

Spring/Summer 1981

Vol. 4, No. 2

# AZALEA

*a magazine by & for third world lesbians*

## **the politics of being a Third World lesbian**

*articles*

*reviews*

*poetry*

\$2.00

(more if you can, less if you can't)

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**This Issue**

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Claudette Furlonge, Sandra Lara, Sapphire

**AZALEA:** a magazine by and for 3rd World lesbians, is printed and distributed by the Azalea Collective—a working collective of seven 3rd World lesbians

We try to remain non-elitist, non-traditional, rotating the editors' spot with each issue.

We print what YOU send—work that is important to us as 3rd World lesbians.

The opinions expressed herein, are not necessarily those of the Azalea Collective, but of individual artists/authors.

Payment is made to each artist/author in copies—a copy of the issue your work appears in will be sent to you.

One of our commitments is to publish womyn artists/writers whose work has never appeared in *AZALEA*. Therefore, it may be necessary to return material by womyn whose works have already appeared in two consecutive issues.

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\$ 2.00 (single issue)

\$ 6.00 (4 issues) 1 yr. subscriptions

\$10.00 yearly subscription to institutions

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*AZALEA* will be sent free to women in prison

Greetings. Welcome to Volume 4, Number 2 of *Azalea*. The theme for this issue is "the politics of being a Third World lesbian." We hope that you will find it of interest. We did.

Once again we've taken longer than we expected. As usual, the barriers posed by living in a society where wealth is unequally distributed and where all the rules are designed and intended to ensure that it stays that way, got in our way. Putting out a magazine by and for Third World lesbians is in and of itself a political act, especially in times like these. Sorry for the delay and thanks for waiting patiently.

Since the last issue we've undergone a few changes. The *Azalea* Collective increased by two members—welcome Afi and Sapphire! And, among other things, we've finally gotten a post office box; please note our new address.

Again we would like to encourage you to share *Azalea* with other sisters and to contribute your own work, and encourage other sisters to contribute theirs, to it. At this time, unfortunately, we are unable to publish photographs. For information about upcoming issues, please see page 28.

In sisterhood,

Joan

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**Foundations:**

**Why the Cultural is the Political:**

**Validity, Purpose to Womyn who are working for political and societal change thru cultural levels.**

by *Linda J. Brown*

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8•5/81

it's impossible to change a society without *underlying purpose* for the reordering.

if people within the society are oppressed, of course, the basic need and desire for change to something better becomes primary.

but, as absurd as this is going to sound - fighting for one's very life is *basic*, but often not enough motivation.

i have wondered thru most of my political life, why motivating people to "stand up" for their rights/lives was/is, often the most difficult thing in the world to do.

every historian, psychologist, anthropologist, sociologist has offered a reason. why.

why is motivation for freedom so hard to conjure up?

there are valid historical and social reasons. but one that is most times overlooked is: the lack of a strong, viable, recognizable, publicly, centrally celebrated cultural force *within* the oppressed society. even *within* a society moving toward radical political change.

to clarify a bit, the question of the definition and quality of life, itself, must be given some space.

it has been said in numerous places/times, that life is based on culture. it is. culture (and not just *artistic* culture am i talking about) gives the *purpose* to living. it gives the *thing(s)* to live for; when necessary, to fight for. culture defines the quality of life: it is what makes life worthwhile. or tepid and meandering, by the lack.

in this society (western, imperialist, among other things), the historical base, and the present one, is to melt all cultures together in the big, proverbial pot. it is often deemed what is necessary for a multitude of people of different origins to survive in a small physical and psychological space, together.

perhaps, aspects of that are true. but, what it *definitely* does is erode, bit by bit, the cultural strengths and definitions from each group of people, surviving, as part of the whole.

●

a thought, here: in most societies that have fought their way out from under oppression, the strong cultural base of the people (i.e. folkloric, social, artistic, traditional, political) was a constant force, both before and after the revolution had been won.

●

in the lesbian/womyn's communities, like in all supporting communities that make up the whole of this society, i feel there is a definite lack of, what i'll call - cultural politics.

there are numerous cultural projects and celebrations - but far too many exist *outside* of a political context.

for instance, a woman who is a cultural artist (painter, writer, musician, to name some) often is looked to/on as the source of "entertainment." her work is often seen as a superfluous occupation within the community.

i have had people ask me (or other culturally artistic sisters) to present our work *after* a certain "political" event, as the entertainment: so that womyn could relax, unwind from the march/rally/conference/etc. ... .

*rather* than be included as a part of a political spectrum.

*rather* than be defined in a political context from the beginning.

i have been told i have a good head - and waste time, it, and myself by choosing to write, rather than organize or speak, let's say ... which, by the way, *is* what i feel i *do* when i write.

it seems the two parts of the community (and, indeed, the necessity to divide it into two parts in the first place) pull against, rather than work with each other.

i think what we sometimes don't understand is that we can't have one without the other.

to me, for dark lesbian womyn, this is especially true: that we can't piece our lives out into separate bowls, like egg white, yolk.

it is the separation that will keep us in danger: that keeps us improperly motivated. and assuredly oppressed.

to realize that one (political, let's say) is the other (cultural), and vice-versa back again, is a key, of sorts, this key, then, will open many doors.



*i am an unpretentious woman: not simple, but i try to live economically: putting out/taking in only as much energy as i can utilize, effectively.*

*i find inflated logic that isolates us as ordinary people, while implying perception, comraderie, and righteously complex answers to basic problems, to be not only non-productive — but dangerous.*

*i don't have definitions or solutions that are phonetically correct - or intellectual in the context of "correct" wording or rhetorical allegiances.*

*the view i've presented is inconclusive, but most singular views are.*

i would be happy if we could discuss it some more. write: *L.J. Brown*, c/o *Azalea*, 314 East 91st St., #5E, NY, NY 10028, if, hopefully, you have something to say.

in sisterhood.

lindajeane

## Invisible Among the Invisible

by Michiyo Cornell

I am asking the reader's forbearance because this is a painful, hard to write article and I suspect it will be the same to read. I am a Eurasian Lesbian. I can't say that I have experienced rejection because of being a Lesbian, but I have experienced degrees of alienation and degrees of misunderstanding in and out of feminism, in and out of Third World groups, in and out of Asian American groups and on and on. In a way, this is an advantage because I can never have the illusion that I am totally "unified" into any group but it also breeds loneliness. I don't want to wall myself off and I find—in daily life—that I can't deal with masses of people, only with individuals.

I am trying to think back. Think myself into that thin, intense child that was me. Outwardly, I was docile and obedient to family demands that I be drudge and servant for the family; cleaning dishes, floors, walls, clothes, giving up programs I wanted to see or songs I wanted to sing because my family would not tolerate the programs I wanted to learn from (too boring) or my singing. Inwardly, I plotted my escape from poverty and lack of choice by going to college.

I had already learned in school that I was an outcast and fair game simply because I was half Japanese. They could not force me to be ashamed of being half Japanese but they could make me suffer and they did. In the meantime, my father pressured me to call myself white because he wanted "white" children. I may be half Japanese and look it but I was supposed to ignore that and assimilate into whiteness. How I was to accomplish this he never said: I was simply expected to do it.

In spite of the shit, I made it to college and was initiated into Third World politics and perspectives as well as had my first run-in with separatists (white Lesbians) whose confusion confused me. At that time, I thought I was straight although I had the disturbing habit of not leaning on men or paying much attention to them unless I could learn something from them; sex was an occasional by-product of spending time in this endeavor. Sexual intercourse was a faintly pleasant recreation without many emotional ties except some guilt over being sexual at all. Also, I kept having dreams that involved me rescuing my male lovers from some dastardly fate. I was reversing roles and didn't know it.

I was also losing all my female roommates because I was too



“intense,” too disturbing to their bland, white world view. I also had a Jewish roommate and we became friends through two semesters before she dropped out of college.

Much time has passed since then and I know I am a Lesbian. The joy of loving a woman brought with it the conflict and fear that my daughter might somehow be taken away by the state or by my family. I don't know; it's so hard to describe. I am not a separatist and it hasn't escaped my attention that most separatists are white women. I am told there are Third World separatists, but I never met any. I am Third World, Lesbian and feminist; these identities mutually support each other in me, but I get scared sometimes when I see what those who share the same labels do or say. One example is white women who get so angry about deer being killed by men without distinguishing between those who kill for trophies and those who kill for food.

I was and am angry at the reality of rape, battering, and the daily neglect of women and children. Most men don't take these things seriously because they don't suffer from them and they benefit from the system as it is now. It has been suggested to me by a woman I know that Lesbians evaded some kind of responsibility by not dealing with men any more than necessary. That sort of idea seems awful dumb to me. So Third World people should spend all their time raising white people's consciousness about racism? I'm not going to be responsible for some man's sexism; it's up to him to deal with it.

So, why my title “Invisible among the Invisible”? That comes out of my experience as a Eurasian woman. I think we all know how heterosexuals try to make Lesbians invisible, forcing us into closets and so forth. While I was on campus, I was invisible another way. Third World seemed to mean Black people, apparently Spanish-speaking, Native Americans and Asians disappeared, assimilated or weren't worth bothering with (according to most whites and some Blacks). There is a danger to the label Third World. What we have in common is oppression by the whites up to and including (at one time or other) genocide, exclusion, and repressive legislature to keep us second class citizens. We must also realize that we come from different cultural groups, colors, and that the oppression we have all suffered hasn't affected us all the same way. When the chips are down, I look to people I know I can trust, regardless of color, gender or any other thing. I get sick of people projecting their shit onto me, assuming they know who and what I am because of a few labels.

I think we need to take the time to learn the reality of this country. Who got here, why, what they met when they got here and what responses they made. Some examples from my studies show me that Native Americans are the rightful owners of this land and have never been properly reimbursed for their oppression. Blacks and Asian Americans mostly were brought in as slaves and contract laborers, respectively. White women betrayed Black people in order to get the vote. So, you see, being American is a very complex question and we have yet to define what it means as a proper noun. But I know that the Teutonic/Celtic self-image has to go because it does not reflect the reality of a multi-racial, multi-cultural America. □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### “LESBIAN IMAGES”

A lesbian radio program with a Black and 3rd World perspective.

We will attempt to inform, share, and give new or clearer perspectives on our lifestyles as women and lesbians.

We encourage you to listen in - and become part of what will be an informative and enjoyable program.

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A lesbian/feminist journal of art, language and politics, committed to dialogue among women beyond all assumed/existing boundaries. We are actively seeking work by women of color.

Editors: Michelle Cliff and Adrienne Rich.

Free on request to women in prison or mental hospitals. Write for info about subscription rates.

Announcements cont'd on page 21

by Patricia Wright

I had to be alone if just for a little while today. I felt the need to let myself just feel, flow, breathe. Walking through the park the drizzle still in the air. Light purple skies coat the background. The ground covered with leaves. Each time I am with you and we part I feel so deeply moved. My body is tingling. My spirit smiles sweetly pleased to be sharing souls. My mind clicks with unlimited stories to write down. I feel high as if all my parts are soaring effortlessly. I wish to experience this with you. Afraid that the crowded stench of rush hour riders would invade my space I sit peacefully on a friendly park bench. The wind blowing through my hair calming all resistance tells me although I'd like to sit here all night I must go sometime. I never want to leave you. Sitting here across town from your home I still feel my soul embracing yours. Like an oboe gently echoing a sweet refrain I hear you call my name. I see your smile, your quiet intense glare whose brown eyes penetrate my soul. I feel your touch messaging my insides. I come to life. Breathing in the air I sense we shall never part. Yet I am not afraid to allow you your space and myself mine. We shall come together as the wind aids sailing ships to shore. Drifting ever so easily on a silent sea I can dare to close my eyes. There's no one else around for miles. I can trust you. I trust you with me. I trust me with you. For we are one and both so much the same the differences between us help balance each other out.

When I swim along and hard with each inhalation I feel something strengthen inside. I'm breathing slow and deep. I'm stretching, extending long and hard. I'm relaxing deep within myself. It's as if I'm trying to get somewhere. I can't stop til I get enough. Often I must force myself to stop or I'll be sooo exhausted later on in the day that I'll have burnt myself out. Afterwards though my soul feels so satisfied. So warm and exercised do I feel that the beauty emits, sends a glow through my eyes and unto my soul's reflection. I feel so much the same glow and exuberance when I look into your eyes. I can only sit back and smile. Easy...gentle ... caring...bouyant...reciprocating... soaring.. .transcending unto another time and space we shall meet and come together again. □

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by Patricia Wright

Being a Black lesbian feminist often means being alone, feeling isolated sometimes like the only one of your kind around. Being myself a black lesbian feminist highly motivated, talented, athletic and often very quiet individual I have many levels out of which I respond. Often to the general white and to a lesser degree black male defined and dominated world I inhabit my inner space staunchly as a tortoise to its shell. I assert my individuality by walking the streets usually alone *whenever* I choose. I feel strong enough and smart enough to walk alone at night with my senses aware and ready for whatever could occur. I do not go seeking trouble. I simply want my own space wherever that shall be. I can and will defend myself should the need arise. I refuse to be one who does not get out because there is no one to constantly be at my side. Sometimes I do feel frightened or nervous but never to the point of locking myself away from reality. Sometimes when walking alone or sitting in a crowded subway car 98% occupied by men at 5:30 in the morning on my way to work I think the following thoughts.

"Why must everything of value be locked away, stored away inside? I am afraid someone will rob me, 'walk away with all my stuff.' And you see what I fear most is that without ever really examining what they have stolen they will throw *me* away. Discarded like an empty wornout handbag snatched violently away from its unsuspecting owner I lie wide open in the alleyway. Amid the garbage and the shit no one else wanted lie my most valued possessions. No one knew how much I treasured my soul. I need its existence. It was as if she were my only real friend. I could tell her secrets, confide in her without a drop of fear that she would blab my secrets to someone else. We were the closest of friends for never did she condemn me for being foolishly, hopelessly "in love." Or for wanting to try and give again when others would simply slam the door shut refusing, "sorry I gave at the office." Like a true spirit she knew what I was feeling long before I felt it. She caressed me sensuously, tenderly like silk she would navigate my circulation, help me to move with the flow of my blood. Often she'd console me speaking softly to my ears as we walked through Central Park. When I needed a push in the right direction or a leash to hold me taut she would administer the correct amount of force. Feeling truly alone in the night she would massage my tired aching soul. My body would coo and smile in gratitude. She was always with me. She is ever within me. She is me."

My relationship to the 3rd world community, the women's feminist movement and the Black Lesbian community is rather limited. I am just recently politically and socially in the last year "coming out." Yet I am seeking out Black Lesbian and 3rd world communities and organization with whom I can align myself. In January I went to the First Annual Black Lesbian Conference held in N.Y. and given by The Committee For The Visibility Of The Other Black Woman: The Black Lesbian. It was wonderful to see other black and 3rd world lesbians of all sizes, shapes, skin tones, and educational backgrounds and locations come together under one roof for a common cause; A celebration of self, The Black Lesbian. Yet when going out to a different Women's presentations such as the most recent International Women's Day Celebration given by CARASA: Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse and others at the YMCA on 51st Street on March 8th, I scanned the audience time and time again asking myself and my friends, "so where are all the sisters?" I could count on both hands the number of Black sisters in attendance that day. On the other hand 3 out of 10 performers that day were black, 2 sisters and 1 brothers. "And yes where were the brothers gay or straight?" Two of my friends commented that they felt a large portion of the output of energy, time, body and presence behind and in the forefront of the Women's movement is and has been our black lesbian sisters. Yes I agreed, but where are the rest of us, straight, bisexual or undecided? Why can't we come together on days like this one or any other day? Where are their heads? Or maybe I wasn't in the right place. Still I posed to my comrades, what is it about me a black lesbian that straight black women feel threatened by? Or what is it about us that they fear? I still don't know. So my interests and desires to bridge harmony between sisters straight, gay, bisexual, undecided or whatever remain unsated because we cannot get together on common ground for causes such as the ERA, which are simply the rights entitled to *all* human beings. Until we can begin to come together and collectively pool our talents, knowledge, energies and skills we shall remain divided and male dominated, without a space of our own, without power as women. □

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## GREEN RIBBONS

by Anne Roberts-Calamease

Green ribbons hung in the window of the Afro Luncheonette. Although St. Patrick's Day was not far away, I knew the ribbons were for the children. Those priceless, irreplaceable, murdered children in Atlanta.

Many blacks in the New York area are wearing green ribbons to show their support for the families whose children have been murdered. This display of unity in a time of crises is good, and yet, it seems a shame that death should unify us as a people. But that seems to be exactly what has happened. The death of twenty-one black children from Atlanta has sparked a note of unity among black people everywhere. For a spell, we won't show irritation with each other. We will be patient with one another now that our attentions are drawn to the suffering of those Atlantan parents. As a people, we will be less condescending toward each other because we are sympathetic. We are all the same now, their pain is our pain, their loss is our loss. We will speak gently to each other so our sharp tongues won't awaken the sleeping spirits of the murdered children. We have no way of resurrecting them, so we shall let them sleep, peacefully.

But what's going to happen when those responsible for the children's murder are found. We will, in unity, demand justice—execution, retribution, eyes for eyes and teeth for teeth. Then, afterwards, when the cloud of death has disappeared and retribution has been paid, will we slip back into our old, separate selves? Will that old irritation we felt surface. Instead of snapping and growling at the "man" who is usually the cause, will we howl at the nearest, dearest, darkest face?

Will we belittle the advances our neighbors have made, instead of striving to attain something better for ourselves? And will those soft tones cease in mid-air, drop and then lie buried with the coffins of the sleeping children? Think back. This chain of events has happened so many times before.

We must learn to go the distance, together. □

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## What's For Real

by Lou

I just came back from a Southern wimmin's poetry workshop and I came back full of fire. The question of being a dyke of color, and the politics of being a feminist and a separatist, are some very real and touching issues in my life.

Dykes nowadays and especially in my age bracket, always seem so damned into what I call me/ism. I worry about the me/ism, the very real necessity that I feel in us having a community.

I get sick to my stomach when I see so much stupid unneeded classism between those of us that have a strong sense of pride in our racial/ethnic backgrounds, and our strong womanness. But the fact of the matter is that I live in a very lonely and isolated location, and really no one really wants to hear anything I have to say.

I always had to defend myself as a Black woman to other Black dykes, because I always preached feminism and separatism. I was always busy trying to get other dykes to be separatists, just because I am. Also I hate role-playing, but that just happens to be a way of life, that exist in the lesbian community in which I live/love/play/write.

I had to sit Lou down one day and ask myself why it was that so many of my sisters were hearing a whyte voice come out of my Black mouth.

And I finally figured it out, I *did* sound whyte, I *did* act whyte. So I had to change quite a few things about myself.

All the things that I saw wrong with my Black sisters, gradually became all right because those qualities I used to despise in other dykes of color were in me.

So now when I want to deal with these wimmin, I deal with them on a one on one friend to friend basis.

And I know the anger that they feel. I attended the meetings that I was the only Black dyke there, and I saw my beliefs and convictions as a Black woman being run roughshod over.

And I got so damned angry that I just quit going to their damned meetings. And I just stay lonely at home. Especially toward the end of the month, when everything just got so empty.

And I just hold my baby tight. I love the woman, and she's shown me the reasons that I should love myself.

And sometimes, I get scared to open the door to the outside world. But I know that I have a *very strong* commitment to my

sisters, and somebody's gotta speak up. And Linda keeps me strong.

And sometimes I feel like fire and brimstone is raining down on my head because I choose not to deal with men. So many dykes of color are content to let men drag them down.

But I want none, and I'm gonna reach out for the sky.

### NOTES ON CHANGE

by Consuelo Quinones

Looking in the mirror, I see color.

A woman of color, a ray of color.

I didn't always see life through the understanding of race, in this society.

A society built on oppression/division.

Patriarchal, divided man from woman, are dividing woman.

This MANipulation by societies conditioning are dividing us up through those same concepts—sexism, racism, classism, ageism.

Our journey, through this break-out of sexism and racism, that has shaped our lives, with its myths & dehumanizing values must be radically changed.

By sexism/racism, I mean a system which takes a *physical* characteristic, e.g. race, and builds on it divisions of labor ability, responsibility, and power, which then are called "natural."

My first connection/disconnection with sexism within woman was my transition from hetero-sexual to homo-sexual, since this has been a focal point "a woman identified" I have been able to follow evolution coming from a "sexual" point of view.

I've spent several years examining/expanding, seeing through roles us woman have carried on our backs into our lesbian world—like junkies.

Roles that have been exploited/caged in our concepts—mind.

That the "act of" is a repression not an expression of self.

I, a lesbian Puerto Rican, opening her eyes as a new born child to the oppression of race and how color plays such an important part in conjunction with sex.



Sees that racism along with sexism, develops roles that brings about oppression. oppression that is ours.

Yet, we as woman in this society, the nourishers of life, play an important part in this development—evolution of time.

And time is here as we are—in transition.

Finding our selves coming out of the Picisian age (death of old ideas, concepts) going into the age of Aquarius (life of new ways based on harmony)

As Third World lesbians crossing color/race lines are united by a common goal—*survival*

Our vision must not go dusted but remain clear.

These illusions of color, association of—conditions, that have been laid upon us since the beginning of recorded time, will be hard to end, for some.

We may not be able to change our race our sex but we can change the way we think with in our selves.

We, as lesbians, cannot succeed in this struggle on earth if we continue to see any—sexism, racism, classism, ageism, as separate within itself.

The unification of souls must come. Four souls.

One of spirit—race.

One of emotion—age.

One of mind—class.

One of earth—sex.



**Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise.** by Michelle Cliff.  
Persephone Press, Watertown, MA, 1980, 64 pp., \$6.95

reviewed by Ann Allen Shockley

Michelle Cliff's slim book, a mixture of prose and poetry, is immediately absorbing. The writing combines images and symbolisms woven together in a sensitive tapestry of word color, brilliant in intensity.

The theme is one of a young Jamaican woman taught to submerge her racial identity, and in doing so, denies the rich heritage of her blackness. The motif of passing, what Cliff discloses as "An ignorance of connections," "silence," and keeping "knowledge to yourself," has long been a strong one in Afro-American literature. This is especially true in the works of Charles Chesnutt, James Weldon Johnson, and the presently rediscovered Nella Larsen. Cliff, of a different black ancestry, breaks new ground on the subject of passing.

In journal reminiscences of searing kaleidoscopic flashbacks, the author searches through the warm, sometimes painful rubbles of her past, on a journey of claiming an identity clearly visible in the dark skin of her great-grandfather.

Cliff says "The question of my identity is partly a question of color: of my right to name myself." Born of white-looking parents, Michelle was fairer in complexion than her young sister. Hovering over them was the fear of the betrayal of color: "...always the threat the heritage would out: that blackness would rise like slick oil and coat the white feathers of seabirds. Lies were devised. Truth was reserved for dreams."

Michelle went to England to study the Italian Renaissance, an elitist subject far removed from the gory history of West Indian slavery. The subject was safe to her in the sameness of her supposedly white kind. At twenty-two, she was "officially" informed of her mother's "dark blood," and cautioned to "tell them your father's white."

The book contains five chapters of writings which have appeared previously in publications, including the one from which the title was taken. This makes for a lax of tautness in continuity, a distraction from the core of the journey to self-identity. But the writing of black women historians in a cave of granite, the masquerade of costumes and eulogy to the work of women is so evocative in language and strong in perception that the weakness is overlooked.

Cliff offers a miniature view of her family, black families, black women and herself. She grazes the black-on-black prejudices of some Afro-Americans who "don't understand us either." Perhaps those blacks, whom this reviewer has heard label West Indians as "monkey-chasers," and "tree climbers," were totally ignorant of the history of the Maroons and the connecting link of slavery. Congruently, Cliff skirts the West Indians who look askance at the Afro-Americans, far removed from their ancestral shores, who are still aliens in a land not of their ancestors' choice. The West Indian is "after-all British."

Despite the diversities, there is a commonality in all blacks of mixed blood, who as Cliff spits out in the mouth of a Jamaican street cleaner: "You not us. You not *them* (italics mine) either." This species of kind is remindful of the white master's sexploitation and rape of black women—the guilt of white sperm.

The love of Cliff for her island, its people, the land and what it bears is highly reflective in her writing. The soliloquy of mind-thoughts, sights and fantasy truths shimmer like diamonds on dark waters.

Cliff's pilgrimage to acclaim her identity, herself, her person gives a message as clear and beautiful as a lone bird's song in the throes of dawn: denying oneself is never the answer to fulfillment. □

## POLITICS: BLACK PLUS LESBIAN

by Leocadia

The form moves.  
The emotions lift,  
The spirit flies.

We are the earth quaking  
And the seasons changing.

**2 hands/not clapping: The First Black Lesbian Conference,  
San Francisco, Oct. 17-19, 1980**

by doris davenport

los angeles  
december, 1980

In reading this, please keep two things in mind: one, that i was only there from Friday night until Sunday morning and two, this is just *one* womon's opinion. My opinion is that although the conference had several laudatory aspects, there were also aspects that left a lot to be desired. First, the good parts:

The conference was very well attended. One mood that seemed unanimous was that it was good, inspiring, refreshing, reassuring and comforting to be among so many diverse black lesbians. We were diverse in locale, age, background, and professional and political perspectives. It felt good to be in an atmosphere that for once was only and solely for, about, and to, *us*. One of the major aspects emphasized at the conference was "networking" or making viable connections. That started at once on several levels.

Friday night there was only registration and orientation: the conference organizers did an amazing job of finding housing and transportation for "foreigners" over the weekend. Saturday morning the conference really got started with keynote speeches from Andrea Canaan, Pat Norman, and Angela Davis. Of the three, Pat and Andrea made the most salient and relevant points. Pat cautioned us against becoming alienated from each other because of internalized racism. Andrea reminded us, through her vibrant energy and love, alone, that "Nobody can kill a whole womon." Angela's presence seemed to inspire everywomon. The opening session ended with Andrea singing to us, after she had us all form a huge circle around the auditorium so that we could see each other. That, for me, was one of the most meaningful events of the weekend.

The rest of the day, the workshops were well attended. In fact, several were packed. During the first session i attended "Feminism 202 (Networking & self-disclosure)"; for the second session i wandered in and out of several workshops, almost following Sahara and the videotaping crew. In all the sessions, interest was strong, energy was high, and there was never a lull for lack of topics and personal herstories to be shared. Also, there was one room for arts and crafts. Some of the artists sharing their work were Asungi Smith, Carol Cole (conference graphic artist), and Mildred Thompson (batik artist). There were also a few "political" tables, one dedicated totally to Dessie Woods (who was denied parole again in October).

At the end of the day there was an open general session which every one attended, to share reactions to the various workshops. The only complaint seemed to be "not enough time!" One woman from the workshop on drug abuse raised everyone's consciousness with a few succinct comments. Andrea Canaan told us the details about her being fired for *saying* that she's lesbian. And i was read 3 poems.

That night there was an evening of entertainment: singers, dancers, a poet, and Cassleberry and Dupree (2 sisters who sing and play music, backed by their all-womon band). Cassleberry and Dupree were the second most meaningful experience of the weekend, for me. After the "show", there was dancing. By the time we left, it was already early Sunday morning, and i left at 6:30 a.m.

If these had been my only impressions, i am sure that i would have felt, as many of the participants seemed to, that the conference was an absolute success. But i had mixed reactions to most things, and unequivocal negative reactions to many.

★ ★ ★

i felt, from Friday night, that something was slightly out of focus. (Since my period was due, i decided it was me and tried to dismiss it.) But still, i did wonder why we checked in Friday night, and that's all. It seemed wasteful to collect and focus that much energy just to have it disperse in touring the town or the local wimmin's bars. i went to one of the bars. It was not a dive, like the only womon's bar in L.A., but then again, disco bores me.

Saturday stayed out of focus too for the most part. Yet it was several days later before i could get in touch with what seemed remiss about the conference for me. For one thing, there was the matter of the workshop topics. They seemed to leave out so much of black *lesbian* reality. Particularly topics like "Women & Employment" and "Women in Real Estate." The topics seemed too much the usual or standard ones. It could be, however, that i suffer from conference "burn-out." It also could be that i received the information too late to suggest alternative topics.

The sessions that i wandered through seemed more like general rap sessions, after i thought about it. In the one that i attended, the facilitator seemed unwilling to direct the group, so we basically went around the circle saying what we expected from the session. When that was done, it was time for the next sessions. We never even addressed what feminism meant to us as black wimmin/lesbians, nor did we ever discover what was meant by self-disclosure.

i had an odd feeling, as i wandered around feeling increasingly displaced and alienated, that several sessions went like the first one that i attended, except, of course, in sessions on concrete subjects like health and real estate.

Apart from this, it seemed that we kept digressing from the issues of being lesbian, to those of being black. i am NOT suggesting that these 2 issues can or should be separated, absolutely not, but there are specific "problems" in this society, with being *both*. For example, it seems that there should have been a workshop on "lesbophobia," especially in the black community. In short and in summary, there was a lack of a certain political and spiritual dimension that i think is desperately needed among black lesbians. Which leads back to the title of this short essay: when Angela Davis stopped speaking, all the wimmin clapped, loudly and long. Some gave her a standing ovation. i was writing, so i did not clap. Nor did i stand. i watched those around me and wondered if they were applauding her speech, or her, period. Similarly, many of us seemed "blissed out" on so many of us being together in one place. For me, that simply was not enough. My feeling was, now that we are all here, THEN WHAT?

i shared my reactions with one local friend. She said that for me to mention any of the negative aspects would be ... unsisterly, to put it mildly. i don't believe that. i have always thought that a good friend was one who told you the truth, or helped you find it, not one who helped you maintain your illusions. But in case some of you agree with my friend, let me make this as clear as possible:

this is NOT meant to belittle or minimize the efforts of the wimmin who planned that conference. The fact is, i am writing this as an act of love and good faith. The fact is, the conference could have been better planned, the workshops better focused on black lesbians. (For example, this "butch/femme" madness. i had to almost fight one woman to stop her lighting my cigarette for me!) We need to address a *practical* (as well as rhetorical) application of the concept of being sisters. We need to address our spiritual and psychological survival in a world that seems headed toward death, bent on killing anyone who deviates from the norm. For all i know, all this might have been discussed on Sunday. But then, i was gone.

So i do not clap. i question, instead. i hear, also that some sisters in L.A. are already planning a second conference. i invite me, and all of you, to offer ideas and suggestions. To ask ourselves exactly what it means, apart from the physical aspect, to be lesbian. Are we looking for a "lesbian world view" (to quote a friend) or simply looking for a

safe haven? Are we interested in cruising, or in changing - the world and/or ourselves? If we start working on these questions now, maybe by the next conference, more of us (for i do not feel i am alone) can join the standing ovation.

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### ANNOUNCEMENTS (cont'd)

WIRE is a women's collective whose work has shown us that confronting sexism, racism and classism in the United States requires an understanding of women's struggles and gains in a global context.

We reproduce published and unpublished accounts and analyses by and about women in the Third World, and make them available inexpensively to everyone needing such information.

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE EXCHANGE  
SERVICE (WIRE)  
2700 Broadway, Room 7  
New York, NY 10025

Dear Sisters,

We have prepared a newsletter on parthenogenesis. The first issue is already printed. The second followed this spring and the third will be printed in early summer.

For information about subscription costs, please write to us at the address below.

We are also looking for both technical information and personal thoughts, ideas and visions. We will keep our sources strictly confidential.

Write: *P.O. Box 85, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387.*

And **please**—be very cautious who you pass this information to.

Sarah Feinstein and Julie Fullmoon Joy, co-editors

## BOOKS

This is a list of books that have been sent to us, here at *Azalea*. I have categorized them under four separate headings: **BOOKS BY 3RD WORLD LESBIANS - BOOKS BY & ABOUT 3RD WORLD WOMYN - NEWSLETTERS - LESBIAN/WOMYN'S PUBLICATIONS.**

In keeping with the policy of the Azalea Collective of not accepting commercial announcements or advertisement, I have included names and addresses where further information and prices can be obtained.

If you have, or know of, a book that you think belongs on a list like this one (we plan to update it in the future), please send it to me at *Azalea*.

-lindajean brown  
co-editor, *Azalea*

### BOOKS BY 3RD WORLD LESBIANS

#### CHRISTIAN, ROBIN

*Lady, These Are For You* poetry

314 East 91st St., 5E,  
NY, NY 10028

#### DAVENPORT, DORIS

*it's like this* poetry

1316 S. Highland Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA. 90019

#### GIBBS, JOAN

*Between A Rock And A Hard Place* poetry, prose

February 3rd Press  
306 Lafayette Avenue  
Bklyn, NY 11238

#### GOMEZ, JEWELIE

*The Lipstick Papers* poetry

Grace Publications  
310 W. 93rd St.  
NY, NY 10025  
#6E



**LORDE, AUDRE**

*The Cancer Journals* journal

Spinsters, Ink

RD 1

Argyle, NY 12809

**MARULANDA, ROSE**

*A New Day* poetry

*Death* poetry

*Toni* poetry

1433 Coney Island Avenue

Bklyn, NY 11230

**PAZ, JUANA MARIA**

*The La Luz Journal* journal

11 W. South Street

Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

**SHOCKLEY, ANN ALLEN**

*The Black And White Of It* short stories

NAIAD PRESS

PO Box 10543

Tallahassee, FL. 32302

**BROWN, LINDAJEAN**

*Kiwi* journal

*The Rainbow River* short stories

*jazz dancin wif mama* narrative fiction

IRIDIAN PRESS

314 East 91st St./5E

NYC, NY 10028

**BOOKS BY AND ABOUT 3RD WORLD WOMYN**

**SCOTT, RENAE**

*Doing Community Outreach to Third World Women*

Domestic Violence Technical Assistance Project

(A Project of Casa Myrna Vazquez)

342 Shawmut Avenue

Boston, MA 02218

### NEWSLETTERS

*3rd World Women's Gayzette*(Salsa-Soul Sisters), December 1980

publishes monthly lesbian

Salsa-Soul Sisters

c/o Washington Square Methodist Church

133 West 4th St.

NY, NY 10014

*daughtervisions* parthenogenesis, Vol.1 - Winter Solstice 1980 Vol.2

-Spring Equinox 1981

publishes quarterly lesbian

Sarah Feinstein

PO Box 85

Yellowsprings, Ohio 45387

*Changes* April 1981

publishes monthly lesbian

PO Box 1441

Winter Park, FLA. 32790

*Monthly Cycle* March 1981

publishes monthly lesbian

PO Box 1306

Lawrence, Kansas 66044

*lesbian feminist flyer* April 1981

publishes monthly lesbian

PO Box 7216

Richmond, VA. 23221

### LESBIAN/WOMYN'S PUBLICATIONS

*Top Ranking: A Collection of Articles on Racism and Classism in the Lesbian Community*(edited by Joan Gibbs/Sara Bennett)

February 3rd Press

306 Lafayette Avenue

Bklyn, NY 11238

*Feminary: A Feminist Journal for the South, Emphasizing the Lesbian Vision*

Vol. X No. 2

Vol. X No. 3

Vol. XI No. 1,2 - Being Disobedient

publishes quarterly

PO Box 954

Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514

**WALTER, CLARA**

*The Healing Art of Clara Walter: A New Approach to Health Care*

Alyson Publications, Inc.

75 Kneeland St.

Rm. 309

Boston, Mass. 02111

*Conditions: a magazine of writing by women with an emphasis of writing by lesbians*

No. 5 - The Black Women's Issue

No.6

publishes quarterly

PO Box 56

Van Brunt Station

Bklyn, NY 1121

**FADERMAN, ERIKSSON**

*Lesbianism-Feminism in Turn of the Century Germany*

**CALIFIA, PAT**

*Sapphistry - The Book of Lesbian Sexuality*

**RULE, JANE**

*Outlander* short stories, essays

NAIAD PRESS

PO Box 10543

Tallahassee, FL. 32302

*Sinister Wisdom: A Journal of Words and Pictures for The Lesbian Imagination in All Women*

all volumes from No.5-No.16

publishes quarterly

PO Box 660

Amherst, MA. 01004

*Womanspirit*, Spring Equinox 1981 Vol.7 No.27  
publishes quarterly womyn's spirituality  
PO Box 263  
Wolf Creek, Oregon 97497

**A Review:** by Carletta Joy Walker Ochumare

*it's like this* by doris davenport ©1981

Doris Davenport's collection of poetry took me walking, running, flying, on a dirt road, on concrete, in a free space. Sometimes, I just stood still, like on

"121 Soque Street"

memories  
turn into  
dreams.  
dreams  
into  
memories.

I stepped back for some

"4.3.80"

see	see	see
won't	you	please
look	at	me
my	me	tro
nome	bo	dy
keep	ing	time
to	your	
	madness	

yea un huh I see; it took some minutes, but I see. I was captivated by the form of this poem, enjoyed it playing with me.

With "MAMBO", it was WoW, I've been there

i keep dancing  
just outside y'r  
frame of reference

like day-glo white paint  
on a black canvas  
in a dark room lit by candles

like a faint body smell  
of natural funk  
that almost stinks yet  
you like it

on that edge can't walk away because I feel the connection, almost.  
I meet "Renita Juanita Maria Theresa Jones"

because she wants to dance with  
everyone she has to dance alone...

I'm halted at the first line, going into each word. Partys, dances,  
meetings, classes, into the shadows, can we be one with the ones we  
choose.

Doris Davenport offers her personal political, private political, per-  
sonal objective - subjective

monologue : the sister on the RTD,  
talking to herself

this ride keeps getting longer  
and the days keep getting shorter  
and my back keeps getting tireder  
and my knees give out too.

my patience gets thinner  
and my bugs got plants...

and she goes on, and she goes, and I go on.  
Occasionally I gave retort to the words jumping at me; Doris  
Davenport tells "Sojourner, you shouldn't have done that"

...Why did you bare your chest?...

...you told them the truth, Sojourner,  
we knew you were a woman, too -  
but all black wimmin inherited your  
theatrics. so now

what are we spose to do???????

We spose to do what we do, just like Sojourner; perhaps we should  
bare our teeth.

*it's like this* penetrated me with sprinkles of Doris Davenport's quiet,  
her loud, her soft, her hungry, and her I know what's happening. I felt  
shared with.

### NEXT ISSUES

Poetry (graphics, and designs also welcome).  
Submissions no later than August 31, 1981. Mail  
to: Azalea, Box 200, Cooper Station, NYC  
10003.

The Winter 81-82 issue will focus on writings  
from Third World lesbians journals, logs,  
diaries, personal letters, and correspondence.  
Send all submissions to Azalea, Box 200, Cooper  
Station, NYC 10003. The deadline for this issue  
is Dec. 21, 1981.

### PLEASE NOTE:

Our new address is Azalea, Box 200, Cooper  
Station, NYC 10003.

*The Azalea is a beautiful, multi-colored flower that blooms in the early spring. It is hearty, with strong roots and branches, but delicate, needing love and care to thrive and grow.*

**AZALEA**

P.O. Box 200

Cooper Station

New York, New York 10003