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women

BLU

bahamadia

humility, cliques, and God

taking control

african women publishers

hip hop moms

the next generation

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issue #12 volume 3



welcome to the second annual women's issue

blumag.com

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THE BLU NETWORK

is now too numerous to mention by name. thanks for all your work, you know who you are.

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BLU is a volunteer run organization. All the writers, editors, and artists are in it for the love. So please show support by buying our artists' CDs and subscribing to the magazine.

The views expressed by BLU's contributors and interviewees do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or publisher.

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todas somos ramona



Last year we celebrated one year of publishing with our "Women in Struggle" issue which marked a lot of firsts: Patricia came on as business manager, it was the first issue I designed, the first issue Marianne edited, and Queen Godis' debut as music director. It's also the first issue that's completely sold out. **BLU has done a** lot of changing and growing in the intervening year. As a collective we have continued to learn about the legacy and basis of the struggle for social justice, and how to present this withing the limits of a magazine format.

The purpose of this issue is simply to honor all the unique ways in which women build community – whether as artists, entrepreneurs, activists, community organizers, political prisoners, mothers, sisters, or all of the above. **Fran Harris** takes us on a tour of women who have moved out of the mainstream to create communities, **Kadija Sesay** breaks down the history of Black women in publishing, **J-Love** sheds light on a new realm of hip hop – mothers, **Emily Chan** talks to five Asian woman activists about their work and inspiration, and political exile **Nehanda Abiodun** shows love to her sister and other women who work "behind the scenes".

This issue creates a space where we can step out of the mold society has been forcing us into and redefine ourselves with the words and images of our choice. As women we need to take control, not only of our futures, but also of the percieved limitations and expectations that hang onto the beautiful word "woman". Although not everyone will agree with every word published here, we hope that BLU's second annual woman's issue will give birth to a new image of woman – now it's up to you to nurture it.

~ matina weeks

submissions

BLU magazine has an open submissions policy, which means you're welcome to send in your article, essay, interview, poem, drawing, photograph, or music track. However, since each issue of BLU is built around a particular theme, we do not have space to print many general submissions. If there is a topic you think BLU should be covering, please send a proposal for an article so that we can let you know whether we will have space for it in an upcoming issue and can work with you as the article develops.

If you would like to be added to the list of writers and photographers that we ask to write reviews, do interviews, and cover events, please send two samples of your work plus a summary of your experience.

Email features editor Marianne Mommsen marianne@blumag.com with any questions about written submissions.

Email design editor Matina Weeks matina@blumag.com with any questions about submitting graphics.

To submit material for the BLU compilation CD, send a DAT or CD along with a bio and photo to the attention of music director Queen Godis.

Email queengodis@hotmail.com or music producer Red Zim redzim@blumag.com with any questions about audio submissions.

We apologize that due to the high volume of submissions, we may not be able to get back to you right away.

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rita marley
photo by wonderknack

love LOATHING

letters • from • our • readers

BLU CREW -

A while back my moms stopped giving me Christmas presents and began giving me \$\$\$ to give to charity in our name. This year's donation was an easy choice; I hope you all maintain your non-profit status. I've worked for non-profits before, but never been involved in an upstart. I can only imagine the amount of work that you all put into all the organization is surpassed only by your passion to bring the masses such a quality zine.

I want you all to know that your work does not go unnoticed. From you philosophy to the concept to the packaging, you all hit the nail on the head every time. It seems self evident that hip hop as a world movement is the musical and cultural force to be reckoned with. Every cat wants a piece, but only the vanguard will carry it further. And that's exactly what BLU does, and does it damn well.

Keep up the excellent work, the momentum is growing.

Peace

Sam

Davis CA

WHAT UP BLU!?

wanted to give you a mad shout out. Hope to be seeing you grow and even have multi-lingual issues, that way some of my brothers here in Brazil can enjoy more than the sounds and pictures. Nonetheless, we are feeling the vibe and devotion. Keep up good work!

Tchao

TO THE PEOPLE OF BLU,

I am constantly impressed by BLU magazine and the silenced struggles it brings to life from all over the globe.

I grew up in the Fiji Islands, a country far from the consciousness of most of the world. So I was surprised to see a Fijian writing for BLU (Allen Eboune's article in BLU #10). But also confused to read an article on Fijian politics in a magazine celebrating global guerrillas.

I moved to Fiji from apartheid Southern Africa, and in comparison, I can't say I ever felt Fiji was committed to anti-colonial struggle. In fact the opposite. Fiji has never fought for its independence, economic or political. And has for the most part accepted the dependence created by the neoliberal policies of Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Britain. The Queen still appears on all coins of the "Republic". And for the thirteen years I lived in Fiji, I wrote in school books with "Fear God and Worship the Queen"

printed on the cover. The free market reigns supreme.

So when Eboune mentions the coups staged by Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka and George Speight as acts of anti-colonial resistance, I would have to disagree. As would the activists who spray-painted 'Democracy Now' all over the capital after Rabuka's first coup. Far from being revolutionaries, both coup leaders have demonstrated extremely reactionary politics. For one thing, the prime ministers whom Rabuka and Speight displaced represented the (leftist) Labor Party. And, while the coup leaders justify their cause as indigenous nationalism (given strong Indo-Fijian support of the Labor Party), it is obvious that they 'struggled' for an elite who did not want to give up their power under a Labor government. And what 'radical' future did these coup leaders have in mind? Rabuka welcomed a rapid liberalization of Fiji's economy, boosting the prevalence of foreign owned sweatshops (yup, the great Gap and Banana Republic). And his supporters pressed for the creation of a Christian state, regardless of the fact that more than half the population is Hindu, Muslim and Animist. Speight, on taking over parliament, abolished the multi-racial constitution, encouraging racist policies and action among his supporters and militia. Meanwhile, Mahendra Chaudry, the freely-elected Prime Minister Speight ousted, had made progressive proposals for a living wage, Universal Health Care and affordable public education, and issued a statement against the inequities of the WTO. Not completely revolutionary. But a start. True, there are many histories, but on this one, I feel that the story is a little skewed. Strength for continued dialogue.

in love and struggle

jessica (semhar) horn

p.s. if people want to check out local news coverage on Speight's coup, the University's newspaper Wansolwara is a good start. sidsnet.org/pacific/usp/journ/index.html

I AM AN anti capatlist who is most intreged in people of, the same Ideas I found your artical on CAMILO CIENFUEGOS in BLU 10 moast intersting a grate read for a boring lunch I am also trying to asablish my self as a politicl thinker and poeit but am finding it hard to make myself hard probaly becouse am 15 and come from a school where inteligence is not apperashted by my class mates I would be moast grate fell if you could help me.

oscar k

YOUR CDS are amazing. Thank you for being. I've picked up the last two issues after eyeing my boyfriend's copy. I live in a pretty sheltered town and an even more naïve side of it. I've felt guilty and out of touch with the real world - other cultures. The magazine has edited me very much on issues no one around me has answers to. Like life outside of White Rincon Valley. But yeah. Thanks, even if reaching white suburban girls wasn't your target. I just wish I could help the fight ... unwelcome as I am.

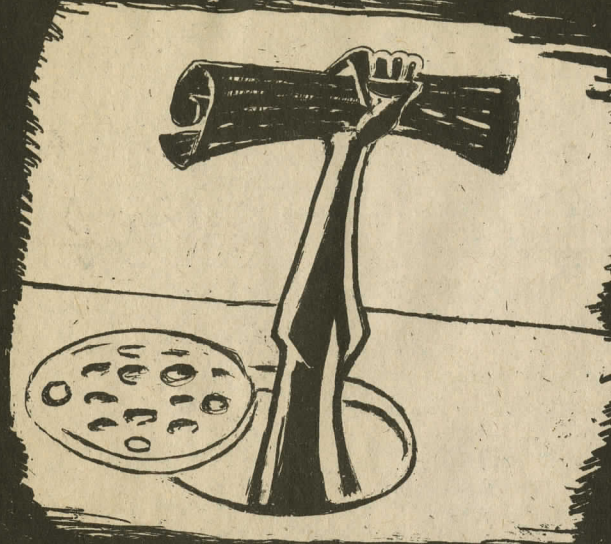
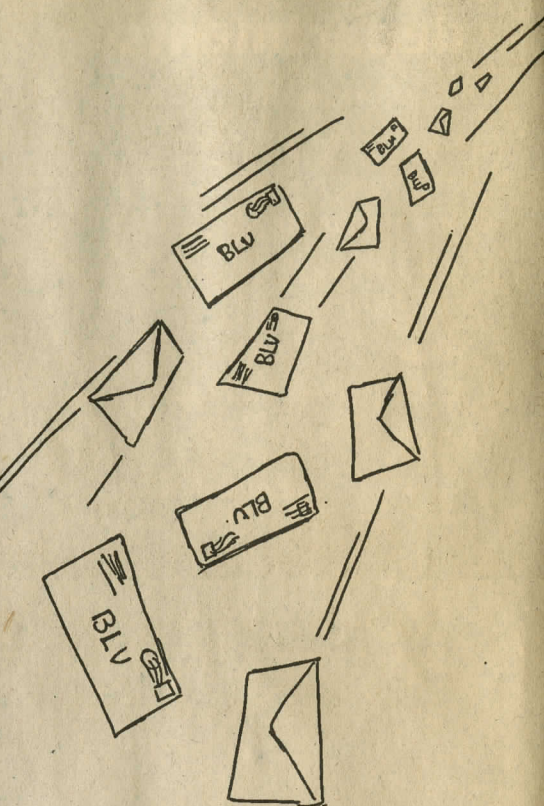
Christine

Santa Rosa, CA

JUST READ blu 11. I am very impressed; never heard of your publication before. I look forward to reading further articles in your publication.

THE ARTICLE on Lee the Vietnam vet was extremely moving. That was truly a story about love. Lee had to sacrifice all that he loved because the situation he was in left him with little or no options. The love burned in him, and he became tortured because of his choice. However, he found love again in other people, and love for himself. Love is forgiveness, as it is many other things. To forgive is one of the strongest qualities of love. This story showed that. Self-forgiveness too is essential. A beautiful story. Thank you.

Peace and blessings Lonestar



under- ground news- stand

we owe you nothing

Punk Planet: the collected interviews

edited by Daniel Sinker

Akashic Books

Getting *we owe you nothing* in the mail one Monday morning was a pleasant surprise because it's among the more relevant and well conceived publications that's come across my desk recently.

The surprise only lasted until it occurred to me that collaboration between Punk Planet and Akashic Books could hardly fail to impress, since both are well established when it comes to publishing politically charged material that's also enjoyable to read. It's nice getting a book to review that you are actually interested in reading (unfortunately that means that everyone else in the office is also interested in

reading it and you spend a lot of time trying to track it down).

we owe you nothing is a reminder that punk is more than combat boots, multiple piercing, and neon hair; as Daniel Sinker (who edited the book and who has been editing Punk Planet since its inception in 1994) explains in the introduction, the basic premise for punk is that "anyone could take part - in fact everyone *should* take part." Which means that if you don't like something, it's up to you to make changes. This ethic is restated throughout the book by people who did say "enough is enough" and take action, whether by taking creative control of a situation (like Jon Strange who memorably disrupted Madeleine Albright's press conference in Ohio) or pioneering an approach to music (like Ian Mackaye of Fugazi). This has the cumulative effect of forcing the question, "why aren't I doing it too?" Like Punk Planet the magazine, *we owe you nothing* deals not only with punk music but with punk culture, so in addition to featuring artists like Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill, Jello Biafra, and Sleater-Kinney, the book includes interviews with graphic designers, film makers, and political organizers Noam Chomsky, Ruckus Society, and Kathy Kelley of Voices in the Wilderness. Maintaining that Q&A format is a more honest presentation of interviews than "featurized" presentation, the exchanges read as intelligent conversations. Although some of the interviews are several years old, updated introductions make this an important and current resource for anyone interested in alternative culture.

Even if you consider some of the people interviewed painfully mistaken in their views or recoil from the thought of having to listen to their music, you should read this book to understand the strong link to progressive politics that makes punk relevant. *we owe you nothing* is comprehensive but not agonizingly exhaustive, passionate but not ranting, and (which counts for a lot) beautifully produced; the \$16.95 investment is well worth it.

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www.akashicbooks.com • akashic7@aol.com

Punk Planet • PO Box 464 • Chicago IL 60690 •

www.punkplanet.com

~mem





underground newsstand

Prison Masculinities

Don Sabo, Terry A. Kupers, Willie London
Temple University Press, Philadelphia PA 2001

Anytime Angela Davis, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Christian Parenti discuss any issue regarding the current conditions of the United States penal system, they have my undivided attention. When they all come together with a variety of other passionate individuals at the same place and same time, you have a virtual all-star team of intellectuals and social critics. This is exactly the situation readers will find themselves in when coming in contact with *Prison Masculinities*.

The self-proclaimed purpose of this work is to explore the frightening ways our prisons mirror the worst aspects of society-wide gender relations. This particular book goes well above and beyond its stated intent. Edited by a psychiatrist, social science professor, and a poet who is also a NY state prisoner, it explores taboo topics that are often referred to but not covered in any depth in typical discussions of the penitentiary and its social implications.

Editors Kupers, Sabo, and London's diversity of background is reflected in their approach to selecting submissions; the contributors include activists, academia, and prisoners. This puts a unique twist to the typical text-book pattern that all too often leaves the potentially interested reader lost and confused in intellectual wordiness and specialized jargon.

This work is divided into six sections that discuss matters ranging from prison's historical roots and contemporary trends to the reformation of prison masculinities. The facts and research are astounding, but it was the emotional impact of the original fiction and poetry that really touched me.

One finds oneself standing face to face with the darker side of the current political trend to "get tough on crime" when reading essays like "The Phone" or "The Story of a Black Punk." These essays open a window to a world which many readers have had the good fortune of never entering.

"The Phone" delves into the helplessness of an inmate whose situation has him dealing with family matters from inside a cage. "The Story of a Black Punk," is the painful confession of a system-produced prison "bitch" that vividly describes repeated rapes and the victim's role as a "wife" to more dominant male inmates for the sole purpose of protection. Perhaps it was my own conditioning in the male masculinity culture, but these essays seemed to terrify and anger me more than any others because of the complete loss of control they illustrate in an inmate's life. The psychological impact of this heterosexual male's experience still carries such a scar that the autobiographical author still chooses to remain anonymous.

Overall, *Prison Masculinities* picks up effectively where so many other books on the subject matter fall short. The wide subject matter also allows for appreciation from a larger audience than most specialized works will command. Newcomers to the problems of the prison system will receive a crash course in inmate hierarchies and prison realities. A well-versed reader will appreciate the historical discussion and explanations of the new prison industrial complex. Inmates with first hand knowledge of such atrocities will be able to appreciate the universality of the conclusions the work draws on the whole punitive and rehabilitative incarceration hypocrisies.

Prison Masculinities is set for publication in February of 2001. It is



Insiders' Art:

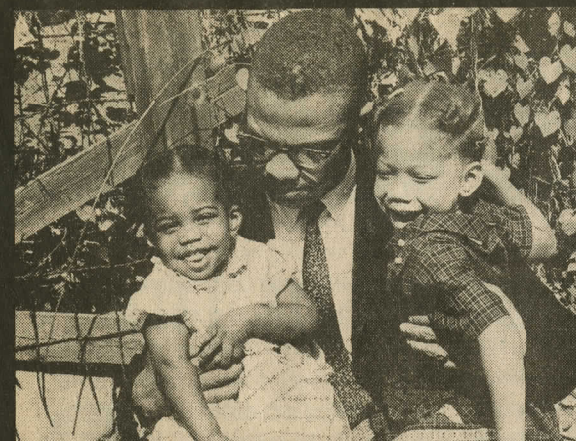
The Context Collection by Artists in Prison

Edited by: Jill Benowitz, Tim Dunn, Barbara Hirshkowitz • Contexts
Project of Books Through Bars • Philadelphia PA 2000

Prison may rob a human being of the freedom that many people take for granted but it cannot rob an individual of their spirit, thoughts, and dreams. *Insiders' Art* is a collection of amazing art work that was created in spite of the contributors' being subjected to some of the most horrific conditions known to man. The art ranges from satire to profound political statements and realism. Had it not been for the work of editors Jill Benowitz, Tim Dunn, and Barbara Hirshkowitz, the world may have been deprived of the emotions these inmates expressed through various artistic interpretations. *Insiders' Art* challenges damaging criminal stereotypes and allows the reader to see momentarily the world through the eyes of incarcerated souls.

~Adam Corwin (tomjoard21@yahoo.com)

an intricate puzzle piece to anyone wishing to comprehend the byproducts of American culture and the criminal justice system. This book also pays careful attention to recording the various sources it has drawn upon, making further investigation into the subject matter a simple task of resource location. For more information on *Prison Masculinities* contact: Gary Kramer, publicity manager at phone (215)204-3440 or email Kramer@mail.temple.edu.
~Adam Corwin (tomjoard21@yahoo.com)



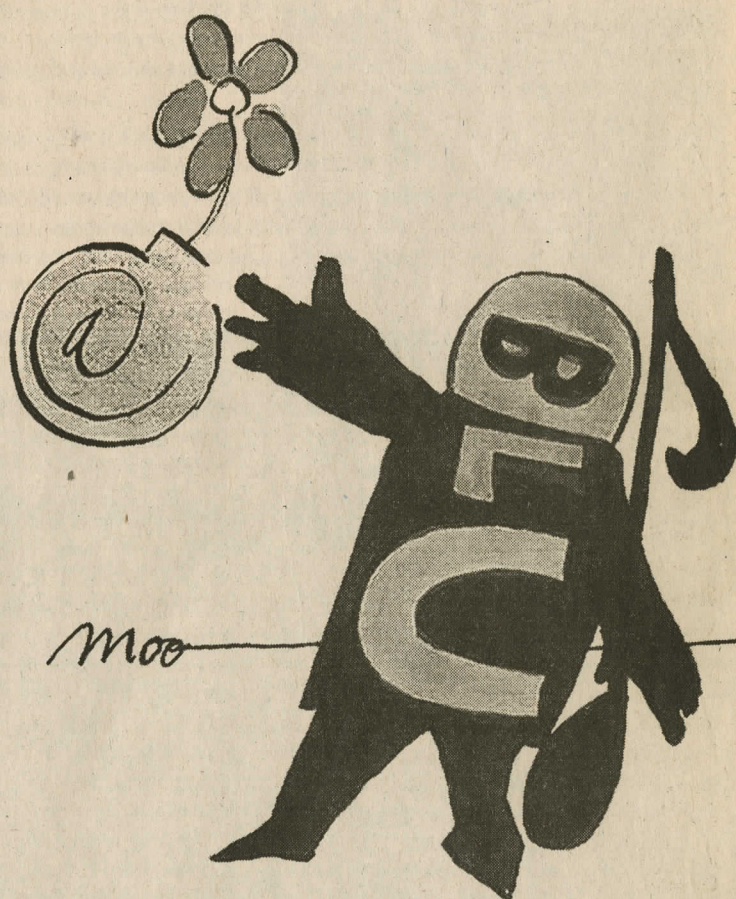
RICANSTRUCTION

born in the bottom of Sodom another
sling shot dropped in the rot and forgot
blessed as a have not beat by the street
bittersweet love isn't lost just damaged
and damned in defeat by the above cost
slum seed sacrifice, still had to ta think
twice rollin' the dice in this life you'll
pay a price so follow Assata, i said in
recollection ghetto and god will provide
needed protection Outside children
dying, politicians lying cut throat corpo-
rations gangland generations X and
King forgotten Huey Newton shot and
arms and evolution love and revolution
born in the horror of Harlem, hell, and a
hard knock life full of strife got a knife
behind a pad locked war at the door ever
sure only a stones throw jesus will cheat
us or lead us straight outta death row
saviors and graveyards and guns, no
time for romance baby just maybe just
one more second chance go follow
Assata, i said a resurrection ghetto and
god will provide a new direction
Outside youth uprising, solders strate-
gizing police in positions, radical reli-
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for fred hampton arms and evolution
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Love + Revolution

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graphic by matt mahlen

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mother earth

Sometimes I look at her petite 5'2" frame and wonder how that body, which I now tower over, is the same body that carried me for nine months. The same body that pushed me into this cold, harsh world and protected me from it when I couldn't fend for myself. **She looks so** small and fragile, but I know better than to take her soft-spoken, subtle ways as a sign of weakness. Four healthy children have passed through that body so she's anything but fragile. In fact she the strongest person that I know. She held down a career, cared for all her rambunctious mischievous children equally, not to mention a hardworking husband. Even my older brother, who was my father's son from another woman, got the same love and attention she gave us all. The same sense of warmth and comfort that she blessed each of us with.

Somehow she managed to give her kids everything she had and still not spoil us. Then again in a sense I guess we did turn out spoiled. Not materially spoiled, because she never had many material possessions to give. However I am spoiled when it comes to love and attention.

I've got so many memories of the sacrifices and efforts she's made ... I remember she would take care of us when we were sick, healing us with home remedies. And even though out of ignorance she would feed her kids pork and beef, it was cooked with love and that made it more nutritious than any organic food. And when I started

becoming conscious of the food I put into my body she listened when I would tell her that certain foods weren't healthy and that she shouldn't buy them. I remember she would come home from food shopping and she'd proudly show off the brown rice or soy milk or whatever it was I had requested. She even made an effort to stop cooking all the time (much to my father's displeasure) and to eat better.

And I know it couldn't have been easy to love me at certain ages. I remember the hurt in her voice when I called home from Brooklyn Central Bookings to tell her I'd been arrested, how upset she'd be when she came home from parent teacher conferences. She had always been a good kid and an excellent student, so she couldn't understand why I was doing so poorly in school. Especially since she knew how smart I was. I had my father's love for books and yet I wouldn't do the reading assignments. I was so respectful to her and my father and yet my teachers complained about my talking back to them.

But she never really paid much attention to my teacher's opinions. She gave me space to grow and search for my niche. And I'll always love her for that.

So here's to you, Mami, you've given and done everything in your power for me. It's up to me now to make it happen. Te quiero mucho ... Rebe-lu.

by JP Ablo

18 Feb 01

Erykah Badu's band started the night out with a loop called, "This is Badu's Show, It's not Yours." A lady came out with a long white wig singing, "This is Badu's Show, It's not Yours" and I am playing when I say, you should have seen the look on the crowd's faces! Some people when as far as saying, "What the hell!" "Who is that?" "Is that her?" "What happened to her?" But they still clapped. After all this sister on the mic was holding down the vocal of "Cry Me a River." Also this was of course, still Badu's show. The sister singing even had "natural" sisters asking the question, "Is this Badu?" And just as the crowd began to sit back down the mic controller says, "Please, welcome the queen herself. Badu!" To watch a room full of exhaling Black folks was like watching the expression of a kid when she/he first discovered that they indeed read a book without having someone correct their every word. Pure Bliss! The crowd were on their feet again welcoming this diva with her high white head wrap, incense hanging from her lips, white fur outfit with a backpack. (I hope it was not real fur Badu gurl!)

The crowd came alive and she played the diva role to its fullest with a cat-walk across the stage, head high, and no smiles. She walks up to the microphone pulses, launches back then

forward as if she is thinking "Should I sing now? No, I think I better wait until they really understand that this is Badu's Show!" They did by virtue of the screaming, more like what Tupac might have called, "Thug Passion" but this was a little more, it was Badu's Tonic. Then she sings, "Other side of the Game" ... yes, this was Badu we all have come to venerate, respect, love and envy. She sings like a person on a journey, honestly seeking what we all ultimately mediate every night to have: Peace! Though the night she keeps telling the crowd to always seek the truth, not to be frightened, and to do what they got to do. Soon afterward the band switched into "Penitentiary Philosophy" of course, this song was particularly very important since Philadelphia's police department is known for always trying to lock down spirits that they can never, never, ever control. One of the many highlights of the evening was when the band began to play the bridge of "Cleva". She dropped her head-wrap and Wow! Wow! Because she is cleval! She sings as she rubs her now bald head and proceeds to take yet another walk across the stage with her head held high.

Yes! Badu keep that head up!

(The lady with the white wig is Badu's younger sister Nayrok. And we should expect the unexpected from her soon.) ~buashie



bullets and clips

b-girl manifesto

by Shante Bullock



With the intent of "celebrating the female energies in hip-hop & beyond", arts collective and showcase series B-Girl Manifesto is tuning DC into the power and

talent of unsigned female artists of all genres of music. The showcase was created by Kimani Anku Productions to give three on-the-verge female artists a platform to speak their minds, free their souls, be seen, and be heard. (The B-Girl Manifesto showcase series also shouts out their male counterpart with a fifteen minute feature segment in the showcase called "Revenge of The B-Boys" that shines the light on male performers.)

You can't talk about B Girl Manifesto without mentioning Afi, a native Washingtonian and Howard University alumna who began performing at the age of two in traditional African dance. As a gifted songstress, Afi has serenaded her way to become the flagship artist of the B-Girl Manifesto Monthly Female Showcase Series in DC. With seasoned roots and effortless grandeur, Afi won the title of "DC's Newest Singing Sensation." As she enters the stage, Afi creates an ambience of warmth and divinity, soothing her audience with familiar and original tunes. The Sunflower is symbolic of Afi's talent to uplift through performance. Afi is currently completing her independent project that will include some of her signature original pieces. Afi is a grassroots worker, giving back to the community by mentoring at risk youth and teaching free dance classes to promote positive expression via her very own Yiniwah Productions.

Sporadic, a native of Germany, Boston, San Diego and all points in between, now calls DC her home and adds her talents to the B-Girl mix. At any given nanosecond within the average 24/7/365 you can catch her rotating her rhymes like the earth does her axis. An avid listener, pupil, and all around lover of old and new, trippy and retro hip hop, this femme emcee slash poet slash connoisseur of fine soul vernacular majors in the strict art of head nodding.

Christine, another active B-Girl Manifesto member, says, "I have been fortunate to work/study such issues as interracial relations, hate-crimes and sexual assault. Being knowledgeable about these issues and others related to women's and minority rights will determine the fate of the majority of the American population in the next four years. B-Girl Manifesto artists express themselves on these issues and more – the perfect breeding ground to not only make a statement on behalf of less represented groups, but in my case an opportunity to hone my skills by promoting this effort I believe so much in."

B-Girl Manifesto is making its presence known throughout the city through electronic campaigns, word of mouth, as well as innovative measures, spreading their positive vibes with the same skill and dedication that will soon be required of all citizens in order to make our voices heard on Capitol Hill with the new Administration.

B-Girl Manifesto • PO Box 727 • Glenn Dale, MD 20769-9998 • 202.756.4101 x 2622 • www.bgirlmanifesto.com •



af
sporadic



earthquake

by Kaira Espinoza

On January 13, 2001, El Salvador – the smallest country in Central America – was hit by a 7.9 earthquake that lasted almost forty seconds, causing huge damage and burying entire villages. One of the most tragic things about this devastating earthquake is that the right wing government of El Salvador has been taking control of all international aid and is not making this aid available to poor communities who support the left party group: FMLN. Although this party has its own internal challenges, The Committee for Emergency Help to El Salvador (COESA) is dedicated to making sure the aid goes to the victims who need it most and the most affected areas.

Please make your contribution through COESA because:

- COESA DOES NOT use any portion of your donation for administrative or shipping & handling purposes.
- all donations go directly to the most needy victims.
- no one in COESA receives any kind of salary, it's all volunteer.
- COESA is not affiliated with any political party, we just want to help the people
- if you send your address with your contribution, COESA will send you a final report of how contributions were used & distributed.

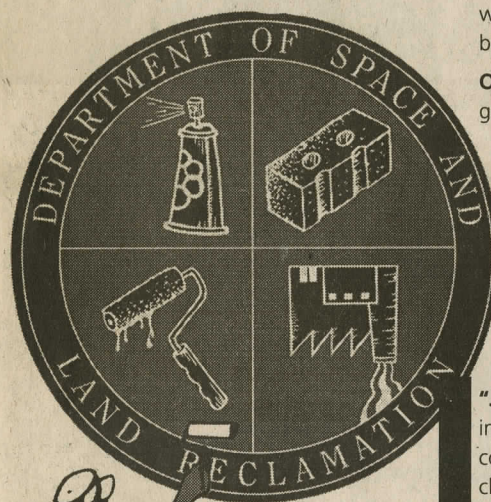
COESA • 3382 26th Street • San Francisco CA 94110

bullets and clips

reclaiming space

by Josh Macphee

Open call to public space modifiers, community garden enthusiasts, militant neighborhood associations, chipper anarchists, non-frothing leftists, culture jamming nightcrawlers, graffiti painting pirates, unproductive cultural producers and monkey-wrenching toddlers. Join the Department of Space and Land Reclamation (DSLRL) for a weekend campaign of redistribution. Creating a hub, or laboratory, of interconnected mayhem, the DSLRL explicitly desires the reclamation of all space, land, visuals and culture back into the hands of the people who create it, work it and live in it. The DSLRL is interested in bringing together people for the explicit task of aesthetically taking back our lives. The movement against globalization, as well as growing grassroots empowerment and direct action campaigns at home, has provided some areas in which we see the possibility of radically changing our daily lives.



millenium uprising:

Seattle to Vandenberg

by Tracie de Angelis

"Just as the WTO has become the coordinating body for the corporate agro-industrial complex – its sweatshops and stripmines, clearcuts, plantations, and genetics labs, just as the IMF has become the hub of global corporate finance – its brutal debt policies, interest rates, austerity plans, and concentration of wealth, so the US Space Command is increasingly the hub of 21st century military terror, of space age counterinsurgency war to enforce the economic and environmental violence of corporate globalization." *Vandenberg's Global Reach* (Rising Wind Press 2000)

On May 19 2001 – Armed Forces Day – hundred of concerned people will converge on Vandenberg's beautiful coast for a mass nonviolent security zone occupation to

But our movements are still frail and timid. We must boldly push our dreams into the doorways, parking spaces, chain-link fences, brick walls and lobbies of the city we aim to take back. Reclaiming space is exciting, invigorating, life affirming, and quite against the grain.

Some examples include squatted gardens where space becomes a place to grow carrots and get to know the neighbors, skateboarders who kick flip onto dead "public" sculpture, graffiti artists who lay claim to 3 am city walls, billboard manipulators who alter and jam the tedious messages of the overbearing system of capital, jail breakers who rightfully escape their spatial deprivations, street performers who nickel and dime it with accordions and buckets.

DSLRL is not interested in just art. DSLRL is interested in people taking back their lives with a wide range of approaches and methods. We want to encourage people from all walks of life who are interested in reclaiming the streets and buildings of Chicago to put in a proposal.

Out of this campaign DSLRL also hopes to generate a strong critique of both artists'

subservience to the status quo as well as capitalism's stunting of the growth of a liberatory aesthetics. We anticipate more networking between various space and land reclamation organizations. We want to make demands on both art movements and political movements that a new and autonomous and critical aesthetic be supported and encouraged both through discussion and action. Some results of this could include creating space in radical and community-based publications for art and discussion, the development of non-capitalist networks to help create and display autonomous art and other cultural projects, and political groups making art and culture integral to their campaigns. Great things are bound to happen if we successfully take back what is rightfully ours!

The DSLRL Laboratory will be set up over the weekend previous to May Day, April 27, 28, and 29th. If you can come to Chicago we will try to find places for people to stay. If you have any questions at all, please get in touch: spaceandland@hotmail.com • J. MacPhee/DSLRL • PO Box 476971 • Chicago, IL 60647 • www.counterproductiveindustries.com

challenge, confront, and disrupt its counterinsurgency satellite launch complex, also used to guide nuclear missiles and Star Wars weapons. As VAFB's surveillance and targeting satellites guide the US swat/INS teams, corporate/military death squads, and gunships from Colombia to Indonesia, we have the power to rise up and say no. Join us!

Sponsored by the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, Direct Action Network Against Corporate Globalization Santa Cruz/Resource Center for Nonviolence/Latin America Program • www.geocities.com/vafb_m19/ • pnut119@hotmail.com • 831.421.9794 or 831.423.1626 x 104

bullets and clips

boycott bacardi

by Natalie Wright

Rock Around The Blockade is British based campaign largely run by a group of revolutionary women based in London. The organization stands in solidarity with Cuba and has recently launched a Boycott Bacardi Campaign to highlight the organized attempts of the Bacardi Company to undermine the Cuban revolution.

The campaign discourages people from drinking and stocking Bacardi in bars and pubs throughout Europe. It also dispels Bacardi's advertising myths that insinuate the white rum still has Cuban roots. In reality the company is based in the Bahamas and broke all ties with Cuba when the Bacardi family fled the island just before their Batista cronies where overthrown by Fidel Castro's guerrilla movement.

Since then, the Bacardi company has backed several illegal and violent operations that openly attack Cuba and its residents. This includes financing the Cuban-American

National Foundation (CANF) a resentful right-wing group that are responsible for several systematic acts of terrorism against Cuba.

The founders of the Boycott Bacardi campaign regularly visit Cuba and work closely with Young Communist Party members, supporting

Cuban youth through the provision of sound systems and other items. To get more details about Cuban Solidarity work and the Boycott Bacardi Campaign please write to: Rock Around the Blockade. c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX. Or email@rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk *Uhuru means freedom.*



marshall eddie conway

by Ameejill Whitlock

MARSHALL EDDIE CONWAY AWARENESS WEEK APRIL 22-28

There is a growing awareness that the case against Marshall Eddie Conway is a travesty of justice. The issues bound up in the case are many, including the punishment of political dissent and racial bias in the United States criminal justice system.

Marshall Eddie Conway has been unjustly incarcerated since April of 1970 for a crime he did not commit. He has been victimized by a covert government operation called COINTELPRO and targeted for his political beliefs while in the Black Panther Party - Baltimore Chapter.

Along with documented lies manufactured by police and paid informants and denied his constitutional rights to the counsel of his choice, Eddie was railroaded. No eyewitnesses or physical evidence linked him to any wrongdoing.

The case of Marshall Eddie Conway is still in the Maryland State courts. We want to make this a year of decision. Hence we call for a Marshall Eddie Conway Awareness Week April 22-28th to promote an end to this unjust punishment of political dissent.

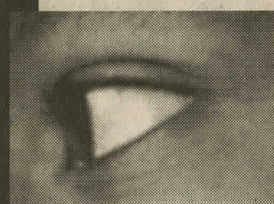
We call on all people and organizations concerned with justice and human rights to make plans to take this issue to their communities and constituencies during the Marshall Eddie Conway Awareness Week.

This week will include a wide variety of local, national and international activities around Eddie's case and that of other political prisoners/prisoners of war, culminating on Saturday, April 28th, in a Town Hall Meeting inquiring into the case of Marshall Eddie Conway.

We must make Eddie's name into a household word and make his case into a political dividing line in the United States and around the world.



Ameejill Whitlock • 719 S. Bond Street • Baltimore, MD 21231 • 410.815.2298 ameejill@hotmail.com



bay area

La Peña Cultural Center is a leading site for revolutionary art, performance, and international solidarity. Check their calendar at www.lapena.org for events • 3105 Shattuck Avenue • Berkeley CA 94705 • 510.849.2568

NOMMO: The Power of Word-Featuring some of Los Angeles' up and coming poets/spoken word artists, writers, visual artists, and performance artists happens on a monthly basis at the Brasil Brasil Cultural Center located at 3021 Airport Ave. 104A in the Santa Monica Airport. The performance space is a Capoeira studio – please bring blankets and/or pillows to sit comfortably on the dance floor. The BBCC also offers ongoing Capoeira classes with Mestre Amen Santo. galo37@hotmail.com • 310.397.3667

Indie. Independent. Underground. Backpack. Whatever phrase you've adopted into your street slang lexicon; whichever term your local industry snob/publication uses, whichever label your neighborhood tdk terrorists uses at leisure; they epitomize the whole sense of Cali's Below The Surface; Sovereignty. Sovereignty not only in terms of what they carry, Independent records, cassettes, and cd's, but just the total BTS aesthetic: A strong D.I.Y. vision and a guerilla like tactic of word of mouth.

It's not just tapes, wax, and compacts; even though BTS is largely known for it's retail. Steadily over the past year Below The Surface has started delving into other mediums; releasing six 7" from producers including Deeskee, Elusive to MCs Lip Service, Murs, Maleko, and a full length CD by Lip Service in March all under the Sub-Level Epidemic label; all to complement last year's underground phenom "Strictly Indee", a 70 minute compilation running the gamut of Bay Area underground hip hop styles (Bored Stiff, Anticon, DJ Marz, Still Life, Constylations etc..) ~ *patrick diaz*

chicago

For hip hop, deep house, or just dancing and dining with a relaxing vibe check out Chicago's Cafe Sidecar located at the corner of Chicago and Orleans. In 2000, Side Car was voted # 1 hip hop club in Chicago by Def Jam records and has continued to be a hot spot for real hip hop.

Come to Sidecar Friday or Saturday nights for live hip hop or dj'd parties presented by Chicago's own Chi-one Entertainment, a mix of indigenous Chicago underground and raw style, or for the best in deep house music check out Sidecar on week nights. For booking or info call Michael 312.202.0502 or Chi-ones Vincent 773.209.2746. Cafe Sidecar is located at 801 N Orleans Chicago IL ~*i-zak*

Women Out Loud happens the last Tuesday of the month at Mad Bar. An open mic hosted by Krystal Ashe, Lucy Anderton, Tara Betts, Anida Yoeu Esguerra of I was Born With Two Tongues for for women who write// perform// play// love// fight// sing// smile// laugh// cry// announce//denounce// kick// scream// celebrate // revel //BE. Open mic fills up fast so get here promptly at 7:00. \$3 open mic readers, \$5 general admission, no poor poets will be turned away. Mad Bar • 1640 N Damen • Chicago IL • 773.227.2277 • womenoutloud.com

Puerto Rican Cultural Center Grassroots community building at its best – the Cultural Center provides educational & Community programs, an art gallery, and coordinates the annual Fiesta Boricua. The Center continues to Face continual harassment for its involvement in the struggle for Puerto Rican self determination Juan Antonio Corretjer • 1671 N. Claremont • Chicago, IL. 60647 • 773.342.8023 x 24

new york

Revolution Books is a liberated place where rebels, radicals, and those awakening to political life can depend on finding information and inspiration for revolutionary struggle. A not-for-profit staffed almost entirely by volunteers, Revolution Books is the largest explicitly revolutionary bookstore in the country. There are sister stores in Atlanta, Seattle, Cleveland Heights, Cambridge, Honolulu, Chicago, Berkeley, and Detroit. 9 West 19th Street • New York NY • tel: 212.691.3345 • fax: 212.645.1952

Nkiru Center for Education and Culture is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting literacy and multicultural awareness for people of color. www.nkirucenter.prodigybiz.com • nkiru@cs.com • 732 Washington Avenue (Between Park & Prospect) • tel: 718.783.6306 • fax: 718.783.6245

Nuyorican Poets Cafe

Founded by the original Nuyorican poets in 1974, The Nuyorican Poets Cafe is a living room hosting the freshest art to come through the ports of Nueva York. Situated in Manhattan's Loisaia, the Nuyorican collective attempts to provide a stage for non mainstream artists to show their work. 236 E. 3d St. in Lower East Side • NYC • 212.505.8183.

philly

The Black Market Gallery in North Philly is an arts and culture venue buzzing with good vibes and creativity. An upcoming issue of BLU will bring you a detailed profile of the Gallery and Taekia, the mastermind behind it all. 1700 North 5th Street, 3rd Floor (at 5th and Cecil B Moore) • 215.769.1608

washington dc

Sisterspace and Books and the African American Women's Resource Center, Inc. proudly present the 2nd African American Women Writers and Readers Conference April 27 - 29, 2001 at the University of the District of Columbia Washington, D.C.

The 2nd African American Women Writers and Readers Conference will provide an interactive forum where aspiring writers and poets, scriptwriters, journalists, book club members, avid readers, and students will gather to celebrate the richness of African American women writings.

To register and for additional information: 202.332.3433 • sistersp@erols.com • www.sisterspace.com

points beyond...

The 2001 Global Justice Tour will travel across the United States and Canada to educate and mobilize people to take action for global justice. The tour is focused on Citigroup, the world leader in financing imperialist corporations, private prisons, and environmental destruction, and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA is a secret agreement that would expand the disastrous effects of NAFTA to the entire Western Hemisphere. The Global Justice tour consists of ten regional conferences, teach-ins, cultural events, protests and much more.

Conferences and teach-ins will feature workshops on the Prison-Industrial-Complex, Predatory Lending, Redlining, Global Forest Destruction, Globalization, and Anti-Racism. Trainings offered include Guerrilla/Political Theater, Media, Direct Action, Consensus Decision Making, Non-Violence and more.

The Global Justice tour will include conferences in Portland, East Lansing Michigan, Lawrence Kansas, Chicago, DC, Philly, New York, and Boston. www.calltoaction.org or call 503.804.9378 • campaigns@calltoaction.org

The Global Justice Tour is brought to you by Call To Action and co-sponsored by the War Resisters League, Rainforest Action Network, Inner City Press/Community on the Move, Forest Ethics, and the Ruckus Society.

The Official Cypher (the alter destiny for altered/natives)

Air thick w/ the choke of copal on coal beddings & Sun Ra's Arkestra permeates ether "...calling planet earth/Earth...". Imported Ghana-wax wraps & Sean John juxtapose cowry chokers and bling pendants, as sugahbritches of distinct regions & sweet poppies of thug religions trickle through the Cypher gates. It's like this every 2nd Friday; maybe Black Womb; maybe Mark Wells Trio, tuning up for the Roots "Next Movement" or Ohio Players "Skintight". The resident conspiracy theorist enters the stage, licorice stick on palate opening "Welcome to a sacred place for sonnets & psalms & songs of cynics and syllogist..." Patrons sip on orange-carrot jugo & Red Stripes as this Jesuit Jook Joynt turns to brimstone baptism, rimes thrown to four-winds, mantras of M-O-b-b and panthers. Inside, the crowd is sciened by "Diallo Deathmask Suite" or by the phatback groovewurks of "Chitlin Chirren". Outback in the courtyard, impromptu build sessions of Lawds & offdome rime/ciphers. Capoeistas & Nilot Dervishes whirl in drum circles...then suddenly...copal aftermist...& un/holy church is dismissed until next sunday...i mean 2nd Friday...and the mind can't wait for another. "Space is the plaaace/Space is the plaaace..."

visit us on the web: www.officialcypher.com • Raleigh NC ~*r.c.glenn*

Desperation

by J.V.

Young and restless I feel so helpless

In this world I'm desperate.

To find a family. A home.

Shit! I'm all alone.

Moving in this world I'm a whirling dervish,

Fuming. Fuming. Anger. All kinds of Anger.

Pain. Resentment. Sorrow.

Emotions changing

like there is no tomorrow. Faster. Faster

than a speeding bullet. Faster than the

speed of light. Oh the fright! Each and every

night with no one by my side.

Emotions colliding. Inside I'm dying.

For I keep on trying. Trying. Trying to find

my home that I will never find.

J.V., 17, is a student at Rosewood High School, the all women's high school on Rikers Island. Inspired by BLU magazine, she hopes to start her own magazine one day.



For more information on the writing workshops at Rosewood High School, or to donate books or supplies contact Victoria Sammartino • Voices UnBroken • PO Box 342 • Bronx NY • 10461

• voicesunbroken@yahoo.com



Turbo Tunes

a Kill Rock Stars retrospective sampler

Turbo Tunes was like listening to a mixed tape put together by someone who loved each and every band. Included are post-punk faves like the Bangs and the Frumpies, as well as people like Jim Carroll (he did the 1980 punk anthem "People Who Died"). For those not yet familiar with Kill Rock Stars, it's a quality indie label and the same who puts out Sleater-Kinney's stuff. Sleater-Kinney happens to also be on the comp as well as one of my personal faves Slumber Party. www.killrockstars.com

~pcw

Company of Prophets

Who ever heard of an insurgence of "political hip hop" in the San Francisco Bay Area? Obviously if you haven't been following the Collective Soul series of shows, or heard of groups like Zion I or The Coup ... then you might not have heard of Company of Prophets.

Company of Prophets is a duo based out of Oakland. Comprised of MCs Brutha Los and Rashidi Omari, CPs have been steadily acquiring more visibility as community-conscious performers and activists. According to Brutha Los, "Our outside influences don't come from within the music (hiphop). I'm inspired by people like John Coltrane, Nina Simone and Stevie Wonder. People who had the ability to transform music beyond the period of time it existed – to transcend. They made political music."

Company of Prophets have been linked up with Underground Railroad, and plan on continuing an educational information campaign with them this summer. Last year, CPs were in Seattle to kick off the WTO rallies. "We rocked it, early in the morning, on top of a van, with mics in our hands," says Rashidi. Thus far, Company of Prophets has been performing and touring, for the sake of inspiring others to become more aware and active, through the medium of music.

At the moment Company of Prophets anticipate releasing singles this summer, and eventually a full-length album. "We just want to continue making good music together," Rashidi says. "To keep moving forward."

~Audrey Ednalino

Brutal Police Menace

Since the death of Amadou Diallo there have been any number of records to put out as protest against continued police brutality and racial profiling – Weldon Irvine's *The Price of*

Freedom, *The Stolen Lives Project*, and *Hip Hop for Respect* come immediately to mind – but there can't be too many voices of protest in a country where youth continue to be terrorized by police. The electronic dance compilation *Brutal Police Menace* from Brooklyn Beats is "a confrontation and vocalization of discontent, not only with the brutal police menace, but also with the BPM culture we are part of," a call to reclaim spaces that rightfully belong to the people rather than corporations or government. Recognizing that all music need and should not be blatantly political, *BPM* establishes that dance music can transmit a radical message very effectively. The album includes contributions from Zipperspy, Ylyptyk, Doily, Criterion, Bruce Grant, Jack Clang, Nettle, DJ Rupture and Aristide Massaccesi.

Brutal Police Menace is a benefit for the community computer center at ABC No Rio and is dedicated to Patrick Dorismund, the Haitian musician who was murdered by police last year.

www.crucial-systems.com

www.safetyinnnumbers.net

Seeds of Wisdom

The Seeds of Wisdom are the hottest thing to come out of the MOVE Organization since JOHN AFRICA, and in fact it was his prophecy that MOVE children would grow up to be more dangerous to this system than he and the other members of the older generation of MOVE ever could be. The Seeds' second album *The Power of Truth Burnin Down the System* is now out with thirteen songs of revolution including brand new tracks like "A Couple of Issues", "The Power of Truth", "All Part of the Game", and "You Make the Call" as well as familiar Seeds songs like "What Are We Talking About" and "Welcome to Philadelphia". There is also a spoken word piece by Mumia where he explains just what JOHN AFRICA'S Seeds of Wisdom are.

The CD costs \$12 and all proceeds go to the MOVE organization to aid in various projects including the case of the MOVE 9, a Mumia's case, and a current battle over child custody with the city of Philadelphia.

The MOVE ORGANIZATION • P.O. Box 19709 Philadelphia PA 19143 • 215.387.4107/9955 • seedsofwisdom@hotmail.com • onamovellja@aol.com

BLU collective

Once again it's time to recognize the people who make BLU what it is, and this time (of course) we're focusing on some of the women. I'll keep the introduction short cuz their commitment speaks for itself.

Mel & Jenny

the two woman wrecking crew from the UK

I first ran into these sistas through dead prez and from that moment on they have been putting the UK down with the BLU family worldwide. They don't usually roll in a pair but they come with a whole squad of committed soul sista's (you know who you are). Much love to the whole UK squad. Mel is the hustler and loves to put artists onto the multimedia aspects of BLU. If you wanna catch up to Mel you gotta be on the scene. I don't just mean some wack-ass party but you will find her down with the most positive musicians here in the states and abroad. Mel is the sista that will tighten up ya wig piece – I'm talking twisties, dreads, cornrows, braids all on some real natural shit. Mel is now in school and also holdin' down major distro for our BLU office in London.

I love this team cause its total yin and yang energy. Jenny is very tough, smart and savvy. She somehow came all the way from the UK and ended up living in a collective uptown with my man Native Sun and mad other peeps. I had been trying to get down with these folks for years, then Jenny just said, If you need somewhere to stay in the city I got you covered. The next thing ya know we're at the collective living space and I'm getting to build with Native Sun. All to Jenny's credit, cause if it was up to Sun and myself we may have been still floating out in the universe somewhere...

Jenny is the other half and I mean the other half. For most sista's and particularly brothers she is way too strong in attitude and spirit (don't ever change). This always adds a level of excitement to the way the whole democratic process goes down between the sista's and brotha's...

~rsiii

Toya

This sista represents the type of women that the movement is in desperate need of. She is steady, trustworthy and committed to the struggles of those less fortunate. We first met at the BLU collective yearly event where she made her mark in all of our collective hearts and minds. A major factor that day in helping BLU come up with where we were going in the next year and also coming up with ideas around what our mission should be.

Sista Toya is a woman with a big heart and a real taste for freedom and justice.

~rsiii

Ameejill

A true soldier from Baltimore who don't put up with no shit. This sista is for real in every aspect of her life. Ameejill's been working on the front lines for Eddie Conway (see bullets & clips) for many years now and also does organizing against police brutality and for Mumia, and for other community organizations. When Ameejill came up to the hof i was immediately impressed with her dedication and willingness to do real work. She's been a valuable friend to us in BLU, one who's not afraid to call us out when its needed. Peace fam~pcw

Myrian

I could go on for days about this sista. She's not anything like anyone I've every seen in all of my years. That is to say that she has survived some of life's hardest blows and keeps right on tickin. She is a real lover of life and all that it has to offer. I used to think that I was revolutionary in my thought pattern but it's one thing to be revolutionary in your thoughts and a whole nother thing to be a free thinker and a real nonconformist. Myrian runs her own natural hair styling co. & rents a chair in one of California's hottest salons. She's been doing color in hair since her years of coloring her own mohawk on the punk scene. When we met, some of her friends (and including herself) would refer to Myrian as "Da Mommy". She said I could call her Da Mommy. In my insecurity I said to myself, "you can forget about me ever, and I mean ever, calling you Da Mommy, how silly I'm a grown man" – even though she exemplified those qualities about as well as my grandma. Well I guess she was right (as most times sistas are). I now call her Da Mommy (we're expecting). Much love to ya, Myrian I have no question you'll make a great mother (I have been truly blessed).

~rsiii

And we can't

let it go without thanking Desiree Gordon, Buashie Amatokwu, Aya de Leon, Yaya Porras, Kiilu Nyasha, Kathryn and Heidi Scott, Verena, Vera Beatty, Shante Bullock, Sadie Johnson, Shashari Murphy, and especially Carolyn and Monika for their contributions and support. And most special of all, BLU's official grandmother Dorothy Mommsen, who at age 78 volunteers six hours of her day to correspond with the many prisoners who write to BLU – if you've ever gotten a letter from her you'll understand why the letters addressed to "Queen Mother Dorothy" continue to pour into the office.

~mw, mem

BLU back issues sold here

tees and hoodies

BLU star tee \$15

(L, XL, in navy, blu, black or green; baby tee in green)

BLU star hoodie \$33

(L, XL, in black or green)

BLU Millennium Sport tee \$20

(L, XL, in navy blu)

Che tee \$20

(L, XL in black or green)

BLU 1 \$5.00 Mumia introduces BLU, Subcommandante Marcos, East Timor, Death by NAFTA, Assata Shakur, Artaud, and Rumi No CD

BLU 2 \$10.00 Young Lords Party, Control Units, Martin Espada, Las Abejas
the CD Rock Bottom Players, Seeds of Wisdom, Laddio Bolocko

BLU 3 \$15.00 DEDICATED TO MUMIA ABU JAMAL Mumia, Assata Shakur, Maroon Shoatz, CA Prison Gladiators, Rafeal Cancel Miranda

the CD The Coup, Fred Ho, Ricanstruction, Jim Page, Grand Ran, Conflict n Friction, Lucid Dreams, Bruderhof Kids, Euware Osayande

BLU 4 \$10.00 IN THE TRENCHES - BECAUSE ITS A WAR Piri Thomas, Millions for Mumia, Mzwakhe Mbuli, Kosova & King, Satyagrahi, bell hooks, Bob Marley & St Augustine

the CD dead prez, Welfare Poets, Momsug Dojo, Mzwahke Mbuli, Dope-a-Delic, Fermin Muguza & DUT

BLU 5 \$10.00 SURVIVAL: THE ABOLITION OF POLICE TERROR Chuck D, Assata Shakur, Dwayne Wiggins, Roberto Rodriguez, Alejandrina Torres, Laura Whitehorn, Mumia, Sundiata Acoli

the CD Munk Wit Da Funk, Corey Harris, Makeba Mooncycle, Los Pleneros de la 21, ashe bande, Antigua, La Bruja

BLU 6 \$5.00 INDIGENOUS REALITY Leonard Peltier, Afrikaa Bambaattaa, Mos Def, Ghana Roots, Asian Dub Foundation

the CD Poor Righteous Teachers, NAME, Mos Def and Talib Kweli, Quetzal, Zuba

BLU 7 sold out! WOMEN IN STRUGGLE Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, Sonia Sanchez, Yuri Kochiyama

the CD Medusa, Rha Goddess, Sweet Honey in the Rock & Sonia Sanchez, Gospel, Queen Godis, Instinto

SOLD OUT!

BLU 8 \$5.00 PA'LANTE Pedro Albizu Campos, dead prez, Piri Thomas, Vieques, Crazy Legs, Latinas in hip hop, Ireland & Puerto Rico

the CD Ozomatli, Tony Touch, Willie Colon, Ricanstruction

BLU 9 \$7.50 BLACK AUGUST George Jackson, Geronimo, NY3, Junot Diaz, Hurricane Carter, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Tupac, Bob Marley

the CD Les Nubians, Bahamadia, Cee Knowledge, Spearhead, Boukman Eksperyans

BLU 10 \$20.00 GLOBAL GUERRILLAS Gang Organizing, Zapatista Women, Martial Arts & Hip Hop, Frantz Fanon, Playahating, DC Punk Underground

the CD Saul Williams, Aztlan Underground, Blood of Abraham, Mountain Brothers, Arsonists

BLU 11 \$5.00 LOVE Muhammed Ali, Common, Love and Revolution, Ben Harper, Playahating part II

the CD Mike Ladd, Blackalicious, Hil St Soul, Phife Dawg

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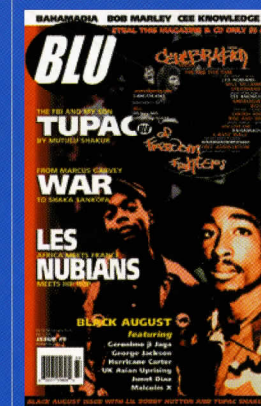
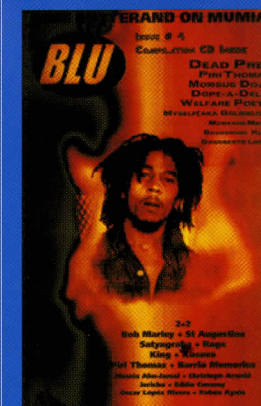
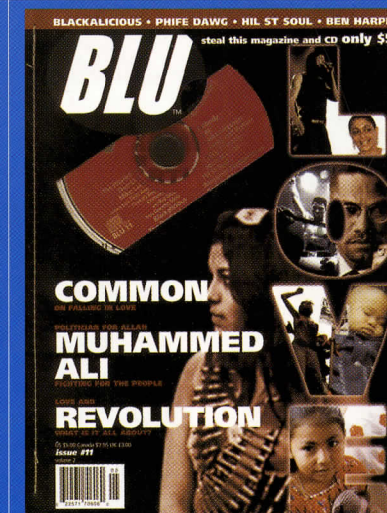
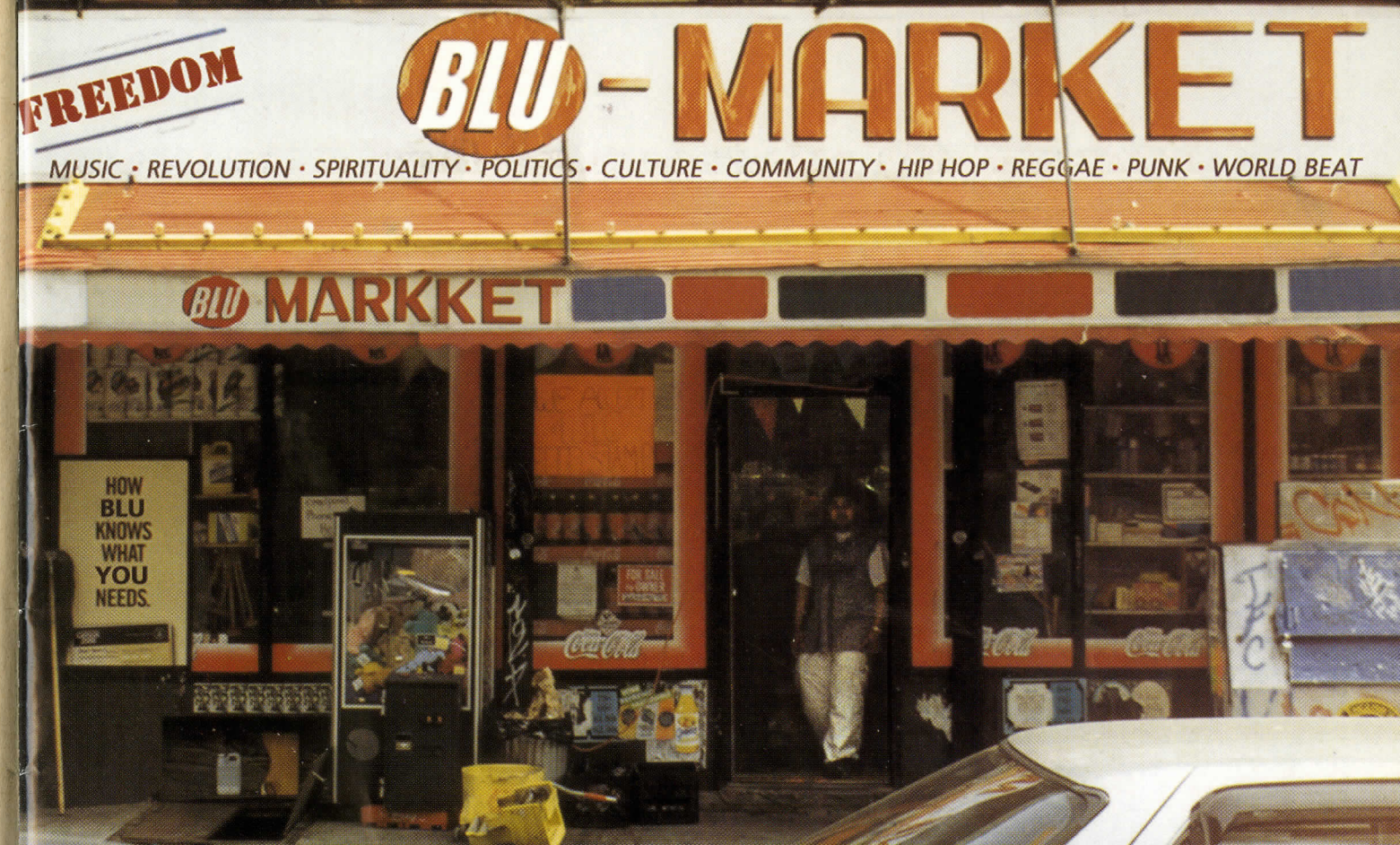
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To believe in external government is to believe that the force that put you here on this earth would give the wisdom, the coordinating power for your life to someone else. Why wouldn't that force give you the coordinating power for your own life? That don't make sense, do it? Everybody is equipped to coordinate their own lives.

~Ramona Africa of MOVE

women



cutting the system strings

by fran harris

If what we want does not exist, we can talk about its absence, we can argue for its legalization – or we can make it happen. Structural change does not happen from the exterior, it starts from the grassroots. The first fugitive slaves in this country did not

spend their lives asking for manumission, they claimed their lives as they knew they should be lived. When the Zapatistas declared war on the Mexican government, they did not come to San Cristobal from meeting halls. They came from the mountains of Chiapas where they had already formed their rebel army. Even the so-called forefathers who came and took over this land called America did not wait to be given England's blessing before they did it. This article profiles women activists who are finding creative ways to live with less reliance on traditional channels.

Ramona Africa was one of only two survivors of the May 13, 1985 bombing of MOVE's family rowhouse by the city of Philadelphia that killed eleven men, women, and children. This atrocity followed years of harassment by Philadelphia police on MOVE, who have always been visible and vocal about restoring life to its natural harmonic order. In the aftermath of the bombing, Ramona was the only person charged in the incident and spent seven years in prison. Her dedication to this movement should never be considered a mere lifestyle choice. She is in it because of a passion that transcends personal choice.

But even Ramona acknowledges that people come to revolutionary consciousness from varying degrees of privilege and dedication. "Even if they're not all that sincere at first, if

they are willing to do some work, even out of phoniness, then why not use that work? And perhaps they will gain some sincerity and commitment along the way. I mean when I joined MOVE, I wasn't sincere. I was phony as hell. Sure I saw things that attracted me to MOVE, but nowhere in my head did I have that this was a lifelong commitment. Nowhere did I understand in my head that all of the information that I confronted officials and politicians with when I first came around MOVE, that that same information applied to me – to the judge, the cop, the politician in me. Because everything that's in the system is in us, until we honestly look at it and do the work to rid ourselves of it."

MOVE's community began with their founder, John Africa, in the early 70s. Since then, they have received international recognition for their work to free political prisoners such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and the MOVE 9, and for their passion about abolishing this unjust system of oppression. And while the media may frame MOVE as "a loose-knit organization" or "back-to-nature radicals", Ramona stresses that, "we don't do all the 'ists' and 'isms'. MOVE is a family."

As a family, MOVE makes all major decisions in meetings where every voice is heard, including those of MOVE children. MOVE is adamant about educating their children at home to preserve their profound sense of revolution and respect for life. This has not been easy, and MOVE has waged many battles with the Philadelphia public school system in order to preserve the right to home school. Dragged to family courts over the last decades, not only the adults, but the youth have

confronted the courts to demand this right. Ramona point out that the laws aren't about protecting MOVE kids. "This government does only what is in the interest of the government, not in the interest of the people. So anytime they tell you that you *must* do something, you can almost assume that it's not in your interest."

It is exciting to see women moving to a place where activism is not trapped within issues of feminism but incorporated into the work itself. The work that women do in the name of feminism to critique and organize around issues of equality and protection often feed right back into oppressive systems. Rape victims' advocacy organizations, for example, that approach survival with an "us-against-them" mentality whose priority is to move women from the hotline to the prosecutor's office as a sole solution to crimes against women, lack a larger understanding of how cycles of violence continue to manifest. They disregard not only inequalities within the criminal justice system, the pathology of punishment, but also the fact that sex offenders are members of communities, not isolated individuals.

Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA), a year-old organization in Seattle, WA, has a truer understanding. CARA's main three programs – The Black People's Project, Project Action for people with disabilities, and the Youth Program work – share one thing in common: their communities are often marginalized by mainstream sources of support like the criminal justice system. So CARA is trying a whole different approach. Working with a host of activists, they are reaching out to these communities to respond to sexual

violence with community organizing through peer advocacy. Not only does each of these groups find it difficult to get support through the typical channels, they are groups that are more prone to sexual violence. According to CARA, 85-90% of people with disabilities are sexually assaulted in their lifetime. African-American women are about 30% more likely to be the victim of rape or sexual assault and the risk of rape for women between the ages of 16-24 is four times higher than for any other age group.

The challenge for CARA will not be just to win support from these communities, but to change attitudes toward sexual violence. Some of the cynicism about their project comes from the sexual and domestic violence community whose ideas about treatment usually involve traditional clinical approaches. But CARA has support from many liberation-minded folks in the anti-violence movement. Alisa Bierria, CARA's program coordinator, points out that the typical approach to marginalized communities uses the "cultural competency" model of gaining more information about a population in

comes to abuse. Last year, they did their first three support groups, two through Project Action about sexual violence, with a strong component focusing on sex, desire and choice and a third group was for sex workers in juvenile detention through the Youth Program. A lot of CARA's success will also depend on the alliances they make with other grassroots organizations in Seattle such as the African-American Task Force Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Arc of King County and a non-profit loose-knit collective called Home Alive.

Home Alive's goal is to train people, mostly women, in self-defense from a community perspective. Following the rape and murder of a woman named Mia Zapata in 1993, this group of artists and activists, many of whom were friends of Mia, quickly organized, realizing that not only was the Seattle police department doing an inadequate investigation, but that any legal resolution to the case would be inadequate. These women developed trainings, not only in self-defense, but also around boundary issues – which means also working with sex workers, men who have been arrested for

Since 1993, Home Alive has done outreach far beyond the city of Seattle. Ronica has taught classes in places like Calcutta, Egypt as well as along the East Coast and Vancouver, BC. As activists, they do work around anti-racist and anti-globalization efforts because, as Ronica says, "we live in a rape culture. We rape the land, we use little kids to do labor all over the world and the United States government is responsible for that. And that's why the work that we're doing is relevant globally. We do attack consumerism, we do attack ideas of complacency that directly relates to the violence that a lot of mainstream Americans are lulled into."

Materialism will always create a culture of violence, so members of the Bruderhof, a eighty year old communal movement, renounce all personal property and money. For Bruderhof members this is the best way to apply the biblical commands – to love God, and love the person next to you – to daily living, which for them results in community. Like MOVE, membership in the Bruderhof is not a lifestyle choice, but a commitment to a lifelong struggle for justice and equality for all people. Founded

whether to become a member. As a teenager, Helga was inspired to activism through the words of Bruderhof founder, Eberhard Arnold, "our Bruderhof movement grew out of a longing for revolution ... ultimately, true revolution will lead to a community of social justice." Bruderhof activism has been global, including sending delegations to help break the blockade in Cuba, actively opposing the death penalty, and offering aid to the indigenous Las Abejas community in Chiapas, Mexico.

"But let me make it clear," says Helga, "that this isn't about politics. This is about humanity." Helga recognizes that some Bruderhof tenets are controversial and perhaps inappropriate for activist platforms. For example, even though Bruderhof faith deems abortion wrong, Helga points out that she, "would never stand in front of an abortion clinic and wave a sign screaming 'baby killer' to a woman walking in, because that's not where the problem should be addressed. It's society that needs to change. Society needs to welcome babies into this world and support mothers. That's where the blame lies. How many women have lost their

hunger, we talk about the right to be able to feed one's self, to talk about the structural causes of hunger which lie in poverty and which would need genuine land reform and a living wage for all." Food First is interested in the economic and political policy that bring about hunger. In the last few years, Food First has worked with other radical grassroots organizations to interrupt the global meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) whose corporate trade agenda has historically had little to do with human rights. "We're not waiting on these institutions to turn into benevolent dictators who will listen to us. We are wielding the power for social and economic justice." Food First works to build coalitions between activists and organizations such as in a recent Atlanta demonstration with the Black Farmers and Agricultural Association where 260 organizations were brought together in 1999. They are challenging the notion of distributing untested, unethical, and genetically engineered food throughout the world, particularly in "relief" packages to "third-world" countries. When Food Not Bombs activists were arrested

strong passion for riding and many of them are committed to bringing in new riders on every trip. And when you go, you are likely to find activists, migrant farmworkers, Vietnam vets, and a whole host of people and stories sharing freight space. "America's political system is based on the idea of private property and a set of rules where some things are off limits to people and other things people have 'a right to'," says C-Line "so no, these moving freight trains are not our property but we're saying we've got a right to ride."

Freight riding and squatting are often associated with punk culture. But "squatting" (or finding shelter) is not always supposed to be pure adventure, nor is it just for punks. Like a host of other organizations that are known for their spontaneous, decentralized chapters, Homes Not Jails (HNJ) has its beginnings in San Francisco. HNJ is made up of volunteers committed to housing homeless people via direct action – i.e. squatting vacant buildings. Once in the units, Homes Not Jails operates on a "sweat equity" model, renovating the property, thereby 'paying' for their residence



Communities need to to feel safe. it's not about "Well, if some big guy should get into this stance

order to work with them. But CARA's organizing efforts have resulted in communities identifying connections between their experience of sexual violence and the other ways that oppression is manifested. "You have to incorporate an analysis of oppression. It's not just that Black people like hip hop. Part of the culture people forget, besides the food and the music and the way we communicate, is that the reason people have specific types of culture is because they have a different standing in society. So if that means looking at issues like police brutality, the death penalty, the prison industrial complex, having a strong critique of the institutionalized racism within the criminal justice system in order to be authentic in looking at sexual assault from the perspective of Black people, then we have to speak truth to power about this system while formulating our discourse about rape."

CARA's vision involves not only providing support for the survivors, but also changing the ways people think about themselves when it

solicitation, high school students, and diverse communities to emphasize that violence is communal, not individual.

Since then, Home Alive has developed into an organization of about forty staff and volunteers. They hold about 300 classes and reach about 3,000 people every year. Ronica Mukerjee has been a Home Alive self-defense instructor for about three years. Her work with marginalized communities has helped to frame her philosophy about safety while working within a feminist organization: "Communities need to change in order for women to feel safe. When we teach these philosophies, it's not about 'Well, if some big guy walks up to you on the street, you should get into this stance and kick him in the balls.' It's really about creating community, knowing how to negotiate, dealing with interpersonal relationships as well as focusing on necessary skills if you do need to physically defend yourself – but really looking at the physical as a last resort."

in the midst of the turmoil of 1920s Germany, the Bruderhof was chased out of Nazi occupied Germany in 1937 and fled to England, where in time of war people were suspicious of the international, predominantly German, membership. Next stop was Paraguay, where Bruderhof members lived in extreme poverty for twenty years until an increased interest in communal living in the US following the second world war prompted the Bruderhof to move to America in the early 50s; there are now eight communities of about 400 members each in New York, Pennsylvania, England and Australia. The Bruderhof runs and operates several businesses to support its growing membership. Education and care of children is extremely important at the Bruderhof, and children are communally educated until they attend public high school.

Helga Mason, a mother of three, has lived at the Bruderhof all her life. Like all Bruderhof youth, she was encouraged to spend time away from home after high-school before deciding



change in order for women When we teach these philosophies, walks up to you on the street, you and kick him in the balls."

lives over the issue of abortion? We're for life – across the board."

But does autonomy always mean living in communes? It could mean changing the way people think about pre-existing institutions. Anuradha Mittal, the new co-director of the Food First Institute for Food and Development Policy in Oakland, CA can tell you that think tanks have a bad reputation. For good reasons: think tanks often mean bad news for international policy and for fair trade. Food First is a twenty-five-year-old think tank that has been researching the root causes of hunger and publishing their findings through books, videos and lecture circuits. Anuradha, who was a political scientist focusing on gender issues and control of natural resources before coming to Food First, says she grew up in India on the organization's platform and her optimism about this work has a lot to do with their research. "The good news is that it is human decisions that cause hunger, and therefore we can change those decisions. When we talk about

in San Francisco the same year, Food First helped generate support for them which concentrated on the absurdity of arresting people for giving away food in the park when people were starving on the street.

Neither is autonomy always without adventure. Hobos From Hell recognize the political implications of freight hopping, but freight hoppers' political involvement ranges from notions of freedom to working with other activists, many of whom can be found between boxes of freight cars somewhere between Santa Cruz and Davenport. C-Line is a rider who has a larger agenda. She has a radio show on Free Radio Santa Cruz, one pirate radio station that has survived the multiple attacks on microradio over the past few years. C-Line's show "On the Fly" focuses on social/ecological justice issues and links the current movement to the tradition of political activism. She lives in a squatting community in the forest with lots of other riders and activists. Hobos mostly have a

with work in lieu of rent and publicly vying for the space.

In June of 2000, a young woman named Kirby put out the call to bring HNJ to Washington, DC, where the homeless population is at least 15,000 in a given year and the income disparity is one of the highest in the country. In "No Trespassing," Anders Corr makes a clear distinction between the counter-cultural squatting found in a lot of punk communities and need-based land occupation based on socioeconomic disadvantage. Corr sees the importance of both, and while Kirby says that environment would be nice, "DC is not exactly an attraction for the counter-culture." Though Kirby was one of many inspired to direct action after the Seattle WTO protests in 1999, five days of which she spent in jail, she had been homeless in DC and understands the absurdity of being homeless in a district with 20,000 units of vacant housing.

So she and other activists from New York did their first housing takeover under the name of Free Land Action Group, but were arrested within hours. Now the DC HNJ is challenging the legislation around issues of homelessness through direct action. "City policy actually encourages speculators to take hold of property and sit on it for years and years while it stays empty. Someone leaves a building and doesn't pay the taxes, then the city auctions off the property for pennies. You would think it would be a great, cheap way to get housing, but it's not well publicized at all. So one or two companies show up to buy the taxes on these places, then they sit on it some more until the property value rises. They're warehousing entire neighborhoods just waiting for the new dot.com wealth coming in." HNJ does two different kinds of actions, public takeovers intended to capture media attention, such as one last year for women and children, and quiet takeovers, solely intended to house people as long as possible. So what do you need to get started? Kirby says the biggest thing "which sounds really cheesy, is faith in yourself. If you're trying to house people, then there's the need for people with media skills, people with a good sense of organizing, people with experience. To be more prepared, then you'd need who knows how to do some research, food and water, people who know construction, someone who knows piping and wiring. But on a very basic level, you just need a building and bodies."

Nor does autonomy need office space. When Jennifer Whitney first started working with Direct Action Network before the World Trade Organization came to Seattle, she realized that given the expectation of police violence, there was no medical system in place for protesters suffering from broken limbs, blunt trauma, hypothermia, dehydration, breathing difficulties or burns from pepper spray and tear gas. The EMS in Seattle was not expected to be the most reliable form of care. First of all, the expenses behind getting first-aid treatment made it an unrealistic option for people without insurance. Second, because of the cooperation that was expected between the police dept, the hospitals and the EMS in order to preserve the image of the city. A fear that proved to be well-founded, since the EMS were barely present during WTO. So in preparation for WTO, Jennifer began soliciting donations for first-aid equipment like bandages, latex, gauze, water bottles and herbs for tonic solutions. Within about six weeks, the clinic was staffed with volunteers and trainings were offered to anyone who wanted to work as street medics during the protests. When WTO got underway, protestors had access to more than 200 trained first-aid providers prepared to respond to common injuries like chemical irritation and

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sprained limbs. Jennifer has since taken her skills and training to other large-scale, domestic protests. But Jennifer is clear that she is not training to work in hospitals. "I'm doing this as a political thing, it's not a humanitarian effort alone. I'm not going to tell people who they can and can't treat. But I have friends who won't treat cops, and that's a decision that every one has to make. This *is* political and I make a point to bring up that discussion when I do trainings."

Funding is one of the first question that comes up around incorporating activist notions into a lifestyles. Some people squat for a living and scavenge for food to make it happen. Others grow their own food and live in cooperatives. Still others work within long terms projects and use grants as stepping stones. And there are major grant-giving organizations, like the Soros Foundation, but many individuals and non-profits purse their lips and in talking about time spent writing grant proposals and filing applications and, say in the case of Soros,

considering where that money comes from and who got fucked over to get it. Money's a strange issue. Some of us think people like Jesse Jackson spend way too much time talking about making it and not enough time on what to do with it when we get it. We know there are tons of activists with trust funds who have a lot of knowledge about access to resources who don't share their knowledge, maybe out of embarrassment and maybe because they lack the forum to do so. There are lots of non-profits like Food First who do amazing things and take a firm stance about money. Anuradha boasts Food First as "the only think tank which derives more than half of its funding from individual member contribution, which does not accept government or corporate funding" and attributes that to the organizations ability to maintain its radical edge.

There are organizations like CARA who receives city funds and who also has a radical bent. In cities like Seattle, where despite the city's wealth and the overall prerogative to protect its elite, there are programs that are developed with progressive visions, like Office for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence. There are organizations like North American Students of Cooperation that help co-ops get started with resources and even with loans. Homes Not Jails in DC tries to get banks to donate the mortgages of the houses they squat or want to squat along with classic means of obtaining money like holding benefits and fundraisers. Other organizations are not squeamish about taking full advantage of city, corporate or mainstream. Home Alive will take money from anyone. Ronica points out that if they "can subvert some corporate office, so be it. It's not like we change our philosophy. We don't water it down, and we may do some beefing up in corporate settings." Of course when I asked her if they get asked back to those offices, she laughed a little. "No. Not usually."

I need not say that the boundaries of this article only have to do with time line, a word count and this piece being for the women's issue in BLU. The movement is taking the boards off of property all over the country. I am inclined to think we are spending less time fragmenting and more time reclaiming our own coordinating power.

fran harris is a DE-troit born writer and artist. having spent lots of time on the west coast, she's incredibly tempted, from time to time, to call seattle home. she recently moved to brooklyn, thinking new york the best place to learn from some of the best artists, activists, optimists and to satiate a wandering, hopeful soul.

Hekima Hapa, the designer and producer of *til we free* clothing, points out, "Clothing is one of the basic human needs. If our community can begin to clothe, feed, and shelter ourselves we can begin to define the relationship we will have to the oppressor."

til we free is a real life response to the tenth point of the Black Panther platform that calls for, "land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace, and people's community control of modern technology." *til we free's* logo, a modern-day likeness of Harriet Tubman and the true underground where her spirit lives, reflects the ethic the company which is "inspired by African peoples' struggle for freedom and self-determination. It's symbolic of the ability to resist – both masked and open – that African women display." This ability to resist was passed on to Hekima by her mother, Rebecca Stukes, a highly talented self-taught designer and seamstress who at seventy years of age still sews everyday. "My mother begin teaching me to sew at twelve years old but allowed me to design clothing as early as five years old." Hekima developed and has been operating *til we free* as an independently run clothing company under that name for three years.

She explains, "The struggle that *til we free* represents has been around since the first African body was drug from the very first slave ships.

"Never before has so-called black owned clothing company attempted to answer the question of need to clothe the people. Instead we replace good old-fashioned white nationalist capitalistic clothing company with black ones."

To those people who are, "attempting to build yet another 'black owned' clothing company that blood-sucks from the community and follows the blueprint (exploit African culture, pay off celebrities and rappers and once you convinced everyone you're black owned and operated, go public and sell your company for millions of dollars)," Hekima makes it clear that, "as the contradiction between the oppressed and oppressor grows sharper, there will no longer be a place for that company."

As is evident from the participation by a host of young-men and women in sewing, knitting, and crocheting classes, community involvement is more important at *til we free* than purely commercial concerns. "The sewing classes *til we free* offers give the community a chance to clothe themselves. If you can't trade paper

currency for finish goods you learn to produce your own clothing or barter other services."

The *til we free* boutique also sells Universal Love Jewelry, the product of the craftsmanship of Baba Adam Ecclesiastics and Brother Fahiyim Muhammad. Sauda Askari of NaNa Creations is a crochet artist who designs 80% of the knit goods carried by the boutique; the other 20% are the work of Tamu Francis. Daveen Capers produces hand embroidered towels with Adinkra symbols. The *til we free* project is publicized by Ngozi Odita through an internet magazine called Urbanfacez.com.

Since everyone needs clothes, the merchandise that *til we free* offers brings together people of all backgrounds and interests. "My customers are a reflection of community – they are performing artist, actors, poets, homemakers, students, mothers, business professional, the unemployed ... there are no limits." Taking rage against the abusive sweatshop economy beyond chic campus protests and back to the community, Hekima points out that, "it's easiest to get people in the community involved in solving problems that affect them daily. Feeding their children, healthcare, homelessness, shelter, clothing themselves.

"My understanding of collective work is individuals working together for the good of the group placing the welfare of that group as

profile

its number one priority and not personal gain. It is the only way for community to continue to exist."

True class is timeless, as Hekima notes, "clothing needs no definition, no name, no limits – only purpose. Clothing with purpose remains constant, it is not a trend."

And to those who might think that sewing and other traditionally "domestic" occupations aren't compatible with a revolutionary agenda, *til we free* demonstrates that it is precisely this hands-on work that will really mend the torn fabric of our society. "Collective words and thoughts mean nothing without collective action."

til we free boutique
806 St John's Place • Brooklyn NY • 718.493.8241 •
tilwefree@aol.com



design by Aseer Ali

sista II sista

by J-Love



The struggle we have in front of
us is no greater than our
strength.

Not one more shot, strangled,
stabbed, sister anywhere.

We'll be free...

together... in sisterhood.

excerpt from a collective poem written by SIIS
participants.

Growing up in this society women have been socialized to see each other as competition for just about everything. However on any given day at Sista II Sista (SIIS) there is a startling vibe of unity, and the rollin' eyes, hands on the hips, and whisperings of "that bitch" seem to be figments of the outside world's imagination.

SIIS was unveiled in summer of 1996, conceived out of the desire to create a sacred space where young women of color could let down their guard and be free. Armed with themes of critical thinking, community activism, holism, and sisterhood, program activities are designed to challenge young women in ways most schools don't have the time, capability, or willingness to do. SIIS offers a free year long program focusing on the holistic development of young women of color in Brooklyn. Through the program's Freedom and Action Squads the girls learn how to organize around political issues they identify as important to them and their communities - this year's focus is violence against women in their community of Bushwick.

Nicole Burrowes, a co-founder and collective member of SIIS feels, "We're trying to build a "home" - a place where sisters feel comfortable to passionately believe, to fight it out, to have different opinions and still work together ... A place that models our conception of how organizations should be." Merowe Nubian began as a participant during the first summer and now is a volunteer; "SIIS allowed me to feel a lot more comfortable around women. It's

definitely a mentoring process I really enjoy. A place where I can talk to women in a positive, inspirational way ... I'm still trying to find myself and I find Sista II Sista's environment nurturing." Merowe is a mother and attends Medgar Evers College. Dealing with the challenges many urban females encounter, sistas discuss topics like gender issues, women's images in hip hop culture, and historical revolutionary movement women. Connecting body mind and spirit, the program includes a physical component, like boxing, martial arts, African dance, Capoeira, and B-girlin'. Guest workshop facilitators have included B-girls Rocafella and Asia-One, who bless the circle not only with fancy footwork and headspins, but with knowledge and love. Other facilitators have included artist and hip hop activist Rha-Goddess; poet and activist Suheir Hamad; and Iris Morales, creator and director of *Palante, Siempre Palante*, a documentary on the Young Lords. During her visit Morales described to the young women the highs and lows of political movements, collective leadership, and the concept of revolution through a Latina woman's perspective.

This grassroots organization has consciously chosen a collective model of leadership that is consensus based, and supports the indigenous leadership of volunteers and young women of color. SIIS collective member Paula Rojas, a community organizer, speaks of why she's involved; "The idea of doing this work in a collective is the most interesting part of Sista II Sista. If we model our goal of democratic and just leadership, that brings us closer to making

a change." Jason Warwin, co-founder of an organization called The Brotherhood reflects, "Sista II Sista's model of leadership...is based on critical reflections of past social movement models...They recognize we live in an individualistic hierarchical society.... Recognizing these factors SIIS has developed a collective leadership model which ensures sustainability, and consistently inspires young women to assume leadership roles within the organization."

SIIS highlights powerful women who reflect the young women's essences, who look like them, came from them, are them. "Real social change needs to address personal transformation for young women as well as larger social transformation. I think that a space that allows for both simultaneously can be revolutionary," says collective member Adjoa Jones de Almeida.

At the foundation of SIIS is a deep sense of sisterhood, love and hope. Big up to Sista II Sista and other programs across the globe who are striving to create safe spaces for our younger sistas to learn, love and thrive.

Sista II Sista • 1497 Myrtle Avenue 2nd Floor •
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in the womb of hip hop

...where creation is created

by J-Love

The beginning of time began with woman. Birthing ourselves through our own wombs, transforming the world around us with our Goddess given right - to give the gift of life. In recognizing that mothers are our forever creators, we may reclaim them as Queens, as Earths, as Love itself. In salutation and celebration of our mommas, we must acknowledge the sacrifice, strength, and perseverance these women give to their children and all of our communities. Much of it goes unnoticed, yet it is what feeds us, what clothes us, and what ultimately keeps us surviving. Hip hop's at a crossroads, and as it grows older so

does its constituents. As mothers abound, it's foreseeable our culture will need to shift, incorporating new values, beliefs, and ways of living, fitting the needs of parents and families. Can hip hop begin its healing process through the birth of new members forming our next generation? As mothers roll in with their strollers and breast milk to catch the latest hit record, how will we accommodate them? How are children received in hip hop culture? In what ways can we share in our cultural hip hop traditions with our families?

ASIA-ONE

b-girl Her daughter Yasmin was born on February 3rd, 2001. This interview was conducted when Asia was nine months pregnant.

How are you planning to raise your baby on hip hop despite the widespread misogyny and hoeification (my own word) of women of color?

Since me and hip hop are entwined at the root, I plan to raise my daughter up on the nurturing aspects of hip hop, the energy of the art, dance and music. I'm speaking of b-girl dance, graf and hip hop and funk music, soulful beats and breaks, lots of drums, the fly gear, and the love of cultural heritage. I feel that if you're a fly mommi with your game tight your daughter's

gonna look up to you for support and knowledge, not the trife hoes that brag about their poonanies.

How are you planning on teaching your baby a love of, and knowledge of hip hop culture?

Since our shorties mirror what we project, I manifest the realness of skills with my b-girling, and I project strength with my organizing efforts, and my dedication to keeping hip hop a culture with all the elements recognized and co-existing together. She will be soaking up all of this, formulating her own wisdom, and plan for her course in life.

What is your outlook on particular issues within hip hop now that you are about to be a mother?

When I was about three months pregnant a lot of things really started to stress me, issues that I noticed before but let be, like how women of color are trivialized in rap videos, lyrics, shows, and in general life. I came to realize that now more than ever our brothers are not doing their part to respect and present valuable imagery of women. The bottom line being, what are the shorties being taught by all of this, and how will it affect the future of relations between men and women of color?"

If you had one wish to bestow upon your baby, what would it be and why?

Since she is yet to be born, health is constantly on my mind, like any momma to be.

asia one



ATP HOP MAMMAS

Rachel Raimist

film-maker (*Nobody Knows My Name*), mother of Tiana Raimist-Carter (Titi), born August 13, 1997.

How are you raising your baby on hip hop despite the widespread misogyny and hoeification of women of color?

It's a crazy balance actually. I know my daughter is exposed to a lot of grown ideas and concepts already, and she's only three. I know I listen to way too much radio and watch too many music videos; it really doesn't help that her dad is a label guy. He works at Jive. So RKelly E40 Too\$hort Joe and our favorite ass-shaker, Mystikal, are always around. She knows all their names and can call them out when she sees them on TV ... so what do I do? I try to cut out the worst of the worst like "I just wanna fuck u" which they play on the radio 24/7 here.

So Tiana also knows every lyric to Medusa's music and I just try to keep absolutely horrible things out of her reach. I know that when she is a bit older we will have talks about the stripper kind of girls and the rest of us.

How are you teaching your baby a love of, and knowledge of hip hop culture?

She began to both develop a love and appreciation for the beats while still in my belly. Her dad is a dj, so music was constantly pumping in our home. I also continued working and actually directed a seven camera shoot of a Wake Up Show Wu-tang concert at eight and a half months. Since then, she has traveled

extensively with me to all the film screenings. She loves Medusa's music, she copies Asia's style, and says, "mommy you are hip hop."

What is your outlook on particular issues within hip hop now that you are a mother?

Honestly, my whole perspective has changed. I used to be much more tolerant of bullshit, hoes and crap. Now I really can hardly stand the music industry. It's more of a stripper/prostitute industry more than anything else.

And I used to be able to decipher them from me. There isn't a clear line for me anymore... Why is everything so centered around strippers and hoes now? Why is Snoop Dogg on Howard Stern talking about how he's a pimp with over five hundred hoes and he only gives em 2%. Why isn't that fool talking about his music, his pitt bulls, his wife and kids, his real life? Why all this pimp shit? So now, as a mother, and as a woman who is getting older, I can't stand this shit ... It's getting to be that

why all this pimp shit? as a mother, as a woman, I can't stand this shit

more and more I don't want to participate. I just want to develop a curriculum and teach it at a university so young people will think critically about the state of affairs with hip hop and will help push it back in a more positive direction.

What are some lessons learned/passed down from your mother that has helped you in raising your baby?

stories in and out of our home.

How do you balance your life as a mother with all that you do?

Sometimes I don't. I try to keep things for Tiana regular on the day to day. Somedays I am good at keeping things together, other days we lay in bed together, watch cartoons and eat ice cream and popcorn all day and night. I'm corny, so often we play some Whitney, "I'm every woman, it's all in me!" and we dance around the living room with our deaf kitty.

La Bruja

poet, mc, actress mother of Kelson and Carina

How are you raising your baby on hip hop despite the widespread misogyny and hoeification of women of color?

Hip hop is not "baby-friendly". It is a culture that was born from struggle, poverty, and change. My son is almost three and my daughter is almost one, it is important to protect the innocent. What we think they do not understand, they absorb like sponges. My son overheard me say the word "fat" and he asked me, "Fat Joe Mami, Fat Joe?!?" We burst out laughing, he had made a connection without understanding the meaning. It's hard to make sense of this culture.

How are you teaching your baby a love of, and knowledge of hip hop culture?

I expose them to all kinds of music, art, dance,

poetry and word games. The hip hop culture is all of that, but it is not strictly limited to hip hop.

What is your outlook on particular issues within hip hop now that you are a mother?

The cursing and the violence is what concerns us as parents. We don't want them desensitized to these things at such an early time, even though we as a society are highly desensitized.

What are some lessons learned/passed down from your mother that has helped you in raising your baby?

My mother always told me the truth when I asked her questions about life, she didn't make up stories to shelter me. I intend to be the same way. Take time to explain things when they want to know them, not lie. Keep open lines of communication from the start so that they will stay open in the future. Gotta keep it real, so they can be ready for the real.

If you had one wish to bestow upon your baby, what would it be and why?

I wish for them to always strive for their dreams, not quit or settle for something less. I will be their biggest supporter. That is something that my mother has taught me too, even when I've had doubts, she has always believed in me and that has made all the difference. My mother is amazing, I want to be just like her.

La Bruja with Carina



children's natural gift of innocence is what we need more of to restore sensitivity, respect, and romance

What gifts do you believe your baby brings to hip hop?

Their most natural gift is innocence and that is what hip hop needs more of. We need to restore sensitivity, respect, and romance – enough bustin' nuts inside bitches and bustin' slugs in thugs. We are just ruining the mindset of our people.

Anything else?

We should always remember our roots, our ancestors and teach our children to do the same. If we were a flower and we didn't have roots, we would fall over and die. Let's blossom, so that our seeds will continue to grow. To my seeds, Kelson and Carina, Mami loves you more than ANYTHING in and out of this world.

Pri the Honey Dark

mc mother of Harlon aka Groovie

How are you raising your child on hip hop despite the widespread misogyny and hoeification of women of color?

To raise a child in hip hop is to raise a child period. As far as my son is concerned, I teach him the difference in reality vs the fantasy and ego presented not only in music videos, hip hop or otherwise,, but also in movies, on radio, in magazines and in the street as well. My son is treated and spoken to with respect (authority when needed). He is taught that however he treats me and views me is how he treats and views other women, with respect, but never respect anyone who doesn't respect you, male or female, and don't force respect on anyone who is not ready to respect themselves."

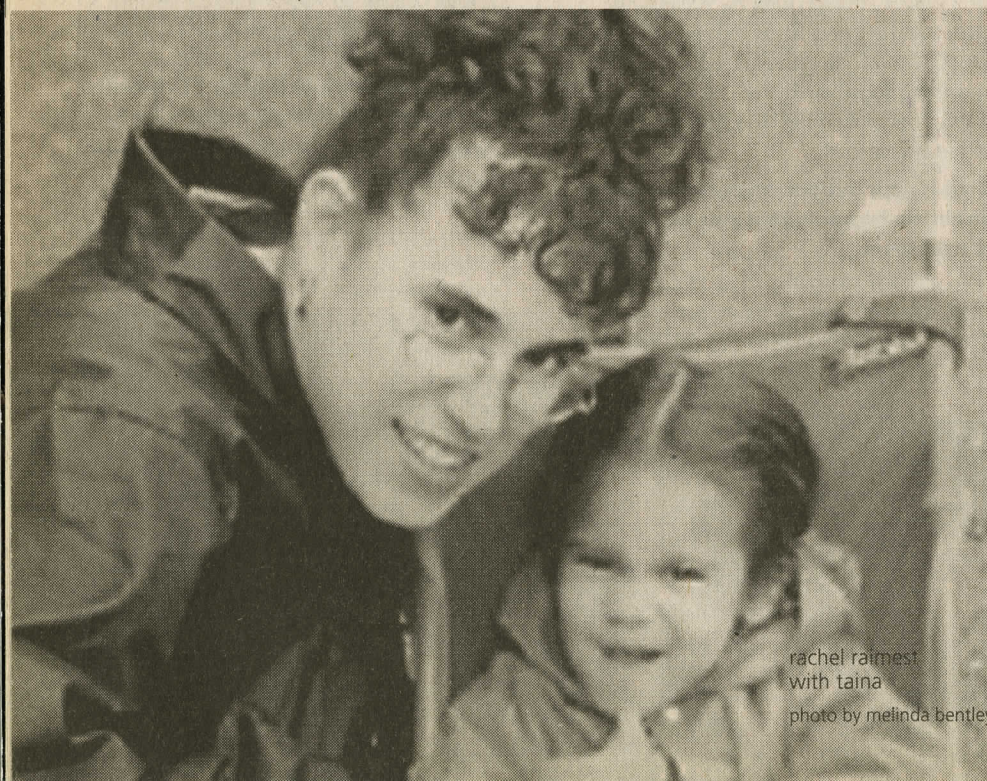
How are you teaching your child a love of, and knowledge of hip hop culture?

My son has been in this since day one. He was

raised on James Brown, Bob Marley and Billie Holiday, to name a few. He is always taught how music of the past has influenced this culture. His father is a DJ, His mother is an MC and he not only has a "black book" of his own graff (it's really cute), but he is teaching himself the art of b-boying as well. He knows all four elements and I try to make sure he understands the difference between the business of rap vs the culture of hip hop.

What is your outlook on particular issues within hip hop now that you are a mother?

I see no real problems in hip hop as a culture. It's the rap world that is taking what little hair I have. In the business there is too much selfishness, contradiction, and lack of overall control of our artform. How the hell are you going to shout how many drug addicts you supply, how much "ice" you own vs property, and investments, and how you had a kat's mother crying at his funeral on Thursday, then turn around and do a children's benefit or public service announcement on Sunday?



rachel raimist with tiana
photo by melinda bentley

HIP HOP MOMENTS

Makes no sense to me, but as long as we have no control over our business – and by now we should! – we have no control over what is presented to our children. We can only present the platter to them and hope they pick the right foods.

If you had one wish to bestow upon your child, what would it be and why?

Wealth of the mind. Anyone can get paid money and consider themselves “rich”, but not too many can actually become wealthy. Wealth is acquired through knowledge, not only knowledge of self, but through knowledge of circumstance and knowledge of priority. Then and only then will you be truly rich. I want my son to use this knowledge to build himself up financially and mentally.

If I had my way, my son would acquire land and investments that will last longer than his in hand cash – who knows how long the “green” will exist – and spreading that knowledge will be his ultimate power.

What gifts do you believe your child brings to hip hop?

His true love and respect for the culture, as well as his understanding of how each element compliments the other.

What gifts does hip hop bring to your child?

It teaches my child expression and creativity as well as determination. Hip hop is one of the only cultures that will never die, even when the money does. Not only is it fun for children, but it is one of the most powerful teaching tools around. Just look at Sesame Street now a days.

How do you balance your life as mother, with all the other things your involved in?

It is extremely hard. I write, I record, I produce, perform, network, deal with business issues constantly and on top of that I have a full time job. I keep in contact with my son constantly when I’m not around and when we do get that time to spend together I try to make his day special. He understands what I do and sometimes he misses me as well. It hurts sometimes and occasionally I go for days without sleep trying to get my stuff together. Thank god for the help his father and my family provide (thank you). I hate not being around my son as much, so I am bussin’ my butt, because I know that it will all do right by me eventually.

As we move into a new period in our culture, of the many issues that need to be addressed, our family preservation must be a priority in order to secure our future as a community. Learn from several phenomenal woman who are inextricably tied to hip hop culture, AND are mothers, raising their babies. Raising our babies. Hip hop’s babies. Much respect to our Life Creators, and bless all of the beautiful seeds that continue to blossom.



Pin the honey dark with her son and his father
photo by Jonathan Morrison

**hip hop is one of the only cultures that will never die...
it is one of the most powerful teaching tools around**

profile

people's theater

conversation with Lynda Patton

Lynda Patton is the Artistic/Educational Director of New African Company, Inc. “Theater for the People” which was founded in 1968 and incorporated in 1970. She also teaches Black History at the University of Massachusetts and is a writer of plays, essays, children’s books and is presently working on a novel. A life-long revolutionary, her commitment to a culture of liberation is reflected in the themes of her plays: *Drink the Contents of this Vile* is about three women locked in a mental hospital because men couldn’t deal with them; *Ole Sis Goose & Other Fox-tails*, a musical with songs by Walter Bland and Mwalim, is about an elderly griot and a child who, hiding in a swamp to escape slave catchers, draw on folk tales for reassurance; *The Encounter* is a depiction of a secret meeting between Black abolitionist Lewis Hayden and writer Harriet Beecher Stowe.

This interview took place during the wee hours of the morning in Lynda Patton’s soft lit kitchen (she is light sensitive). Pink and purple bulbs, flickering candles with tiny lights illuminate the room. The lights bounce off her walls which are adorned with picture collages of relatives, good friends, theater productions, the famous, the almost famous and good times. It is a warm place to be on a cold New England January night.

Could you briefly describe your philosophy in addressing society, gender and race as an artist and educator?

No, uh sorry...

My philosophy runs deep and I could not answer this question briefly. I will say this, though: sexism is centuries older than racism and when forced to address these two social diseases spawned by greed, you’ll find they penetrate every aspect of the world’s cultural fabric. No matter where you go, they will rear their ugly heads.

As an educator, it is difficult to implant what seem like new ideas into the minds of people who have been taught these various forms of sexism and racism since they were born. For example, that womyn are physically weaker than men, or light is prettier than dark, or womyn are responsible for unleashing sin on

the world, or womyn were made from a rib of man. As you can see, a lot of the sexism in society is born from Christianity, but then again the slave owners also used the Bible as justification of their atrocities. Sexism and racism are intimate bed fellows.

Tell me what drew you towards the theater and playwrighting as a means of addressing womynist issues?

I found the theater environment was the most adaptable or open-minded to new and different thoughts to help “right” what’s “wrong” of the world. Theater people are usually well read, intelligent and experimental. Actors and playwrights have to do an abundant amount of reading, when they research a character, or time period. Even the most sexist male playwrights write interesting womyn characters that contradict their personal lives. At first, it was baffling that these sexists could interpret my struggle so accurately. This was intriguing and I became curious.

Also, I didn’t join just any theater, I joined a Black political theater. When I walked into that theater, I saw men taking care of small children, talking to them like they were equals, womyn on ladders hanging lights, telling the mostly male techies what to do. The last organization I had any close association with was the Black Panther Party and New African Company appeared to be carrying on that important struggle for equality. I felt safe to act, sing, direct, to have philosophical conversations and write. My intelligence and accumulated knowledge were respected by New African Company.

What do you see as the issues and challenges that separate womynist movements from feminism?

First off, the way of the world does not allow me to be only a womyn. I am a Black American womyn born in 1948. This limits my ability to embrace feminism as a total occupation. I’m never sure whether people see me as Black first or a womyn first. I suppose that depends on

who’s looking (she laughs that big laugh of hers).

My interpretation of feminism is the quest for the equality of all females in the world. I see the womynist movement as encompassing much larger issues such as homophobia, the rights of children, environmental racism, subliminal racism, sexism, ageism, violence and health issues that are peculiar to the experience of being Black in America.

Would you call yourself a racist?

That’s a hard question, because I don’t believe in “race” as a truth. Genetically, Caucasians are 65% Asian and 35% African, so according to their own rules of “one-drop-makes-you-whole”, The Aryan nation is just a bunch of light-skinned under-educated hybrids gone mad. I believe in tribes, ethnic cultures, and ethnic groupings, not race. Therefore, I can’t be a racist! (she laughs that big laugh of hers again).

~interview by shante bullock



graphic by staajabu

Someone asked me recently what made me start publishing books. I realized then that when I really thought about it, there was a large element of fear bound up in my decision. What would I do if someone – a publisher – rejected material I had so lovingly put together?

If I believed in it, why shouldn't they?

What I failed to ask myself was, why should they?

When I was a child, I knew that being involved with books was all I really wanted to do (okay, and to become a flight stewardess!). Yet when the time came, I thought the fact that I was not good enough was the sole obstacle to this becoming a reality. I had no concept at the time that establishments could put barriers in my way. When I was told, for example, that I would not enjoy attending Birmingham University because it was racist, it didn't mean anything to me. Until I had to live it for three years.

At the end of my studies, I was informed on the graduation "milk round" that if I liked books, the last thing I should do was to go into publishing because I would end up hating books. I stupidly believed the publishing industry representative who told me this, not realizing at the time that the other truth he could have told me, but had possibly not even considered was:

a. that Black people do read books (well, we must have got into a prestigious redbrick university somehow)

b. but he had never seen a Black person within the industry.

Fifteen years later in Britain, there are still so few Black people working within mainstream publishing that they could probably be counted on both hands, with fingers left over.

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Publishing Black books in Britain has been dominated – not solely, but most definitely – by

women. Publishing is often linked to the development and improvement of women's status. Therefore it is important that women are involved not just with writing, but with the entire publishing process because being able to publish means taking control of your own words, taking control of your own history.

Women of African descent on the continent and in the UK have shown their resilience in literature not only as award winning writers, but also as award winning publishers. The first few authors – all women – published by Angela Royal Publishing, which was founded in 1996, have been nominated for awards and published internationally. The recent trend of published Black British writers has been highlighted by the establishment of The Saga Prize for first time Black British novelists. This attention has made it easier for publishers like BlackAmber to develop a publishing company purely in the genre of Black British writing.

Una Mulzac, the owner of Liberation, New York's oldest Black bookstore, is adamant that the way forward for the growth and survival of Black literature is for the Black community to maintain their own publishing companies, despite the enormous challenges to small publishers. Nigerian/British novelist Buchi Emecheta takes the same position. With her sons she established Ogwugwu Afo (which means The Great Survival) which published her autobiography, *Head Above Water*, and one of her novels, *Double Yoke*, so she knows that it is possible. In the 1960s, African woman publishers Margaret Busby and Jessica Huntley, with their companies Allison and Busby and Bogle L'Ouverture, did important ground-breaking publishing work and demonstrated the possibilities for small and independent presses, and, just as importantly, the success that Black women made of it.

The difficulties that independent publishers face have been primarily connected with control of marketing and distribution. This problem has become more prominent with the advent of book chains and megabookstores who rarely provide the flexibility to deal with small publishers in terms of space, point of sale material, and stock. Nor can small publishers compete with the reduced price book sales which large publishers can offer because their big selling authors offset costs for smaller runs of lesser known writers. It is hard to gain review space in essential national trade magazines, national press, and consumer publications, especially if you are not a friend or a friend of a friend of a well-known writer. Despite these factors, there have been more Black publishing companies starting up successfully, still predominantly by women. Producing books has become easier with the advance of technology, particularly desk top publishing and printing methods. With layout and design now possible

on home computers, some of the mystery and cost of publishing has been reduced.

But is this enough to survive in a market place where these same Black authors that independent presses exist to publish can be published by major houses and sold with mass discounted rates that small publishers cannot hope to compete with? For some publishing projects it is still too early to tell. Others, like Tamarind in the multi-cultural children's market, have carved out a niche in expanding market areas like educational cultural books.

In addition, the "closed shop" scenario in mainstream publishing houses means that apart from a few exceptions like Angela Royal, Black women in publishing lack experience within the industry. This can lead to expensive mistakes which small presses can ill afford. There are few women of African descent with prominent positions in UK mainstream publishing, whereas in the US, the situation is reversed, with a growing number of African-Americans in mainstream publishing houses, including women in decision making positions, rather than setting up their own independent presses.

Women's publishing in Africa is more overtly linked with feminist politics than it has been in the UK or the US, where Black women publishers historically do not come out of "women's movements". In Africa, as the *Guide to Women Publishing* points out, publishing is a "political act, as creative and diverse as the women's movement itself." There are currently about forty women publishers on the continent and about fifty women in senior management positions in publishing companies, plus a handful more in other areas of the book trade such as distribution, marketing, and directors of bookfairs and trade associations. At least twenty women's organizations have dedicated publishing programs.

A fundamental difference for women publishing in Africa to those outside of the continent is that writing and publishing is often done at the risk of their personal lives. The growth and survival of small press in Africa is too often dependent on the political movement of the country and the use of fear tactics to control content. For example, while it may be difficult for women in the UK and USA to get business loans, in Africa projects are usually severely under-capitalized with no possibility of obtaining a loan at all. The cost of printing is restrictive, because within many African countries, printing presses and paper has to be imported and is highly taxed – in effect, a censorship tool. Funding for publishing companies often comes from international agencies for small press, support which is short-lived because it is given for a specific project with an explicit remit and time. Ironically, this allows African publishers to operate with less

fear of market trends so that existence is not based on a profit basis. This means that publishers' survival is based on political rather than commercial factors and tends to be linked to a community and education base.

Publishers in Africa produce a wide range of titles, with academic text books accounting for most of their output, followed closely by children's books. Of course it is difficult to generalize about publishing trends on the continent since the situation differs from country to country. The most active countries in the publishing arena are South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria Senegal and Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe holds the annual Zimbabwe International Book Fair in August. Some of the more prominent African women publishers include the Abidjan publishing company and bookshop, Les Editions du Livre du Sud (EDILIS), owned by Mical-Drehi Laraugnan set up in 1992. Serah T.K. Mwangi is managing director of Focus Publications in Kenya which started in 1991. In 1995 Focus published the first novel of Margaret Atieno Ogola which won the Best First Book award for the Africa region in the Commonwealth Writers Award Competition. Asenath Bole Odaga is Kenya's first woman publisher. Her Lake Publishers, founded in 1993, is a grassroots women publishing operation to produce simple

fiction, non-fiction, children's, and some academic titles in local languages and English. Prominent Senegalese writer Aminata Sow Fall is director of a publishing house, Editions Khadua, which was founded in 1988.

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Taking Control

Black women publishers require control of two key factors, distribution and language. Few if any distribution outlets are owned by people of African descent. Therefore the to whom, from whom, and subject of what is distributed is dictated in a subtle, calculating manner that prevents Black women from controlling who reads what they write. Ultimately, if distributors refuse or do not encourage works by Black women for sale to booksellers, they will not be stocked and their words then remain invisible to a wider public.

To counteract this, Black women publishers need to concentrate on knowing and developing their target markets and how to reach them. They may find that mainstream distribution and retail outlets are not the most effective way to reach the majority of their audience. It is possible to achieve this through various cost- and time-effective methods such as direct mail, reading groups, educational institutions, events

taking control

african
women
publishers

by Kadija Sesay
photos for BLU by Jon Mahone

being able to

publish means

taking

control

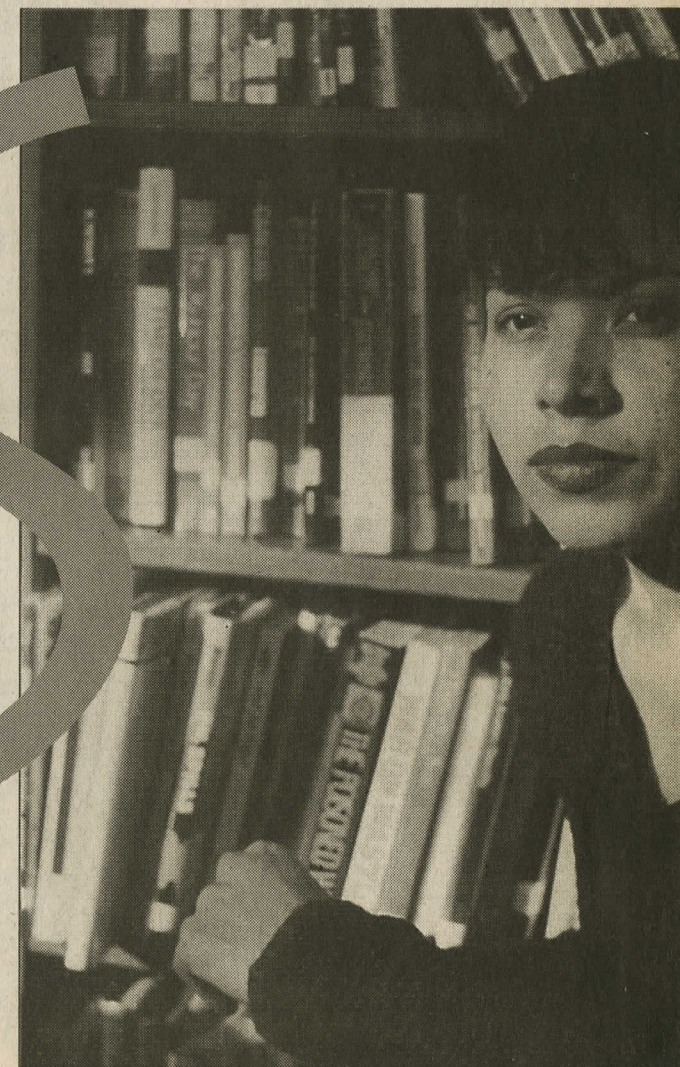
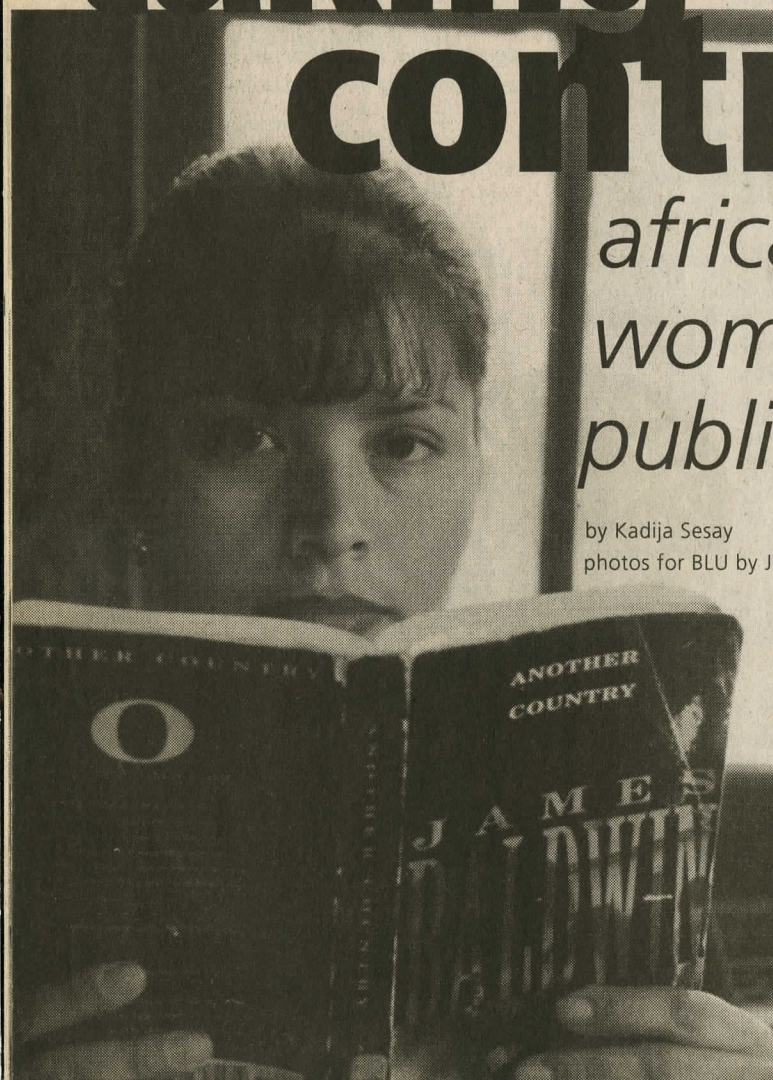
of your

own
words,

taking control

of your own

history



and venues where women meet, including specialized and independent bookshops. All of which cut out the middle man, so that the publishers, if they choose, can offer the books at a cheaper price, yet still retain a healthy profit margin between 50 and 60%.

Small and women publishers tend to do well at specialist book fairs where there is opportunity to target their markets directly. At the third International Feminist Book Fair in Montreal 1988, the International Association of Feminist Presses was created to improve contacts and create networks of support for publishers. Women's presses have already taken the initiative in developing their market among individuals, women's organizations, international donor agencies, and policy planners. Black women publishers have to take advantage of this process that has already been established, and where necessary develop the additional market that specifically targets Black people.

Women publishers need to think more in terms of collaboration rather than competition. The Egyptian publisher Le Fennec, for example, disseminates information on other publications that deal with women's issues both nationally and internationally as well as publishing their own Arab women writers, both fiction and non-fiction, and are planning to hold an Arab Woman's Book Fair. They also have a newsletter that includes information on women's writing and publishing. Sending out advance publication details through such newsletters, perhaps offering discounts on advance purchase books,

the way forward
for the **growth**
and **survival** of
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publishing companies

alleviates the necessity to produce expensive point of sale material for retail outlets.

There are many women who are requesting publications from Africa, making it necessary to network and distribute on a larger scale. Organizations such as Women Link, managed by the International Women's Tribune Center in New York, provide information and market and distribute women's books from abroad. Book launches can take place wherever there is a reading group set up, and this does not have to be in a bookshop. This also helps to create a reading public in non-traditional places, as does applying the club culture to marketing literature.

Collaborative efforts in marketing are important, because while the African publishing train is slower in terms of technology, a company in the UK or USA can provide this service, alongside their own. Internet capabilities for breaking down barriers of distribution and communication work well for small and specialized presses. As well as joint promotion, there can also be joint production of books and joint ownership of capital equipment, printing presses for example. Women publishers can share these costs to reduce their own costs of overall book production. Books may be expensive to produce in Africa, but they are still more readily accessible than computers and thus have a further reach.

In addition to word of mouth promotion, word of internet is increasingly accessible across the globe. The internet has moved barriers

Publishers – or at least
their publicity departments – **seemed**
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that **all** Black
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have **sex**,
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coming of age
through **sex**.

between writer and reader, allowing a more immediate response and providing a means of control over distribution of books and information for authors as well as publishers. Many authors have created interactive web-page newsletters to stay in touch with their readership, maintaining the loyalty of current readers and targeting new ones.

Internet publishing is similar to independent publishing in that it is often not a profit making enterprise, although it can be a successful means of selling printed books.

The second issue regarding the issue of survival for these publishing companies concerns control over the language used about people of African descent. Egyptian novelist Nawal el Saadawi is an exponent on taking control of language and demystifying words. In her essay "Decolonizing the Imagination" she argues that we need to reject the language that is used to describe us unless we take control over those words ourselves.

Misuse is noticeable even in the blurbs on book jackets. Buzz words that continually

popped up a few years ago regarding Black women's writing were "sexuality" and "celebration". Publishers – or at least their publicity departments – seemed to think that all Black women did was have sex, celebrate having sex and experience their coming of age through sex. Tagged alongside is feminist politics; whether or not feminist ideas are cast in positive or negative language depends on who controls this factor – it is rarely a Black woman.

This makes it all the more important for women of African descent to own their stories and therefore their own histories. They need to have to take up the challenge of publishing otherwise, as has happened in the past, other people tell African stories from the angle and stance of their own cultural backgrounds. Constant misinterpretations trivializes both the work and the writer but will continue if publicists believe it can be sold only in these terms.

What is real to Black women writers is not always real to the publishers. White editors have been known to try and enforce changes

that are fundamental to the story because they don't understand or believe the situation. For example, an author friend of mine had to change her character from having a liberal Muslim background to having a mixed race (black/white) cultural background because she was informed that she did not know enough about the religious situation to write about it and that it didn't come across as "believable".

There still exists a resistance to Black literature, especially if the voice and language does not conform to a media image and particular stereotype, or if it is just not understood. By their very nature, small presses do not make substantial profits and cannot pay huge writer's advances, sometimes none at all. But those writers concerned with how they are depicted have a choice to work with a small publisher who may care more about the non-material needs that are equally as important as financial ones.

SSS



INFLUENCES

edwidge danticat a novelist, is most recently the editor of *The Butterfly's Way: Voiced from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States* (Soho Press).

I used to dream of smuggling letters to my parents. I was eight years old, living in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, with my paternal uncle and his wife while my mother and father were resettled in Brooklyn, New York, and since my uncle and aunt did not have a telephone at home – few poor Haitian families did then – and access to a public facility was extremely costly and limited, we had no choice but to write letters. Once a month, my father would mail a half page, three-paragraph missive addressed to my aunt and uncle. Scribbled in his minuscule scrawl, sometimes on plain white paper, other times on lined, hole-punched notebook pages still showing bits of fringe from spiraled binding, the letters were always composed in French, with the first paragraph offering news of my parents' health, the second detailing how to spend the allowance they had wired for food, lodging, and school expenses for my brother André and myself, the third section concluding abruptly after reassuring us that we would be hearing from my father at approximately the same time the following month.

"I am no writer," he now says. "What I wanted to tell you and your brother was too big for any piece of paper and a small envelope. I was no writer."

Later I would discover in a first year college seminar that my father's letters had been written in what was called a diamond sequence, the Aristotelian *Poetics* of correspondence, requiring an opening greeting, a middle detail or request, and a brief farewell at the end. The letter writing process had been such an agonizing chore for my father, one which he had always hurried through while assembling our survival money, that this specific epistolary formula, through its guidelines and constraints, had offered him a comforting way of disciplining his emotions. "I am no writer," he now says. "What I wanted to tell you and your brother was too big for any piece of paper and a small envelope. I was no writer."

Whatever restraint my father showed in his letters was easily compensated for by my uncle Joseph's reactions to them. First there was the public reading in front of a gathering of fifteen or so members of our extended family. This was done so there would be no misunderstanding as to how the allowance my parents sent for me and my brother would be spent. Usually one of my older cousins would read the letter out loud, pausing now and then to ask my uncle's help with my father's penmanship. It soon became obvious that my father's handwriting was as clear to me as my own thus I eventually acquired the job.

Along with this task came some hours of preparation for the reading and thus a few intimate moments with my father's letters, not only the words and phrases, which did not vary greatly from month to month, but the vowels and syllables, their tilts and slants, which did. Because there was so much he did not write, I would guess my father's thoughts, moods, level of happiness, from the dotting of his "i"s and the crossing of his "t"s, from whether there were actual periods at the end of his sentences or just faint dots where the tip of his pen had simply landed. Were there commas splitting his streamlined phrases, or were they brief, staccato declarations, like someone speaking too rapidly, out of breath?

For the family readings, I recited my father's letters monotone, honoring what I interpreted as a secret between us, that the impersonal style of his letters was due as much to his lack of faith in words and their ability to accurately reproduce his passions, as his caution with my brother and my feelings, avoiding too happy news which might add to the aggravations of a family separation, too sad news, which might worry us, and any hint of judgment or disapproval for my aunt and uncle, which they could have interpreted as suggestions that they were mistreating us. The robot letters, as my father

and I would later call them, were his way of avoiding a mine field, one he could have discharged from a distance, without being able to comfort the victims.

Given all this anxiety, I am amazed that my father wrote at all. Even the regularity, the consistency of his correspondence now feels like an act of valor. In contrast, my replies, though less routine – my uncle Joseph did most of the writing – were painstakingly upbeat and elaborate. Sketched in ornate, often misspelled details, and sometimes in stick figure illustrations, would be every happy moment in my brother's and my life, our holiday trips to the Haitian countryside, our Saturday morning visits with our candy-generous godmothers, our Sunday afternoon rides on rented bicycles at the bicentennial park in Port-au-Prince arbor. In my letters, I bragged about my grades and made requests too, for an American doll at Christmas, a child's sewing machine for my birthday, a pair of "real" gold earrings for Easter Sunday. But the things I truly wanted I was afraid to ask, like when would my mother cook for us again, or when would my father let us sit on his lap and play with his beard? I was sleeping every night with an open jar of coconut pomade because it reminded me of the scent of my mother's hair and I wanted to ask both my parents when I would have to stop doing that. However, since my uncle read and corrected all my letters for faulty spelling, I wrote for his eyes more than my father's, hoping that even after the vigorous editing, my father would still decode the longing in my cursive's slopes and arches, which were so much like his own.

The letters that both my father and I wanted to write we never did. These letters were not approved, in his case by him, in my case by my uncle. No matter what the reason, we were all further censored by the fear of breaking each other's hearts. Every once in a while however, one or two phrases would elude our respective constraints. In one of my letters, I wrote to my father asking for a *psaume* (psalm) of money, when I meant to request a *somme* (sum). I was planning to use this money to bribe one of my older cousins to smuggle my unedited letters directly to the post office. My uncle missed this one error, so in the concluding paragraph of his letter the following month, my father added a line responding jokingly: "Please tell Edwidge that I will send her a psalm next month, perhaps Psalm 118, which is the longest one of the bunch, much like her beautiful letters."

The letters that both my father and I wanted to write we never did. We were all censored by the fear of breaking each other's hearts.

what feeds you?

by emily chan

from meetings to rallies to campaigns, we often have little time to reflect upon our activism and its connectedness to our whole lives. I spoke with five Asian American women in New York City about what nurtures and inspires their grassroots activism, and how linked and separate activism is to their lives. Their critical perspectives battle the sexist stereotypes of Asian women.

Asian American women are leaders in grassroots groups that fight for justice in many spheres: race, class, labor, economics, freedom of speech, and the prison industrial complex. Yuri Kochiyama, a long-time Japanese American activist, is a driving force behind a number of prisoners' rights groups including Asians for Mumia/Jericho and the David Wong Support Committee. These groups formed as part of the US anti-prison movement, and to demonstrate the solidarity of New York's diverse Asian Pacific Islander communities.

Asians for Mumia/Jericho was formed to galvanize support in Asian communities for Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners. The David Wong Support Committee works to expose the injustices facing David Wong, a poor Chinese immigrant who was incarcerated for armed robbery. He received an unusually long sentence for his first offence. While in prison, David was framed for a murder he did not commit. His trial was loaded with racial stereotyping and discrimination, which pervades the U.S. prison system. David is currently serving a sentence for the murder.

Other examples are South Asians Against Police Brutality and Racism, and the October 22nd Coalition who work specifically against racism and police brutality. Their work is not only focused on people of Asian descent, but in solidarity with groups fighting against state violence on people of color, women, the poor, and immigrants.

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The organizational involvement of the five women I spoke to exemplifies the links between many issues and social movements. The women are connected in their aims to fight oppression, and to strive for fundamental social change. Their commitments are crucial at a time when immigrants have become one of the fastest growing populations in US prisons, and the model-minority myth flourishes. Moreover, the Asian immigrant women labor force is increasing in factory sweatshops and sex trades. In this capitalist economy, the widening gap between the rich and poor is as evident in Asian American communities as in all others.

The following discussion about the lives and organizing work of five hard-working women clearly illustrates their passions for social change. These powerful sisters share with us how their activism is fed through their family, work, forms of creative expression, politics, and identities.

Liz Sunwha Kaufman

David Wong Support Committee

I am motivated and inspired by my family, friends, comrades, and those who have fought for justice before me. I am guided by the prospect that with work, justice can prevail, that on large and small scales, humans can triumph and determine their own lives and destinies, and by "great feelings of love," as brother Che described. I do not find this work without moments frustration, sadness, or outrage. But my energy to continue is renewed by the knowledge that all of our lives are interconnected, and that we can't stop until the systematic and targeted destruction of people's lives and our environment has ceased and been replaced by a just form of leadership by the people.

One of my high school teachers had a tremendous influence on my value of people of

color unity. She brought a different style of teaching that involved more student interaction and self-expression. She arrived at a time when racial tensions were increasing, and she was invaluable in helping me deal with daily arguments about race in my American history class (where I was the only person of color) and with students outside of class. The guidance she provided was with me as I began my first year at Barnard College and found myself in the midst of the Ethnic Studies struggle at Columbia. I saw the Third World solidarity of the movement, and was drawn to it.

In my quest for information, a sister named Cindy Wong began telling me about meetings and breaking it down for me, and was instrumental in my participation. The Asian American students who were involved were such a contrast to the others on campus, who seemed to be in their own worlds and saw me, a Korean adoptee, as un-Asian and unacceptable. Throughout college, I found my place in Ethnic Studies organizing, where I also first heard Yuri Kochiyama speak. I went to see her again in LA, and was inspired to participate in the Summer Activist Training Program (SAT) run by Asian American organizations.

Being involved in these struggles has shaped my perspective of life. It has profoundly affected the way that I live, from my jobs, my choices as a consumer, the way I interact with the people in my life, to my awareness of what is happening in my surroundings and my efforts to be an accountable and responsible member of society. I see the education system failing our young people, while the exploding prison industrial complex is funneling youth into prison at astounding rates. I have begun volunteer teaching at an alternative school, and would like to work in education policy and teaching, and eventually start a school. I believe that investing in young people by providing a strong education and opportunities to explore their interests, is the foundation for our future. Activism and organizing work is inseparable from other components of my life, since it has changed the way that I think.

Janet Yip

*Refuse and Resist!
Revolutionary Communist Party*

I am fed by everything that happens around me daily: from the blatantly partisan US election process, to being on the subway and seeing how a parent treats her child. There have been different seminal moments throughout my life where I have felt the need to change things. More recently, my parents wrote about their lives in this country for a book, and specifically about their experiences in the Japanese Internment Camps. It described the bitterness that they felt, as well as the communities that formed in the camps. My parents never talked about it with me until the Asian American movement developed in the 60s. They never thought that it would happen to them.

Then when I went to Berkeley, I became part of the Third World Studies struggle, and I went on the front lines with African, Latin, and Asian American students. My parents told me not to unite with other ethnic groups because that was the lesson that they had learned in their lives. They asked, where were these communities when Japanese Americans were in the internment camps? Well, I realized that what we want now is to teach a different lesson; that in order to get beyond society's injustices today, we need to work together with people of multi-nationalities.

I believe that right now in this society is one of the best times for what Mao has characterized as a "Great Upheaval in Society". Even with Bush coming in to office, it's a time when people have to protest and build a movement for a different world.

Gloria Lum

Asians for Mumia/Jericho, David Wong Support Committee, Letter Carriers' Union, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance

Working with the David Wong Support Committee, Kazu Iijima, Yuri Kochiyama, and the Chinese Staff and Workers Association really opened my eyes. In the early years of the Silver Palace Restaurant, I saw the struggles of sweatshop workers; and I also saw injustice through the case of David Wong in the criminal justice system. I believe that these movements are not an Asian thing, but of disenfranchised peoples. A struggle for one is a struggle for all. I see them as a struggle not of culture, but a class struggle. It was so empowering for me to see UNITE work with all people: Asians, Latin Americans, and Blacks. Especially for women who work in sweatshops that do not speak english; they are empowered because they understand that as women workers, they bridge the gaps and dissolve stereotypes between ethnic groups. And THAT is what really shakes up the system.



Another moment where all of this connected to my personal life was when I was divorced with Wayne, my current partner. I learned that I can take care of myself, and I didn't need a man. I had financial security, and it opened up a lot of doors for opportunities I hadn't seen before. If we hadn't been divorced, it would have changed everything now. It empowered me as a woman to be independent. As Asian women, we're brought up with the understanding that we gotta take care of those around us, and in the process, we lose a lot of our self-esteem and individuality.

If you give a woman the chance and educate her in her rights, whether on the workroom floor or about her human rights, she is capable of anything! You see that now in how Asian American women mobilize. The Asian Woman's Center, for example, teaches women that they don't have to stay in a violent domestic situation. Twenty years ago, this was unheard of. Especially in the language that we use now, to say that violence is wrong, that is really powerful.

Chaiti Sen

Writer, Asians for Mumia/Jericho, South Asians Against Police Brutality and Racism

When I became a teacher, it taught me a lot about what people are up against, and sparked certain questions for me. I met some members of South Asians Against Police Brutality and Racism, and they had access to information that I hadn't had before. They showed me that what we deal with, in terms of injustice, doesn't have to be this way. At the same time, I gained a whole community in my life.

What inspires my writing and my activism come from the same place: both are forms of self-empowerment. I feel that I'm not just taking things that come my way, but that I'm taking control. A good writer can write politically eye-opening fiction. It's hard to make it not sound preachy. I read once that art should shine a light on society as it is today. It should make a situation clearer, but not be a political dissertation, because they are two different things. I am working towards that.

Karen Ahmed*

South Asians Against Police Brutality and Racism, Asians for Mumia/Jericho, October 22nd Coalition

The strongest and earliest political influence in my activism was my mother. She was independent and not conventional, and although she wouldn't see herself as a political person, she instilled in me the spirit of rebellion. I grew up in Pakistan, a repressive environment for women and Christians, and with two brothers, just having my mother's influence was awesome. My mother instilled in me the belief that I could do anything, which was radical – and yet, because of our environment, she imposed restrictions upon me because I was female.

One of the reasons why I wanted to get to this country is because it represented freedom. When I got here, I learned what America really represented as an Imperialist power. In New York, I became involved with SAKHI, a South Asian women's group against domestic violence, as well as Workers AWAZZ, a South Asian workers' rights group. I feel that when you understand that it is unacceptable for people to live with injustice, there are two ways that people respond: either they become depressed and overwhelmed with what surrounds you everyday; or, you become more involved and active.

So, that is where I am today, I cannot even imagine what my mother must have lived through and endured. We were so busy that there was never time for talking about all that. She knew to live the best way you can, and she's instilled that in me. Fighting for social justice is the best way I know how to live.

* name changed on request

Emily Chan works at the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance. She is a member of Sista II Sista, David Wong Support Committee, and Asians for Mumia/Jericho.

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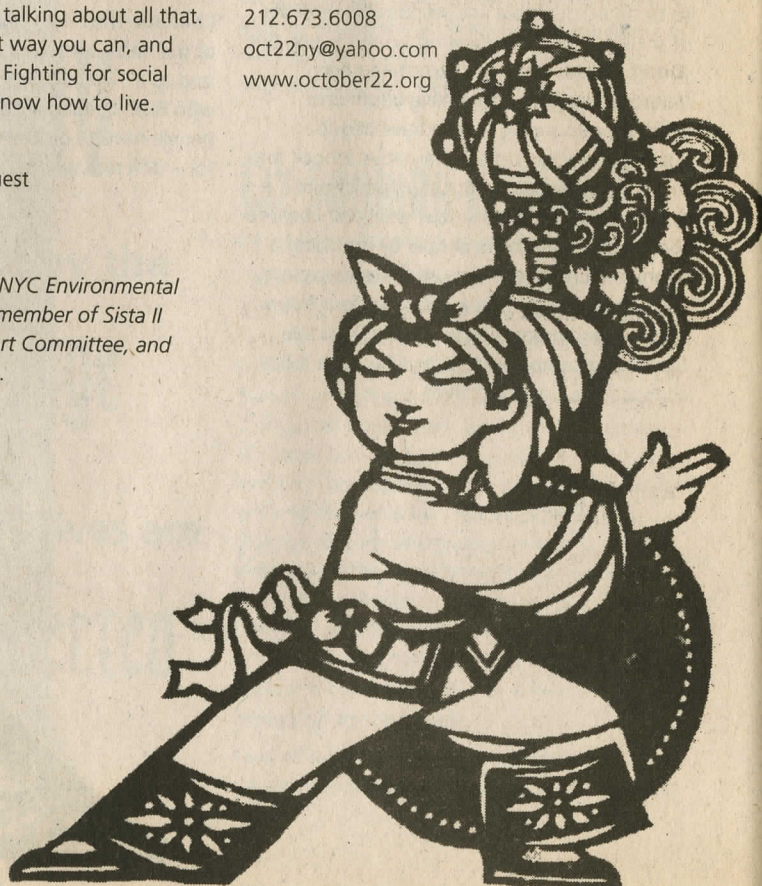
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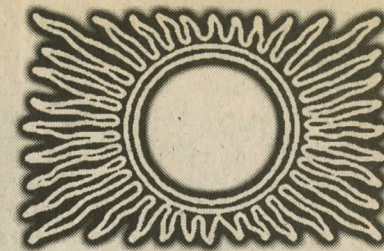
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from the hof



Bearing and raising

children is the most creative and important gift we possess as women. Undoubtedly there is a big price of pain, worry and frustration as our kids grow up. Sometimes we doubt our ability to be effective mothers; we feel hurt when our children rebel and go down roads we have taken great pains to steer them clear of. However, I believe that with our mothering nurture, or better yet with the combined love and labor of father and mother, our children will grow and positively impact their world

Since children are such a wonderful gift, why does the current pressure of society discourage having more than one or two kids? I see many reasons for this: money, career, convenience, pressure to conform, mobility, and a host of other mostly selfish pursuits. I have five beautiful children from a wonderful, if not quite perfect, eleven-year marriage. There is not one child I could imagine living without. I am proud of all of them. God willing, we may have more. There must be a reason our Creator designed us with millions of eggs in our ovaries (our partners come with at least equal quantities of sperm).

Don't get me wrong, I'm not a fertility fanatic. I don't advocate having scores of children who won't be loved and provided for. I'm not condemning all common sense, all use of contraception or spacing. What I am trying to say is that children are priceless and that God is pleased if we accept our destiny as women with pride.

Of course this is only reasonable, only fair if we create a secure environment for our children with the support of family, community and friends. That is where today's social priorities have it all wrong. That is why I am so thankful to be living at the Bruderhof Community. In fact, I think that it would be impossible for me to raise five children anywhere else.

Here at the Bruderhof, a faith-based community where members share worship, income, expenses, responsibilities, and family life, I have support and help from all fellow members who are my brothers and sisters.

From a well-staffed daycare center up to a private high school, my children are in a safe and exciting environment during my working hours. As if this isn't good enough, they are close enough to my work place that I can visit them regularly during the day, on foot. Got a late doctor's appointment or other emergency? Not a problem. A fellow member will be more than happy to step in as temporary foster parent at a moment's notice, just as I would do for my neighbor's kids. Our children live in such a happy and protected environment that it hardly seems fair – I wish the whole world could share this with us. But even here good parenting doesn't come free. It takes commitment, pain, persistence, love and hope for the future. It also takes giving and receiving frank reminders – sometimes even angry shouting – between parents to keep us focused on the importance and priority of good parenting.

I have great admiration for mothers all over the world who do sacrifice their entire existence to the care and nurturing of their children. Many of them do this in circumstances that are unimaginable for me. So many mothers have to helplessly watch their children suffer and die from hunger, disease, and violence. For a mother, this means dying many deaths.

To those who are concerned about space, overcrowding and diminishing resources, I say that human resources are far more valuable than oil, coal, or gold. The problem lies not in the amount, but in the availability and distribution of material resources. I have confidence in the problem-solving abilities of our descendants. It is not the number of children, but how we educate them that will be a factor in the further destruction or restoration of our planet.

Having children enables us to actively participate in tomorrow. Through descendants, we pass a part of ourselves on, we build a legacy for the future. It is amazing that God allows us to be a part of his creative spirit in this way.

I have a parting thought to all the true feminists out there: Womens' liberation is to bear and raise children.



~ W. Arnold

photo by Roswith Mason



BUILDING

CONVERSATION WITH LINDA EVANS

Some are hailing Y2K as a high-water mark in activism: unprecedented numbers came out to demonstrations throughout the year and the agitation against globalization enjoyed increased media attention. At the same time, a weakness within the activist community emerged, namely a superficial understanding by many demonstrators of the historical and racial implications of the issues that prompted the rallies. Today's fledgling radicals cannot afford to ignore or minimize the legacy of struggle represented by political prisoners who daily and yearly continue sacrificing because of their commitment to the struggle for liberation. The attitudes behind NAFTA and the IMF's encroaching economic empire is not this year's phenomenon, and the political prisoners are a link to the struggle that goes back for decades and centuries. Systematic oppression of people of color throughout the world are built into international corporations, so that the relationship between racial profiling and sweatshop labor is not a theoretic one. If you don't grasp these connections, the desire to smash a Starbucks window doesn't amount to much more than rebel-without-a-cause anti-establishment angst.

Linda Evans, who spent fifteen years in federal prison before her sentence was commuted in the final hours before Bush Jr began his occupation of the White House, has important insight on the historical continuity of the struggle for justice and dealing with white supremacist mentalities within the movement. Linda's work as a Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organizer was extensive and developed over many years. She eventually began working to develop underground resistance capable of conducting armed struggle as part of a multi-level overall revolutionary strategy and was arrested on May 11, 1985; the length of her sentence – forty years – was blatantly politically motivated. What follows is excerpts from a longer conversation that is available online at blumag.com.

—Marianne Mommson

I'm sure everyone is asking you this, but what changes do you see in the movement today compared to your experiences in the seventies and early eighties?

One of the things that impressed me coming out is that the conditions on the streets are so much worse than when I went in: the homelessness, the tremendous gap between people who have anything and people who have nothing is extremely upsetting. We know that police brutality hasn't stopped, it's gotten worse, we know that racism has intensified in many ways.

I'm very impressed also with the young people that I've seen who are so committed, especially doing prisoner activism, fighting against globalization, to doing work with community people, for instance in San Francisco there's a big struggle about gentrification and people of color in particular being kicked out of their homes so that the dot com empire can have more real estate. So I've been really, really impressed, embraced and very happy to see the community of activists that exist now. People are very dedicated and very serious,

Two years ago you, Laura Whitehorn, Dylcia Pagan, Alicia and Lucy Rodriguez, and Carmen Valentin were all at Dublin prison; now Marilyn Buck is the only political prisoner left there. How is she doing and what can people do to support her?

Marilyn is an extremely strong, resilient and determined woman and she has a very large community of loving friends inside who are extremely supportive of her, with good reason because she's a good friend to them. So I know she will continue to struggle inside. I know she was very happy for me to be released; as soon as she heard she just threw her arms around me.

Certainly people can write to her and maybe in their letters they can specifically say that there's no obligation to write back, because that can be a problem. But the best thing that people

can do right now to support her and other political prisoners is to educate the community at large about the political prisoners and about the sacrifices that they have made. Being out of prison has reinforced this: the political prisoners were fighting for the same things that people are fighting for now and I think that continuum of history is really, really important to understand and to recognize. Supporting political prisoners is a way of asserting that our struggle is not something that is not just a flash in the pan, that people are committed, that they realize that the struggles that are going on now have been going on for decades.

People inside are getting older, a lot of them have been in prison for two, three decades, and they are starting to die. We've had three comrades die just in the last couple years: Merle Africa, Noah Washington and most recently Teddy Heath (see sidebar). All of them should have been released on compassionate release at the very least. Whether people support the political prisoners says something about the character of the movement that we're building: whether it will be a radical movement, whether we recognize that there are many tactics and different strategies at different times that need to be supported whether they work or not.

The other thing is that there are new political prisoners all the time. We have a comrade in Atlanta, Jamil al Amim, who's on trial for his life. It is crucial for people to rise to his defense because we won't have seventeen years to build some kind of defense like we've had with Mumia – the national legislation about the death penalty is to go to trial quickly and get executed quickly, so I think it's really important that people do work now. People have to recognize that he was a freedom fighter long ago and that's why he was targeted by the Atlanta police. Defending people that have been doing this work for so many years is a way of building solidarity and depth to our movement.

What do you think are the obstacles to increasing that solidarity and radicalism?

I think a lot of it is about racism. What goes on too much is for white activists to separate themselves from the Black liberation or Puerto Rican independence prisoners and the issues that were the reasons why those prisoners went to jail. The struggle against globalization at its essence is a struggle about the confrontation between poor communities and corporations. If you look at it, comrades from the Black Liberation Army and the Black Panther Party were imprisoned in the first place because they were fighting police repression and the kinds of restructuring that was going on at that time, in other words for the empowerment of their communities. That's the same struggle that's going on internationally against globalization and restructuring today – it's all about self-determination. That's the historical link and it's also one of the reasons why people have to fight against white supremacy and to overcome their own narrow vision.

And obviously if you persist in that fight, it can require a substantial sacrifice.

Once you are a socially conscious person, once you have awakened to the oppression that is so pervasive in our society and once you've decided to take a stand against that and really struggle for justice for all people, that doesn't go away. So of course in prison I was able to continue responding to the problems of the people around me. It comes from your heart, it just is a very deep commitment that doesn't fade with time. It's not a decision that I personally could take back or would take back. I think the forms in which we fight for justice have to change with time, so that's what I'm kind of struggling with now is to figure out what exactly is going on, where can I be most effective.

INFO & ACTION



Teddy Jah Heath was born on September 16, 1943 in the West Indies. In 1966 he came to New York City where he was confronted with the same oppressive conditions that he had left in the West Indies. In 1968 Jah joined the Black Panther Party in New York at the time when the entire New York leadership was arrested and charged with numerous counts of conspiracy. Due to these attacks Jah and others decided to go underground and function clandestinely with the Black Liberation Army (BLA).

On May 2, 1973, Teddy 'Jah' Heath, along with his co-defendant and former Panther 21 defendant Baba Odinga, was arrested and charged with the politically motivated kidnapping of an organized crime figure from Westchester County. Jah was denied the attorney of his choice. Due to this and other racist rulings by the judge Jah refused to participate in the trial. He was convicted on all counts and sentenced to 25 years to life. He was denied parole twice.

Since the beginning of his time in prison Jah was confined to maximum security prisons. He was transferred numerous times due to his political activity behind the walls. He spent his time teaching Black history and doing political education classes. He spent years in solitary confinement under conditions of extreme brutality. Other than educating others, Jah posed no security threat. On January 21, 2001, Teddy Jah Heath died from cancer in prison.



to find out what you can do to support Iman Jamil, previously known as H. Rap Brown, contact:

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write to political prisoner Marilyn Buck. to find out how you can support other political prisoners go to www.thejerichomovement.com or www.mxgrm.com (malcolm x grassroots movement)

Marilyn Buck
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Robert King Wilkerson, one of the prisoners known as "the Angola 3," was released from the Louisiana State Penitentiary on Feb. 8, 2001, after spending 29 years in solitary confinement for a murder he did not commit.

He has pledged to dedicate his life to winning freedom for Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace, the other two members of the Angola 3, and for all of the other innocent men with whom he was incarcerated for the past three decades.

"I may be free of Angola, but Angola will never be free of me," Wilkerson said.

Woodfox and Wallace have also been held in solitary confinement for 29 years. They were convicted of the 1972 murder of an Angola prison guard. Wilkerson, Woodfox, and Wallace have always believed that they were framed by prison officials because they organized the Angola chapter of the Black Panther Party. Prior to being placed in solitary confinement, the men led campaigns to end prisoner rape, improve race relations, and ameliorate conditions at the slave plantation-turned-prison.

For more information on how you can support Woodfox and Wallace, visit www.prisonactivist.org/angola

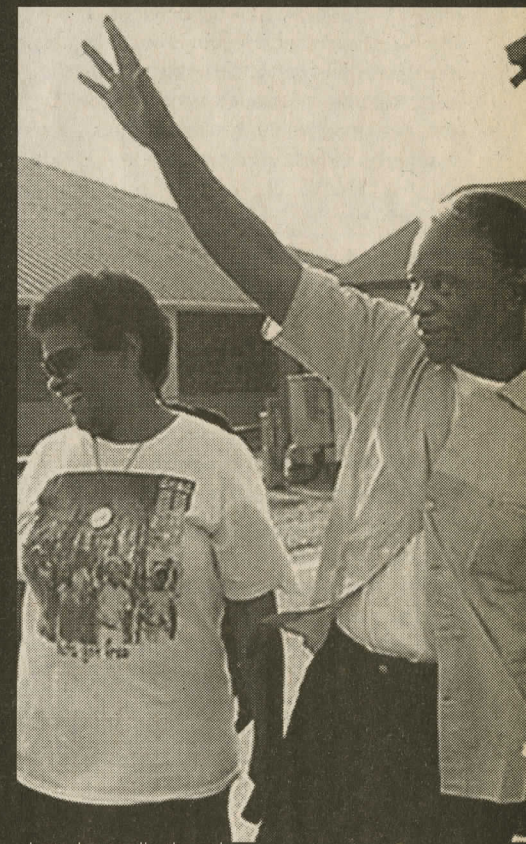
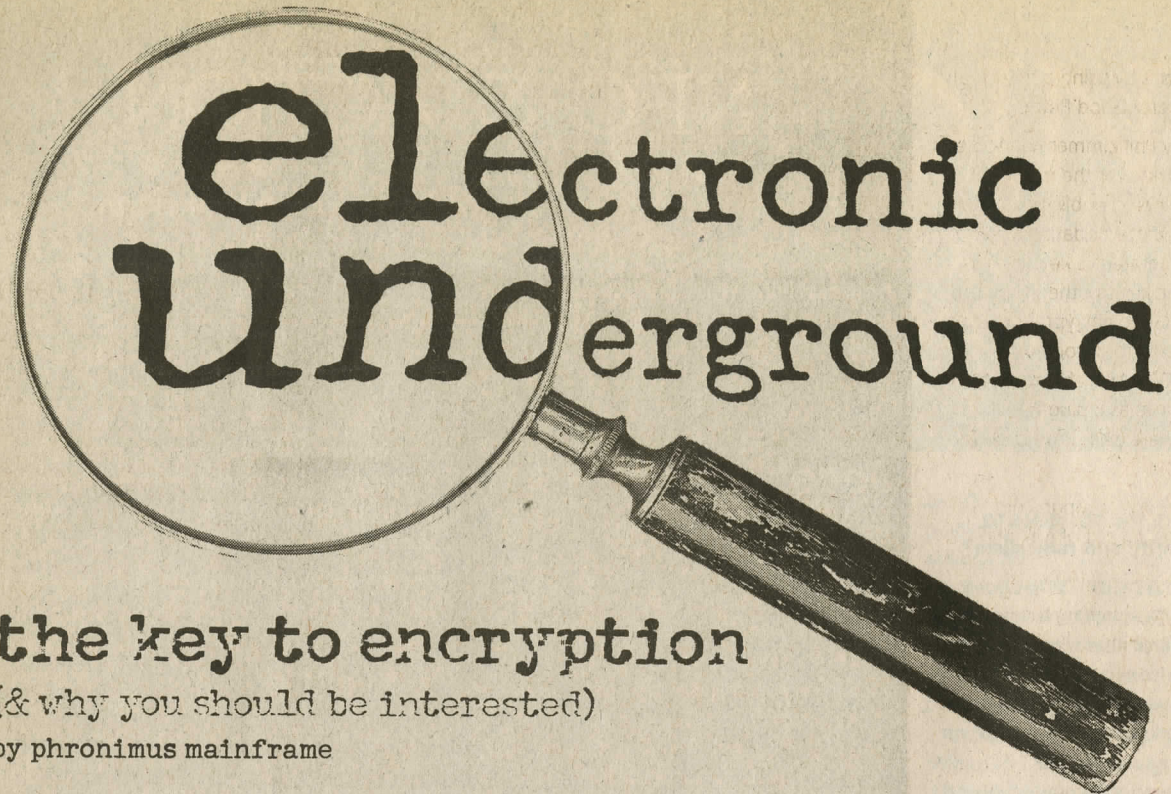


photo by noelle theard

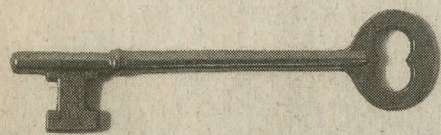


electronic underground

the key to encryption

(& why you should be interested)

by phronimus mainframe



In the last installment

we explored how data travels on the internet in order to understand how it can be intercepted. By the end, it appeared that the only way to protect ourselves was to encrypt sensitive data. This way, even if it is intercepted, it can only be decoded by the party it is intended for. In this installment we will take a brief look at the history of encryption. We will then check out the best freely available encryption software on the net today and the controversy which surrounded its distribution.

The earliest evidence of cryptography (the science of translating messages into cyphers or codes) appears in an inscription dated around 1900 BC in the main chamber of an ancient Egyptian tomb. This inscription contains non-standard symbols in the place of ordinary hieroglyphics. This substitution of symbols is considered to be the earliest example of an encrypted message.

The most famous example of early encryption is attributed to Julius Caesar. Because he didn't trust his messengers, he would encode most important messages before he had them delivered. He would do this by shifting each letter by three places in the alphabet. For example, every "A" would become a "D", every "B" an "E", and so on. Unless you knew the shift by three rule, the message would be illegible.

This example set the standard for the next couple thousand years. In this classic model of encryption, a raw message called the "plaintext" is encoded according to some encryption scheme known as the "key" which results in a "cyphertext". This cyphertext can only be decoded by those who know the key. So, using the Caesar cypher, the plaintext "HELLO" would result in a cyphertext of "KHOOR" which could only be decoded if you knew the key (to shift each letter three places back).

There was always one major problem with this model though: How do you make sure that the key remains secret?

Obviously, at some point you have to tell the person you are sending the message to what the key is. If you think you have a secure enough channel to tell them the key, then why not just tell them the message this way? If it's not secure, then others may be able to obtain the key and so the encryption becomes useless. This is the paradox/problem with classic encryption.

In 1976 this problem was solved by Diffie and Hellman. They proposed the first public key encryption system.

Public key encryption uses a set of keys, one private and one public. After the key set is generated, the private key is kept safe by the owner while the public key is distributed freely. The public key can then be used to encode a message. The resulting encrypted message (cyphertext) can now only be decoded by the holder of the matching private key. The idea is not simply that the private key cannot be guessed from the public key, but that the private key (the real key to the code) never needs to leave its owner.

This solves the paradox of classic encryption. The private key never needs to be transmitted. All someone needs in order to encode a message is the public key, from which the private key cannot be guessed. This allows the true (private) "key" to the code to remain truly secret.

The easiest way to think about it is this:

Let's say you have special locks made that can all be opened by a single key. Now, you hold onto the key but give your friends these locks. Your friends are now able to go around and lockup whatever they'd like, knowing that only you have the key to open them. These locks can be thought of as the public key while the one unique key that can open them all is the private key.

Just as one of these locks can't be used to open another lock, the public key alone cannot be used to decode an encrypted message. Only the private key can do this. So, as we can see from the example, you only need to provide the "locks" (public key) for public distribution while keeping the key (private key) which opens them to yourself. This is the strength of public key encryption: you can freely distribute your public keys and still be sure that the real (private) key to the code will remain secret and securely in your possession.

OK, OK. So what's this have to do with you?

Well, today public key encryption has become the standard for the Internet. The ease and security of this method makes it the perfect choice for those who want to retain their privacy online. Even so-called "secure websites" use forms of public key encryption such as the SSL (secure socket layer) protocol. But you want to begin encrypting your data, right?

The best way to do this is by using a free program called PGP - Pretty Good Privacy.

PGP was developed by Phil Zimmerman to be strong public key encryption for the masses. It allows you to create your own public/private key sets for use encrypting whatever data you want. All you need to do is generate the key set and then distribute the public key to other. They can then use this key with PGP to encrypt a message which only you will be able to decode with your matching private key. PGP is available for most platforms and can even run as a plug-in with your favorite email software (shit, I'm starting to sound like a commercial).

The homepage for PGP is: www.pgp.com but the free version is distributed out of MIT at:

www.web.mit.edu/network/pgp.html

This page has a lot of links covering the basics of using PGP and so I won't go into it here. As they say online, "RTFM" (read the fucking manual).

PGP is considered strong encryption. The strength of encryption is typically measured by the complexity of the encoding method and the length of the key used. The longer the key (usually measured in bits), the stronger the encryption. With current super computers, the US government estimates that it would take twelve million times the age of the universe to break a single message encrypted with a 128-bit PGP key. Computing power will obviously increase in the future, but it seems as though you'd be safe in our lifetime.

PGP encryption is considered so strong, in fact, that the US government spent three years threatening Zimmerman (its creator) with a suit in court for violating international arms regulations.

We will continue in the next issue by examining this attempt by the US government to block the spread of publicly available "unbreakable" encryption in the early 1990s. For those of you still wondering why it is necessary to encrypt your data, I'm going to conclude with an exploration of three ways - Carnivore, the Clipper chip, and Echelon - in which our privacy is currently being threatened. I will also be including some relevant internet links for those of you who want to do some more reading online.

Peace.

Phronimus
pmainframe@yahoo.com



Dear Phronimus Mainframe

Thanks for your articles - they're one of the many, many parts of BLU I find interesting. I had several questions about your article in the last issue. You said, "Once someone has your IP address, they can theoretically spoof it and begin gathering the packets meant for your computer." The implications of this weren't clear to me. Does this mean that the packets don't reach their "real" destination, or does it simply mean that a copy goes to the "spoofer"? I don't care so much about surveillance. **What I want to know is, can someone prevent my site from receiving email and web forms sent to it?** I ask because I'm helping set up a simple, collective website for several small and progress left not-for-profits, and I'm not a specialist or anything.

Thanks
Jacob

Jacob,

The short answer to your question is that the packets would never reach their "real" destination - meaning that no copy is made. People could theoretically intercept and actually redirect the packets headed for your website or email service much like a switch on train tracks.

Let's say party A is sending to party B. Party C wants to listen. So "spoofing" is when Party C gets between them and fools

1) Party A into thinking he is Party B &

2) Party B into thinking that Party A has stopped sending and nothing is wrong.

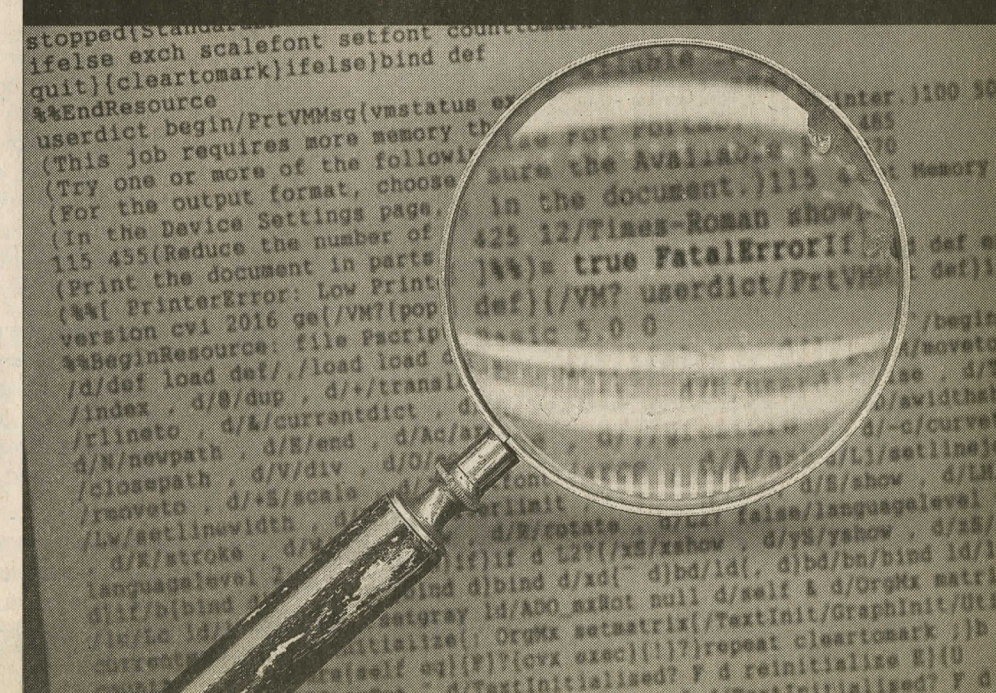
So both sides get fooled. The Sender (A) thinks they are sending to the right person while the rightful Receiver (B) thinks that the transmission has stopped.

I wouldn't be overly paranoid though, just aware. This is just a "what is possible" scenario. It is not easy to do and would take some time and malice. If someone wanted to spy on you at your home, they could sit outside in the bushes for a year and watch you. The fact is that they probably won't and you can't live in fear of raising your window shades due to the possibility.

My next article deals with how you can encrypt your email and other communications. I think this is the best defense since someone who does intercept such a message would simply find a bunch of garbage (encoded stuff) and so move on to the next "target".

Thank you for the question and the chance for me to clarify myself. I'm hoping to educate and not just spread panic by running through the streets flailing my arms yelling "PEOPLE ARE READING YOUR EMAIL!!" The point is that people can and we deserve to know and understand how it's possible for our own protection.

Peace.
Phronimus
pmainframe@yahoo.com



DECEMBER 27
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

4:00-15H

by el maceo

SO AFTER GOING to work at 2:00 for two hours I got cut and they told me to come back in three hours to work the night. My day was shot. Not a good feeling. So I went down to the Plaza de Armas to sit and just watch people, like I've been doing a lot these days. As I'm walking over I hear the sound of a trumpet horsing around somewhere. I follow the sound to the plaza and as I get there I look in the direction of the sound and see nothing, just Marshalls. Now, during this season Marshalls has been blaring these annoying Christmas tunes outside its store, invading the plaza and tricking me several times into thinking that there was live music somewhere about. But this time it sounded too human to be the Marshalls window so I looked around and saw this trumpeter sitting on the fountain blazing away and I realized the sound of the music was bouncing off all the buildings like some crazy cartoon bullet eventually pegging me in the brain.

Dope I thought, and picked a bench right up next to the fountain to check him out. On the other side of the bench was sitting the oldest guy I've seen in a long time. He was the kind of old where he sort of had that permanent smile on his face like someone told a joke that he didn't get but was down to join in the flavor of the moment. He hunched over so much that it seemed like his chin was in line with his belly-button, lost somewhere in his guayabera. The bridge of his nose was so high that it set his eyes so deeply into his skull that he had the look of a crane or vulture or something. My man was old.

So I sit on the other side of the bench and listen to the music with him. I decided to pull out a cigar that I had been waiting to smoke and puff away. I knew the old guy didn't care. He'd smoked a mountain of puros in his time. I decide to toss a few bucks in the trumpeter's case cause I know I'm just gonna chill there for a while. *Gracias* he says. *No, 'mano, gracias a ti* I say. He keeps playing.

It's funny how music changes a space. People tap their feet or move their heads instinctively without even paying attention while others just walk by like nothing's different, but it's funny cause you can tell that they have to pretend. It's like when somebody passes you and doesn't look at you but you know that they're intentionally averting their eyes so they're really doing it doubly. Anyway, those people made the trumpet man even more of a reality just by trying to ignore him.

But the kids, well, kids are like soul-barometers. If something is going down, the kids know what's up and they're all intrigued and approaching. Parents follow, and here they're open to it. They talk to the guy too, or at least support their kids approaching the music. (It's not the same in the states.)

This story starts when this drunk lady (you know, the lady who's drunk all the time but speaks the truth more often than you'd think and speaks nothing but foulness at the end of the day) comes up and starts dancing and taunting the people around to clap when the goddamn song is over, which of course they should but they hold back until this drunk lady lets them do it. She's romping around with this bandage tied around her left calf. She comes and goes, offers the trumpeter some of her unopened two-liter bottle of pepsi which he has to refuse and keep refusing. She dances, he plays: it's all good.

Then from across the plaza comes this cry or yell or something and there's this guy in jeans and a denim vest with no shirt with a leather-bound clay cross dangling on his chest, dragging his guitar by the neck. He makes some gesture like he's howling at the moon and I didn't know what to make of it and neither really does the trumpeter but he plays along, sort of like the face of the old guy on the bench next to me.

He goes up and sits next to our trumpeter and starts to play along slowly, sort of awkwardly, off beat and shit but grooving. He looks just like that old Picasso painting of the guitar player: all in blue,

holding the guitar crooked but with affection, tired white hair. Finally, after a few songs their ideas converge and they're playing all these classic old Puerto Rican songs that everyone knows and the old guy next to me starts laughing carefully and clapping off-beat with all the soul he can muster. The guitarist laughs occasionally too, out of the blue, and he's missing his incisors which makes his laugh seem even more heart-felt somehow.

Then this other guy comes up to the scene who looks just like Lee Van Cleef from the old westerns if Lee Van Cleef were five feet tall, had been born en el campo and had no teeth. A little man with wily eyes, he paced back and forth sort of nervously around the musicians. If he had told me he was a street sweeper, I would have believed him.

And he just starts singing. And it's beautiful. He sang as if he were stuck in the bottom of a well and was singing to the moon that shined directly above him, but also tenderly like how a campesino might sing to his horse as they walk along the border of his land to the work set aside for the day.

People start to pay attention. Between verses he sucks on his cigarette and his cheeks cave in so much they must touch each other on the inside. He sings like it's this craft that he doesn't even have to put much effort into anymore, it just comes out like vocal origami. It's fluid, it's chill and just a little gruff, gruff enough to let you know that this cat's for real and has seen some shit in his life, not some Ricky Martin disney world boricua sales-man.

So he takes it easy, drops a few lines here and there, steps out for a song or two, comes back in when he wants. The drunk lady is back in full effect clapping and dancing, limping a little on her busted leg. Then this last guy comes up. He is tall and skinny, Black, but really more like the reddish color of very old rum. He has a permanent smile on his face too but his makes you think that he knows what's up and that he's up to something. Subtle but clear. He's always on the inside of the joke. His eyes are sly and he has a Sammy Davis Junior thing going on with his wrist and his cigarette.

So this guy, Charlie from Bayamon, just starts freestyling this song. He drops a few verses here and there about people he sees, the plaza we're in, rhyming every last phrase by letting us know who he is: Charlie de Bayamon. With his *versos de inspiracion* he had people laughing, getting embarrassed, clapping, whistling, dancing, howling. Between every verse he just bounced his head and smoked his cigarette, his eyes like a fox letting you know there was some ill organization going on up there as he waited for the verse to come back.

It reminded me of the possible musical future of hip hop.

I hope when I'm old and sitting on the bench with my cane and sunken eyes next to some kid smoking a cigar that all these rappers of our day will be around to come out to the park and just drop something. Someone with a conga or a bucket, a guitar or a trumpet just needs to be out there to drop the beat and these old timers can come up and lay it on the people. And I can tell the kid next to me that I grew up in the golden age of hip hop, when people were involving themselves on all these fronts and you can pick some old timer off the street who you think is just some street cleaner and he can spit some verses like *what?!* like he did back in the day at some party or in his basement. And the most important part will be if the other people in the park will feel it, if they'll remember the beats that take them back to their childhood, to memories of their old boroughs and barrios. If hip hop can become ingrained in our society to the point where people don't just recognize the songs but recognize them to be meaningful to their own lives. That they consider them to be *their songs*, part of something that makes them proud, as a people. As everyday people. I think we are at a deciding point for this. Can we create in this era a greater culture that not only supports, respects and is receptive to hip

hop but that feels it is part of their identity? Can we make hip hop that has messages that reflect the reality and poetry of people's daily lives? Can we do it in a way that moves the needs of the people to the forefront of everyday conversations and challenges them to consider their world in new, critical and beautiful ways? I hope so.

Charlie from Bayamon finished his song and they all kept going for a little while until finally this garbage truck passes. Here in old San Juan at the Plaza de Armas it takes the garbage truck like fifteen minutes to drive by cause of all the traffic and once it was clear that the truck was gonna be there for a few minutes the group dispersed as quietly and tranquilly as it united. Picasso went one way, Lee Van Cleef another. Charlie and the drunk lady went in their separate directions, leaving the trumpet man and the empty pepsi bottle sitting there next to the fountain. He kept playing and fooling around, talking to kids and old ladies and their daughters that wanted to talk to him.

I looked up and noticed that the moon was this little cradle under the orange clouds and then quick looked for a clock. I was already late for getting back to work. *Fuck it*, I thought. Some days it's clear what's important and what's not.

who's afraid of a Black Grrrl REVOLUTION?

A Problackgrrrl-Feminist Founder's Statement on the Black Grrrl Revolution Struggle
by Brigitte M. Moore

Who's Afraid of a Black Grrrl Revolution? Those who maintain white male, white female, and black male dictated social systems, structures, and order. Those who hate a Black Grrrl for being "stuck up" and "self absorbed" enough to resist, outsmart, and overcome her multiple oppressions. Those who hate a Black Grrrl confident. Those who hate a Black Grrrl proud. Those who hate a Black Grrrl too successful. Too educated. Too cute. Too free. Shit, those who hate a Black Grrrl for fucking eating everyday. For having shoes. For having common sense. For having a piece of job. For having decent shelter. Those afraid of a Black Grrrl Revolution just love the romanticized notion of Black Grrrl suffering. Love to hear of us raising 20 kids on 4 dollars a week and never missing a day of church. Love our dying penniless. Love us to NEED them.

And why are they afraid of a Black Grrrl Revolution? Cause a Black Grrrl Revolution requires a full on eradication of all forms of oppression and folks just want to eradicate the oppressions that affect them – the white, the male, the privileged. Cause folks just can't bear the thought of living a life void of the right to oppress in some capacity. Well, perhaps those afraid of a Black Grrrl Revolution are merely addicted to some form of privilege and are just not ready to let it go. Perhaps those afraid of a Black Grrrl Revolution are more self-serving than apathetic. Perhaps. Well, then it's the folks who could not care less about a Black Grrrl Revolution who are in straight up collusion with oppression.

Who could not care less about a Black Grrrl Revolution? Smug motherfuckers so filled up with their own privilege and popular causes could not give a fuck that black grrrls suffer every form of global human oppression. Could not give a fuck that black grrrls live lifelong slow deaths buried under the weight of deferred dreams in serving blackmalewhitemalewhitefemalekind. Those same hypocrites who march for Mumia yet go on with their days and sleep tight at night when little Black Grrrls are gang raped in school. Those same hypocrites who iconize urban superstar rapists and talk shit about taking down the world bank – yet when and how do they support – not pimp, not profit from – but SUPPORT the



independent and unadulterated visions of Black Grrrls? No, they just keep on building new and improved establishments for Black Grrrls to file for– scrub up for–type for–manage for–sing for–dance for. And they could not care less that Black Grrrls cry in bathrooms on our jobs, could not care less that Black Grrrl brilliance goes unrecognized, could not care less as long as they all remain white or male or privileged on the backs of Black Grrrls.

How do they try to prevent a Black Grrrl Revolution? By perpetuating Black Grrrl exhaustion and broken heartedness. By convincing Black Grrrls that they cannot do anything on their own. By devising of new establishments for Black Grrrls to accessorize. By denying Black Grrrls access to the ol' white boy, ol' white girl, ol' black boy networks. By denying Black Grrrls access to information, to resources, to love, to truth, to honesty, to energy, to spray paint, to the turntables, to the mic, to the academy, to feminism, to liberation, to the tools of revolution. By calculatively ignoring how drained Black Grrrls are and still making demands on our cultural capital.

Now what happens when a Black Grrrl takes her crumbs and makes a cake, self-educates, savvily allocates the 30 cents she makes on every dollar, overcomes their every attempt on her spirit, and utilizes all that space so graciously provided her by systematic isolation to create, name, devise, fund, foster, conceptualize, and contextualize a Black Grrrl Revolution? They try to kill her. Kill her because somebody's got to be David if they all are to be Goliath. Kill her because somebody's got to be willing to play the part of least valued, if they all are to play the more valued. Kill her because somebody's got to be the volunteer if they are to be the owner. Kill her because somebody's got to do leg work if they all are to be the visionaries. And in a white supremacist-patriarchal-capitalist-biphobic-homophobic-ageist (ie anti-blackgrrrl world) it just must seem logical to the users and benefactors of privilege to just offer up Black Grrrls as the sacrificial lamb for their freedom, their privilege, their success, their survival.

How do they try to kill a Black Grrrl Revolution?

Ten times out of ten they fire the bullet at the Darkest and/or Loudest Black Grrrl. La Negra Bruja, La Negra Revolucionaria, La Prietta Bata. Focus the red light of hate right at her forehead and then hate her even more for alluding, for surviving. All day, every fucking day, alluding their hate that aims to kill. Hate a Black Grrrl for fighting for her name. Hate a Black Grrrl for fighting for her right to exist on her own terms. Hate a Black Grrrl for getting out of line. Hate a black grrrl for being difficult. Hate that a Black Grrrl is the one who put the three words Black Grrrl Revolution together. All their Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate of Black Grrrls that drives them to try to kill a Black Grrrl Revolution.

Their weapons of choice when trying to kill a Black Grrrl Revolution? Slander, scrutiny, withdrawing and withholding of energy, envy, imbalanced competitiveness (cause privileged folks competing with multiply-marginalized folks is a little imbalanced, no?), discrediting, ignoring, assaults, insults, slighting, condescension, social-cultural-sexual rape, manipulation, dismissiveness, hypocrisy, erasure. But their all time favorite weapon of choice is reverse psychology. Convince a Black Grrrl that she's already liberated, that she's being greedy, that she's asking for too much, that she's conceited, that she's selfish, that she has an attitude, that one Angela, that one Alice, that one Oprah is one too many. Convince a Black Grrrl that being high up in their structures is the same thing as spearheading her own vision. Convince a Black Grrrl that its all just one big coincidence, just one big fluke, that there hasn't been a genre, a global philosophy, a global movement rooted in, based on, and coming from the context of all grrrls of color and many languages. Convince a Black Grrrl that she's crazy for desiring a movement of her own. Convince a Black Grrrl to kill herself and ease their oppressor load. Then they all sit back and jack and jill off in bliss as a Black Grrrl invisibilizes herself, plays herself down, takes back seat, beats herself up, negates herself, martyrs herself all in the name of trying to convince them that she is none of the things she is being accused of, all in the name of trying to convince them that she is not them-- the oppressors and the privileged. Folks hate when Black Grrrl will and Black Grrrl brilliance outdoes their oppression and privilege. So they press the heel harder, pull the rank tighter, hoping to kill even the thought or possibility of a Black Grrrl Revolution.

Now why would they hope to kill even the very idea of a Black Grrrl Revolution? Because the anti-blackgrrrls can't HEAR a Black Grrrl. Because the anti-blackgrrrls can't SEE a Black Grrrl. Because the anti-blackgrrrls want Black Grrrls to remain wrapped up struggles that liberate everyone else except for Black Grrrls. And even as the anti-blackgrrrls march thousands deep demanding an end to all the kinds of brutality that affects and/or kills whitemalewhitefemaleblackmalekind, even as the anti-blackgrrrls fight among and teargas each other, they all unite on the frontline to kill a Black Grrrl Revolution.

Who's Afraid of a Black Grrrl Revolution? In the end it really doesn't matter who's afraid of a Black Grrrl Revolution because there will never be a free world without one. Because a free world is the one reality that cannot be created by walking around, walking over, and ignoring the most marginalized of Black Grrrls. Because a

full on eradication of all oppression can not and will not be achieved without addressing every form of oppression to which the most marginalized of Black Grrrls are subject. So of all the freedom fighters, the militants, the liberals, the progressives, the radicals, the nationalists, the thisists and the thatists I dare ask **Who's down for a Black Grrrl Revolution?**

Brigitte M. Moore is the founder/chairwoman/executive director of Black Grrrl Revolution, Inc. (www.blackgrrrlrevolution.org)

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health

Managing Stress Using the Science of Breath and Meditation:

Whether you are a political prisoner or a stay-at-home mom, there is going to be stress in your life and managing it doesn't have to be difficult. You don't need extravagant tools or a PhD. You simply must make a decision to go within and rely on what has been given to you from the moment of your existence.

It is something that no one can take from you no matter what situation you find yourself in. One minute to spare or one hour, just do it, the choice is yours.

To begin, pick a time and place where you will not be disturbed. Take a deep breath in your nose and push your stomach out. Then gently release the breath through your nose and pull your stomach in.

Continue to do this until you are focusing on nothing but your breathing. Now as you breath in meditate on breathing in the Light of the Creator and as you breath out meditate on letting go of anything that has been causing you stress. Breath in unconditional love and breath out anything that is not for your highest good. Breath in healing, mentally, spiritually, physically etc. Releasing the breath let go of any blockages that are causing you grief. Whatever time frame you've given yourself for this session continue until you have replaced the stress with total relaxation. And know that you've just been armed with the power to handle whatever you're confronted with NEXT !!!

Divineempress Mother Takeasha

ba- ha- ma- dia-



In a personal letter to Constance Webb, Trini' militant and scholar C.L.R. James writes, *"politics, art, life, love, in the modern world, all become so closely integrated that to understand one is to understand all."* The integration of many life forces as a source of struggle exemplifies Afro American performance and expression, whether it is the poet Langston Hughes, the poet-activist-elder-sage Amiri Baraka, or revolutionary Sista Angela Y. Davis, countless elder statesmen of Black America point to music as the highest level of articulation in Afro-American culture. It is appropriate that James's insight into the synergy of politics, life, love, and art should preface the words of Illadelph's B-B Queen Bahamadia. Whether it's her reflections on spirituality, the symbolic package of the "female compilation", or her resistance to the pigeon-hole of the "conscious artist", Bahamadia in her words and music exemplifies the fact that the masses are constantly (as the righteous say in Phili) Ona Move!, refusing to be abstracted and stifled by the labels and classifications Babylon spits out. Bahamadia's responses were part of a conversation between her and Buashie Amatokwu in Phili.

ON MUSIC'S PURPOSE and the label of "conscious artist"

To expose the truth, just putting an alternative to what's being exploited right now. No, and I don't necessarily want to be a part of that [conscious music] because I'm about being an individual so I'm promoting individualism, if that's the word. I just don't want to be pigeonholed. To me, being labeled and being able to be put in a box is to confine and restrain me and I don't want to be restrained. I want to be free to explore all the avenues because God allowed me that ability. And no disrespect to anybody who's doing their thing, that's their niche and that's what they feel comfortable operating in and that's cool. But I don't want to limit myself to just doing a song or collaboration with a Erykah Badu, I want to be able to do it with a Ja Rule, a Jay Z, a Erykah, a Common, a Madonna, anybody, as long as it's a spiritual process and we can get it in and get a song made and the end result is to make the money to move the units. That's my bottom line and I gotta be real with people.

I try to shy away from situations that would put a stigma or label on me and to be honest with you, I feel that the whole female compilation thing is kind of old hat now. If we really want to consider ourselves to be equal, then we should be out there competing and operating with people from different genres, sexes, whatever. It's not just about the feminine energy being exchanged. It's nurturing and rewarding to come in contact with a group of females that have mostly the same ideas, but I don't want to get in with that completely.

I don't know how people perceive me but as long as it's positive it's cool with me. But I don't look at myself as this extra mouthpiece for single Black mothers, all this political shit and all this. My background would really be a surprise if they took a closer look at who I am. You know I came from a really dysfunctional family, first of all, but then all of us are. I was a juvenile delinquent growing up, I mean my life was totally different the way it's portrayed in the interviews and how it actually is.

And I'm not shying away from the responsibility, I'm one of those people who try to represent truth as best as I can and I know that the only way I can do that is to deal with me completely. That's why I'm talking about my past a little, touching on it trying to give people some type of idea of who they invite exactly.

THE RIGHT CLIQUE on responsibility, leadership, God and the market

I feel like I have responsibility to myself, I have responsibility to God because it's really his blessing, I'm just operating under his favor. I'm a Christian, so I feel like I have to acknowledge him in everything and all things. Once I fulfill my obligation to God the next thing is myself because if I'm not taking care of myself then I can't do work which can be utilized properly for anybody else ... there could be a situation where you could be operating with certain people that aren't educated about the basics of life. Like this sister may feel like she has to be scantily clad to gain attention from men and stuff like that. At some point she might want to change her life and it's up to that individual to seek out that help and to research that information.

That's one of the things that I dislike most about the industry or society, that society tends to use people who hold high profile positions - artists, politicians, people like that - as a scapegoat to try and hold us accountable for someone else's actions and mistakes. And I can't call it 'cause I got a lot of issues that I got to deal with myself. So I don't feel like I'm in a position to dictate the direction of somebody else's life. I can only offer you what was offered to me. But it's on you whether you want to receive it or not and some people might not be in a position where they want to receive it or they need to receive it. So it's kind of like a Catch 22. It's like a real thin line between being a so-called example, being a source of inspiration and support for someone, or being a judgmental person and preaching to someone. Especially the younger generation don't want to hear that; you can't sit there and point fingers 'cause everyone got skeletons in their closet and I got to clean the ones in my closet up.

The thing that I love most about hip hop is you can just have idea and the energy to help support and promote that idea and you can make it become a reality. But with the team effort, I guess that's the same thing as you were saying about the female, I'm getting it now. It's just I don't like pigeonholing.

I mean, you can have a whole bunch of support groups, so you know, when you're dealing with some issues where brothers can relate to us in terms of like the video, sometimes it's beautiful but at the same time let it be tasteful, but no one is going to say that but the sister clique. I think that's where the power comes

And dealing with the right clique is not where my experiences have been in the past. People say one thing and then they walk totally different from what they say. So that's the thing that makes me shy away. But getting back to what people say about our collective and stuff, it's like, that 's what we want to do, we want to provide opportunities for up and coming talent. You know, I've always been like, now that's something where I'm probably being a spokesperson, I've sacrificed a lot of my success, my career and my visibility in the mainstream because I believe in homegrown talent, in giving people a fair opportunity because someone gave it to me. And to tell you the truth I like dealing with things from the ground up and help to see it develop.

That's what I'm saying: it's like any collaboration that I've ever in my life done while I've been in the industry is always been through like the border movements, a grassroots person or someone heard my voice or something like this. So I didn't wake up and say I want to be an alternative artist, or I want to be an underground artist, you know what I mean. It's just the way it happened.

edited by Jeremy Glick

I can only offer you what was offered to me

Warrior Work

by Kelly Chase

Yejide. She loves rhyming. Not only because she's damn good at it, but also because it's her birthright, as a woman, as a mother, as a lover, to represent. And she represents, so very lovely, striding any beat with confidence and style. Creatively and musically she's working with new producers: Evil Dee from Black Moon and the Beatminerz, Lil Sci from Scienz of Life, Mike One for Track Team Productions and Abja Kamau for Red I Bluez.

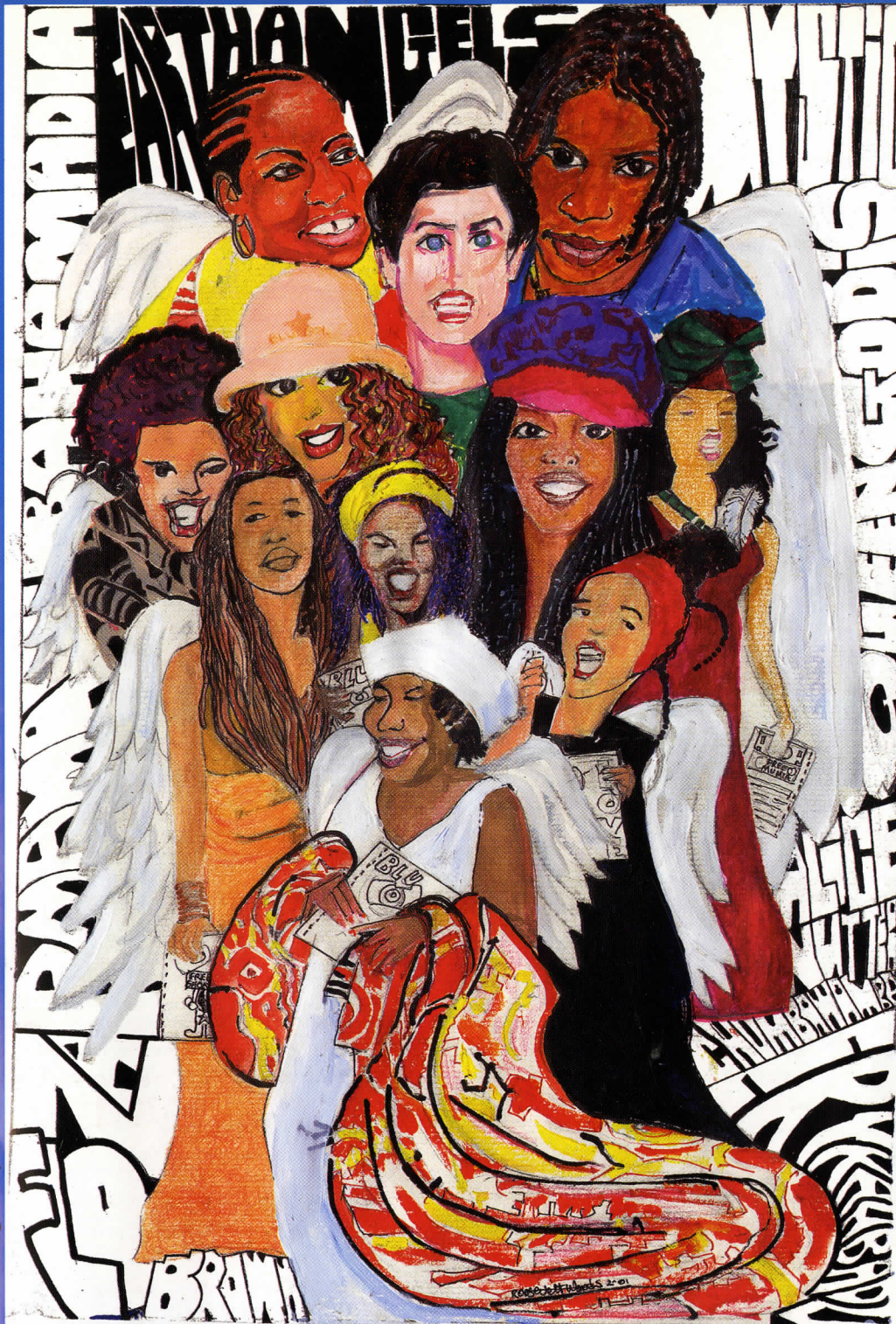
The Night Queen. With her 31st birthday on February 7th, this multi-talented artist (dancer, illustrator, producer, etc.) has been in the music industry for almost twenty years. Her man is treating her right and her two dreadlocked children are growing beautifully. So, why did she want to take on more responsibility by starting the DAWTAHZ (pronounced daughters) showcases? "DAWTAHZ is a declaration of women," she says proud. "My main concern is to have [women] perform and have people enjoy them, and see how much talent they have cause women are really underrated still. You see the stuff that's on the videos. You hear what's on the radio, [they want you to believe] if you not talking about ass and bling! bling!, you're just not all of that, and it's not true." Like WERISE, another collective designed to empower women, DAWTAHZ encourages women "to be independent and to show and prove, whatever heart-felt, art-filled expression they have."

Storm. "I don't have an image to get shattered. I put myself on the table just to set the example, 'cause a sistah shouldn't go through all the drama I went through 'cause it's not necessary, [especially] when you doing right. I don't want anybody putting me in any boxes." It's hard to believe that anyone can do anything to Yejide without her permission, but her desire to remain an artist in control of her destiny is an inspiration to many. But, she doesn't want anyone to put her on a pedestal either. "When I decide to put on my mini-skirts, I don't wanna hear it." Remember all the negative comments shot at Lauryn Hill, when she wore clothing that other folks didn't think was appropriate, for such a

'positive sistah'? "If I'm comfortable with my back out, if I'm comfortable with my belly out, if I'm comfortable with my legs out, then you should accept me as such," Yejide says, the energy of Storm rising, "because the mindstate and everything else that comes with the package didn't change. You're just seeing different sides. People have to know that I have different ways of expression. I don't want to be pigeonholed."

The Mama Wize. When asked if she has any goals for the DAWTAHZ showcases and the compilation album, she replies, "No," pausing to smile, "just for the album to be a success. Sort of the female lyricist's Lounge but not limited to hip hop, and not limited to the US tour, with special male guests and not limited to people who already have fifty records out and are signed to labels — basically, independent artists." There's no doubt Yejide will do everything in her power to make the album a success; the showcases are already a success. But she has no intention of selling her soul for a dollar, and she doesn't want any sistah to have to sell her soul. "I'm not stressing label deals, label money, label rights or label publishing," she says laughing. That's why she does everything she does. To show folks that there's more to being an artist than being signed. Being an artist is about taking care of family, giving back to the community, and keeping your skills tight as you grow; the work of a warrior. "My daughter was born in 88. I graduated highschool two months pregnant and I had no intentions of getting rid of her," Yejide says, "I was determined after I had my daughter that she would never be a statistic, cause as far as anybody else was concerned, I was a statistic." No doubt sister is a warrior and far from being a statistic, her DAWTAHZ showcases and the compilation album will bless us with the talents of many women. No doubt all warriors like Yejide, the Night Queen, also known as Storm, the Mama Wize. All warrior.

Yejide appeared last year on BLU's first women's issue, singing a funky reggae version of "Summertime". You can reach her at 917.720.7028 or via email YTNQ@juno.com.



Earth Angels by Roosevelt Woods mixed media

Some call it feminism. Some call it womanism. Some say it's paying homage to the goddess tradition, while others choose to make spiritual associations between the body and the universe (ie the womb and the moon, etc). Then, there are those who for some reason consider it reverse sexism or "man bashing."

I say, all we are doing is just balancing thangs out! So you can duck if you want to, but the women in this issue are way too busy **just being** who we divinely are to be throwing punches. Although there are definitely some

heavy hitting tracks on BLU 12, the CD is full of beauty, power, affirmations, and healing. And oh yes! we just had to throw in the humor because with all the craziness that folks try to shove at us, sometimes sistas just gotta laugh. We have taken off our shoes and given birth to yet another amazing child called BLU 12, and I enjoyed being one of the midwives for this project. So, give thanks for this new birth, cause that's about as close to the barefoot and pregnant image as you are going to get up in here!

Special thanks to and for Zuleka, Imani, Desiree, Erika, Lola, Buashie, Sarah, Shequila,

and L for their support and existence. To the five generations of women living in my house, thank you for **everything!** (especially for your strength and your voices that you hear on track #18 "Four Generations"). Big ups to Vagina Monologues, Alice Walker, Sojourner Truth, hof women, mothers, daughters, sisters, and all women everywhere who are unafraid to **just be!** love

Queen Godis
music director

p.s. women, please continue to send submissions for the CD so we can stay balanced and so that folks can continue to honor our gifts.

earth angels
the BLU 12 cd



photo by
Matt
Salinas



photo by
Malik



photo by erin



photo by yvonne o etoghene

Clockwise from top left:
Invincible, Mystic,
Jessica Care Moore, Megababe,
Queen Godis



the day the music lived

for the emcees I love

he promised rivers
and offered his tongue as his word
climbed to the top of a small mountain
searching for the lost tribe of givers
this is where they kissed for the last and first time
their liquid moment created the first rhyme

her breath confused time with reality
so she could not survive
on this planet of poets and spell mixers
truth was her nemesis
somewhere between the Torah and Genesis
is her love story

ready to unravel, her bones
shattering, paper as he read to her
pulling letters from the beginning
she fooled him into thinking he was winning
the familiar smell of his skin became her language of memory
she took his eyes into their future and past
occupying the same few seconds of a space
this was the first pull of blues from a bass
& strings & horns would follow
her feet lay dormant over his, and they danced
by standing in place
defined a generation in the curves of their back
bending and folding under the pressure of their existence
she left her sound inside his two palms
facing the heavens

and asked that he chant her name
before the clap
he slowly entered her rhythmic silence
she pressed her image
& vinyl scratches deep into his back
and so began the beat
of the first hip hop track.

— by jessica care moore



brigitte m. moore

The voice framing the CD is that of Brooklyn born activist, artist, writer, social theorist, philosopher, organizer, and entrepreneur Brigitte M. Moore. Excerpts from her poem "Temple" are the first and last sounds you hear; an excerpt from "Marilyn" precedes the Indigo Girls' "Soon be to Nothing".

Moore is the self-educated and self-determined creator-founder of Problackgrrrl-Feminism (the new and holistic feminist philosophy) and several Problackgrrrl-Feminist factions including Black Grrrl Revolution, Inc. The Problackgrrrl Movement for Universal Freedom and Moore Awareness, Inc. Problackgrrrl Music, Film, & Literature. Since 1990, Moore has pioneered a decade-plus long career advocating for the specific rights of Black Grrrls and Womyn.

Founded by Moore in 1998 and based in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, NY, Black Grrrl Revolution, Inc. (www.blackgrrrlrevolution.org) is a not-for-profit Problackgrrrl-Feminist organization that

empowers and advocates for the specific rights of Black Grrrls and Womyn and counters patriarchy and misogyny within inner-city Black communities by way of street and community based direct action, programs and services. Black Grrrl Revolution, Inc. is a year 2001 recipient of a Third Wave Foundation Grant and the year 2000 recipient of The Audre Lorde Legacy Award.

Brigitte M. Moore is also the founding artist and owner of Moore Awareness, Inc. Problackgrrrl Music, Film, & Literature Since 1990 (www.mooreawareness.com), a Problackgrrrl-Feminist indie web-based multimedia label that produces Moore's independent works including her 1997 full-length recording *Birthing My Own Affirmation* and her forthcoming career memoir *Problackgrrrl-Feminism & The Building of A Black Grrrl Revolution*.

Brigitte M. Moore's writing has been featured in The Third Wave Foundation Newsletter, Ms. magazine, and The Rain &



Thunder Radical Feminist Journal. Look out for Moore who has been profiled in numerous publications including NYLON Magazine, The Village Voice, City on A Hill Press (UC Santa Cruz) when she is featured in the spring edition of Curve magazine.

kayo the lion "tribute to BLU women"

Brooklyn-born Kraal "Kayo" Charles is a twenty-five year old man who has been writing his truth in the form of poetry for the last twelve years. In 1998 he made public his talent for words and in doing so became, at the age of twenty-two, the youngest slammer to hold the title of Nuyorican Grand Slam Champion.

Author of the book/CD *Bridges to Build, Rivers to Cross, Mountains to Move*, Kayo continues to wow audiences all over the country with the depths of his baritone voice and his even deeper words. Hear his humble tribute to women on BLU 12 - just something he whipped up on the spot while hanging out one night. To experience more of his work, or

simply support this artist, contact him at PAGA Communications Inc • 6 Woodend Road • Valley Stream NY 11581 • 516.792.9538 • pagacom@aol.com • www.pagacom.com

~queen godis

* **bahamadia** "beautiful things" feat. Dwele see page 44
beautiful things appeared on the BB Queen EP, Goodvibe Recordings 2000



iNDiGO GiRLS

interview by Alison Kelley

I've had affection for

the Indigo Girls ever since a spring afternoon driving home from highschool with a car full of friends singing along to "Galileo". Combine a story about selfless heroics on behalf of truth and the question "how long til my soul gets it right?", and if you're seventeen, life can be as simple and shattering as that. A couple years older and less susceptible to cataclysmic emotions, I can still listen to *1200 Curfew* (the two-CD live album that combines some of the Indigo Girls' signature original songs with inspired covers of muses like Bob Dylan, Neil Young, and Gladys Knight) and evoke the mood of that drive: a sort of innocence, a sort of nostalgia, and great sing-along hooks.

Amy Ray and Emily Saliers are critically (and commercially) successful folk rockers; they were signed by Epic Records in 1988, won a Grammy, and have released numerous albums, two of which are certified platinum. But like they say, "Rock is cool but the struggle is better..." and the Indigo Girls have toured extensively to raise consciousness on issues like Native American and environmental rights prove, most recently on the Honor The Earth tour with Winona LaDuke last fall (see www.honorearth.org). As individuals, both Indigo Girls have established community oriented businesses: Amy Ray's label Daemon Records was established in 1990 to support other independent artists, and Emily is co-owner of Watershed, a restaurant in their native Atlanta that's big on spirit, organic food, and a family vibe. Amy Ray is also about to release her solo album *Stag*, so my first question to Emily was, what's that like?

It's an album of songs she's written and recorded with different friends of hers like The Butchies and 1945. It's a great record. It's sort of punky, raw, edgy and emotionally right up front, as you would expect from Amy.

It's an emotional journey, you find yourself relating to one song and then jumping to another. They are all good and even though she recorded with a lot of different musicians and different people are singing on it, it has a cohesiveness that holds the whole record together.

One of my favorite songs that you guys cover is Buffy St Marie's "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" which is about the tragedy that occurred when people like Leonard Peltier dared to "stand between the reservation and the corporate bank". I know the Indigo Girls have been extensively involved in environmental and antinuclear issues with Native American groups and I was wondering why you think that's an important issue to campaign on.

Well, we've been doing environmental work for a long time and we met up with Winona LaDuke at an Earth Day show back in the early 90s. Then it just became apparent you could not do environmental work without considering what was going on in the Native American Country because so many of those small community groups are fighting corporate encroachment, mining companies, deforestation or desecration of their sacred sites and they face nuclear waste dumping on their reservations.

And now more than ever we need to be standing in solidarity with people who are doing environmental work because the new administration is a real threat to all that's been accomplished. It concerns all of us, not just Native Americans.

I think a lot of people in this country prefer to ignore what we've done to our own people and to focus on groups that are farther away, more removed.

Yeah, I think there's a real guilt - an American guilt. Politicians tell us we're leaders of the free world, compassionate, protectors of human rights, etc. But America also has this history of oppressing, enslaving and killing people, so I think a lot of people feel guilty. A lot of stuff also goes on without people knowing. We're working on this Mobile Chernobyl bill which is a nuclear waste policy act and if it had passed quietly through the house and the senate they would have been shipping thousands of shipments of this high level toxic waste on trains and trucks and within half a mile of where fifty million Americans live and nobody knew about it. It could have just been passed and those are the kind of things that we try to find out about, educate ourselves first and then spread the word through community activism and through music.

Are there any reflections you could give from the Honor the Earth tour last fall? I was reading up on it and it seems like women were in the forefront of a lot of the organizing.

Yup, women do a lot of the organizing. Winona LaDuke sort of spearheaded this whole Honor the Earth thing with us. She's a mentor to us, a great leader, and very smart. You know, we've been in communities on the last tour such as Akwesasne near the St. Lawrence River where PCB contamination was a factor on their land and people were getting sick. We met a woman there, a midwife, who with other community women took on the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] and General Motors, having to become scientific experts and activists in order to protect their land and the future of their children. So yeah, it's a lot of women, grandmothers, mothers, nurturers and protectors of the earth.

I understand you and three other women co-own a restaurant, Watershed - what kind of venture is that?

It started out more like a café/wine bar/gift shop and we had retail wine sales. Basically we just wanted a community based type restaurant/café type place where people could come in and chill out and have a very good meal and it turns out we've become much more of a restaurant.

We use local growers and organic vegetables a lot - it harkens back to that day when you don't get strawberry shortcake in the winter because strawberries aren't in season. You have to wait for it to come back. We just have an excellent chef and really good team and now we're really a full-blown restaurant.

We're just sort of, as they say, a mom and pop organization. There are a lot of restaurants that come into town with huge budgets behind them, or they're owned by corporations or whatever it is, and we're just sort of like just a few women who got together and wanted to start a business. We're proud of it, it's a really good restaurant, the food has a lot of integrity and I really think it's a great place.

I was the financial backer for the most part and I feel very privileged to have been able to contribute in that way. A lot of women struggle financially; it's hard to get loans. I never take it for granted that we got a foot up. But even so, it's a hard business to run, it's not easy to succeed in the restaurant business. Our hearts are really in the right place in that restaurant so I think that's why we are doing ok.

Anything else?

Power to all the people! Alright.

daemon
records



Amy Ray puts her money where her mouth is.

After experiencing success as one half of the folk-rock duo, Indigo Girls, whose their self-titled 1989 album on Epic records sold more than 500,000 albums and won a Grammy, she sought ways to give back. While reaping the fiscal benefits of being a star in the popular music industry, she found herself dissatisfied with the environment. "Music was getting lost among the checkbooks, executives, and mountains of paperwork," she says. So in 1990, Ray formed a label, Daemon Records, in her hometown of Decatur, Georgia, just a few miles east of Atlanta, that was committed to, "allow[ing] recording artists to express their artistic vision without the confines of and restrictions of the traditional corporate...label."

Daemon's first signing was an Atlanta punk band named the Ellen James Society. The group's debut, *Reluctantly We*, proved to be a successful launch and is still one of the label's best-selling albums. Ray wanted to ensure that Daemon didn't fall into the trap of becoming a "niche-driven label" like so many other independents and she actively sought out diverse acts. "While a clearly defined 'sound' enables a record label to attract a strong and specific fan base, it doesn't provide its listeners with an opportunity to broaden their musical horizons," she says. In addition to Ellen James Society, an assorted group of trip-hop, hip-hop, acid-jazz, garage pop, folk, and country acts, including the genre-bending pH Balance and Rock*A*Teens, have been signed to the label.

At its core, Daemon is a not-for-profit entity. Any profits that are made get funneled into the next project or go to a charitable cause. The label has released two benefit albums, a recasting of Jesus Christ Superstar featuring over one hundred Atlanta artists that raised over \$60,000 for organizations working to end handgun violence, and *Honor* which included luminaries like Bonnie Raitt and earned over \$40,000 to assist Native American groups combating environmental destruction. Daemon also sponsors an on-going series of all-ages shows throughout Atlanta, featuring its own artists and other local acts. These monthly shows cost \$1, and while they "willingly lose money," they are providing a welcome outlet for fans and musicians.

With over forty releases in its eleven-year history, Daemon is enduring in an industry wrought with fleeting celebrities, audiences, and notions of what is hip. A strong sense of community, political activism, and making music for the sake of art have enabled the label to grow, meanwhile attracting a loyal following of supporters, artists, and fans.

by Maori Karmael Holmes

shoshana levi "elements"

Shoshana Levi is a truth addict who refuses to act in any other manner and is a staunch believer in the powers of coalition and cultures of resistance. She digs painfully deep at times with a respect for the universal inner quest connected to the collective quest for freedom. Shoshana creates music with its own unique atmosphere and presence. Skilled as a guitarist, sitarist, and vocalist, she draws from her eclectic musical upbringing to create music that incorporates elements of spoken word, rhyming, folk, and rock music.

Currently, Shoshana is in Los Angeles studying sitar with Ustad Shujaat Hussein Khan

and writing new music. She is also doing research regarding the role of women in hip hop culture as healers, harkening back to root mother traditions in a powerful maternal continuum.

Shoshana thanks her sisters Yejide the Night Queen, Queen Godis, and Queen Michelle Rhone-Collins for whom "Elements" is inspired and is dedicated to their tireless efforts for future generations. She also thanks Baba who co-produced this track.

Shoshana can be reached at shoshvogel@hotmail.com

*busi mhlango "Oxamu" ibomvu dance remix see page 53

oxamu remix appears on Urban Zulu - The Remixes, M.E.L.T. 2000

black surreal "come on girl"

"Platform for Resistance ... no explanations or apologies." This theme is prevalent in Yetunde's life and music. She is the womban aspect of a hip hop culture duo called Black Surreal. The underground MCs that pride themselves on being hardworkin, innovative, and dope. Their musical production is ignited through "Free Clinic" (Jihad holding it down). Black Surreal can be heard on the A.W.O.L.

compilation which also features dead prez and Spearhead, and their latest collaboration *Inneractive* is due out late spring 2001. Yetunde and N. Hemisphere plug shows in Brew City and Chi. Goddess Innerworks is Yetunde's platform for managing, editing video, promoting, and building. Hit her up at Anikayeye@aol.com if you want to trail blaze through the midwest.



*flo brown "dust daughter" see page 62

The organic soul sound of "Vibacious" reflects the combined talents of the two versatile artists, Monet and Da Wiz.

New York born and bred, Monet is a classically trained flautist and seasoned actress but most recently her artistic expressions have been exploring different avenues, a trend indicated by the type of artists - guitar virtuoso Vernon Reid, Afro-beat sensation Antibalas, Les Nubians, The Jigmastas and Greg Tate's Burnt Sugar - that she's been sharing stages with.

Monet has also been busy in the studio. She just released "Bahia Blues", a collaboration with DJ Spinna for the *Trip Do Brasil* compilation for Rythmix Records/SONY France. Monet has also

monet
"vibacious"

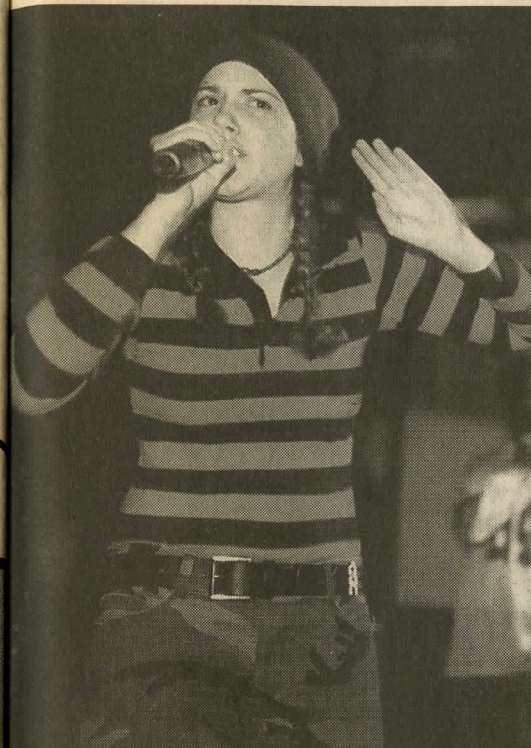
appeared on DJ Spinna remixes of UK hip-hop artist Phoebe ONE and French dance artist Kojak, and has three songs on the *Lost Found Soul* project released in Japan. She also recently completed "Episode" in collaboration with DJ Dove, which is her contribution to the *Soulful House* project to be released on Beechwood (UK)

Monet also has worked on two upcoming films *Kali Vibe* and *Justin Brown*, both scheduled for release in 2001. These projects have inspired Monet as she completes her own solo debut, which she describes as organic soul with funk, hip-hop, jazz and folk flavors.

Gil "Da Wiz" Small is a versatile musician/producer/artist/songwriter/remixers who is able to move effortlessly from classic soul, modern r&b, hip hop, jazz to pop and rock. Da Wiz honed his skills at Berklee College of Music in Boston. Blessed with the gift of perfect pitch and proficient on keyboards, drums, and French horn, Da Wiz is able to write, hear and produce music from various perspectives. Da Wiz has worked with and produced artist as diverse as Cassandra Wilson, Killah Priest, Michael Speaks, GZA, and Terror Squad, and keyboardist Rodney Kendricks. What he's passionate about, however, is a very special rhythm, inspirational project with his wife Robin. He's also slated to start collaborating with one of his favorite singers, the vastly underrated but very special Glen Jones.

*mystic "the life" see page 60

the life will appear on Cuts For Luck and Scars for Freedom, to be released late spring 2001 by Goodvibe Recordings



invincible "perfectionists"

Nowadays just about anybody can rap. In the wake of multi-syllable gurus like Wordsworth and Eminem, it seems just about anyone can piece together a halfway decent rhyme. But, as always, it is still the MCing and solid song writing that are in short supply. Thankfully for hip hop heads from coast to coast, twenty-year-old Ann Arbor native Invincible has both talents in abundance. Replete with wordplay worthy of Pharoahe Monch and didactic lyricism that rival's Posdnous, Invincible's stunning rhyme style evokes memories of the great MCs. She's been putting it down on mixtapes and ripping open mics from Ann Arbor to Brooklyn, where she currently resides, for years. But Invincible's wax debut came - appropriately enough, considering her strong political convictions - on Rawkus' non-profit 12" "Hip Hop For

Respect". In addition, Invincible contributed lyrics to the rhymed sketches on MTV's *Lyricist Lounge*. Though she is still honing her craft, Invincible is just now putting the finishing touches on her first solo 12". Produced by Supa Dav West of De La Soul fame, "Perfectionists" b/w "Anti-skeptic" lay the foundation for her budding career. "Perfectionists" features Helixx of the Anomalies crew, an all women hip hop collective of which Invincible is a core member. Other members of the crew include Kuttin Kandi, Pri the Honey Dark, Big Tara, and many other talented and dedicated women. Delicately balancing witty punchlines with thoughtful content, Invincible stands poised as one of the most exciting new MCs on the scene. "The Invincible, untouchable..."

*zap mama "m'toto" see page 58

m'toto appears on A Ma Zone, Luakabop 1999

*indigo girls "soon be to nothing" see page 46

soon be to nothing appears on Come On Now Social, Epic 1999

*chumbawamba "enough is enough" see page 54

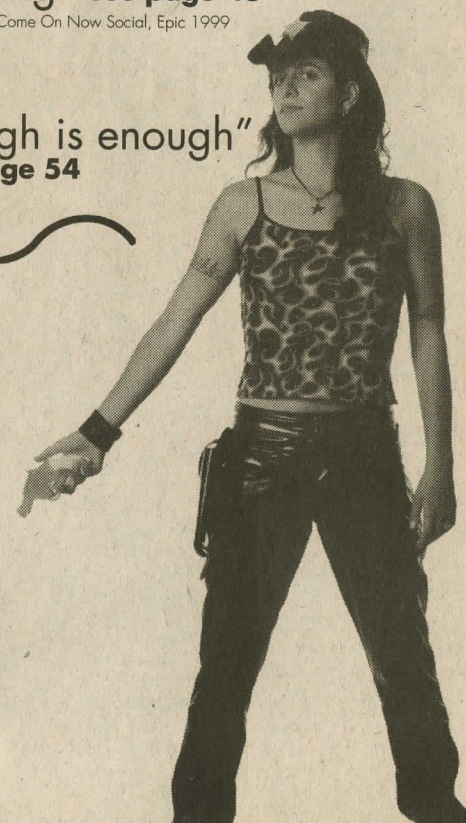
enough is enough appears on Anarchy, EMI 1998

megababe "trailer park"

Megababe, originally of Seattle, has now established itself in NYC and is spreading fear, wonder, and amusement all over the East Coast. Megababe has been touring as a band for two years; the band consists of Angie Hussy drums, Diane on bass, Adrienne Shredder on lead guitar, Viva on guitar and Lola Rock N' Rolla on sax, vox, and wiggling. All this with the additional pleasure of a horn section, DJ, and squaking backup divas Jackie Hall, Davita, and Sharon Needles.

Megababe has opened for Marilyn Manson, Joan Jett, The Accused, Tribe 8, Lydia Lunch, The Presidents of the USA and a million people you have never heard of. Check for Lola on HBO's *Vagina Monologues* in Feb 2002.

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four generations

JUCA "100 million souls"

JUCA means Joy, Understanding, Creativity, and Abundance. It's reggae for the new millennium from a three woman ensemble that focuses on traditional African influences including rock, gospel, folk, and jazz. "We bring voice to the African-American woman's experience pulling from all our roots throughout the African Diaspora."

The members of JUCA all have many years of musical experience and performance behind them, making their music confident and rewarding. Judith Casselberry has been performing as a guitarist and vocalist for over twenty-five years, including as a vocalist as part of the renowned duo Casselberry-DuPreé from 1979-1995. She has performed throughout the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe, and Northern Africa, performing as a solo-vocalist/guitarist with Nona Hendryx, Laurie Anderson, Lillian Allen, and Linda Tillery and is a current member of Toshi Reagon and Big Lovely. Debra Kenya McGee is a teacher and scholar of African drumming, percussion and dance who has taught and/or performed the music of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Zaire, the West Indies, and African American Gospel. Vocalist Lovejoy has been performing for twenty-two years.

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photo by oberon blackwell



bonus track queen godis "yo mama"

Born and raised in Brooklyn, Queen Godis began performing at the age of seven with family members and friends. In addition to being the music director of BLU, she is a multi-talented performance artist who fuses hip hop, song, dance, and lyrical prowess with a dynamic socio-political consciousness.

The track "Yo Mama" is especially dedicated to little girls who have grown up not believing that they are "just right" despite the world's warped standards. The music for this track was produced by DJ Flav of the Woodsmen (kvisionb@mindspring.com).

Amidst completing her undergraduate studies, Godis continues to travel offering spoken word workshops and performances both on her own and with other world renowned performance artists. To bring her to a stage near you email her at queengodis@hotmail.com.

From everyone else here at BLU, a big thank you and much love for the continued work and commitment.

photo by erin doty

busi mhlongo

by Niren Tolsi



I couldn't help it. Despite having the rhythm of George Dubya Bush on morphine I was seduced by the music and actually moving a few body parts. We'd talked about the energy and spirit which envelops her on stage, which wafts its way across the crowd like a trail of Durban Poison and strikes stronger than a hit from the bong, but this personal performance was ethereal. All I dared do was bop along and smile inanely for fear that it would blow out the window and be lost among the sweaty sounds of Durban returning home from work.

I was sitting in Busi Mhlongo's apartment in Durban and she'd just put on some of the new stuff she was working on. She was moving about singing a word here or there, pointing out the deep bass riddims of Brice Wassey, the magnificent scales of Mali's Oumou Sangare and giving me a personal performance which had long since jumped into the abyss of raw, African celebration.

If Miriam Makeba is Mama Afrika, the grand old dame of South African music, then Busi is her hipper, more adventurous sister. The one who goes out to buy a packet of smokes and returns seven years later riding a camel and playing the sitar.

Leaving her family behind she did Europe's club and casino circuit in the sixties and seventies, returning in the eighties when the police state was at its height and the townships were bathed in the fire and brimstone of revolution.

"It was really bad. I'd been away for so long, completely forgetting, just enjoying my whole experience. It was really heavy, oh yo yo yo! When I'd left yeah, there was fighting but not like when I came back. It was war you know," she said, recounting the days following her return to Inanda, north of Durban.

"You see people you love and in a few days they are all bloody and dead. I really went crazy and then you see the children exposed to that, that's their life. Hai, it was like they didn't feel it and because I had been away it seemed like nobody seemed to see it the way I did."

But apartheid was not the only thing that scarred Busi. She has the aura of someone

spiritually wise and beautiful, someone whose life has known great joy and great sorrow and who embraces both equally. Her husband Early Mabuse, Dollar Brand's drummer, died a few months after she left South Africa for the first time and because of meat-market-like contractual obligations she was unable to return for his funeral.

Speaking about that dreadful phone-call, her eyes narrow, the pain is still obvious. "Oh, I was so young, at first I couldn't believe it. When I truly realized I freaked, I really freaked, I even wanted to..." (she motions slicing her wrists quickly and throws her arms in the air.)

Her relationship with her daughter, Nompumelelo, who was three when she left for Europe, also seems to have played a huge part in who she is. Later when Busi's nephew and two friends – all with adoring eyes – joined us for a chat and a listen to some music she touches on it briefly: "I see other mothers with their children and I know I haven't done even ten percent of what they do, but I hope I made up for it in my music and my daughter forgives me."

"Sometimes I made really horrible choices, some say I shouldn't have left, but its okay I've got my music."

Aah, her music. Her first album *Babhenu* was a reflection of her travels and a basic mix of marabi, Mbaqanga and maskanda, also teeming with jazz, R&B and funk. Her second, *Urban Zulu* remains one of the most beautiful records to come out of South Africa and won her three South African Music Awards. Her voice moves from the sunset roar of a lion to the sweet whisper of your lover, from the noises on the bustling streets of Azania to the rural innocence of KwaZulu-Natal.

So what does she sing about? "Just the problems in the country," she laughs. "Na, na, that's not true. It's still the beauty of the country and I think South Africans are the most beautiful people, they still smile in the streets and greet you."

And while Busi sings about the beauty, she also chants down the injustices. Our conversation is littered with "the problems of South Africa" from the slave-trade that is the South African music industry where greats die paupers' death to her good friend, the People's Poet Mzwake Mbali, who is currently in prison for a crime that many believe he didn't commit. From the understanding explanation the dehumanising effect that apartheid had on the Black man, and its consequent waves through society to love of a man and women, Busi is an Urban Zulu ... a warrior.

photo by rashid lombard



alice nutter of chumbawamba



photo by Ian Clifford

Always controversial and often hilarious, Chumbawamba has been on the British music scene for the last two decades. From their early days of communal living and involvement in the Miners' Strike of 84-85, through the harsh Thatcher years and the barrage of bad press, they surfaced in the nineties wiser but unrepentant. An unlikely band who spent more time shoplifting than jamming, they somehow managed to scrape a living from making radical music in a conservative culture.

A nightmare for the music industry, they encouraged fans to steal their records from the shelves. With an uncanny knack of upsetting people and shooting themselves in the foot they surprised themselves and the rest of the world by selling five million copies of their album Tubthumper in America and ensured they'd never be invited to another award ceremony again by dousing the deputy prime minister with a bucket of ice water at The Brit Awards in 1998. Theirs is an ongoing punk rock saga in an age of manufactured bands. Vocalist Alice Nutter communicated some of Chumbawamba's devil may care attitude when she talked to Jason Landsel.

What do the people in Chumbawamba have in common outside of the music?

We're a group of friends. We had a strong work ethic, not in the sense of wanting to go out and get a job done but in wanting to create things together. We squatted [occupied a house extra-legally] together for over a decade and became a music group by accident. And because we didn't want to label everything and have everything separate, living together just seemed sensible. We even extended that to money. People think that money would be the biggest problem, money is never the biggest problem. Obviously the biggest problem is lust and things like that. We'd never argue about cash, we're more human than that.

So what's the best way to cultivate the spirit of constructive creativity and community?

Oh fucking hell.

You've got to get rid of capitalism. We've got to find work that is socially fulfilling and creatively enjoyable even though we're producing complete shit. You know, most people's jobs are pushing bits of paper around these days, especially here in Britain where it's all "call centres" these days. A lot of work is service industry - it's not like we're producing things. I'm not an old style socialist, but I think we've got a weird state of affairs where it's impossible to be creative or develop things when you are so shattered just from trying to survive.

If capitalism has conquered the world how do we get it back?

It's a fucking slow process! But it is possible for us to win because we're constantly winning, it's just never acknowledged. We wouldn't have a welfare state system if people hadn't fought for it. We wouldn't have fucking anything if people hadn't fought for it. I don't believe in this horrible thing that goes round that human nature is basically bad and that we're born self-willed and that we'll fuck up what ever we do. If we encourage the best in each other the best comes out. But capitalism promotes the idea that some people have to earn much less than others in order to have profit. We have to challenge the idea that it's alright to put profit before people.

So what does it mean to be truly human?

It's being able to love people and be loved. If you look at a lot of the fuck-ups, you can actually tell that they stopped being able to love people and were not loved in return. There are a lot of unhappy people in the world and a lot of alienation. Capitalism is not kind. In countries where they can get away with treating people like shit, they do.

Describe anarchism.

I think it's that freeing of the heart or mind. I don't see anarchism as that idea of, "anybody can do whatever they want." That's a right wing idea, letting everybody fend for themselves. To me, anarchism is just taking your own responsibility and also allowing yourself to be creative. I probably am an anarchist. There's a bit of communist in me but at the moment I don't actually care what I am. The label isn't all that important. What is important is how I behave to other people.

In regards to religion you've said that "religion is a socially acceptable version of heroin and a prop that fucks people up and over." Explain.

People wear spirituality like a badge: "Look how clever I am, I'm a bit further up the evolutionary scale than you are." I don't understand what it is when people say they are spiritual. I have a problem with people who wander around professing spirituality because I don't know why they do it. I have a problem with Christianity. I used to go to church but I managed to chuck it over before it seriously fucked me up.

Did becoming a mother change your perspective on life?

Before my daughter was born I never thought, "Oh I can't die." Once she was born I was thinking, Now I can't die because I've got to look after her. So whatever happens I can't die which is a bit of a tall order because I am going to die whether I like it or not. I thought it might be difficult having a kid because it would be a real struggle to put somebody before my own wants. But I find I am really looking after her and I'm managing to work, and her dad looks after her. I thought I might resent it that I wouldn't be able to do all the things

I've done before, but what I feel good about is that I don't resent her at all. I just love having her around.

Her dad's great with her. She's got two parents who really love her, and I don't have to do it on my own.

Honestly I don't know how single moms cope. They must be absolutely exhausted the whole time, because I'm exhausted now and there's two of us.

So what place does man have in the family?

Just be around to love the child. Everything that we do is negotiated because I don't think what I do is more important and vice versa. I grew up hating my dad. I had a shitty childhood and I want her to have a better childhood and I don't think it matters whether

or not kids have a dad around. I think that what matters is that kids have people that love them. And if that's just going to be a mum, then fair enough and if it's a dad and no mum, fair enough. I don't like that idea of staying together for kids. That the child experiences love is what is important. We don't live in the world where, like Tony Blair talks about, "children need a man" because children don't only need "a man". They need love.

It's a well known fact that many kids often rebel against their parents. So you think she's going to become a police officer? What would you say if she grew up to be a right-wing Bible thumper? I'd be shocked. I'd be really, really shocked. What could I do? I can't imagine her being such a horrible person. Even as a baby she's got a nice nature, so I just can't imagine her being a right-wing Bible thumper. You'd have to be pretty evil.

As your daughter grows up how do you see yourself preventing her from becoming addicted to things like McDonalds, Manchester United and all the wonders of our materialistic society?

Fuckin' hell what a nightmare! I can't imagine her coming out one day from McDonalds with a Man United scarf on! I guess I'll just have to explain that there's a few evil things in the world, Capitalism, Man United, the police force, the army ... you just have to give it to them, don't you!

www.chumba.com

If you look at a lot of the fuck-ups, you can actually tell that they stopped being able to love people and were not loved in return.



zap

mama

interview by Buashie Amatokwu

Everyone always says, **"Wow! She invents things! She is very powerful!"**

But it is not I.
It is Africa.

You might be forgiven for thinking that Marie Daulne, architect of the four fantastically imaginative albums that have been released by Zap Mama, the Afro-Belgian group that has won popular and critical renown, is a potent inventor.

In fact, Marie Daulne is the essence of Zap Mama, and elements of her life history are mirrored in the brilliant complexity of Zap Mama's music. The child of a Bantu mother and a Belgian father, she was born in the jungle in Zaire where her mother had fled revolutionary violence to live with the Pygmies. She returned later to spend time with the Pygmies, an experience that was incorpo-

rated into Zap Mama sound and philosophy. The Mama's first album, *Adventures in Afropea*, explores the connections between Pygmy vocal styles and European choral traditions, but at the same time is conscious of the tension between African and European cultures. "In my teens I rebelled a lot about how the Europeans viewed the Africans because of how the colonies spread horrible things about Africa in their books. I grew up in Europe and I said I think I can fight to prove the opposite, only we have found that it is

through music. When I went back, I stayed with the Pygmies and everything came easily and I created Zap Mama.

"I called it Zap Mama because everybody comes through Mama and there is Mama Earth. I brought all these sounds, no instruments because I wanted to prove that we don't need materials to be. This is why I created a band with only five girls' voices, African be-bops."

In subsequent albums the Zap Mama's sound has changed dramatically as sounds and styles from cultures around the world which Marie Daulne had visited are incorporated into the audio collage. *Seven* reflects her experiences in Mali, where she encountered the knowledge that

Zap Mama is a woman band and men follow us.
But we don't have to push up our breasts for men –
the breast is there to feed babies!

human beings have seven senses, rather than just the five of western description. The sixth sense is emotions and the seventh sense, which not everybody has, is the power to heal others. It is the power to heal with music, calm with color, to soothe the sick with harmony. The album title pays homage to this gift and to Marie's African heritage.

The Zap Mama phenomenon is of course irresistible for people who like their culture easily digestible, the readers of coffee-table books that exoticize "primitive" cultures and then reduce them to a one-size-fits-all definition. "I have to fight against that, because Zap Mama was categorized as 'world music' in the beginning. 'African Art' is a block: there is no person, no individualization. African art ... boom. Everything is together.

"I hate those words because of the way Africa is always one block, and in reality there are lot of sophisticated philosophies and colors. [With Zap Mama] I just translated what has happened for years in the oppressed culture that wasn't allowed to spread. You find it when you go around Africa. We want to save some of these philosophies through music before it disappears. People have always represented African art as if there were no sophistication. My music exists to bring all the sophisticated sounds from parts of Africa that nobody knows and put it in an urban world."

Zap Mama was squarely on the map after collaborating with the Roots on their most

recent release *A Ma Zone*. As Marie said, "the urban world opened its doors and said, 'Ah yes, it is possible it is not 'African Art'."

An unavoidable part of the urban world is misogyny, a fact which Marie acknowledges. "Zap Mama is a woman band and men follow us. But we don't have to push up our breasts for men – the breast is there to feed babies! That is the education I received from my mother.

"The African community has a lot of dignity and I bring that with me. Many women forget what dignity is, they forgot where they came from." Marie believes that a lot of misogyny comes from men feeling insecure about women: "They are so impressed by the power of women to be a woman, to give birth, to be so sophisticated and simple!"

Characteristically, Marie draws on her experiences in Africa when she talks about her approach to this situation. "The Pygmies said to me, 'Spread our sounds, and say that they come from us, and they will say, 'Ah, they are sophisticated, why do we treat those people like that if they have a culture? Maybe they have the things to help the pain and problems of the urban world.'"

Pain and problems are not a remote footnote on Marie's agenda. When asked about how legacies of freedom fighters like Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela have affected her life, she answered, "That is one of the

many reasons I became a musician. I heard stories of these leaders, and I said, 'How can I fight?' In the beginning I wanted to fight with violence but it wasn't effective. I read books about people that fight and why they do fight. And I figured the best way was to build something positive people can receive easier.

"It's like I put a grain in my hand and tighten it, my sweat is going to feed the grain and it will blossom. This is how I see music. Music is the best way to carry this grain. An old man told me, 'It is best through music.'

Zap Mama's music is magic on stage. They incorporate costumes, theme performing, singing, be-bopping, drumming, dancing, rapping, and social commentary in their show. We hear and read about artists bragging about what they invented and how it was hard for them, and I guess it's easy to take all the credit when you are slave trading with an industry where stealing and "borrowing" is like taking that next do-doo. But doing that means forgetting that the people who made you up will also bring you down.

Zap Mama does it all, but at the end gives the credit to the community that nourished them. Marie acknowledges that, "Zap Mama is powerful because of the oral tradition. My Mama received it from her mother and father, I received it from her, and I pass it on to my daughter."



chopping it up with mystic

interview by
Irene Faye



photo by Tajia Tiello

She dwells in the heart. The heart of Oakland. She lives smack dab at the crossroad, at the fork between two main streets. One is the threshold directly entering the city and the other one leads you straight to the exit. And when she opens her front door, she stares at her city, straight into its sleepy Eyes. She put a couch on her balcony to watch it for days. To face it, it's ugliness and it's beauty. And every time she opens that door she thinks, "There's a lot of work to be done." Her bird Milagros (miracle), sings behind her.

What childhood elements helped create the world and music of 'Mystic'?

My mother is a strong beautiful woman, a free spirit, she liked to roam so we traveled a lot. I was born on a hippie commune. We lived in Mexico, Hawai'i, Oregon, so many places.

I grew up at UC Santa Cruz, where my mom was going to school and she was really into culture and politics. The students and the other teachers had me paying attention to the world at a young age. My mom wasn't around much, but she always encouraged and supported me in expressing myself as an artist, as a human being period.

I started writing poetry when I was five. And I am me because I listened to her. And I rebelled from her, too. We lived around the ghettos, never directly in the ill ILL ghettos but I would always be up in there. My mom would trip, she'd worry, but I would be out there because I wanted to be around it, help take care of things. I started working in and for the community in non-profits in my early teens and I did it for years.

And where did hip-hop come in?

Hip hop was growing up. It was growing up along side of me. It was all over.

It was also nothing, not like it is today, it wasn't yet such a defined culture, a mindset. It was something we did on a daily. Lunchtime meant breaking out the linoleum and at night we would bomb the city.

Do you see today's attempts to appropriate and intellectualize hip hop as problematic?

No. But what I think is important is understanding where it came from. Hip hop derived from depressed inner city communities. It has become the voice of the oppressed people, that energy released. Now it's all over — the movies, TV, clothing — which is not necessarily a bad thing.

But it's like, you know five/six years ago with the whole "keep it real" campaign? Well, people are just buying "real" now, buying it at the store, wherever "real" is selling at. It's not fair to its roots when people are passing through because it's a trend, when people are dying because of it.

When you're an MC, it's not just like you'll die for what you say or how you say it, you can die because you do it. If my son or daughter, came up to me and told me that they want to be an MC, I would warn them of that, then give them some books, have them read up on it. My mom was actually cutting up articles on it and giving it to me to read while I was getting into it, too.

Who is the community you address, the community you represent? In addition to representing Oak-town to the fullest and all...

I am just speaking to the World, the children, the parents raising them children, everyday people living in these impoverished areas. We take this pain, and find peace, find our strength and maintain that drive to succeed together.

Hip hop is not a community. Hip hop is a vehicle for us to connect with community, like Woodstock was a vehicle that connected communities. Building a community has to extend outward from self. Music has to extend outward from self. Music won't build a community nor will music destroy a community. Music can create a controlled environment, not a community.

Where do you stand when it comes down to women and hip hop, this steady movement of hip hop/feminism?

I want to talk to people on a deeper level. I don't consider myself as a righteous poster child of the revolution. Culture and politics, to me, are the same thing. If you were born a "person of color", you were born political. We must deal with our pain.

And as far as the women and hip hop — I approach this movement as something not needing to be done only by women, for women. I am working for the balance, that yin and yang of men and women alike. I want one day for all of us to represent together and rock it on one stage. I am working for us to understand, appreciate, respect each other all the same.

Your album is droppin in spring. Where does the title *Cuts for Luck and Scars for Freedom* come from?

I have been using that phrase in my rhymes for four years now. Overtime, it developed into my philosophy we all go through experiences that cut us, where we break down but we heal and it's alright. But there are other experiences that we go through that cut us and we're scarred for life. They dictate whether we're able to love or be loved, whether we're parents to our children, whether we choose to live legally or illegally.

What do you want people to know about the album before they experience it?

That it's different. The first song I knew that I was going to do for my album confronts the truth about my feelings on the death of my father. All the tracks are honest and personal. They really make me feel vulnerable. When I'm performing these, there's a relationship going on with me and the audience. Like you and me right now I am here, you are here, let's seriously build. If you don't want to listen and you just want to jump and bounce, raise your hands in the air, then go see someone else. This is personal.

You really insist on putting yourself out there, sis.

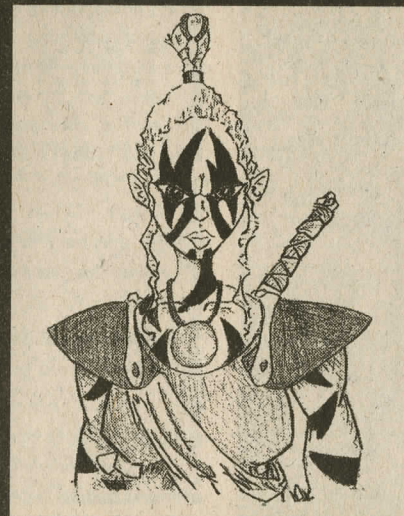
I don't know if there's any other way to do this. We were always supposed to do just that, right? Speak the truth...

Mystic's album Cuts for Luck and Scars for Freedom will be available in early May from Goodvibe Recordings.

A Single Thought...

Patria Caraballo

A tear dropped
A gun popped
A person falling
A baby calling
for her mother to come back.
A single fear
A single tear
A single thought
Another battle fought
A world of pain, and grace
Filled with problems you have to face.
Another side
That you have to hide.
You wanting to live your life,
and not have it held back.
Not to believe that a future is something you lack.
A path ahead of you that you have to fight
to get away from the screams in the night.
To put your life back on track
You can't let anything, or anyone hold you back...



conversations with

Flo Brown



like water for...

Every so often, *sistas* get thirsty for those spirit quenching conversations that you just don't find in every body with a hole in its head disguised as being a mouth, in every chat room, or in this day and age, especially not on every Sprint or Verizon. And just when dehydration started to kick in big time, and it seemed as if life was playing some stale, dry joke on *sista*, I stumbled upon a feisty hip hop/spiritual oasis just a "Flo'n" along my path. Flo Brown, The universe's self-proclaimed "Dust Daughter" (see CD) is quite a refreshing gift to a world that seems to pride itself on its bastards while its daughters are too often left "deserted". (That's all 'cause she really don't need no introduction!...)

~ Queen Godis

What is one of your fondest memories/funniest stories that your parents ever told you about yourself when you were a little girl?

My fondest memories entail being around my family and my loved ones. One time I can think of is about my uncle, who died, he was my father's older brother. Before he died, we were all down South with my father's family. For some reason I thought that his girlfriend was trying to kill him or something. I was serious; I had conceived this whole thing in my mind. I don't know whether I thought she was trying to poison him or what, but I was sincerely scared for my uncle and I didn't trust this lady. So, I was doing things to stick around him, so she couldn't get him alone to kill him. I was just like acting strange, and then I finally told my mother and my father and they just busted out laughing and told everybody.

How does this allude to your nature? Do you feel like you are a protector?

Yeah ... I think I am just very non-superficial. Not to the extent that I don't care about doing my hair or I don't care about looking nice or whatever, but on a certain level, I don't look at

the surface. I always detect that there is something deeper than what is going on. Some people probably call it paranoid, but, it's really pretty balanced.

How old were you when you first looked in the mirror and were actually conscious or judgmental of what you were looking at?

I do remember, looking in the mirror one time, and I held up my hands to cover my hairline and I could see ... I don't know, I don't know whether I saw my spirit, or what I saw, but it scared me. I just left the bathroom crying. I was really shocked by it. I had to be like, no more than six or seven. I just saw something that I didn't normally see in the mirror, you know what I'm saying? It scared me.

And from then on...?

I didn't try to induce that feeling again.

Another memorable thing I remember that happened when I was young, probably six or seven...maybe when I was eight, was a conversation I had with God. I was just in the bathroom sitting by the tub or something, and I was trying to convince God that I loved him: "I love you!, I love you!, you gotta believe me, I love you!"

Was this because you were in trouble or afraid or something?

No, I don't even remember being in trouble. Just from a very early age, his presence was always big in my life. I was just trying to convince him I loved him. And then all of a sudden, he asked me, he said, "Do you?" I was like, "Yeah!" He said, "You do?" And I was like, "Yeah, I promise, I swear!" And that was all he said to me, but I kind of felt like he gave me a friendly gesture, just to let me know that he was there. That's really memorable to me as a child.

Describe what you mean by your love for God because I know that means different things to different people especially because people

picture God in different ways, and they deal with God in different ways. Do you distinguish that from your love for anything else?

I don't really think it can be distinguished. Love is just a feeling that exists, it's the same feeling, just like it's the same spirit that flows through all of us

That particular night I was just there. I was always just that close to him. In the Koran it says he's closer to you than your own self. Usually when I talked to God I didn't really get an answer in that form, but this time, it was a straight-up voice, and I didn't ever question it. I was just like, COOL!

As far as my love for God, I think it's like the first love that you know. People have made God out to be this tyrannical and jealous person that's going to damn them to hell if they don't do exactly what he wants them to do. Right there, their view on love is jilted. Because if God is that jealous and selfish and tyrannical that's just going to be a standard they set for themselves. But if God is ever-loving and always forgiving and understanding and non-judgmental, then that will be at least the standard that they'll set and that will set the tone for how they will deal with others.

I was going to save the hip hop questions for later, but I'm really interested in the connection between this love for/connection with God and how you channel it into your your music, your lyrics.

I know what GOD IS and I know God loves me and I know that I can go to God; I know he is always here for me. But by the same token, under certain religious environments, it could be said it was ungodly for me to curse, or things like that, you know? I felt a direct conflict there between that which felt natural to me as part of my expression and that which was connected to God, but it was just a societal attachment.

Allah just told me this summer basically through a lot of literature (and I'm not always thinking. God is a man, or whatever), but it was explained to me more that God is me; that he experiences himself through me and that is where the natural feeling to express myself in any way that I choose - not exempting a curse word or not exempting force or not exempting anything - comes from. It made even more sense to me when I realized that God doesn't judge. When it got explained to me that God doesn't judge, it felt real and when it felt right to me, then I was freer.

Now I don't have a problem expressing myself in any way, for example, I don't feel like I have to explain why I use the word "nigger".

What about the aspects of hip hop that are more judgmental for example, battling or rhyming about what you have or don't like in someone else?

It doesn't matter. Whatever you choose for yourself, it doesn't matter. Especially if you can walk away from that experience and feel that you have fully expressed yourself. That's where I'm at.

We talk about our destinies and our existence in this life time, and sometimes people believe that our names are significant to our experiences/identities. Who is Flo Brown? I know there was a time when you were called Falona (your birth name) and there was a point when Falona walked into the name Flo Brown.

It was a name that was put onto a force, onto an energy. It is not about the name, it is about the energy and the movement and the motion and everything that is behind it. I notice that people like the name.

Brown is my slave name, and my name is Falona. I always had what I considered to be a

fear is a prerequisite to bravery and courage ... the fearlessness of the MC is probably one of the strongest attractions that people have toward hip hop.

rap name because even Falona is a kind of name like, "What!!?" Then a friend of mine just adjusted from calling me Falona to Flo and she said, "You know, you should just be Flo Brown, 'cause that's your name". I felt an attachment to it as far as rhyming, the motion or the patterns that are created with the words that come through me. It's a flow/Flo, and at the same time, "Brown" got to represent the manifestation of my melanin, so there is definitely a nice little twist to it that I am very comfortable with. It can mean a whole bunch but it can mean nothing.

Talk about fears.

I think fear is one of the biggest (things) that we as humans have to overcome. Everybody has it and you have to have it in order to not have it. Fear is a prerequisite to bravery and courage. You cannot have that without having had fear.

Now put that into the context of what you do with music, as an MC, a lyricist.

Hip hop is as much about confidence as it is about being fearless.

There has to be a fearlessness about you that people have to identify with. There can't be no tricklings of insecurity. The fearlessness of the MC is probably one of the strongest attractions that people have toward hip hop.

As artists and human beings it is inevitable that people's expectations for us may differ from what we may be going through. As an artist you have a goal. You have a goal for yourself to express yourself and be who you are in your art. So, is there a compromise there?

There doesn't have to be if you are strong enough to deal with whatever comes along. If you are going to survive, you're going to survive. A survivor is a survivor.

The universe is preparing me to be a survivor. Like there have been a lot of situations that I came out of real quick that showed me how quick things can change.

I don't consider myself into hip hop for survival. I am a survivor regardless. Hip hop is like a personal gratification, nobody can take it away from me.

So what can we look forward to from you...are there any artists that you are working with right now?

I have a couple of artists that I would like to work with; as of now there is nothing that has been solidified. Nothing that has been recorded. We'll see. We'll keep it a surprise!

...and as we keep the world thirsting for our next moves, I just want to say to Flo and all my "Sistas" ... may Peace, Love, Balance and that special LIGHT from within continue to irrigate our souls.



MAJESTIC

by Nehanda Abiodun

"tugging abyssinia" painting by Helina Metaferia



When I first learned that BLU was publishing another issue on Strong Women, my first thoughts were of all the unnamed Sheros; the women who never have their names in print, rarely receive an award or even a thank you for their ceaseless devotion to justice and freedom. Many sisters' names came to my mind, some who are young adults, just beginning to learn the true arduous tasks of revolutionary struggle. I realized that these women, whose contributions are seldom recognized, were often the deciding factor between the success or failure of numerous campaigns. While thinking about all of this, there was one person that kept popping up in my head, someone who is the sum of all that I characterize as a Strong Woman. Her name is Chinganji Regina Akinyela.

Chinganji's name means Majestic. "Powerful", "independent", "caring", "regal

in stature", and "foot soldier with beauty" are also words that can easily describe her.

Passing out leaflets, demonstrating against police brutality, chairing a workshop, organizing a conference, or soliciting funds to help pay the expenses for the children of a political exile, are just a few of the tasks that she considers her responsibilities as a revolutionary.

Her patience and understanding of the shortcomings of others and honesty in pointing out her own faults are among the qualities that endear her to many. She's the first to see the good side of a bad situation and after some blunder you've committed she'll extend her arms for a "you'll do better the next time" hug. It's not unusual to see her shed tears for the hungry, the homeless and those who are in prison unjustly. Her sisterly love, advice and help are available to those who find themselves

in a bad situation. Or if you need a head wrap to go with a particular outfit, she's probably got just the right thing for you. The Sistah is very New Afrikan, and mixes the traditional with the contemporary.

Chinganji can forgive, bare her soul with dignity, and quietly demand respect under the most adverse circumstances.

Here in Havana she once told me while leaving a meeting in Los Angeles, she and others who were surrounded by the Joint Terrorist Task Force. The pretext for the raid was that they were looking for me, and since both Chinganji and I are tall they thought they had struck pay dirt. Brandishing M16s and other sophisticated weapons, scores of SWAT team military police surrounded the car she was in and demanded that she get out with her hands up and get on the ground.

"Nehanda," she said, "I looked at the face of the agent that was nearest me. I was frightened but he was more scared than I was.

"The barrel of the gun that was pointed in the middle of my forehead appeared to get bigger by the second. The only thing I could do was pray that no harm would come to our comrades. In my prayer, I told God that if I had to die so you could be free, to please give you added strength to help bring our nation to fruition and to forgive these fools (our enemies) and help them see the light, because they are some lost souls."

The last thing she told me about this incident was that she refused to get on the ground. Laughing she said, "I would have gotten my clothes dirty."

Like all of us who walk this earth, Chinganji is not perfect. She's a bigger procrastinator than I am and if you have to give her a telephone number make sure you have her repeat it at least three times. She suffers from what we jokingly call the Lucy Syndrome – that's when you get the simplest things ass backwards.

However, I think her biggest shortcoming is not knowing just how great she is, how much she's contributed to our struggle as well as to the lives of those who are blessed to know her. She is a loving daughter, devoted mother, a partner to her husband, a conscientious friend, and for over twenty-five years has been an active defender of human rights for all people.

As I write this I can imagine her saying, "Nehanda, the reason you think I'm a strong woman is because I'm surrounded by and have been blessed with lessons from really strong women like my Mother, Large Marge, Ahadi, Amanata, Ife, Monifa, Latonya, Makini, Adisa, Katrina, Assata, Safiya, Vanessa, Nefertiti, Inna, Yuri, Laura, Marilyn, Sylvia..." Those words coming from her would not be a display of false modesty – that's how she thinks.

Majestic (and all the other Sisters who never get credit for their work): just in case I haven't said it lately, thank you for all your sacrifices to our struggle. Thank you for the love that you've give to those of us who were fortunate enough to be touched by your kindness and most of all thank for teaching me and others what a Strong Woman is really about.

I love you my Sister(s)
FREE THE LAND!

Nehanda Abiodun is a political exile living in Havana Cuba

Art Speaks

A blessed collage of people gathered to support the cause for Mumia and lives lost to police brutality through the common bond that brings the truth out of us all, art. The type of art exhibited on that magical Sunday night was of the verbal, heart-reaching, soul soothing genre. Although many that attended were attracted to the event because of the marquis names they soon received knowledge they had been starving for. The list of artists includes DJ Carlos Nino, Besskepp, East L.A. Sabor Factory, DJ Dusk, The World Famous L.A. Breakers, Mystic, Aztlan Underground, DJ Nobody, Sheila Nicholls, Dwight Trible, DJ Logic, Freestyle Fellowship, Jerry Quickley, Blackalicious and special guest Mos Def along with others who supported from the audience. The artists dedicated their performances to those who have lost their lives at the hands of the police. Informing the people on how we can end this conflict, the artists utilized all forms of media to evoke a powerful response. And that they did. Many left the function with ideas and questions about what they could do to help provide resolution. The message is simple, we need to treat each other as one, all are one. This Sunday night was beautiful because everyone focused on the positive and helping each other through difficult times.

We need to focus on how we can heal this gaping wound. We are products of what we experience. By educating ourselves in all forums we can help those who don't have as much opportunity and then we can begin to create awareness and destroy stereotypes. The Artists Network put together a wonderful event which should not be forgotten but used as a catalyst towards our goals. ARTSPEAKS was a great opportunity for us to share divine love, not just from artists but people who gave their souls for others to learn and get nourished from.

clockwise from top left:

Mos Def, Boots from the Coup, Dilated Peoples, Ozomatli, Mystic, Mike Ladd, Aztlan Underground, Sheila Nicholls Blackalicious

below: host Garth Trinidad of KPFF 89.9



photo by malik



photo by sam golzari



photo by sam golzari

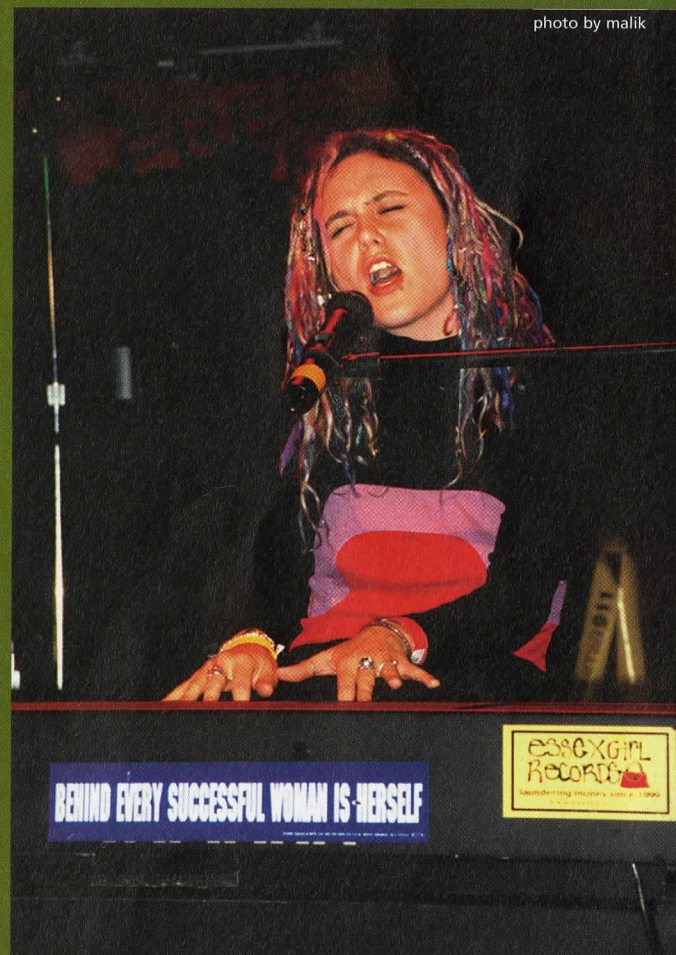


photo by malik



photo by malik

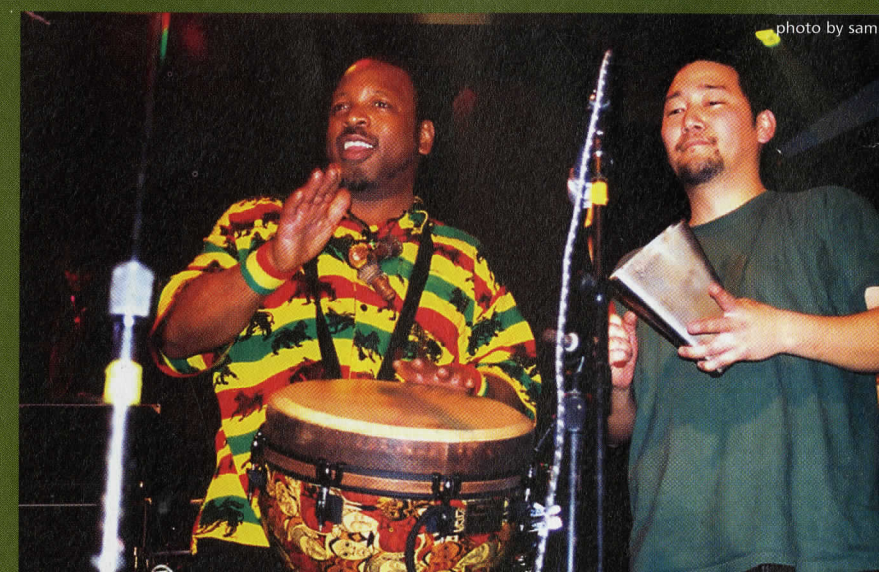


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Garth Trinidad is holding a copy of the second edition of Stolen Lives available from 1-800-No-Brutality or www.stolenlives.com.



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agent BLU on the scene



collective soul 3

all photos by shashari murphy

Collective Soul is a monthly gathering celebrating community and culture hosted by revolutionary hip-hop crew Company of Prophets. Doors at 8pm, after-hours session feat. 808 Band and DJ Sake One. Investment is \$7 b4 10 and \$10 after. Collective Soul happens at La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley CA 94705. These pictures are of the show on January 17th featuring Company of Prophets, Goapele, Hanifah Walidah of Harlem Funk Essentials, and Prophets of Rage.

TY

London's home-grown artist TY (aka: Teaching You, aka: Telling You, aka: Taking You) performed at London's popular hip hop night 'Scratch'.

His performance on stage shined with humour, emotion and cleverness. As he took the audience through tracks taken from his debut album *Awkward* TY proved to be an artist that is true to him self. The audience enjoyed every moment of his amusing performance as he displayed character and personality in each song.

A veteran of the hip hop scene, TY has worked with emcee's like emcee Mell'O, Jonzi-D and DJ Pogo. TY also runs a workshop for teenagers and uses poetry, hip hop and performance in his workshops.

I managed to chat with him after this performance, and here's a few words of blessings he had for BLU magazine:

"BLU I love what your doing, I love the writing, the music, just the whole revolutionary mind state of being original, being different and talking about things that we SHOULD and NEED to know about. I'm speechless! BLU Love! TY"

TY's debut album *Awkward* is out now on Big Dada records and purchased on. www.ninjatune.net

~mel brown



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- * play and promote the BLU CD when you deejay for your radio show or club gig. Get a free DJ subscription.

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CD track listing

- 1 Brigitte M Moore excerpt from *Temple*
- 2 Kayo tribute poem
- 3 Bahamadia feat Dwele *Beautiful Things*
- 4 Shoshana Levi *Elements*
- 5 Busi Mhlongo *Oxamu, ibomvu dance remix*
- 6 Liza Jesse Peterson cameo
- 7 Black Surreal *Come On Girl*
- 8 Flo Brown *Dust Daughter*
- 9 Monet Vibacious (with Sarah Jones cameo)
- 10 Mystic *The Life*
- 11 Invincible feat Helixx and Supa Dav West *Perfectionists* (with Kuttin Kandi cameo)
- 12 Zap Mama *M'Toto*
- 13 Brigitte M Moore excerpt from *Marilyn*
- 14 Indigo Girls *Soon Be To Nothing*
- 15 Chumbawamba *Enough Is Enough* (with Alice Nutter cameo)
- 16 Megababe *Trailer Park* (with Lola RocknRolla cameo)
- 17 Four Generations
- 18 JUCA *100 Million Souls*
- 19 Brigitte M Moore excerpt from *Temple* BONUS TRACK:
- 20 Queen Godis *Yo' Mama*