marry to remain in the U.S. Imagine her constant fear of being caught, and her isolation if she is abused by her "paper husband." How does she survive the act of bartering one oppression<sup>2</sup> for another to buy her "freedom"? And if she is a feminist, at what price does the greencard come when she is now defined by her relationship to her male sponsor? Does any act of barter ever cease to be just that — an exchange of weapons with which to kill us anyway? In the end does it matter whether it is execution by stoning or execution by gas?<sup>3</sup>*

*Borders are not my creation: immigration, passports, visas, greencards. Citizenship, presumed or assumed, is state-sponsored control, and the feminist lesbian who marries for their greencard chooses between lesser and greater contradictions; she chooses among many departures in order to Return.*

*To speak about myself/ourselves is to keep You from making us Name Less.*

## RETURN V

June 1989: "Improperly filed. Rejected." Three words that translate eviction. Ghost moving in fog, she wonders, pack first but store where? Leave for but go where? Goodbye but for how long? Lover is here, conference next month, film in progress, manuscript incomplete ... should this all go in boxes?

"No appeal necessary, work authorization revoked." Like she is not even here: the woman whose plants need watering, ceiling needs repair. The woman with ivy creeping over her kitchen window so the sun has stopped breaking in.

She asks for voluntary departure. Dictionary definition: Voluntary — "proceeding from the will or from one's own free choice; intentional; volitional. Endowed with, possessing, or exercising will of free choice. Done without compulsion. Performed without legal obligation." Eviction by some standards can also mean voluntary departure.

Tonight, her sobs do not come, trapped inside tunnels of fear that lead her back to the same place ... same place ... everytime. Because her mind will not see beyond deportation. Yet.

### JOURNAL NOTES:

*It is true that nonimmigrants tell ourselves that the INS has better things to do than go after some Lesbian from Bombay/Hong Kong/Chile living in Trenton/D.C./L.A., but we also know the risk. We understand why some of us never march on the outside of Gay Pride contingents in case of cameras. Why many of us fear going to bars in case of a raid. Why we only do radio interviews, never have our photographs taken, or get married. Why I, the hard-line, radical separatist feminist lesbian seeks the protection of my closet without apology while standing in a public forum, talking about fighting homophobia, using another name.*

*I wonder how many lesbians realize that closets are not identical, that different realities define our closets, and that the difference in our closets defines the ways in which we choose to Come Out. For instance, non-immigrant lesbians do not only contend with the risks of anti-lesbian violence, housing or job discrimination, they also contend with immigration — a reality that "citizens" do not face by virtue of their legal status in this country.*



*It is a myth that there is only one closet and one way to come out when what is safe for some/many lesbians is not necessarily safe for all. I still go through the obliteration from being in closets while finding imaginative ways of being out without being caught by the INS. I am constantly aware of the identity games I play — Who am I supposed to be today when I go to this conference, Who am I when I speak on that panel? For someone who is an incest survivor, the secrecy feels horribly familiar, as does the threat of exposure.*

*The question is, does the politics of coming out invalidate the politics of a double identity? Do people actually think Lesbians and Gay men are going to be allowed to come and go across the borders just because some law got passed about letting in visitors for conferences on AIDS? As a nonimmigrant, who is not free to cross borders openly as a Lesbian, the new laws are simply a way for white men to feel good about their illusion of liberating "us."*

*On the lighter side, pseudonyms take on their own life/humor — how important it is to be able to laugh at this situation — when I'm in a room and I can be two persons at once talking about "each other" as if we are old friends/housemates/lovers. I survive by remembering that going in and out of closets is a strategy for working to remove the conditions that make my closets necessary in the first place.*

## RETURN VI

Lesbos ... Lesbian ... 19th century terminology ... european.

No wonder they think they've set me free, saved me from dowry death, fifteen children, and heterosexual hell. Don't understand why I don't prefer tuxedo drag, Michigan women's music festival, lesbian bar scene. Why they take me home like their Benetton clothes, enter mine for a cultural thrill.

Tofu burgers, meditation tapes, RC religion, SM debate. I'm trying to collapse distance, fight erasure, and go Home at the same time. There's a real possibility that I may go mad from being invisible as a Lesbian in South Asia, a South Asian in America, and a South Asian Lesbian in both geographic locations, and you want me to unblock chakras and rediscover the goddess via catalogue spirituality?

Have I mentioned our stone sculptures along temple walls of clit to clit, top to bottom, three in one and one for all, centuries old homoerotic love among South Asian women and South Asian men

... Kali, Durga, spiritual representations of the feminine continuum ... "destroyer, warrior, poet, lover, creatrix"<sup>4</sup> mother?

My questions are beyond finding the goddess. To talk about MySelf/OurSelves is to keep you from making Us name-less.

#### JOURNAL NOTES:

*The question for South Asian Lesbians is what license does homoeroticism give us to resist a male-centered universe and question compulsory heterosexuality? How will we maintain the close female friendships that homosocial spaces make available? To what extent can we be silent to retain the progressive circles we move in? How will we as South Asian Lesbians leave the closet and remain out in South Asia without being isolated, without leading double lives, without living in self-imposed exile? What does it mean for us to live out our love for other South Asian women in South Asia and in non-america diaspora?*

*How will I recover my Tamilian Lesbian voice, my language of love; de-exoticize, re-eroticize, un-stereotype the bond between two South Asian women loving each other?*

#### RETURNS — VII

Last night, as you flirted with me on the telephone, I sat, wrapped in lavender mists. Naked under a flickering candle. Mouthing sweet mischief in your rapid Indian vowels, you whispered language magic till I dissolved into silent wetness. Knees flung wide in heated water, I listened to your homegrown expressions of subtle seduction, drawing water between my thighs, my skin settled back against the porcelain of a recreated womb chamber. And when you paused to gather a thought, the symphony of ripples from hand cleaving water rose up to greet you across the wires, leaving you speechless. And for one long moment, we shared only silence and the quiet breathing of two women desiring each other a one-hour plane ride apart.

#### VIII

South Asian Diaspora woman from hidden passages of unborn dreams, you come as a gift, from my goddesses who heard my quiet, quiet, unbelieving asking, behind lips and hearts and ribs.



Asking that only happened in my mind where I though desires never materialized, goddesses do not reside. But when I saw you and saw the Kali in your eyes, I knew I had met my home girl, Tamilian half sister, the other Ganeshi — dark, brown, familiar.

And fearlessly, I let you take me and met your Kali with mine, completing the erotic exchange of triangular black energy:

goddess — woman woman — goddess womanwoman.

In you I come home.<sup>5</sup>

## IX

Cheekbones lost, face without sides, breaths like whispers between us. In the mid-afternoon heat, brown fire, brown dreams linked beyond names, beyond places. I touch you like a sister, like my self, the red candle melting inside black opaque and silence.

---

### ENDNOTES:

1. Shivkumar Sharma is a classical Indian and folk musician. The santoor is played like a dulcimer.

2. The system of immigration policies and quotas is in and of itself exclusionary and, as in many countries like the United States, blatantly racist. Recognizing "legitimate" marriage as a means of granting citizenship or permanent residence adds to the injustice because it reinforces the system's heterosexism. For the feminist lesbian, the "freedom" to come and go from the U.S. and the "right" to work and claim social benefits hinge solely on the fact that she is now a citizen's/man's wife. Given her rejection of marriage as an oppressive institution and her struggle against sexism, if a lesbian opts for a paper marriage she ultimately experiences a total mind fuck and devastation to her psyche, not to mention the vulnerability she now feels from the system and from her paper husband.

3. Throughout past and present history, governments have penalized lesbians and gays for being what they consider sexual deviants. Flogging and stoning are still constitutionally approved penalties in some countries. Lesbians and Gay men were among those who were hunted and killed by the Nazis.

4. In her prose poem, "Transl(ite)r(ati)on: Part 1 and 2," Sri Lankan feminist poet, Yasmin Tambiah, talks about the concept of decolonization as it relates to critically sifting through the aspects of our lesbian/sexual

identities that were imposed on us, and the aspects that we synthesized/re-created for ourselves. In her prose poem ... she says, "I don't think the western and particularly white feminist constructions of the Lesbian has its spiritual connection. I think white women are still engaged in resurrecting their own Celtic and Scandinavian goddesses. We already have our goddesses in images of Durga and Kali. And decolonizing ourselves from our own patriarchies and from a western sexual discourse will include claiming those Durga Kali energies."

5. This piece also appears in my essay, "Confluences: Margins, Crossroads & Identities," in *The Third Wave: Feminist Essays on Racism*, Kitchen Table Press, Forthcoming 1992.



*Assata Shakur — Cuba, February 1992*

Jean Weisinger



## Uno a Uno

Sweat baptized my burning face  
as I kneeled under the attentive noon day sun  
listening carefully to a field  
left to fallow.

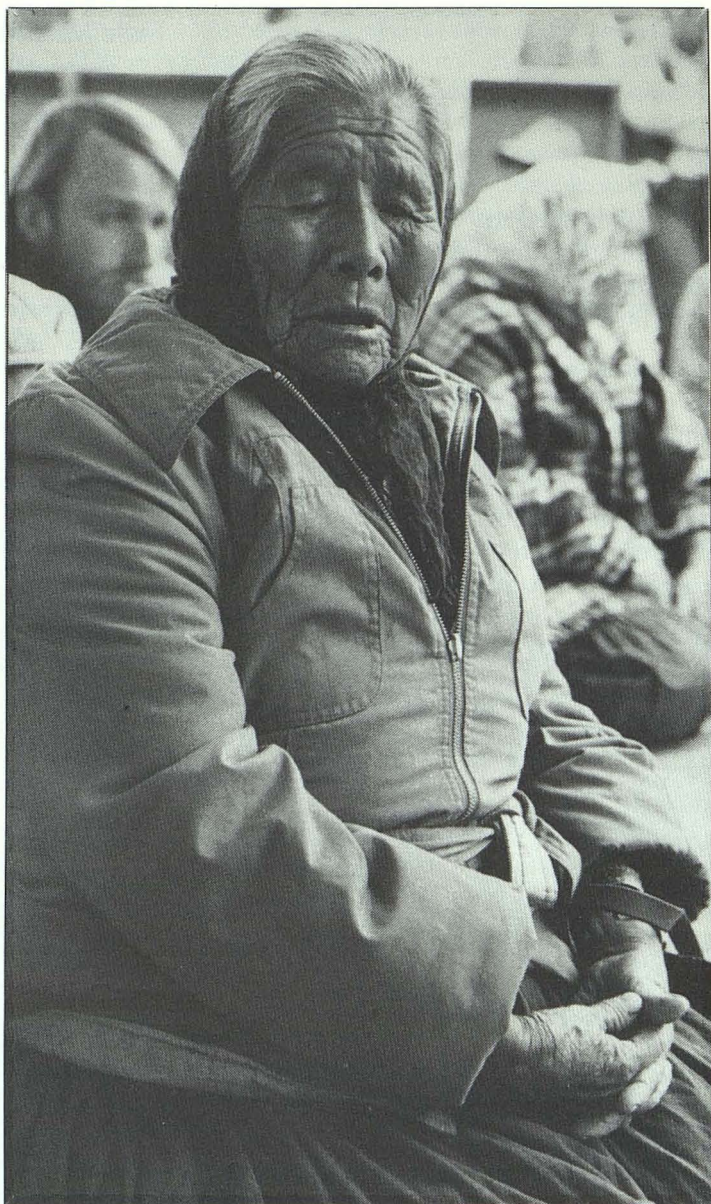
Left to fallow  
this poisoned soil from which  
spinach and strawberries and  
tomatoes and grapes were born.

Born, lived and died wilting in  
one hundred and ten degree heat, or  
drowning in row after row of irrigation  
ditch unless picked upon ripening,  
uno a uno.

Hunched over fourteen hours a day  
picking upon ripening,  
uno a uno,  
caked in mud from crown to  
heel when finally  
buried by the Holy Eucharist,  
uno a uno.

The reaping of each soul quietly mocked by a trellis  
upon which yet another vine clings stubbornly,  
marking the furrows into which they fell unripe,  
uno a uno,  
while picking in a field now left to fallow.

Left to fallow as if the passing seasons would somehow  
conspire to silence the hurriedly whispered testimonies to  
yesterday's tilling of life and  
tomorrow's harvesting of us all,  
uno a uno,  
uno a uno.



*Irene Yazzie*  
*90-year-old blind Diné Medicine Woman*  
Maya C. Valverde



## Mestiza

A white man may have planted seeds  
in the belly of my mother, but their roots  
have not grown into my soul.  
He may have robbed me of my name, but not my spirit.  
He may have stripped me of my mother tongue  
but not the words I hid in secret places.  
He may have left me with no answers,  
but he could never take away the questions  
that stir me in the dark of night.

From the belly of my mother  
I was born a brown child of the desert  
mixed of sand and clay and stone.  
I have grown into a woman,  
still searching for my brownness,  
mestiza, child of the desert,  
I am not alone.  
I choose not to be alone,  
but to plant seeds in my own belly  
and let them grow, let them root,  
let them flower on their own.

## Just Give it to Me Baby ... I Love You!

How often have I fantasized of a time when I would be free of the chastity belt on my vagina — when I could “flow” into the bed with the woman of my choice uninhibited and fierce. And when this “flowing” was *finished* we’d somehow miraculously rise up and live happily ever after ... This was the the fantasy but the real story went something like this: we no longer spoke to one another, we couldn’t look each other in the eye, a friendship was destroyed, one or both of us were hurting, we started a relationship based on our compatibility in the bed — which didn’t last. The scenarios go on and on!

At some point in the quest for my sexual freedom I began to realize that this was not just about feeling good. I owed myself (which includes my body) a lot more love, respect and honoring than I was giving. I realized that I did not develop any of my ideas about sexuality in a vacuum but, they like everything else, were created from an array of experiences that began even before the time of my birth. This reality led me to question more closely my notions of power and my definitions of responsibility (both spiritually and emotionally) regarding my sexual encounters. Ultimately, it has forced me to seek a deeper understanding of the many ways in which the tremendous amount of sexual abuse that I’ve experienced, and continue to experience, has affected me.

Many of us now, for the first time, are coming out of the closet with our sexuality, not just in terms of same sex relationships, but exploring together: how we gonna do it, taking giant risks, talking about our sexual abuse and exploits (en masse), and even considering ways to practice safer sex.

The reality that wimin, and especially wimin of color, have often been the most sexually abused beings outside of children (and all of us were children at one time or another) means that we have a lot of healing to do before we can come from a place of right-use of power in terms of our sexuality. The fact that many of our African wimin ancestors were raped and bred during times of



"legalized" slavery makes a huge statement about the depth of guilt, shame and rage regarding our sexuality we may carry within our psyches.

Everyday on TV, billboards, in the newspaper and movies you will see the woman's body being used as **the** object. Even much of the music now is about the conquest of the pussy! "Just give it to me baby ... I love you." On any given day walking down the street you may be harassed and/or assaulted, as a matter of course, *just because of your femaleness*. This type of abuse day after day with or without protection has taken a serious toll and been internalized — we do not live in a vacuum. This "matter of course" abuse does not take into account that every 60 seconds a woman is raped or that 2 out of 5 girls will be sexually assaulted by the time she is 13 and between the ages of 13 and 18 the statistics are even higher. How many of us are survivors of incest? Who amongst us has been spared and where are we stuffing our emotions?

What about our own "safe" Two Spirited (Lesbian) community? I've certainly been sexually harassed many times by wimin — in public places, in private places, on the job, in front of my lover and theirs. I've also done the same thing at one time or another. I even know wimin who have bragged about raping other wimin. Because this type of abuse is usually equated with maleness, often I find that denial kicks in when I'm being sexualized by a woman, and my disbelief and pain gets in the way of my clarity. If I can't trust my sisters who *know* then who can I trust?

Sexual abuse is the abuse of power with the intent to control. With the type of historical and present day sexual violence that we have been victims of, it seems imperative that we give close examination to the play of power within our sexual interactions. What are the intentions that we bring to the bed, to our flirtations and to our encounters? Are we clear in the signals we send? Were you coming on to her or just being friendly? What sense of responsibility or **no** responsibility do we bring to our sexual acts? This is **not** about being *in love*, but this is **about** love ... this is **about** respect — love and respect of ourselves and, therefore, the love and respect of others. This is about power — the acknowledgement of it and the responsibility for it — whether it be from a so-called *passive* or so-called *aggressive* stance, it is still power. This is about

control. Often, unfortunately, our way of feeling powerful is to be the one in control of the situation even if it's at the expense of another. What about just being in control of ourselves and not focusing on controlling anyone else?

People speak a lot today about SAFER sex but it's mostly from a physical perspective. Shouldn't we be equally concerned with emotional safety, not merely from the perspective of **I am a survivor** — we're all survivors. How are we surviving? Rarely do we speak of sexuality and power together unless it's defined as "S/M" — the latest thing. Well it's always been here but now separated from the *whole* of our sexual experience and called S/M, it is blatantly teaching us about dynamics of power which we don't **really** talk about — except on the level of top and bottom or dominant and submissive. Within the sexual act we **all** have power and we **all** use it — no matter which role or roles we are playing we are getting something from it and making choices — that "something" is our power. It's important to examine the choices we make to expedite healing of the fragmented places within ourselves.

Quite often we **act** like we're powerless while wielding our power through the projection of our pain, frustration, rage and guilt onto whomever we lay with — as though we're the only victims in town. Internalized sexual abuse is rampant. The most obvious is a survivor of sexual assault assaulting someone else. More subtle forms can be: putting your lover in the position of always having to be the one to ask you for sex, because you feel guilt or shame in relationship to your sexual needs; blaming your partner for not knowing what you want and for your not having an orgasm. The way you feel about your body gets played out too. Maybe you're the **withholder**, then again perhaps you're obsessed with how often you cum — better still how often she cums.

And what do we want from those that we lay with? It could be any number of things. She might be "the finest 'thang' **you've** ever seen ... *today*" and you've just got to have her. How many of your sisters did you step on or over to get her? I know — she's the butch you're going to conquer or the mystery that you need to unfold. Maybe you just want to do-it-to-her and don't want to be done, or visa versa. You might not **even** like her — you just want to fuck her. I wonder how much any of those reasons have to do with balance/



giving and receiving? Probably not much. It's empowering to give just as it is empowering to receive. Perhaps you only want to experience one and not the other, which by the way, probably has very little to do with your position in the bed, but more about your position of *vulnerability* to **the person you are laying with** — not your mother, your father or last lovers.

What about the relationship to spirit in all of this? Female sexuality is extremely powerful because the energy of it is connected to creation, our intuition, our psyche, our magic and ultimately Spirit. During "war-times" we have used our bodies as weapons to conquer the enemy and still within our wombs lie the ability to nurture, support and bring forth life. Anyone who has ever been to a woman's gathering has probably experienced that aliveness of spirit, the raw, uncensored, spontaneous energy, the kind that comes when we dance to the drum — that **hotness**. Women's menstrual cycles even change when we come together. Some of us "see" more than others (have developed more personal power — able to **conjure-up** some magic), some of us are in college and others of us are still in high school, what do we do with that charisma? Do we try to blow the other one's mind? Are we interested in a mutually empowering experience? Are we willing to give it up like we want to get it — no matter what role or roles we play? Do we tell the *truth* of our intentions — do we say why we are there? Once again, are we there to honestly give and receive or is it merely to get — to expand our egos ... at someone else's expense?

Although sex is a word, the act is loaded with emotional, spiritual and psychic power, and even if we don't want it to be it is an extremely intimate experience — be we present or not! In our new found explorations — while we're discovering, feeling freer and pointing fingers — shouldn't we, *each and every one of us*, carefully clean out our own pots remembering to scrutinize closely the integrity of the ingredients we mix in the stew? One day it may be the only food we have to eat!

**i** reach in  
slithering wrist  
you unhinge  
and take me  
whole i  
spread my fingers  
anchor your womb  
my clutch  
eye to your thundering  
hips your torso  
tosses my lathered mouth  
from belly to  
thigh i  
search frantic for the shores  
of your pleasure  
crest  
foam i  
tip and lunge  
cannot hear  
my own gasping beneath your  
whip and howl  
my hair wet and  
tangled in your spray  
my heart pounds back  
to your waves upon my  
breast  
i ride you  
work my sails to catch your  
gale  
turn us both toward  
an unknown coast



## Deep-Seated Comfort

If there were some big soft lap  
still and welcoming and sturdy  
my head would be lying in it now  
oh yes you'd find my head there  
    and my eyes would be shut  
    and my air would be coming in deep and smooth  
    and my cheek would be comforted by  
some strong hand stroking my hair  
caressing me letting me know  
it's okay not to move  
it's okay to feel safe there  
it's okay not to think there  
    my heart would be relieved  
    I'd be crying inside and out  
    hot wet tears melting from way down in me  
    somewhere neglected unnoticed hurting  
God I'd stay there  
if I could get there to begin with  
if I ever found some soft fine lap  
and a woman behind it wanting me in it

Edna Escamill

## Black Orchid (Barrio Stories)

She went down there again the next day after school. A side street, not many people passed by. The VFW was across the street, but it could have been ten thousand miles away. The bar had no windows at all, a brick wall, with a solid door in it. The small sign up above was faded, impossible to read.

She inched along the wall, looked both ways, saw no one. So she leaned against the wall right at the edge of the alley, ready to run back. A young woman, lovely serious face, saddle shoes, narrow blue skirt and grey sweater, dark intense eyes. She held her school books locked against her chest. It was mid-afternoon; she waited until she had to run home to keep from being late.

The next day, she came again. It was not a good time for people to be coming to a bar, but it was the only time she had, and maybe ... but no one came.

She waited, nervous, practicing to herself what she would say. Maybe she wouldn't have to say anything. Maybe all she had to do was see her, and the woman who dressed like a man would understand everything. But another day went by, and she didn't come.

Then, it was Saturday. She came downtown with her Tia to buy some tela for her Home-Ec class, but her Tia forgot her purse. In a hurry because the store on the other side would close, they cut through the alley to get over to this side of town and jaywalk to the corner. An Impala roared to a stop, and the woman Chula had been waiting for all those days, got out right in front of them.

Chula saw all of her in one frozen instant: black eyes and molded lips, wild hair across the tan cheek like a brush, breasts taut behind a blue western shirt, levis with a silver chain hanging from the pocket. Y esas movidas, and that incredible energy. Chula hung there and her Tia tried to pull her one way, while she stumbled another, and the woman who dressed like a man steadied her, and stood her on the curb again, saying, "Watch out," in a



throaty, laughing voice. The air around them was drenched with the hot smells of skin and cologne and Chula's feelings — paralyzed and burning, she stared into the woman's face with lips trembling, and then her Tia jerked her away and across the street as though a rabid dog were at their heels.

Chula started to turn around, catching a glimpse of the woman standing next to the Impala, facing her. But her Tia hissed,

"Pon te cara en frente! Don't look over there!"

"Why not?" said Chula.

"Te agarra una de esas, y nungun hombre te quiere de mujer. One of those women gets her hands on you, and no man will marry you." Who cares? thought Chula, making an effort to keep her face straight. Her Tia didn't notice, still talking with disgust and venom in her voice, "Una muchacha como ti son las que quieren. Te sigen y te agarran. They run after young girls like you and ruin you. Never go near that place." She kept her hand firmly on Chula's arm, pulling her along.

The next Saturday, Chula got permission to go to the library with her cousins, Amalia and Tootsie, and then she told the girls she had to go buy something in a flash. Already flirting with some cute boys, they hardly noticed her leave. Chula ran all the way from the library to the back of the building, and ran up the alley. It was almost time.

Chula peered around the corner, panting, but there was no Impala. The late afternoon sun was hot and blistery on the pavement. She had waited as long as she dared, when she saw the black Impala coming down the street. Before the woman who dressed like a man could get out of the car, Chula opened the door and jumped in. The woman, startled, stared aghast at her.

"Will you take me some place?" said Chula. Disbelief, followed by amusement and then concern struggled in the woman's face. She reached across Chula's breast, pushing her back gently against the seat, and made sure the door was closed. She double-clutched at the corner, saying, "Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know," said Chula. Her throat got tighter and tighter and she swallowed, "I mean, I just want to be with you."

The woman didn't say anything, but drove down a side street skirting the Barrio, and from there, along the edge of the South

Side. When they came to a piece of desert, she pulled away from the road and stopped the car. She left the engine running.

"You're the one who's been hanging around." Chula, afraid of the anger in the woman's voice, said, "I've been waiting for you."

"How old are you?" The woman reached out, as if to touch her, and pulled back. "Do you know what they'd do to me if they found us together?" Chula heard her fear now.

"They'd cut off my hands," the woman said.

"Take me some place," Chula pleaded.

"Take you where? For what? You have to wait until you're 18."

"When I'm 18, maybe I won't want this anymore."

The woman's voice was soft, "When you're 18, maybe you won't want this anymore," she agreed.

"Please. I'll never bother you again ..."

The woman dropped the car keys she had pulled out of the ignition, found them, and put them back. Her face was pale. "Come on kid, you'll get me into trouble."

"There's no one I can talk to. There's nobody I can tell about this," said Chula.

The woman put the car in gear, went out on Saguaro Road. She drove with both hands on the steering wheel all the way. They got off the road at a small ranchito. She passed the big house, vacant, windows broken, behind a stand of tamarack trees. Back there, was her little casita with a pink door. There was a beautifully painted black orchid on it.

The woman leaned against the car. Chula walked around looking at the mountains turning purple, at the dancing tamarack sweet with the voices of birds. It was quiet, she could hear the bees buzzing. The woman watched her, not saying anything, tense, knowing she'd come back.

With a cry, Chula pressed herself against the woman's body. The woman didn't move, turned her head aside. Chula forced her face against the other's face, put her hands around the hot skin of her neck. The woman's breath quickened, but still she didn't lift her arms, only her breast heaved up and down under Chula's breast.

Chula's need was a pain filling her body, but not telling her what to do, how to move. The sensations started in her legs where



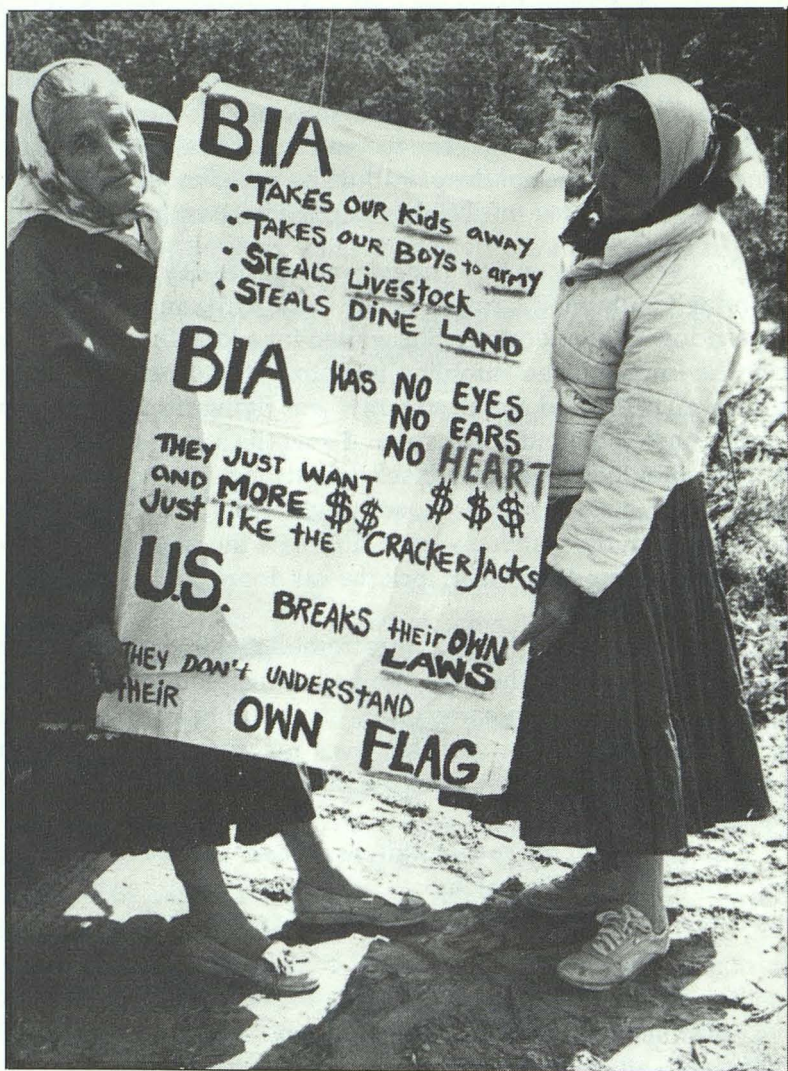
they pressed against the woman's legs. Small, sharp bursts of electricity, the sensations came and went, over and over again, and stonger, and she trembled against the older woman's body. Until at last, the woman's hands encircled her ass and pressed — that was all — pressed her tighter and held her that way, without moving. The burning turned liquid, flowing into Chula's thighs, bursting between her legs. The woman's own breath came out in a moan of pleasure and despair. But she never moved her body. They stayed like that until Chula stepped back by her own will.

Two years later on a Saturday evening, the day after her 18th birthday, Chula went across the street to the VFW, and stood inside the shadow of the doorway. She waited for a long time before she saw the Impala come rumbling to a stop. It had new skirts and whitewall tires. And a pink streamer was flying from the antenna. Chula ducked behind the door, and saw the strangely beautiful woman: molded lips, shaggy black hair, strong, lean body in a blue denim shirt, sleeves rolled up, new levis with a long silver chain hanging from the watch pocket. Chula saw the woman reach for something behind the visor, lock the car doors, and step into the bar.

Chula left her hiding place, legs trembling, heart pumping and walked slowly back the way she had come. She didn't see the woman stand in the doorway of the bar, holding an orchid in her hand, following Chula with her eyes for several long, breath-holding, beats of the heart. Then the woman turned and went back inside.

Chula stood at the corner, staring at the traffic for a long time, and finally just walked away.

A few minutes later, eyes shining, she came back.



*Katherine Smith (left) and Pauline Whitesinger (right)  
(Diné) Navajo activists leading the fight  
against relocation from Big Mountain.*

*Maya C. Valverde*



## Workers Are Falling Through the Gap— The Free Trade Agreement

Against a backdrop of political election hype at home and economic intrigue in the world market, the Bush administration quietly continues to pressure for passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Mexico. Promoted as the answer to economic woes on both sides of the border, evidence shows instead that it threatens to lessen workers rights, speed up the deterioration of the environment, and increase ownership and control of wealth to transnational corporations while decreasing wages and jobs both in the U.S. and Mexico.

Particularly affected would be unskilled or semi-skilled workers, whose jobs are being sent south to be replaced by low-cost labor. Thus women, people of color and laborers in the U.S. — those with the least job security — are losing jobs as factories move to the Mexico side of the border seeking cheaper labor and lax work regulations. These maquiladoras, as the factories are called, employ 90% women who earn \$3.50 to \$7.50 a day performing monotonous, and sometimes dangerous, assembly line jobs. What a worker gets in the U.S. per hour, a Mexican worker receives in a day, taking home an average of \$38 for a 48 hour week with virtually no benefits. The median wage for a manufacture worker in the U.S. is \$400 a week. It is easy to see where the 1.5 million U.S. jobs went to that were lost in manufacturing in the 1980's.

After 25 years of operation, 1800 maquiladoras have created over half a million jobs for Mexicans but workers lives have not substantially improved. Margarita Cruz, representing the Mexican Electricians Union at tri-national meetings in the U.S. and Canada, said that union busting has become more prevalent recently in Mexico. Participation of unions in negotiations at the maquiladoras has been seriously curbed and salaries of union workers have also decreased. "Now it is being promoted that an individual should negotiate her own salary and some non-union

workers earn more than union workers," Cruz said. "This way the worker feels grateful to the boss, to the company, because she had a salary increase for not being part of the union."

How is it that even without the formal passage of a free trade agreement between the two countries, U.S. companies are being allowed to freely set up businesses in Mexico? Companies based in the U.S. are being given tax and tariff incentives, and access to cheap labor with the promise of exporting products back to the U.S. and other developed countries. Mexican President Gotari de Salinas argues that foreign investment is necessary to bring the Mexican economy up to those of the first world. Salinas has invited U.S. and Canadian companies into Mexico in order to generate an export economy to pay back a crushing \$100 billion foreign debt. While the U.S. ranks first and Mexico ranks third in national debt owed to foreign sources, the effects are different in each country. For Mexico and most developing countries, it is the primary obstacle to entering the world market on equal footing with the big players. So one by one, President Salinas is selling off Mexico's resources in order to raise funds to pay off the International Money Fund — attracting foreign investment with promises of cheap labor, land and resources. Even state owned industries are up for sale.

Salinas is the first of Mexico's presidents to endorse privatization, Cruz said, and many state-owned industries have been sold, industries started with money from what is now the national debt. "The national debt has cost us a lot," she continued. "The government is selling all [state-owned industries]. There are few left, like oil and electrical. Right now they're announcing railway transportation, city services and mail services to be sold."

Cruz said the money being used to buy these industries is coming from foreign investment. Mexico's telecommunications system was bought in February, 1991. Two-thirds was bought by AT & T and one-third by a French company, she said. "Mexico is giving all open doors to foreign investors — tax exemptions, low salaries, flexible foreign investment laws. Ten years ago these laws were very restrictive."

Since the president's party is in power in congress it is very easy to change the laws, Cruz said. Article 27, which gives community property to peasants, will be changed to open large tracts of



land for private ownership and Article 123, the labor law, will limit the unions. These are constitutional laws that were fought for and won during the Mexican Revolution. Now laws are being rewritten that will allow for the land to be taken out of control of the peasants, who depend on them for subsistence. They are being bought by the upper middle class or corporate interest, with the aid of foreign investors. Likewise the once powerful unions that protected workers rights are being legislated to take away control from the workers. This will make it easier for corporations to offer poor working conditions and low wages to the working class population who must take these jobs in order to survive.

"All these law changes are changing the country. We want the oil for Mexico. We want our unions to be strong, but Salinas wants to take these possibilities from us in order to open our country to foreign investment," said Cruz. "He doesn't care for the small industry. He's not protecting it. He doesn't care for our internal Mexican market or to attend to our need for education and housing and food. He's worried to give a good impression to Canada and the U.S. so they think that Mexico is in the first world."

The U.S. and Canada, you can be sure, have their own agenda. More specifically, multinational corporations in these two neighbors to the north are looking south to exploit workers and resources there, and with the help of conservative governments in power, are pushing to change international law that would make Mexico and other Latin American countries economic colonies of these two giants. In the U.S., we have witnessed the loss of unions, de-regulation and cut-backs in personnel, wages and benefits. Corporations argue that these restrictions are necessary to stay competitive within the global marketplace. This same argument is being used as the world market players attempt to once again carve out their territory: Germany in the European market, Japan in the Asian market, and the U.S. in the Americas.

The last roadblock to their inroads into underdeveloped countries is being removed through the Uruguay Rounds of talks of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade now taking place. Since 1948 the GATT has been a regulations organization governing international commerce. Its development principle protects the slower economies of developing countries from take-over by

countries with more powerful economies. The leaders of these world powers are lobbying for the removal of this principle that gave certain exemptions or privileges to third-world countries to allow for equal trading with countries with highly developed economies. These changes would allow transnational corporations to have open access to export, invest and set up corporations in third world countries, literally putting control of their economy into the hands of foreign interests.

Business leaders in the U.S. have formed the Multilateral Trade Negotiations Coalition. The MTN includes businessmen from American Express, General Motors, IBM, General Electric, Citicorp, Cargill, Proctor and Gamble, the US Council for International Business, American Business Conference, the National Association of Manufacturers, Coalition of Service Industries, International Investment Alliance and the Intellectual Property Committee. Intellectual property protection, services, investments and subsidies is the real issue in the GATT negotiations, former US Trade Representative William Brock said at the Group of Seven Summit in Houston in July, 1990. The G-7 countries are those involved in the GATT negotiations. If intellectual property protections are removed from third-world countries they would be obligated to grant patented rights and trademarks to transnationals in their countries. This would virtually create a dangerous worldwide monopoly system where powerful multinational corporations would control the use of technology and even ideas.

President Bush is pushing Latin American countries to adopt his Enterprise for the Americas Initiative that would create free-market, free-trade, export-oriented zones to attract U.S. dollars. His reasoning is that by sending low-wage, low-skilled production to Mexico, the market will be available to service these industries with machinery and technology from the U.S. thereby creating more high-tech, high-wage jobs for U.S. workers. So far that has not been the case.

The garment industry is a good example. Since 1989, when Salinas completely opened Mexico's borders to investors, there has been an anticipation that clothing factories from Asia and the U.S. will relocate there. Many already have, e.g. Levis and Jordach. El Paso was known as the jeans capital of the world until many of



these manufacturers moved across the border to Juarez. Now these same maquiladoras have already relocated to Aguas Calientes, near Mexico City, following even lower wages and more profit, not to mention getting further away from the bad publicity for plant closures in nearby El Paso. But the manufacture of sewing, knitting and weaving machines are no longer the domain of the U.S. as they once were. Instead, German, Japan and Swiss companies supply the world market with the necessary machinery for their factories and the U.S. has been left to produce only replacement parts for old machinery from 30 years ago.

Wages and jobs have been lost in the U.S. as a result of a decrease in manufacturing and corporate flight. The top one-fifth of incomes have gone up while the bottom three-fifths have gone down. While state and local politicians speak out against corporate flight, offering incentives to keep jobs and revenue in their tax area, many of these same officials support the Free Trade Agreement that would relocate jobs out of the country only to export those same products back to consumers in the U.S. who are left with less purchasing power. In Shawassee, Michigan, where unemployment is up to 12%, Electrowire displaced 500 workers when they moved their facilities to Mexico. When Pillsbury's Green Giant frozen-foods production moved from Watsonville, California to Mexico in anticipation of the Free Trade Agreement, hundreds of farm and cannery workers lost their jobs and growers in the area lost a market. Recently, American Airlines moved their maintenance facility from San Francisco Airport to the Tiajuana Airport. Hundreds of jobs were lost. Interestingly American Airlines bought Canadian Airlines and Mexicana Airlines was bought by private investors. With no tariffs, few controls, lower wages, weaker environmental and safety regulations the FTA has already lost over 27,000 jobs to corporate flight south, according to the AFL-CIO.

In Canada the FTA passed legislation in 1988 and has been in effect for the past two years. It has not met the promises given to Canadians during its controversial passage. Sandra Sorenson, Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said that Canada was told that the FTA would bring 225,000 jobs. Instead half a million jobs have been lost. Today a coalition of 3 to 4 million out of a population of 26 million is working to overturn

the FTA in Canada this election year. She said women's groups, trade unions, farms, churches and people of the first nations met at a tri-national meeting in 1991 to assure that the FTA once again becomes an issue in 1992.

"It's happening all over the world," Sorenson said. With the opening of the common market, European countries are negotiating to improve the quality of life there. "There is talk of an intra-national parliament to include trade unions and environmentalists. Economics will assure a side charter of human rights that guarantees the bottom moves up. Education and training is based on a realistic assessment that our best resource is human," she said. And while the Pacific Rim is coming up with their own model that will be high-tech and highly efficient, Canada, the U.S. and Latin America, with \$500 trillion of debt between them, has been called a coalition of losers, she added.

The environment and workers will be the big losers in a free trade agreement in the Western Hemisphere. The La Paz Agreement signed in 1983 by the U.S. and Mexico requires that all companies ship back wastes to the country of origin. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, fewer than one percent sent back hazardous wastes to the U.S. in 1988. In a study conducted by the National Toxic Campaign Fund in 1990, spot sampling taken from the border waterways of the Rio Grande River, the New River, the Tiajuana River and the Nogales Wash showed a high degree of toxins and carcinogens that were identical to ones being produced in the corresponding maquiladoras close by. For example, the New River starts out as a small channel south of Mexicali and widens as it passes through Mexicali and Calexico, California through Southern California's Imperial Valley and empties into the Salton Sea, California's largest lake. According to the study, over 100 toxic pollutants have been detected in the New River, known as America's dirtiest river, including PCB's, vinyl chloride and other carcinogens. Many of these come from the electronic circuit board maquiladoras in Mexicali, as well as the municipal dumps, many built along the New River drainage, where hazardous wastes end up. If these same U.S. corporations were on the U.S. side of the border, costs of toxic clean-up would cut into their profits. The Mexican government looks the other way



while maquiladoras dump hazardous wastes along the waterways, but the end result is that all of our water is being polluted. Another tragic example of how Mexican authorities turned their backs on dangerous toxic dumping is the Guadalajara sewer explosion this April that killed a now estimated one thousand people and destroyed hundreds of homes and businesses.

Workers also have no protection from safety hazards. Cruz said there are minimum security conditions for workers, no gloves, no inhalation masks or eye protection for workers exposed to radioactive and chemical materials. An explosion at an RCA factory in Matamoros in 1990 killed at least 10 people; many more were injured. And since workers get no health or disability benefits, they must continue to work in order to survive even with injuries or pain. Over half of Mexico's population of 85 million are minors. About 10% of them are working for lower than the minimum wage of \$3.50 a day and, along with all workers, are being exposed to toxic fumes in Mexico's factories.

As workers become displaced and the environment and workers rights are exploited, coalitions springing up across the continent are working to bring attention to the problem of multinational globalization of the economy. Worldwatch Institute estimated that in the developing countries over 100 million people belong to hundreds of these organizations to better the human condition. *Mujer a Mujer* is one such organization of women across the U.S. and Mexican borders. As Guille Quiroz of *Mujer a Mujer* said, the crises of Latin America being technically underdeveloped are inherited from colonization. The IMF, as one condition to a loan made in 1977, told Mexico they could not develop their dairy industry, said Quiroz. Now it is necessary to invite foreign investors to develop Mexico's agri-business, while peasants are losing land and government subsidies, rights guaranteed as a result of the Mexican Revolution. "Third-world countries have political independence, but not economic independence," said Quiroz. "We were colonies and now we are still under [foreign] economic control."

It is ironic that in this year of 500 years of resistance to the conquest of native people on this continent, we are experiencing another attempt at re-colonization, this time by multinational

corporations. "Native people have been going through this for 500 years," said Sorenson. "We as white people are just now being subjected to what they've been going through for 500 years."

George Watts, chief of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council and Chair of the Economic Development Committee of the Assembly of First Nations, put it another way. "In 1992 a number of countries are going to celebrate that we were colonized. And I don't see those issues as being any different than the Free Trade Agreement," he said. "And who pays the price? Well I know who. It's the people at the lowest end of the economic scale who bear all the burden so that these guys can have their money." Short-term solutions from the FTA are not acceptable to the way tribal people have lived on this land for thousands of years. "I come from a different culture," he said. "I don't care what I own. I don't give a damn if I wake up tomorrow with one thing in my pocket. But I care very much about my grandchildren and where they are going to be. Think about where your grandchildren are going to be."

Restructuring the world into the new order demands all of our participation since ultimately it is our future generations that are affected. History has shown that leaving it to wealthy business interest neither benefits our lives or the earth. It is a crucial issue that deserves more attention than is possible in the space allowed here. Maybe it's time to start examining what choices are being offered, and which ones we'll want to create for ourselves.



imani p. ajaniku

for cora helen smith hadden

Should've known then  
what it was like  
i was too little too young  
you changed your name from cora helen to helen  
when your grandfather died  
and you became colored  
in south carolina  
should've known then  
the voices in your silence  
the pain of having to walk miles  
for an education you knew you'd never use  
while other kids feeling the same pain  
hit you with rocks and sticks 'cause you  
looked different  
and folks wonder and talking 'bout  
which one hopped the fence  
'cause your skin was colored cream  
your eyes covered almonds  
your hair straight black & long  
your brothers like red earth  
how many hopped the fence?  
should've known then  
the benevolence in sweet cream  
the spirits in your rocking  
the agony of watching cowboys&indians  
and silently willing the indians to win  
just once  
and when they did the shame of wishing they didn't  
and feeling the devastation of your native sisters weeping  
for their men with bullets in their guts  
should've known then that you gave me  
your gift of sight

your own when you laughed  
your body when mine wouldn't  
and i wanted  
gifts  
the silence  
all of my medicines  
for the badlands  
gifts  
should've known then  
i was too little too young



## Why I'm Leaving the New College: A Woman of Color Confronts Feminist Psychology on its Racism

*A couple of weeks ago I was looking through the San Francisco Guardian. In the back of the magazines, near the personals, I saw three ads for Asian mail order brides. I wonder how on earth this practice of female sexual slavery could still be happening?! I am pained to imagine women, my sisters, being bought and sold out of a catalogue. My culture is a commodity. My female sexuality a marketable item. A supposedly progressive tabloid advertises it weekly.*

*Three months ago was the last time I talked to my white mother. In our conversation I divulged that I had fallen in love with someone. Her first reaction was, "is it a man or a woman?" Her second was, "I hope she's not a nigger!"*

*After my first two trimesters of graduate school, my grades reflected 5 A's and 3 B+'s. I am the only woman of color left in the only feminist psychology program in the country. The program advertised itself as diverse and multicultural. I attended because of this promise. One evaluation I received read, "[Jamie] took the role of spokeswoman for oppressed groups on many occasions. This tendency speaks to her sensitivity to issues important in therapeutic settings and possibly her need to play a challenging role in a group...her attitude was negative and angry."*

I'm leaving the New College and feminist psychology because I refuse to participate in the lies any longer. In my personal life I expect to deal with the effects of racism in my political work, my job and my family. However, in a graduate program, which I pay thousands of dollars for, and which promotes itself as culturally sensitive, it is unacceptable to be put in the constant position of educator as well as the victim of direct racist attacks. The evaluation above is only one example of the attacks I endured at the New College. I say attack because when you are invisible, ignored or

treated with condescension as a result of your race and your absolute refusal to let racist comments go by unnoticed, then you are under attack.

I have struggled for several months as the only woman of color (there was another woman from China who was in the class, but whose voice and opinion were silent, and who eventually dropped out), the only Asian Lesbian, the only Asian Lesbian Radical Cultural Feminist. I am isolated, alienated. I have no colleagues of color to do a *reality check* with when a racist comment is made in class. When I find myself in this situation, internalized racism has an even better chance of making it inside my head. When there is no opposition to a racist comment, it lays still in the air as truth.

I have had to rely on white professors for some understanding of my situation. I have opened myself up, even pleaded with a couple of teachers for some acknowledgement of the "set-up" I'm in as the only woman of color in a nearly all white school. They were not my first choice for allies, but my only choice. Eventually each teacher I confided in betrayed my confidence and lacked the integrity to examine their own racism before choosing to pathologize me.

*All of the professors have been white so far.*

*All of my professors have been white so far.*

*Eight of my eight professors have been white.*

*I am the only woman of color left in the program.*

*The only woman of color.*

*The only.*

One professor considers me "negative and angry." She also considers me a self-appointed "spokeswoman for oppressed groups." If I were teaching a class and I thought a student was taking on the role of spokeswoman for all oppressed people, I would question the ethics of my own teaching. I would self-reflect. I would look at my possible areas of failure. I would wonder if I wasn't representing oppressed people enough or with respect. I would ask that student why she took on that role. I wouldn't assume, psychoanalyze and/or ignore this behavior. Similarly, if a student had a negative and angry attitude, I would find that behavior disruptive and a deterrent to that student's learning and the classes'. I would find a way to reach out to that student and I



would make it **my job** to assist her in expressing her anger in an empowering way, not a *negative* way. I would ask her why she was so angry. If she was the only woman of color in a group of white women, I would probably know why she was angry. I wouldn't characterize that anger as negative, but as appropriate.

My experience at New College is not anything new for women of color in psychology or in other fields of higher education for that matter. In fact in this period of backlash against feminism and multicultural education, anything remotely resembling either is bashed. Although most schools aren't providing multicultural education, many backlash guard dogs have their ears perked up for the slightest mention of color. When color incidentally comes up, the lecturer is accused of being "overly PC" and reverse-racist. In actuality, there was less multicultural awareness in my psychology classes than there were accusations of reverse racism.

Besides my personal disappointment with the inaccessibility of the New College, there are grave clinical implications for the women who are currently being trained here and in other schools who claim a similar progressive goal. The overwhelming majority of what is currently being taught as "feminist" psychology is white women's psychology (Brown, Green, 1990) adopted from white male psychology. Current feminist therapy theory is a reflection of white scholarship, and exclusively white publishing with very few exceptions. Laura Brown, a widely published white lesbian author of feminist psychology writes:

"To a large degree, this failure of feminist therapy theorists to address the lives of all women, and its consequent difficulties with the 'diversity and complexity' criterion can be traced to the training of feminist therapists in traditional systems." (Brown, 1990).

As the only non-white woman in the only psychology program which explicitly calls itself "feminist" in the country, it was a painful process to decide if I should stay and continue with the white women in this program. One of my early suggestions to the director of the program was to have an anti-racism (also known as unlearning racism) workshop for the class in the first trimester. What followed was a lot of talk about a lack of money and difficulty in planning and it wasn't until the second trimester that an extra

workshop was offered to the students of feminist psychology. By then, it was too late for me. I had already decided to leave.

I had told the director that there was racist talk being targeted at me, e.g., I was called a reverse-racist for not over-valuing the white heterosexual middle-class experience as per usual in most college settings. I had complained that there should have been a workshop in the beginning of the program. I was told this program was still "in-process" and my information would be taken into account.

Students of color come into graduate school in a very different place than do white students. We go through a grueling process of finding our voice and claiming our right to be in schools that are not built to educate us. We go through four years of ordinary college stress compounded by the stresses of racism, classism and other white middle-class supremacy issues. We are seen as trouble-makers if we open our mouths to speak our truths — we are generally ignored unless an issue of our culture comes up, then we are supposed to sit up, smile a big grin and be happy to educate the class about the "Asian or Black or Native or Latina Experience." When Feminists of color enter graduate school we are already sick of being tokenized, misunderstood and ignored. We are tired of studying white male shit and having to argue about exclusion, racist interpretations, etc. We are tired of hearing our "sister" students ask us to "educate" them so that they can "understand us better" or so that *they* can better serve *our* communities. We expect that if we enter a feminist program there will be a general consciousness about race issues among the teachers and students. It's inexcusable that an anti-racism workshop was not planned ahead of time for a program of 23 white women, two women of color. If there is not awareness around racism for all students involved, students of color end up with the responsibility of naming it.

When women of color are the only ones calling out racism we are seen as "negative and angry." If we point out every time a racist comment is made, or when only white able-bodied straight middle class women are being considered in a study or a theory, then we are seen as taking on the spokesperson's role for all oppressed groups. Once women of color are accepted into a white program, we are expected to follow the same rules of colonization that our



families are forced to follow in the larger structure. Any dissent from that role is seen as out of line, unprofessional and "negative and angry." We are pathologized for wanting an education of anything but the white culture.

During our first class session covering cultural issues in feminist psychology, a white lesbian body worker said I was being "reverse-racist" by complaining about an all white reading list. "My clients are all white and I need to know about white women, I think it's 'reverse racist' of you to not see the value in that." My reply was amazingly cordial as well as bitter, "oh, and there's *always* been a lack of information about white women," I said. This position was one so familiar to me I wanted to spit right there on the carpet. Her real criticism of me was for feeling that I **had the right** to give input to a reading list. She was telling me that I could educate her when she asked for it, but don't speak "out of line" when she didn't! Her tone was one of "*How dare you,*" or "*Well, I never!*" She definitely let me know that I was disrupting the *real education*. The racism became clear as day to me, most of these women had not had an education in racism or feminism! They were operating at a level I remembered from undergraduate years, i.e., defensive and ignorant. I knew it would be an uphill battle. A battle I wished to avoid in grad school, primarily why I chose the New College.

My interest, and I suspect many other therapy students of color, is in learning to empower women of color in my community. This student that accused me of reverse racism was not interested in what I wanted to learn. She wanted to learn what her white supremacist forefather's had promised her. What shocked me about her reaction to my challenges in class about racist assumptions, is her enormous sense of entitlement to education. This entitlement comes from years of unnoticed privilege. Just as women of color internalize oppression, so do white women internalize entitlement. (Anzaldúa, 1990). "Racism is especially rampant in places and people that produce knowledge," writes Gloria E. Anzaldúa.

It is imperative that future clinicians get a working knowledge of racism, internalized racism and other oppressions as well in order to be able to do work with clients of color and ethical work

with white people. Programs must be set up to train clinicians to be able to dismantle the powerful weapon of racism. However, when programs are all white, curriculum is predominantly white, and students are all white, the likelihood of the dissemination and receiving of such information is unlikely.

Although San Francisco is a city filled with thousands of immigrants from all over the world, in particular Asian immigrants, psychological consequences that arise from immigration were not discussed. Information on Asian women's sexuality in America (where Asian women are still bought and sold by white men) was not taught in our human sexuality class, though there is great work out on its subtle and damaging effects (Chan, 1988). Identity issues of bi-racial clients were not discussed, though this is an ever increasing population in the State of California and around the country (Root, 1990). Clearly it is the white perspective that is valued. Like the body worker said, all her clients are white, they're the ones that are going to pay a private therapist for their work, it is their psychologies that are important. The message we get in learning about non-white cultures once in a 12-week class, is that these cultures are 1/12th as important as white culture. We also get the message that it is rare that one would work with these non-white people. The clearest of all messages is that the curriculum at New College is set up with the white student and white client in mind.

What this all adds up to is disempowerment and disengagement of women of color in feminism and psychology. It foreshadows even more culturally insensitive therapists that will hit the field in a couple of years. There is nothing feminist about either of these conclusions, and asking the only woman of color left in the program what to do about it is offensive, lazy and unfair. Until programs of higher education begin to realize the necessity of multi-cultural educations, there will continue to be more white grad school graduates and more colored grad school drop outs. The feminist therapy field will continue to suffer for this lack of diversity as will Immigrant, Refugee, Black, Asian, Native, Latina, mono-lingual, etc. clients who are in need of trained help from people of their own culture.

This woman of color however, does not believe it is her responsibility to spend her grad school education educating white



and straight women on their -isms. I leave the New College while it strangles itself with false promises and lousy practitioners (with a few exceptions). I leave feeling negative and angry, (**negative and angry!**). I refuse to pay to be subjugated and marginalized any longer.

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\*\*\* This paper is dedicated to Gloria Anzaldúa for giving me the strength to take actions in my life, and to Lisa M. Horan for her patience and love during my experience at New College. \*\*\*

Sapphire

poem for jennifer, marla, tawana & me

1.

She brought it on herself ...  
it was her own fault ...  
she did it to herself ...

Jennifer Levin was murdered by Robert Chambers in Central Park. His attorney said Ms. Levin had provoked her killer by violent sex play.

Marla Hanson, a model, refused to relate sexually to her landlord and demanded that he return her security deposit. He, a white man, responded by hiring a black to slash her face with a straight razor. The black man's attorney asserted Marla Hanson was a racist.

Tawana Brawley said she was abducted and raped by six white men. She was found in a trash bag smeared with dog shit, 'KKK' and 'nigger' scrawled on her chest. Because she had a boyfriend in jail, liked to party and had an allegedly abusive stepfather it was insinuated she made the whole thing up to avoid being beaten by her parents.

i am thinking about the scratches on Robert Chamber's face and hands. a witness would later testify he looked like he'd been in an industrial accident. him sitting across the road on a wall watching as her body was discovered.

her sister said, "Robert Chambers killed her once and the press killed her all over again a second time."

Marla Hanson, Tawana Brawley and Jennifer Levin  
twice victims  
smeared and cut open  
by *The Post*, *Daily News* and *New York Times*



a woman must be a good girl, virgin, myth of a thing in order to be raped; any other kind of woman brought it on herself, did it do herself, it was her own fault, her own fault ...

2.

it was not her fault  
*it was not her fault*  
it was *not*

he was not titillated into killing her  
he was not provoked into killing her  
he did not slash her face as a social  
    protest against racism  
he slashed her face because he'd been  
    reduced to the level of protoplasm, alive  
    with no purpose but to smear hate and  
    defeat like feces on a child's body

Tawana  
Tawana  
Tawana

Lisa Stienberg  
Lisa Stienberg  
you did not talk too loud  
wet the bed too much  
there is nothing you did  
it is not your karma  
Myo ho re ge kyo  
the cause is sexism  
its effect is murder, rape and child abuse  
  
because you have a boyfriend in jail  
because you are reactionary or even racist  
because you like to fuck  
its not just cause for the life  
to be choked out of you  
for a razor to slice your face  
to the bone

women, it could be you traveling home from your boyfriend's  
    apartment or jail cell

it could be you demanding your money back from a crooked landlord

it could be you wanting romance on a starry night in the park

i've been raped. i am afraid of that happening again,  
what could i do but be silent?  
the first question they ask will be about my past  
and what could i say?  
I *am* that type of girl.  
it is documented and known i have been with  
many many men for many many reasons.  
how could *i* be raped?

3.

go back for the bones of the Hillside Strangler's victims  
those are my bones  
bleaching white  
under a California sun  
a teenager on the run

go back for the arms of that 15 year old girl, hacked off, falling  
on a motel room floor  
her blood mingling with the blood  
of blind prostitutes in Hong Kong  
lined up in an alley full of fever  
and sightless eyes

go back for my bones, arms, eyes  
years ago i sat next to a white woman  
with blonde hair and she told me how six black men  
picked her up, raped her, stuck a '38'  
up her vagina and threatened to  
'shoot it off' in her.  
i went home to write her story  
because she couldn't.  
but my pen froze on the page  
i could not see clear to tell  
the truth  
because i wanted to protect  
'the victims' who were her perpetrators.  
but now my pen flows with the rage  
from her blue eyes, the amputated scream of  
Tawana's brown eyes and the blood of that  
15 year old



girl armless in California.  
i have no one to protect but women,  
let these men keep clutching their balls  
crying about how hard it is to be a man.  
just give me a wash cloth so i can wash  
Tawana Brawley's face,  
a pen so i can finally appease my goddess  
who has been waiting 10 years  
for me to write about the white woman  
with blonde hair taken for a ride,  
a gun shoved up her vagina.

my bones scatter the earth  
my tears are the blood of too many women  
my teeth fall out my mouth when i don't speak

i know my bones.  
i could recognize them  
anywhere!  
and they're there  
bleaching white  
under a California sun.  
the victims were poor women  
the victims were black women  
the victims were prostitutes  
no one missed them  
dogs discovered their  
bones  
bleaching  
white  
under the  
sun

4.

what do you think about when death approaches?  
i just remember scratching the side of my leg  
while hands tightened around my throat as i slid  
down the wall of my father's house into darkness.

my sister's scream loosened the hands around my neck  
then there was air, light, life.

i don't even remember the guy's name,  
he was just playing around he said,  
wanted to see what it was like to choke someone,  
didn't mean to hurt me, he said.

what could i say, do?

I wasn't supposed to be home anyway,  
i was playing hookey from school,  
i could hear my father's voice:

what were you doing with a boy  
in the house?

why weren't you in school?

who is he?

why'd you let him in?

if you hadn't of ...

if you hadn't of ...

if you hadn't of ...

as far as i know those fingers that squeezed my throat 25 years ago  
are still free, all the men who hurt me are still free, some are  
politicians now, famous singers ...

my first boyfriend slapped my head like a ping pong ball, hitting it  
back n forth, back n forth

could i tell my father? my father who also slapped my head like a  
ping pong ball.

no, i couldn't tell him because in all the days of my life i have  
never seen my father or either of my brothers strike another man.  
never ever.

i remember my father saying 'yes suh', 'no suh', stressing the importance  
of dressing correctly, finishing school, keeping the house clean and  
disposing of sanitary napkins properly.

i knew he would not protect me and did not respect me. i was supposed  
to be grateful he didn't kill me.

if i had told the police about the fingers choking me? would the fact  
my father abused me invalidate my accusation?

because i fucked in cheap motels, back seats, bushes, beaches —  
did i deserve to be bones?



5.

use my bones as spears—  
whittle, carve, sharpen.  
let them be knives  
thru the hearts,  
razors chopping off testicles.  
let them impale our killers  
and gouge out their eyeballs.  
and when the land bleeds clean  
of them,  
use my bones  
to build a house  
where we may heal  
and unlearn the patriarchy.  
a house where my father  
cannot come  
unless he comes  
for forgiveness.

Suzanne

## Don't Say Grace — A Movement

Don't say Grace  
Tonight  
In the memory of a People  
Denied.

Some say that Grace is the legacy of my ancestors  
Stolen from home fires far away, murdered,  
Torn from loved ones, raped  
Of human dignities, their ancient tongues  
Beaten  
Into silence; enduring brutalities they did not understand,  
To see their ways disintegrate until they became only pieces  
In a mosaic of untouchable distant memories  
Of Home.

It was with Grace that I sat in school,  
Forced to read aloud the passage  
By an "anthropologist" who claimed  
A parcel left untouched in the center of an African village  
Proved that my relatives were too savage  
To know they could steal,  
Too untrainable to understand the concept of  
Possession.  
That they knew no human  
Could truly possess  
Another,  
Must have been so insignificant  
As to escape official record.

Don't say Grace  
Because it is a tool of oppression  
Used to suppress the right to feel robbed; to deny anger —



As if by this Grace  
We should not revolt  
But remain silent witness to the double standard  
That allows one people to write a history of their whims  
While another is bound  
By Grace.

They say we exhibit Grace —  
An infinite ability to forgive all grievous sins —  
As if we are ignorant  
Of our right to demand  
Accounts be settled  
Now.

With all future generations in heart and mind,  
In memory of a People  
Don't say Grace  
Tonight.



*Stop AIDS*  
Laura Irene Wayne



## Making Magic...

**m**aking magic with words  
i'm told  
soothes anger  
opens doorways  
allows mountains to move  
soft hands brushing away hurt  
holding and caressing  
pressing into the aching  
moving away earth  
so soft, so unbroken  
like wet clay,  
red is the earth of your body  
shining and soft in the sun  
like clay so smooth and maroon  
you are indian, and like me  
red and dark from the sun, we're often told  
it's because we're indians, "red-skins"  
a miracle the skin color shows thru  
after all these years  
  
yes a few of us are left  
and we are multiplying  
preparing for another day  
when we'll be mesmerized by dreams  
dreams becoming reality  
our longing never forgotten.

## The Weaver

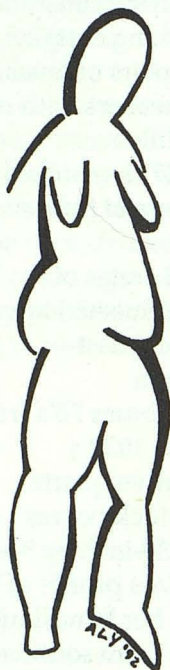
She sits graced with a mane of woven hair  
Sending her hands zipping in a trance through  
The perfectly bound string cage of the loom  
Working in rhythm with a subtle moon.  
Tuesday she often keeps for mending, or  
Untangling webs. Sunday is always rest.  
She schedules each day of work in patterns  
Hidden in her solitary cocoon.  
Alone every night she retreats to  
her dim room that flickers in shadows of  
Candle flames. She then strokes the waiting life  
Trapped, watchful, and eager between her legs.  
Her fingers guiding pleasure with the same  
Soft rhythmic skill as weaving on her loom.



## Moving In

Just say y-e-s  
and I will come  
live with you  
bringing only  
84 houseplants needing  
an eastern exposure  
a 30-piece weight-  
lifting set  
5 sets of South African liberation  
sheets with matching curtains  
9 pairs of lavender  
sneakers with orange laces  
23 stuffed armadillos  
147 unmatched earrings  
1178 Lesbian Feminist buttons  
on-a-rope  
12 crates of my  
unfinished novel  
4 six-foot ceramic breast  
plates from Oregon  
65 blues 78's from  
the 1930's  
750 pounds of native quartz  
crystal from Kentucky caves  
a 30-inch by 51-inch stained  
glass profile of Whoopi Goldberg  
my cat Kiku and her hand-knitted  
mouse collection from southern France  
2 reams of patchouli-scented  
stationery

a trunk of silk panties  
in your favorite flavors  
every note, letter, card, song  
and pressed flower you've sent me  
and all the collard greens,  
cornbread, red beans and chitlins  
you could possibly ever  
want to eat!



Aly Kim



## When It Was Broken

Cora Danby had a voice that made a body believe in sin. It was like tidewater in the summer, hidden and murky and surprisingly deep, buzzing and lazy-making, discovered in a strange twist of a muddy river. It slid over the mind like velvet and muffled the movement there. It made promises. Anything you want, it said. Anything you need.

Her voice was as naughty, as needed, as certain fingers on certain thighs, the glowing end of a cigarette in half-light gone blue in a small, close room at the top of a staircase. There was the feel of silk on the tongue, the taste of lipstick, the soft sound of a throat closing in the middle of a whispered name. When Cora sat on a stool with a microphone before her and a band behind her, with the smoke in the air and the smoke in her lungs and voice, it felt like the meaning of things could be found in slow, undulating movements in warm close spaces. Everyone loved Cora's voice.

Cora felt that it was a gift from some ancient someone in her family, or maybe not — maybe from some god or from Satan himself (most likely, actually) or maybe not; it suited her fine. It wasn't like some of the other women's voices, the ones that charged out of wide mouths and chests that worked as hard as a blacksmith's bellows. The gospel and blues voices. That wasn't her voice. Cora needed a microphone. Cora needed something to hold on to, a stool to sit down on and soft piano behind her. Because when she sang, she thought about the women half-seen from where she sat under the lights. She sang for the surprised and slightly smirking look they wore when they found themselves under her eyes and knew what they saw, when they knew that they were the ones Cora was courting and how funny it was to see the men believe what men needed to believe about a woman who made sex out of sound. And if no woman considered the invitation in the voice like a tidewater, did it matter, really, when everyone, man and woman, stumbled into a Houston night feeling like they've had a taste of something very sweet?

Not even to Cora did it matter. Not when she could sing and feel her knees grow weak. She performed three sets on the weekends, two on every other night but Monday.

Until her voice broke. Some of the singers at the joint said that she never took enough honey and lemon and bourbon in her tea. Others decided that a voice like hers couldn't handle the strain of that many performances a day, a week. It was a Tuesday night, a light crowd, drizzling outside. Cora was in the middle of her second set, only Ben behind her, whispering on the bass keys of the piano. Her voice was in its lowest register, husking at the hazel eyes just left of center staring back. Cora went from low and jagged to flute-smooth, trying to inch over the skin of her fan, knees trembling as the eyes responded, becoming heavy-lidded and sliding, slowly closed as Cora's voice became more and more soothing. Then it happened. Cora felt it, a giving way, like a fiddle string strung too tight for too long just under the bow. A tightness so sharp and sudden in her throat that she imagined a cloth tearing. And she was so good, so perfect a singer that she stopped, mid-note, knowing what it was, knowing that that night, alone in her bed, would be the longest night she would ever have, and waved Ben silent behind her. She left one perfectly pure, unfinished note floating in the air. She stood under the stage lights, still, watching Hazel Eyes, watching the vague shapes that were her audience.

She was not tall, not pretty, but medium height and very brown, dark brown, with eyes the same shade as her skin, lit up and glowing. She looked well-taken care of, the kind of look that appeals because it suggests that this woman could take care of someone very well. Cora said, "Thank you," and remained standing. She listened with the audience to her new, broken voice but didn't sigh the way her audience did when it heard the rasp, the gravel in her throat. She waited one moment more, then left the stage. She was halfway to her dressing room when she heard the first clapping. She was staring into her mirror when the applause really started. It fell on her ears like a shattering window. The audience wasn't sure what had happened. What it did know was that no one could leave the stage the way Cora could, all grace and refined swagger. No one would ever leave the stage the way Cora did that night.

Cora got a job at an insurance company for Negro longshoremen. The salary was excellent and the hours were good. She worked in an office. When she spent nearly every night for the first two weeks pulling the sequins out of her club dresses and lowering hems or sewing them on, turning them into day job numbers, she



reminded herself that it was her voice, her ruined voice, that got her the job. Her employer, a rotund high-yellow from New Orleans, heard that voice and forgot about her dark brownness, the hardness in her eyes, the frizz in her hair. He forgot she couldn't type. He imagined investors hearing that voice and thinking about corner clinches and close dancing and strange beds. Sex one could indulge in harmlessly. But Cora knew that there would certainly be no more singing. She tried to in the shower once but the sound reminded her of the squawk a sailor made at the joint one night after taking a punch in the throat. No, she would never sing again. But she could talk some trash now, with the tatters of her vocal cords rasping like a temptation. She could answer a phone like no one could. The stage she missed. And the women. But she didn't let herself think about that.

She never went to the clubs. Too many people knew her. She moved to a different ward in the city once she got her paycheck. She went home alone. She didn't play her records. She bought a secondhand typewriter (with her second and third paychecks), and spent evenings teaching herself how to type. She became very good. She only dreamed of Hazel Eyes once. She dreamed that Hazel had been waiting for her outside the club the night her voice had broken and that she held Cora's face in her hands and begged to be spoken to until Cora did and didn't stop even when Hazel started to kiss her under a street lamp that sputtered into darkness. Cora stood in the shower down the hall from her apartment when she woke from that dream, feeling beaten and tired and lost, knowing that had Hazel Eyes really asked, she would have remained silent.

Mr. Mason, her employer, was pleased with her new typing skills. He often asked her to type listings and ads for the Negro papers in his private realty business. She took this work home since Mr. Viscombe, Mason's senior insurance partner, made it clear that while Cora's free time was her own, her business day belonged to the insurance company exclusively. Cora and Mason often met on Saturdays to write letters, print ledgers and keep the deeds in order. Cora liked Mason well enough. Mason though Cora was quaint and was interested only in her voice and her typing speed. They got along.

On such a Saturday in June, two months after she left the club, Cora opened the office, piled the day's business into three neat stacks, and waited for Mason's heavy footsteps in the hall outside.

After twenty minutes, Cora began to pace, then stopped when she remembered how she hadn't managed to sit still these days and how much that annoyed her. She used to be very calm, and very poised. Cora leaned against her desk, lit a cigarette, and stared out the window at the summer rain. It was as dark as night at ten thirty in the morning. She blew smoke rings at the pane on her second cigarette. Still no Mason.

An hour later, Cora sat down at her desk and rifled through the stacks of paper to see if she could manage to get something done on her own. There was nothing. Mason had planned to dictate responses to the latest correspondence. She could do nothing without him. She wasn't good at writing letters alone. But then, she wasn't good at sitting still either so she put a sheet of paper in the typewriter and started to type.

*My name is Cora Danby but I was born Cora Mae Johnson of Little Rock, Arkansas, 1971. I broke my voice singing to the girls at Bobbie's. I don't sing to anybody now, not even to me. It hurts so bad. It hurts so bad. Nothing's the same. Everything is just dead now. I wish I was dead.*

Cora stood and went to the window. She put her head in her hands and made low moaning sounds as she cried. It didn't last long. Ten minutes. Then she went back to the desk.

*I cried just now. I haven't cried in twelve years. The last time I cried was when Sonny, my cousin that lived with us, died. The sheriff and some other white men took him out of the field at dusk and I saw them. They put him in the back of the pickup and they drove towards the crick and I saw Sonny cry when my brother Lucas grabbed my arm so hard and pulled me into the tool shed. I know what they did to him because I could smell the burning while we hid low in the shed and that ants crawled all over my arms. We came out at night and Joseph Brown and Zeke Forsher went and cut Sonny down. My daddy put Sonny in some sacking so me and my momma and Susannah and Lucas wouldn't see what was left. The sacking smelled like gasoline. It all went like clockwork. That's how bad it was then. It's not good now.*

Cora read the new part out loud and felt tight in her chest. She pulled out that sheet and put in another.



*I'm gonna get me that hazel-eyed girl if it's the last thing I do with myself. I'm gonna find her and whisper in her ear because I know I can talk some nonsense with this voice of mine. Won't know what hit her; she won't know at all. First I'll tell her some story, then ask her what she means to do with that cherry in her fingers — like I don't know what she was up to. If she's got some other girl or some boy ... It won't matter. What I've got is better than what they've got, even though all I've got is broken.*

The phone rang. It was Mason. Problem with the wife. Schedule conflict. Cora didn't bother to give him her usual mild-mannered scolding for his absent-mindedness. He offered to pay her for the three hours she'd been waiting. She accepted and politely got him off the phone. She got up to lock the door, then sat back down.

*I'll tell her that I saw her eyes from the stage. That's true. And I'll tell her that eyes aren't any softer than hers and lids don't close any softer than hers do. I'll tell her that I like the size of her knuckles and the white half moons on her fingernails and the shape of her chin. I'll press my lips against her and sing without so much as a single note. She'll never feel what's broken in me as broken. She'll want to hear my voice.*

Cora felt tired. She rolled the two sheets with the neat black letters and put them in the pocket of her blazer, under her raincoat. She went home, put a sheet of paper into her typewriter and stared at it. Her mind felt empty. She spent the day feeling tired and empty and strange as the rain turned into a thunderstorm.

## Not Just Another One of Those Identity Poems

*For Lanuola*

### **W**ho Am I?

I am a Woman  
Whose Korean given name translates  
into "Beautiful Jade" —  
a polished, translucent stone.  
I was born in Tae Han Min Guk  
the Land of the Morning Calm,  
somewhere  
south of Pon Mun Jom,  
in my native tongue —  
the 38th Parallel, to you.  
I became the human version  
of an imported product  
stamped "MADE IN KOREA."

### **Who Am I?**

I am adopted — a Paper Daughter,  
exported at the age of five  
under "Alien" immigration status  
to the U.S., as the 1,000th  
adopted Korean child,  
during the first of four waves  
of the international adoption industry  
to a suburban, upper middle class  
Wonder bread white family.  
I was given a new Anglo first name  
and given all of the white washed,  
privileged trappings  
and social conditioning,  
which choked and gagged me  
into silence  
for twenty years.



### **Who Am I?**

I am a woman, a woman of color — born  
in the Year of the Rat,  
but I celebrate a fictitious birthday,  
whose date is unknown,  
with a birth name and a family name  
whose origins are unknown —  
scrawled on incomplete, faded,  
undocumented records.  
But they are all  
I have to call my own.

### **Who Am I?**

I am a lesbian — strong,  
angry and powerful  
who struggles  
in the heterosexist, misogynist  
and homphobic trenches  
  
against queer-bashing,  
separatism, stereotyping,  
the "Asian Model Minority" myth,  
the plexi-glass ceiling,  
the mail order bride industry,  
exotica erotic,  
sexploitation and fear.

### **Who Am I?**

I am an artist and wanna-be writer  
who believes writing is a political act  
where words are power  
and power is knowledge  
and knowledge is the weapon  
to battle for political change  
and social change.

### **Who Am I?**

I am the youngest of four children of a family  
who will never know  
my secrets, my pride, my strength,

my pain, my struggles  
and my power.

Sticks and stones haven't broken  
my bones,  
but names have always hurt me.

I am one who has experienced  
maternal separation, profound loss,  
cultural displacement,  
emotional trauma and transformation.  
I fight every day for survival.

### Who Am I?

I am the small child you see  
with the haunting look  
in my eyes of longing and aching  
to belong to myself.

I am also the adopted Korean  
lesbian womanist,  
who is doing it for myself  
through working, writing and speaking  
through process, growth and celebration.



Pacal Barraza



Sun Dance, AIM, and  
Wolves came dancing.  
It was not good thing to  
say you were Lakota, so  
off to boarding school  
your Ina and Daddy sent.  
You don't spek like you com  
off the Rez now or you  
won't be heard gez nother  
swat I said shit in front of  
that nun gez just wanted  
to use the English  
language, shoulda said  
chesly, gez wouda gat a  
swat any way.  
Gez now every one even  
that ole fly on a horse  
Usake of a nun want to be  
Lakota.  
Gez jus don get it even the  
horse has to swat it self.  
Gez jus glad I don have to  
make a choice.

## cuentos invertidos

1.

Tio Lázaro was a quiet, timid man. Dad used to say he was not a Real Man, and I think only I understood what that meant even then: he dressed mostly in pastels and, unlike the other uncles, never brought a woman to our New Year's Eve parties, never finished his 12 grapes, never gulped his cidra. Dad, needless to say, clarifies that Lazaro never quite gulped anything at all, always only most gently sipping his coffees ("y, si lo dejás, decafeinado"), refusing beer or hard liquor and, to top it all off, allergic to cigars.

Thus I comprehend why no one ever spoke of my cousin Luna, why her only displayed photograph was the one taken soon after her "quinces," her hair artificially curled like Shirley Temple's, blouse and skirt exaggeratedly silky grey, while the others — boyish haircut, beautifully muscular face looking down as if there was something to be ashamed of — were hidden at the bottom of the "memories" drawer next to her letters from Philadelphia, New Jersey, New York pleading for money, never answered.

Where are you now, cousin Luna? Where are you now who are more than a cousin, a sister? Now, after Mariel: hope in America land of the sexually free of the pursuit of happiness common welfare alleged domestic tranquility: are we something our adopted fathers, mothers did not foresee? *that statute of liberty with arms open to political refugees and U-turn signals signs for Lesbians?*

Prima, we are doubly exiled.

I have read, however, *some of us are threatening* we can reappropriate this landlessness *make it self-empowering?* claim ourselves infinitely nomadic, for instance—like Amazonic wanderers:

post-national, incorrigible  
unterritorializable



For his Catholic mother's sake we call it liver disease and send him GET WELL cards assuring — with patience, prayer and effort — improvement: he'll be out fishing on that pier in no time; papi can't wait to savor another of his incomparable *pargos*. But Tio Lázaro is Dying of AIDS. And the *viejita* is starting to worry, wants to know the connection between eating and cooking utensils and liver problems, why his doctor has forbidden use of aluminum, for instance, or prescribes hypoallergenic detergents, pillows, why his clothing needs to be washed separately, his dishes, why the brain is scanned and daily B12 injections and monthly routine bloodwork. What is the connection between that liver and her *muchacho's* sudden incoordination, moments of memory loss, headaches that respond to no pills, herbs or needles? He has never had much alcohol.

Mami, the unofficial family Doctorcita (because of her alleged degree in biology, because of her command of the Spanish language, rhetoric — can sound to everyone [but me, apparently] like an expert on any/everything) can only answer "Mi *Viejita*, the doctors know what they are doing," cannot even confabulate something about the role of the liver in detoxification: that the doctors are trying to minimize the amount of work his organ has to do by reducing the numbers of toxins it has to deal with, for example. Can only say, hanging up, what a good son he has been "no lo merece," has never brought men into the house he lives in with his mother. No one, in fact, has ever seen him with a man. So discrete. So dedicated to his *viejita*.

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"Cuentos Invertidos" is excerpted from a collection of prose pieces I am currently working on about the Cuban/american/lesbian experience of multifold alienation/displacement/exile.

## Freedom to Travel

Whose land is it anyway? The control borders to the Western "greats" get tough, tough, and tougher. This may include travel into Europe, Canada, Australia, The USA, New Zealand (and often those African, Asian, North and South American nations controlled by either of the "greats").

There is little rhyme or reason for the actions of locking one out of a country. Or out of one's own country. Or the humiliating property and body searches that arbitrarily take place. Yet it happens.

Is it that I am Indian? ...African? ...Black? ...Non-European? ...That I may be a great *example maker* to deter others "of my kind" from travel? ... That I may wish to "overstay"? It is all discretionary, based on immigration laws and on the officers' subjective views: interpretation of the laws, own prejudices and/or boredom. The reasons given (if any) are often rather absurd. It happens daily and *can* happen to any one of us.

Immigration control is based on racist, nationalist, imperialist, and capitalist ideologies, and participation in higher cost travel packets is no real security against blatant racist, inhumane acts. SPEAK OUT! Share tales of horror that sisters and brothers encounter each day. Immigration control is war on our bodies, our souls and our spirits.

### Did You Know ...

- Until recent years, women from the Indian subcontinent were routinely subjected to vaginal inspections at Heathrow airport, London England. This was to test for "virginity" and was rationalized as a need to assure that the women were unmarried. Active campaigning has challenged this brutal dehumanizing and illegal policy though this practice is still reported to occur.

- Black women traveling to the "Decade of Women Conference" (1985) in Nairobi, Kenya have shocking horrors: One woman was mistaken for Islamic and kidnapped; women were denied entry into England and Kenya though bearing forward travel airline tickets; women were subjected to cruel and humiliating



searches (including vaginal searches) on return to the USA. Yes, US born and with US passports.

- Immigration bans exist in some countries (including the USA) on those with HIV/AIDS. In some countries those suspected of having AIDS are subject to harassment, including testing at boarders. In the UK, Black women have recently been named as a target group.

- There are holding facilities near most port of entry airports. Persons may be taken there for days, weeks or longer when denied entry and may be denied the right to notify someone of their whereabouts. One may then be transferred to mental or prison facilities for indefinite periods. Often the air carrier may be required to reboard the passenger and take her forward to its next destination or to return her to the original place of board.

Once one has passed the immigration control of the country, there is customs control. Living in the United States, one understands customs control to be of search and seizure of illegal items such as meats, fruits, drugs, plants and money (big bucks of \$10,000 or more). In reality it is another brutal control mechanism often used to systematically harass Black travelers returning from abroad.

One scenario of a recent welcome home via customs: An African-American woman of about forty deplaned from a seven hour journey (London-JFK in NY) to a rather swift pass through immigration as a US passport holder (lines were longer for non-US passport holders).

She encountered the routine questions — *How long were you away? What was the nature of your journey? What is your occupation? Are you returning from India?* Her replies were: "Six weeks," "Conferences," "Health Worker," "No, from London, England," respectively. The immigration officer, a young Black man, continued his set questions. *Did you travel to India? have you every traveled to India?* "No. Though I'd like to."

She was aboard Air India and her ticket clearly showed that she boarded the flight in London. "*Thank you and welcome home*" said the immigration officer.

On approaching the stationary customs officer who generally inquires as to whether one is carrying food, she was swiftly intercepted by a young woman customs inspector, who might identify as a "woman of color."

The inspector asked questions that one expects to be asked at immigration control. *What is your occupation? What is your monthly salary? How can you afford to travel on that salary? Are you traveling with someone? Are you the only person your organization sends to conferences? Who are you traveling with? Where did you travel besides London? How long were you in India? Do you have excess of \$10,000 on you? Who are you traveling with? How much money do you have on you?*

These questions were being fired at the woman as the inspector took every stitch of the woman's belongs from her bags. The inspector occasionally queried, *Where did you buy these?* She made comments of "everything but the kitchen sink," "more trinkets and papers than clothes."

Leaving the contents of the woman's luggage exposed, the inspector requested the woman to bring the bag containing her money, and to follow her to a room for further inspection. Inside the room the woman was told to spread eagle. She questioned the inspector as to whether this was a strip search. The inspector replied "*No, it's a pat down*" and patted the woman up and down, including the crotch. The inspector then demanded that the woman drop her pants (trousers and underwear) so that she could see under the sanitary napkin. The woman further queried as to the reason for the search and was told that some people hid money (?) in different places.

The woman was then told to remove one shoe for inspection. Humiliated and violated, the woman removed both shoes. She was then told by the customs inspector that she only needed to examine one shoe. *One shoe?*

She stated her feelings of humiliation, woman to woman, indicating that she found these actions degrading and was embarrassed to expose her bloods on demand. The inspector told her that women travelers entering the US are subjected to this treatment daily. She concluding, "*It is done routinely as part of my job.*"

The customs inspector thanked the woman for being "so cooperative" and said that she hoped the woman would *soon feel better*. The inspector filled in the white form and returned the woman's ticket and passport.

A young energetic semi-human customs officer ... A woman with a job ... A woman with a job of humiliating other women ...



The traveling woman is a seasoned traveler ... a human rights activist generally prepared for the worst encounter. Yet, this inhumane treatment had never happened to her in all her travels. She recalls this experience with bitterness, anger BUT refuses to be silenced.

What then is the strategy for passing through their "golden gates" as an individual traveler and keeping one's dignity and sanity?

Be prepared (whether traveling in a group or alone) to answer routine questions: *How long to you plan to stay? What is the nature of your visit (business or pleasure)? Where will you stay? With relatives? What is your occupation?* If you are traveling with a mate or partner, the immigration officer may interrogate you separately and look for discrepancies in your stories, no matter how minor. It is important that you and your traveling partner are consistent in your travel objectives.

*Is there someone meeting you? Make sure there is* —it is a safety net, if you are held. *You seem to travel a lot* (an unwritten, though tightly enforced crime for a Black person, especially a woman). *Why don't you just stay in one place?* This implies illegal activity rather than acknowledging individual rights to mobility.

#### A FEW DO's

- Prepare for your journey by reviewing the laws, i.e. entry requirements, money, food, residence restrictions, etc.
- Review and understand Conditions of Agreement forms of charter, tours, and/or courier companies before signing and paying monies.
- Keep travel documents secure and together. Review for dates of expiration, etc.
- Have a name and contact number for legal assistance or have support. Agree in advance that they will accept a collect call.
- Carry a letter from your employer clearing indicating your required/expected return to work date or the nature of your work-related travel.

Above all else, stay calm. Place *blue* before you and walk with your spirit guide(s)—with head held high and answer questions put to you confidently.

## Subway Scenes

A sister sermonizes on the number 3 train.  
Her demons have chased her away from herself  
To Jesus.

He is her lover man.

"I don't care if you think I'm crazy!"

(Maybe she really isn't.)

"I know Jesus loves me!"

We listen,

An unwilling congregation,

feigning indifference.

Nobody moves away.

The brother boxes,

Flitting in and out of the corners of our eyes,

Shaking himself loosely from the shoulders,

Wrenching his neck round and round.

Shadow

Boxing

Shuffling like Ali,

Smiling, grimacing at what he sees

Reflected in the window of the moving train.

We ease slowly away.

Afraid to attract his attention

With any sudden movements.

A man discusses Danielle Steele

With himself,

Pounding his chest, waving his book,

Yelling unintelligible literary criticism.

he cries and shakes his head.

"What a terrible thing life is,"

His gestures say.

We wonder: What does he have in that paper bag?

We move to the end of the car.



At 14th Street, tall, loose-limbed teens  
Swagger in, looking left and right.  
Loud and filled with themselves,  
They banter, tease, curse each other,  
Grabbing at their meager cocks.  
They are boys.

Big boys  
Who travel in crowds out of fear.  
Who can tell what might happen to a lone Black boy  
Marked for play,  
Marked for death.  
If harmed, the only response would be:  
"What was he doing there?"  
They might look back.  
'Cause boys will be boys  
Or something else.

A young man excuses himself for the 100th time.  
Clicking tongues, sucking teeth,  
Sighs and vacant stares greet his request.  
We have no change to spare.  
A woman old with loss,  
Caked in poverty,  
Clutching a used paper cup,  
Reaches out with grubby hands.  
She has no food today,  
Can we help her?  
Purses are opened  
Hands reach into pockets.  
(What would it take  
For our mothers to beg like this?)

Leaving the train, we scramble like rats  
From a rising tide,  
Trying to get away,  
Get away before we drown,  
Before the waves  
Tuck us beneath their murky armpits  
And smother us to death.

## To Provoke a Change

I bring a message from the dykes  
from the darker ones and our allies  
I have news for the presidents and dictators  
for the boys  
definitely aimed at all white supremacists  
and most corporations

I come loaded and charged  
my back protected by the living  
and the blessed dead  
The truth of my testimony  
springs from the scars of my sisters  
from our survival songs

What I have to say is wrapped in  
earthquakes and hurricanes  
daily coming out stories  
and the Puerto Rican flag

It will reach out to them  
my way  
and it is fully intended  
to provoke a change

I will not ask if they can handle it  
We know they have not  
We know  
We know the undeclared and declared  
war they have waged on us  
We know the greed and the cruelty  
The pesticides in the air  
the oil spills  
planetary time bombs ticking away  
for molested girls  
grape pickers  
and apartheid dismantlers



I want to dialogue  
in circular terms  
with all who believe the news of television  
numbing life with credit cards and liquor  
accomplices to the American crime  
We the lesbians of all lands  
bring you a wake up chant

We model a way  
that has brought us to now  
In groups we uncovered  
that which simmers behind the silence  
collectively encouraged the outbursts  
ritualized the pain in ocean pilgrimages  
marched it in prideful outrage  
remembered all those disappeared  
fought back  
and loved ourselves  
Each one taught many  
each one held one  
We the lesbians just to survive

We miss our dead  
and cherish all our living  
We want the return of our land  
and all profits reaped from her  
We weave spells guided by visions  
of the sacred love among women  
of universal harmony  
We build the changed future



*Yen Moi Lu*  
Aly Kim



## Ruby

We used to have so much fun together, my mom and me. It started from the minute I woke up. She used to sing as she opened the door, "Ruby you're like a dream," then she would say "Wake up, get up, you sleepy head." Then she'd fall on the bed and tickle me to death. She used to make me a big breakfast and fix my hair, tying ribbons on my braids. She had a big bag of ribbons that she used to keep in the junk drawer beside the sink. Only they weren't junk; they were all such pretty colors.

My favorite color is red and I wanted to wear red ribbons every day to school. But each day, she pulled out the ribbon that matched my clothes. I didn't care about matching — I really, really LOVE red. She hugged me real tight and kissed both cheeks and stood at the window until I got on the bus. Sometimes, I really missed her at school, especially when the other girls teased me about my socks which didn't stay up on my legs. They said my legs were skinny. My mom used to say they were just long and lean. Sometimes I wanted to cry and go home but the teacher wouldn't let me.

Every once in a while, mom came and got me out of school. When I asked her why, she said she missed me. Then, we went home and made delicious sandwiches of bologna and cheese or peanut butter (with nuts) and jelly. We would just sit there at the table, making faces at each other and sounds like "Umm-a, um ummm." Then she'd go and get my coloring book and cut out a picture. She knew I hated ragged edges so she'd cut it neatly with her big scissors. She'd get out my crayons and I'd color the pictures, staying within the lines. Sometimes, my hand would slip and the color flew outside the lines. When that happened, she would say, "Take it easy, Ruby, nothing good comes fast." She always hung the finished picture on the refrigerator so that my dad and my sister, Nana, and brother, Danny, could see it. When daddy came home, he'd smile and nod his head in approval. We were so very happy then.

Then one day, when I came home from school, she was different.

She sat at the kitchen table, looking at the cabinets. When I went to kiss her, she didn't kiss me back. When I hugged her, she didn't hug back. She just sat there looking real funny. Not ha-ha funny, the other kind. Strange-like. She started talking funny, as if I wasn't there but someone I couldn't see was. And she started laughing to herself. She got up, pushing the chair back against the wall and went to wash her hands. She turned on the water so hard that it splashed all over me and when I asked her what was wrong, she started to hum real loud and made the water hotter. She didn't answer me. I felt as if I were in a dark cold place — real scared, real alone. I ran upstairs to ask Nana. She replied, "Shut up, stupid." "Maybe she doesn't feel like talking to you creep, you ask too many questions anyway." What a drip! I thought to myself as I went to find Danny. But he had already gone out to play. I couldn't ask anyone. I kept getting little shivers in my stomach, so I went to bed and waited for Daddy to come home. When he did, she wasn't any different. Daddy said she was tired but I didn't think so. He took mom upstairs to rest and then made our dinner. His face looked sad. Like he wanted to cry. Like he was alone, too.

After dinner, he gathered us together in his den and spoke in a very quiet voice, "Your mother isn't feeling very well; you will all have to help out as much as possible until she feels better." I went to bed early and prayed that she would be well in the morning. But she wasn't. Nana snatched my head as she combed it and the ribbons sat at cockeyed angles to my head. Danny ran around the house like a car about to crash looking for his socks. Mama just sat there in her robe and slippers, twisting her hands in her lap, making and remaking fists. She was talking to herself, again. We left for school and when I looked back she wasn't at the window. I got on the bus anyway. When I got to school, I couldn't hear the teacher at all, just my mother's voice whispering to herself. Seeing the teacher's mouth move, and hearing my mother. I could not wait to get home to her but, when I did there was no change. I felt my lips hard behind my lips as I grinned at her. She didn't grin or even smile. Just swayed in the chair as she talked to herself.

I went to my room and turned on my radio as loud as I could



to drown out her voice. But still I could hear her voice. I got under the covers and mashed the radio to my ear. Finally, I didn't hear her. The last song I heard was "Ruby, You're Like a Dream," but he didn't sing it like mama. I fell asleep on that song.

She remained that way, day after day and we tried to stay away from home. Out of reach of that voice. We would all take our bikes and travel long distances. Stayed out all day. When I asked my brother and sister about mama, they just cut their eyes and sucked their teeth, so I didn't ask any more.

One day we came home and found a crowd in front of our door. Daddy ran out of the door and mama ran after him, with a great big knife in her hands. She wasn't talking then, just running as hard as she could. Rocks banged together in my stomach as I saw this. Danny immediately ran away in another direction. Nana and me sat on the curb, helpless. I started to cry as I saw the grown up people looking down at us so sad and shaking their heads. They took me to my aunt Lucille's house and Nana and Danny went to another aunt's house. When I asked about mama, aunt Lucille just looked at her husband and they shook their heads. My cousin Caro just said, "She's crazy, that's all." "Just crazy, crazy, crazy!"

But I know my mother isn't crazy. She's just tired. And when she rests up, she'll come home. I can't wait. I need another coloring book. I painted every picture in my old book with my black crayon. I covered all those happy faces and all those smiling mouths with my black colors. I don't want to see those phony happy faces. I just want her to come back good as new. So we can be together again; put red, red ribbons in my hair and in the morning I can hear her sing again, "Ruby, You're Like a DREAMMMMMMMMMM."

## Yanki Vini

Bring me some of dat too,  
She says. I go out to the street —  
down the drive way, across the yard.  
Most people here have a field or a hill  
in front of their house —  
This is an imported style of domicile  
Chile, we ain't so behine all you  
Yankis  
Don' jus live in de bush  
In Trinidad, you know.

At the streetside market, piles of  
mango and hands of banana  
lounge in the afternoon haze  
of the rainy season.  
On a wall across the street  
Graffiti blisters "Cuban pigs go home"  
and the Shopkeeper looks Chinese to me  
("Chinee" to my also Chinee aunt)  
and speaks like my grandmother

What I get you nuh hear  
Visitin in Maraval?  
Her keen eyes have categorized me  
How they know I don't know  
I look like them  
My clothes borrowed from my cousin Marina  
It must be my refrigerated eyes.

At the house, Auntie Meiling thanks me  
and thinks I'm crazy or maybe even  
tutulbe for walking around  
in this heat  
hummingbirds avoid.



I know only that I am afraid  
I came to visit the place  
those forty years away call "home"  
and yet I stand on sand  
that seems to vibrate beneath my feet  
and threaten to shift.

After a week of eating dollars and roti and mango  
and stewpeas and homemade wontons and bake  
and buljahl and bacalao,  
of watching the horse races on the Savannah  
and listening to Uncle Victor's speeches  
about the bloody bastards from the World Bank  
and just about coming every time  
I hear Marina's husky voice  
coming from her perfectly coral lips,  
we drive to San Fernando  
to see the Pitch Lake

A tar pit.

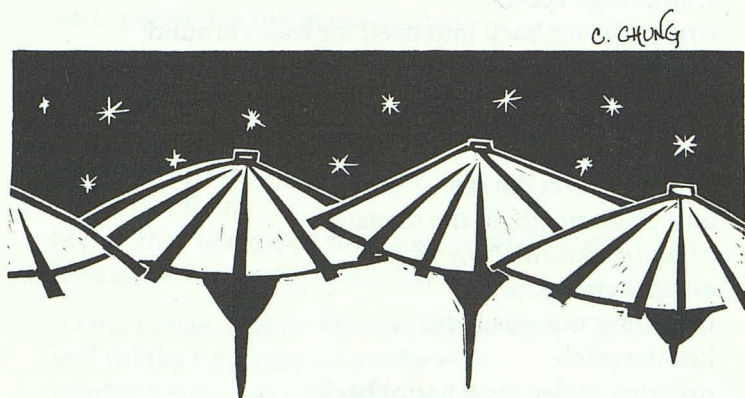
The roads on the way are warped  
and keening and Mitsubishi  
swerves madly.  
The Pitch Lake, explains Uncle Victor in his  
Cambridge accent,  
draws the tar back into itself for miles around

The Pitch Lake  
does not have the obsidian face  
I imagined  
Water reflects the sky  
and underneath, to the dismay  
of no one knows how many  
ancient creatures,  
including my sneakers,  
lies the pitch,  
drawing stolen sustenance back  
into its heart.

S. Jacqueline Miranda

## Caribbean Waters

That island haunts me.  
Won't leave me alone — keeps rounding every corner  
to catch up and pull me to her, seduce with the desire  
and need to reconnect. I carry my severed cord  
from her like a ship waiting to moor. The "Key to the Carribean"  
has been my lock and my escape. I love a land  
I can scarcely remember, a people I lost decades ago.  
She carries my childhood, my spirits — she is  
the key — to a realm of the unconscious  
of unfathomable depth. I feel the pressure build  
in and around my lungs ... I've risen too fast  
from her waters, my chest will explode ...  
I left her much too soon.



Cristy Chung



**C**rossing Over  
Passing to Spirit  
Phil Tingley, Kowa/Gourd  
Society

We will miss you relative  
We will celebrate for you  
relative  
To take flight free, free of  
the physical prison  
You have left us with  
tools to help our people.  
Your strong and effective  
quiet manner teaching  
those willing to see.  
Yes Two-Spirited relative  
Your give away was big.

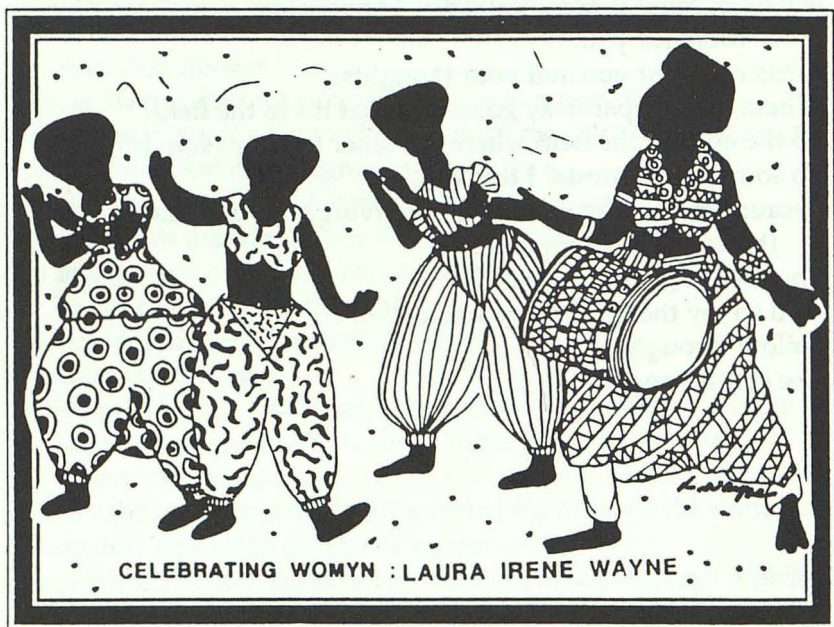
**Good Journey**  
**Tunkashilas Guidance**

## The Continuance

What's the rush? Not knowing.  
It's ok not to know; ride it through.  
Take your time. Each day will bring its answers.  
The answers come slowly. If you move to fast, you might past them by.  
Be still. Be quiet.  
If you find their pace, you might blend in with them.  
You could focus yourself closer into them.  
Your outline will fit into their outline and you will become one  
with the answer.  
The answer comes into you and becomes a part of you.  
The answer is not a person but a person might carry an answer  
inside them that they might share with you.  
What's the uncertainty? Because everything is new.  
My thoughts are new. They have 360 degrees of angles.  
So many ways of looking at the same thing.  
I want to flow into the thought.  
I want to glide into the thought.  
I want to be graceful.  
There is no hurry. I make my own hurry. Hurry. Hurry. Hurry.  
A hurry causes me to be anxious. In the land of Graceful,  
hurry cannot exist.  
What's the stall? Because I am emptying my mind of old worn out  
blueprints and maps that have led me astray.  
I'm walking slowly because I am making new pathways which  
require thought.  
The thoughts will put new lines to fill my new maps and blueprints.  
My empty mind is light. My empty mind is open.  
My pathway has led me to a vast open field.  
My pathway was in the forest and I could see the path clearly  
ahead of me.  
But when I came upon the open field, the trees were no longer  
there to outline my pathway.  
My pathway blended into the grass and mixed into the field.



I stopped. I stopped to look.  
I feel lighter in the open field.  
The sky is bigger. The breeze blows swifter.  
Space to think. Space to see. Space to look around.  
I will rest in the open field.  
Let the sun shine on me and warm my skin.  
I will rest with my open mind.  
My thoughts are lighter in my open mind.  
An open field has room. Herds of deer can visit in the field.  
And there will still be plenty of room for me.  
The open field is accommodating; hospitable.  
Makes me feel welcomed.  
My open mind is accommodating; hospitable.  
It has room for you.  
It has room for you and your thoughts.  
Where has my pathway gone now that it's in the field?  
To the edge of the field where the other trees are standing?  
To some more forests? I think so.  
Because the pathway is living and living goes on, follow  
through the continuance.  
The lifeline goes on and on.  
And so my thoughts go on and on.  
Follow through.  
The continuance.



*Celebrating Womyn*  
Laura Irene Wayne

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## Contributors' Notes

See *Editors Notes for editors who contributed to this issue.*

**Deborah M. Aguayo-Delgado** is a 26 year old Puerto Rican Lesbian New Yorker, who among other labels, is a City College creative writing student, nanny and everyday activist. This is the first time she has dared to send out her work for publication.

**Imani P. Ajaniku:** I am an artist. With the flick of my wrist I spin woven images with a pen. I play puppeteer to my imaginings using colored fabrics. From the voices in my mind I stitch, chain, lace and knot rhythms from the temples of my life. I am a lesbian of African and Native American descent living in Oakland, California.

**V. K. Aruna:** I am a nonimmigrant Black Feminist Lesbian of dual Tamil heritage, born and raised in Malaysia, currently living in the Washington, D.C. area. I write and speak on issues of crossracial hostility, domestic violence, and the concept of community for South Asian Lesbians living in exile outside and within their geographical "homes."

**Pacal Barraza** is of Apache/Mexican heritage, was born and raised near downtown Los Angeles and is in her 4th year of wommin sundance pledge.

**Margarita Benitez** was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She is an afro/boricua bilingual lesbian very proud of her ancestry. She works as a health consultant for the last two years, taught elementary school for 7 years in New York City. She has a background in law and is presently living in Oakland.

**Toni P. Brown:** I am an African-American Lesbian writer of poetry and short fiction. My work has been published in *Sinister Wisdom* and *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*. One of my poems will be included in *The Poetry of Sex: Lesbians Write the Erotic*. A short story will appear in an anthology of Black Lesbian Writing edited by Terri Jewell. I live in Western Massachusetts with my son and two red eared sliders, (they're turtles!).

**Mi Ok Bruining** is thrilled to be included in this issue along with her sisters of color. She is currently co-editing a U.S. and Canada Asian Pacific Lesbian anthology with Sharon Lim-Hing.

**Ana Castanon:** I am Mexican, non-Spanish speaking (and without guilt). I'm a sober dyke from Long Beach, CA.

**Charlene No Bears O'Rourke (Koskalaka):** Two-spirited artist, writer, activist, 36 year old Oglala Lakota from Pine Ridge Agency, SD. I am currently working with Native American wimin and children against



alcoholism in Arizona. I've been networking in the US and Canada with other Native American two-spirited women and men to create solidarity so once again it can be remembered our roles as two-spirited peoples within our nations.

**María Cora** is a Puerto Rican cultural worker of African heritage, living in the San Francisco Bay area since 1981. Poet, vocalist, educator and community activist and a founding member of the Palabras Atrevidas writers' collective. Winner of the 1990 Prisma Award for Achievement in Performing Arts. Equally prolific in Spanish and English, her poems appear in the recently published lesbian of colour anthology, *Piece of My Heart*.

**Irene D R** is a freelance writer, orator and Afro-centric spirituality rooted activist.

**Dajenya**: I am a 38 year old African-American/Jewish lesbian poet/writer. I reside currently in Richmond, CA with my two sons, and study clinical psychology at San Francisco State University. I've been a vegetarian for 12 years.

**Terri de la Peña**: I am a Chicana lesbian feminist fiction writer, the daughter of a Mexican immigrant mother and a fourth-generation Californian father. In my short stories and in my novel, *Margins*, I explore the lives and struggles of Chicanas, especially Chicana lesbians. My work appears in *The Coming Out Stories*; *The One You Call Sister*; *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*; and in the Chicana issue of *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*.

**R. Erica Doyle**: I am US born of Trinidadian parents, and am of African, Carib, Irish, Indian, and French ancestry. Originally from New York, am in DC with dog and cat, in love and in the Diva\*nation Writer's Collective. Trying to get together with all the other beautiful lesbian artists of color (in) this city, and BLOW IT UP!

**Edna Escamill** lives in Santa Cruz, California. She grew up in southwestern Arizona and Baja. She is the author of *Daughter of the Mountain* by Aunt Lute Books.

**Ana Bantigue Fajardo** is a Pinay dyke living in Santa Cruz. A teacher/journalist/poet/athlete. One day I want to live in the P.I. A special thanks to Margaret for her friendship and support.

**Ruth Farmer**: I am an African American poet, novelist, short story writer, Lesbian, resident of Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

**Mara Gálvez-Bretón**: In addition to being a Cuban exile and since (being) lesbian-feminist, an exile from/of dominant sexuality and ideology, I have recently defected from the University of California, Irvine's doctoral program in Comparative Literature to pursue "my

own writing". My previous publications include a poem in the *Iowa Review* and an essay in *Splintering Darkness: Latin American Women Writers in Search of Themselves* (LALRP).

**Terri Jewell:** I'm 36, a Black Lesbian poet/writer. My work has recently appeared in *Riding Desire*, *Outlines*, *Lambda Book Report*, *Matrix*, *Outweek*, and *Way Station*.

**Heidi Li:** I am a 26 year-old Chinese American lesbian who writes poetry and fiction. My writing reflects my continuing desire to contribute to the increasing efforts of Asian and Pacific lesbians to give the creative voice(s) to our own sexuality, life experiences, politics, and spirituality. To date, I have been published in *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*, and *The Poetry of Sex: Lesbians Write the Erotic*.

**Loba** is a Latina lesbian currently living in Arizona.

**Victoria Lena Manyarrows:** I am Native/mestiza (Eastern Cherokee) and lesbian. My goal as a writer and artist is to use written and visual images to convey a positive and forward-looking Native world-view .... a view that is generally ignored and overlooked by the dominant Eurocentric society and culture.

**S. Jacqueline Miranda:** Some of my other poems are in *Wanting Women: Erotic Lesbian Poetry* and *The Poetics of Sex*. My parents, sister and I immigrated to the U.S. from Cuba when I was 11. That one 30-minute flight has shadowed and changed my life profoundly for the last 30 years.

**Josie Miranda** is a 28 year old California-born Puerto Rican dyke. She lives in Sacramento with her partner, April, and their three cats.

**Josefa Molina:** I am a 32 year old Latina/Chicana mixed-heritage lesbian psychotherapist. My father's family is originally from Sonora, Mexico and has Yaqui and mestizo roots. I am of the third-generation born in Tucson, Arizona. Much of my poetic inspiration comes out of the beauty and harshness of the desert, even when it is only in my distant thoughts.

**Melanie Hope Nelson:** I am an African-North American poet, playwright, and tomboy turned lesbian whose most immediate ancestors came from Guyana and Nevis.

**Ekua Omosupe** is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Santa Cruz where she teaches writing, women's studies and literature. She is a mother for three teens, a grandmother and a poet. She is currently working on her dissertation "The Politics of Constructing Black Lesbian Identities in the United States among Lesbians of African Descent." She welcomes contributions, in all genres, from Black lesbians.



**Dawn A. Rudd:** I am a 29 year old artist, activist, poet and healing warrior woman, committed to truth and integrity. I believe women are the healers and saviors of this planet, with the power to transform our lives and the lives of others through vision, love and determination. I am proud to be a woman, proud to be of African and Native American descent and determined to share all that I am with my communities. My creativity is a celebration of my love, my spirit and my diversity.

**Irare Sabasu:** Lesbian feminist pagan, poet, artist. Transplanted tropical Taurean. Taking it a day at a time in New York, NY.

**Sapphire** is an African-American poet, short story writer and novelist. She is the author of a self-published book of poetry, *Meditations on the Rainbow*, available from the Inland Book Company, P.O.B. 120261, East Haven, CT 06512.

**Yasmin A. Sayyed** is a child of Africa-in-diaspora, a visual artist, writer, art therapist, teacher, mother of two young-adult men, lover on the path, survivor of whispered traumas ... who writes and paints, tells and screams, wails, laughs and traces her truth through a maze of refracting lens of perception. She lives in San Francisco, where she works in a community mental health program for adolescents.

**Lynn Scott:** I am a 47 year old Lesbian of African, Native American and European heritage. I have lived in the California Bay Area all of my life, and currently teach kindergarten children with special needs. I am just beginning to feel comfortable calling myself "a writer," and give praise and thanks to Big Mama, Zora, and Akiba for their encouragement with this piece.

**Granate Sosnoff:** I am just your average mixed heritage, Korean, Russian Jewish Lesbian living in Oakland.

**Shirley O. Steele:** womanist/grandmother/healer-poet/urban shaman, living in Brooklyn, N.Y. Afro-American/Native American/Scotch-Irish?/Russian? descent. Her work has been published in *Gap Tooth Girlfriends: An Anthology*; *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*; *The Village Voice*; *Ache'*; *NY Native*.

**Suzanne:** I am a strength-identified African-american currently writing, painting, embracing the Struggle, fighting the System and living, in the Cass Corridor of Detroit, Michigan. I love the color blue, to see people Open Their Eyes, my cats - Ferlinghetti and Arlo, traditional arts, insurrection, and Jack Daniels. I still hope to see Peace and Love, through Truth and Understanding.

**Donna Tanigawa:** I am a 25-year old local-style yonsei (fourth generation) dyke of Japanese ancestry who is from the sugar mill town of



Waipahu, Hawai'i. I am almos' pau with my graduate work in American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa where I have to speak Standard English. Otherwise, it's Pidgin for us dyke-folks here in the islands. Pidgin is a local Hawaiian dialect influenced by a mixture of ethnic languages. I enjoy working with ethnic fabric and hand-dyed textiles.

**Kyna Taylor:** I am an African American woman and a native of Washington, D.C. I am a graduate student in English at Cornell University. I have an MFA in fiction and I wish I could spend more time with my writing. I have stories published in *Word of Mouth 2: Short-short Stories by 100 Women Writers*, and *Writers and Their Craft: Short Stories and Essays on the Narrative*.

**Alma Villanueva:** I was born in San Diego, CA February 10, 1959. My family and I moved to Colorado in 1970 and lived there for seven years. It was there where I began writing poetry. My mother was born in Tijuana, Baja California. Her mother is from San Blas, Sinaloa. My great grandmother was a Tepehuano Indian from Chihuahua. My mother's father, a descendent of the Verdugo family of California, was from San Ignacio, Baja California. My father is from West Virginia. His father was from the state of Michoacan, Mexico. His mother was Black mixed with English and local Indian from the mountains of North Carolina.

**Laura Irene Wayne** is a painter, printmaker, graphic artist, poet, writer and illustrator. For the past twelve years she has exhibited locally, nationally and internationally. Her works have appeared in periodicals, including *Matrix*, *Hot Wire*, *OutLook*, *San Diego Lesbian Press*, *The Black Scholar*, *Aché*, *Black Lace*, *Spare Rib* and *Poetry of Sex: Lesbians Write the Erotic*. Recently Laura won the Pat Parker Memorial Poetry Contest. She lives in San Diego where she owns and operates an art company called Womyn Work.

**Jean Weisinger** is currently working on a black and white photography book of portraits of women around the world, with essay and poetry. *What Does Community Mean to Me*. Her travel has taken her to Germany, London, East Coast, Cuba, Australia, New Zealand and Bali. Later in the year she will travel to Zimbabwe, South Africa and the Virgin Islands.

## Books Received

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About the Books Received List: We list (almost) all the books we get in the mail. Unfortunately, we never have room to review everything we think should be reviewed. I tend to list books here by books/authors/presses I think are important (although all books from one press are listed together), with an emphasis on lesbian-owned presses. If I've read all or part of a book I may add subjective qualifiers like "read this." While the presence of adjectives can be interpreted as editorial endorsement, the absence of them only means I'm going by the publisher's press release — Elana.

*Look Me in the Eye: Old Women, Aging and Ageism*, an expanded edition with four new essays and preface make this excellent work indispensable; by Barbara Macdonald with Cynthia Rich. 1992, \$8.95, Spinsters, POB 410687, SF, CA 94141.

*Riverfinger Women* — a reprint with new afterword of the 1974 lesbian classic by Elana Dykewomon. 1992, \$8.95, Naiad, POB 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302.

*A Flight of Angels* — lesbian intrigue & romance in McCarthy-era Washington, D.C. by Sarah Aldridge. 1992, \$9.95, Naiad.

*A Certain Discontent* — a unique coterie of lesbians, by Cleve Boutell. 1992, \$9.95, Naiad.

*Grassy Flats* — lesbians triumph over discrimination in depression-era, small-town Idaho, by Penny Hayes, 1992, \$9.95, Naiad.

*Under the Southern Cross* — a romance set in Australia from mystery writer Claire McNab. 1992, \$9.95, Naiad.

*A Singular Spy* — the 3rd Madison McGuire murder mystery, set in Europe & the U.S., by Amanda Kyle Williams. 1992, \$8.95, Naiad.

*The End of April*, a Victoria Cross Mystery set in England by Penny Summer. 1992, \$8.95, Naiad.

*Houston Town*, a Hollis Carpenter mystery set in the '30s by Deborah Powell. 1992, \$8.95, Naiad.

*Lesbian (Out) Law: Survival Under the Rule of Law* — important, accessible lesbian legal theory that asks: How can lesbians use the law without being used by it? by Ruthann Robson. 1992, \$9.95, Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850.

*Dykes to Watch Out For: The Sequel* — if you haven't read Alison Bechdel's comics, start now; if you have, enjoy the new collection. 1992, \$8.95, Firebrand.

*Free Ride* — lesbian working life and road romance by Marilyn Gayle. 1992, \$9.95, Firebrand.

*The Worry Girl: stories from a childhood*, autobiographical fiction in stories of an assimilated Jewish childhood by Andrea Freud Loewenstein. 1992, \$8.95, Firebrand.

*Legal Tender* — action-filled lesbian mystery set in Canada by Marion Foster. 1992, \$9.95, Firebrand.



*Speaking Dreams* — a prescient lesbian slave in the retrograde future changes balance of galactic power by Severna Park. 1992, \$9.95, Firebrand.

*Anxiety Attack* — funny, angry, intense, wonderful short and short-short stories by Lorrie Sprecher, the first book from new Violet Ink Press. 1992, \$5, Violet Ink, 307 W. State St., Ithaca, NY 14850.

*Black Candle* — *Poems about Women from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, moving and feminist, by Chitra Divakaruni. 1991, \$8.85, Calyx, POB B, Corvallis, OR 97339.

*Bushfire: Stories of Lesbian Desire* — 16 lesbians conspire to arouse us, ed. by Karen Barber. 1991, \$8.95, Lace/Alyson, 40 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118.

*Journey to Zelindar: The Personal Account of Sair of Semasi* — young woman finds happiness with a band of psychic lesbians, by Diana Rivers. 1992 (reprint), \$9.95, Lace/Alyson.

*A Woman's Story* — Annie Ernaux starts with her working-class mother's death to weave her biography. 1992, \$8, Ballantine.

*Feminine Ingenuity: Women and Invention in America* — both the difficulties women face and our achievements, 1809-1991, by Anne L. Macdonald. 1992, \$22.50 (cloth), Ballantine.

*Sisters: Lives of Devotion and Defiance* chronicles the lives and choices of four progressive, activist nuns, by Julia Lieblich. 1992, \$20 (cloth), Ballantine.

*In Her Prime: New Views of Middle-Aged Women*, a scholarly, international approach that omits lesbians from the index (but includes witches), by Virginia Kerms and Judith K. Brown. 1992, \$15.95, Univ. of Illinois Press, 54 E. Gregory Dr., Champaign, IL 61820.

*The Dictionary of Bias-Free Usage: A Guide to Nondiscriminatory Language* takes itself very seriously, which is what makes it useful; by Rosalie Maggio. 1991, Oryx Press, 4041 N. Central, Phoenix, AZ 85012.

*Directory of Women's Studies Programs & Library Resources*, large format reference by Beth Stafford. 1990, Oryx Press.

*Statistical Handbook on Women in America*, large format charts and tables gleaned from five sources, indispensable for proving your point if you know how to use statistics, compiled and ed. by Cynthia Taeuber. 1991, Oryx Press.

*Wiles of Girlhood*, poems from a working-class Canadian childhood by Joanne Arnot. 1991, Press Gang, 603 Powell St., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6A 1H2.

*Rumors from the Cauldron: Selected Essays, Reviews, and Reportage* — a retrospective view by veteran feminist novelist and writer Valerie Miner. 1991, \$13.95, Univ. of Michigan, POB 1104, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

*Gertrude and Alice* — a new, tender, engaging and amusing biography (with photos), focusing on their relationship as lesbians by Diana Souhami. 1992, \$26 (cloth), Pandora/HarperCollins, 151 Union St., SF, CA 94111.

## Announcements and Classified Ads\_\_\_\_\_

### PUBLICATIONS

*ESTO NO TIENE NOMBRE*, revista de lesbianas latinas en miami, is a new quarterly creative forum for latina lesbians with a Miami twist. Open to all forms (Spanish, Spanglish, English), \$10 per year (checks to: Tatiana de la Tierra). Guidelines, subs to: 4700 NW 7th St. #463, Miami, FL 33126.

*MAIZE*, A Lesbian Country Magazine. \$10 per year (4 issues). Single issue \$3.50. New address: MAIZE, POB 130, Serafina, NM 87569.

*WOMEN FIGHT BACK* — monthly national newsletter to “tell it like it is” — wants personal statements of discrimination as well as subscriptions (\$36 for 12). POB 161775, Cupertino, CA 95016.

*FRONTIERS: A JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S STUDIES* has changed its address to: Room 2142, Mesa Vista Hall, Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131

*SHORT FICTION BY WOMEN #1* is available for \$6 from Box 1276 Stuyvesant Station, NYC, NY 10009.

*AT THE CROSSROADS* is a new feminist magazine exploring reality, esp. the spiritual reality western culture so often denies. Women- and earth-affirming writing, women of color and lesbians encouraged. Info: Jeanne Neath, POB 112, St. Paul, AR 72760.

*WIRE* — Women's International Resource Exchange distributes inexpensive but invaluable short papers & booklets on the struggles of women in the Third World. Send \$1 (post. & handling) for a catalog to: 122 W. 27th St., 10th Floor, NYC, NY 10001-6202.

*WE ARE HERE* — national resource guide for lesbian and gay youth, pub. by the Gay Youth Comm. Coalition of the Bay Area, \$5 (pay to We Are Here) from: 2215 Market St., #479, SF, CA 94114.

*SEP* — publication for lesbian separatists only since 1986. Ask a lesbian separatist how to reach us. Be a part of the contagious spread of dyke separatist courage!

*TUESDAY NIGHT: Poetry and Fiction by Valley Lesbian Writers Group* (the Connecticut Valley of Mass.) — special prepublication price: \$6 pp (checks to: Sally Bellerose). VLWG, c/o Stinson, 49 1/2 Union St. #9, Easthampton, MA 01047.



## CALLS FOR SUBMISSION

**BLACK LESBIAN CULTURE: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE** — Black lesbian writer seeks material: Putting all "correctness" aside, let's be honest and claim ALL we are, have been and will be for centuries! All and every form (photos, bios, herstory, songs, jokes, rumors, anecdotes, fashion, art, names, organizations, bars, poetry, essays, stories, radical and separatist material welcome. For guidelines, info: SASE to Terri Jewell, POB 23154, Lansing, MI 48909, running deadline.

**MULTICULTURAL LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS** anthology. First-person, cassettes, interviews O.K. Topics are: racism within and outside relationships, having/raising children; socializing/friendships; language differences, etc. For guidelines, info: SASE to Rene Dawson & Terri Jewell, PO Box 23154, Lansing, MI 48909.

**ARAB FEMINISTS:** Arab-American, Arab-Canadian, Arab/Middle Eastern women now living in the U.S. or Canada sought for an anthology to be pub. by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, in order to promote visibility, provide a forum and sustain political activists. All forms. For more info, SASE to: J. Kadi, POB 7556, Minneapolis, MN 55407.

**EATING OUT** — fiction, erotic fantasy, true-to-life experiences, poetry, essays, recipes — the fun stuff — for lesbian anthology on "eating out" while dining in. Women of color, big, physically challenged and fun women encouraged to apply. Send SASE to: N. Landers, 3717 W. Cermak Rd., Chicago, IL 60623 for guidelines, info.

**BY AND ABOUT WOMEN WITH FACIAL HAIR** — all forms sought by bearded lesbian, interested in: presenting ourselves, pride/shame, self acceptance, interactions, how class, family, age, race, sexual identity affect our decisions, writing by women of all choices (bleach, shave, trim, grow, remove, etc.). Send with SASE to: Lyn Staack, POB 239, Hartford, VT 05047.

**BROTHER-SISTER INCEST** — any form of work on paper on our brothers' inability to keep their hands and organs away from us. Pseudonyms can be used. Send with SASE to: Risa Shaw, POB 5723, Takoma Park, MD 20913-0723.

**RISING TIDE PRESS**, a new lesbian publisher, seeks full-length lesbian novels. For guidelines, send SASE to: Rising Tide Press, 5 Kivy St., Huntington Station, NY 11746.

LIKE WRITING ABOUT WOMEN? We need your stories! LAV-  
ENDAR LIFE, 215 Cleveland Ave., Endicott, NY 13760.

WOMAN OF POWER no longer accepts unsolicited poetry and  
fiction, but is looking for other forms for #25 "Overcoming Preju-  
dice, Celebrating Difference, Cultivating Diversity" (deadline Dec.  
1, 1992) and #26 "Language" (deadline March 1, 1992). Query: POB  
2785, Orleans, MA 02653.

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT, a multicultural lunar calendar seeks  
women visual artists & writers for 1993 calendar. Full Womoon  
Productions, POB 1205, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 for guidelines.

HISTORY OF CHILDLESSNESS — personal stories wanted from  
women and men. For info: Elaine Tyler May, American Studies,  
104 Scott Hall, Univ. of Minn., Minneapolis, MN 55455.

GAY/LESBIAN/QUEER PRISON ANTHOLOGY, *Cold Iron*, seek-  
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## CONFERENCES

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Oct.29-Nov. 1, Seattle. For info: Kayla Weiner, 600 1st Ave., Ste 350,  
Seattle, WA 98104.

THE INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM: SETTING OUR OWN  
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forming the Curriculum to Reflect Issues of Gender, Race/Ethnicity,  
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'93 conf., 3 copies or query to: The New Jersey Project, Room 315,  
White Hall, William Paterson College, Wayne, NJ 07470.

## CONTESTS

FIRST ANNUAL LESBIAN PLAYWRITING COMPETITION —  
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tion of the play. Script and resume by Nov. 1 to: Tiana Lee, Tribad  
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## SUPPORT

SHE — Sister Homelands on Earth has purchased its first two acres — Saguaro Sisterland — to primarily provide accessible space for lesbians with mobility/or allergy/chemical sensitivity disabilities and low-income wimmin. Money and support services are critical to SHE's survival — write to SHE at POB 5285, Tucson, AZ 85703, inc. SASE for reply.

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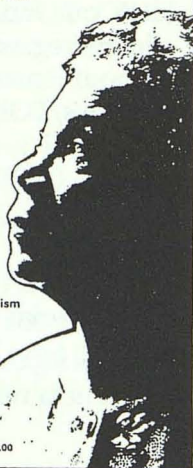
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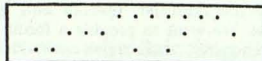




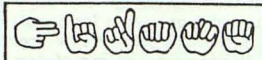
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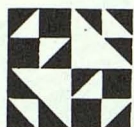
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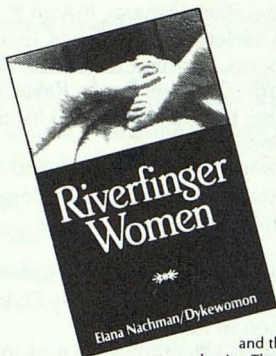
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**#48 Resistance** will be out in early December.

**#49 The Lesbian Body:** We want to explore the territory, from hair to toes. We want to know why our heads get disconnected from our bellies and vaginas. We want to travel to the sources of shame and fear. We want to know how/if to create new standards of beauty. There's been a tremendous backlash to the work lesbians have done on looksism, and everything that contributes to it: racism, anti-semitism, ageism, fatphobia, classism, disablism, heterosexism. We experience it at events, festivals, concerts, in the lesbian personals ("Gay white adrogenous femme, 26, seeks same. Must be slim, stable, employed, able to hike Yosemite and still look like a lady. No PC types or dykes, please!"). What's going on here? What forces us to keep internalizing/externalizing the dominant values: worth = body image = social power (or the lack of it). If you find yourself saying: "Not that P.C. stuff, who I'm attracted to is a matter of personal choice, if you have a problem with that, it's your problem, get therapy," you probably won't contribute to this issue but we sure hope you'll read it. For those who are troubled by these trends, the deadline is Oct. 1, 1992.

**#50 Lesbian Ethics:** What are our ethics? What does an ethical lesbian look/act like etc.? Is there a lesbian code of behavior? How do we treat each other as lesbians? What is our responsibility to lesbian communities? How do we handle abuse within the lesbian community? Is there a lesbian politic? How do we deal with judgement? What about ostracism, shunning and trashing? How do we impose judgement? What is the difference between influence and imposition? How does racial, ethnic or class identity effect your ethical outlook? What specific ethical challenges do you face because of your lesbianism, politics, etc.? How do you meet these challenges? What principles (if any) would you like lesbians to agree on for a system of ethics and in what ways are those principles specifically lesbian? Can you be ethical and have fun/be sexual? Deadline is February 1, 1993.



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We publish only lesbians' work. We are particularly interested in work that reflects the diversity of our experiences: as lesbians of color, ethnic lesbians, Third World, Jewish, old, young, working class, poor, disabled, fat. We welcome experimental work. We will not print anything that is oppressive or demeaning to lesbians or women, or which perpetuates negative stereotypes. We do intend to keep an open and critical dialogue on all the issues that affect our work, joy and survival. See p. 160 for details on upcoming issues. We are open to suggestions for new themes.

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