

# SEX, RACE AND CLASS—THE PERSPECTIVE OF WINNING

A Selection of Writings 1952–2011

**Selma James**

**Introduction by Nina Lopez**

**Foreword by Marcus Rediker**

In 1972 Selma James set out a new political perspective. Her starting point was the millions of unwaged women who, working in the home and on the land, were not seen as “workers” and their struggles viewed as outside of the class struggle. Based on her political training in the Johnson-Forest Tendency, founded by her late husband C.L.R. James, on movement experience South and North, and on a respectful study of Marx, she redefined the working class to include sectors previously dismissed as “marginal.”

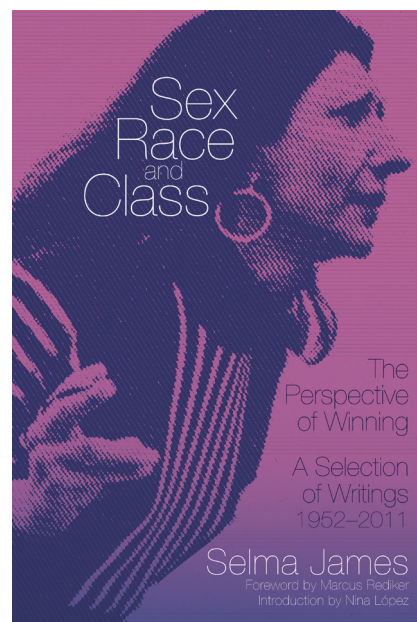
For James, the class struggle presents itself as the conflict between the reproduction and survival of the human race, and the domination of the market with its exploitation, wars, and ecological devastation. She sums up her strategy for change as “Invest in Caring Not Killing.”

This selection, spanning six decades, traces the development of this perspective in the course of building an international campaigning network. It includes the classic *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* which launched the “domestic labor debate,” the exciting *Hookers in the House of the Lord*, which describes a church occupation by sex workers, an incisive review of the C.L.R. James masterpiece *The Black Jacobins*, a reappraisal of the novels of Jean Rhys and of the leadership of Julius Nyerere, the groundbreaking *Marx and Feminism*, and “What the Marxists Never Told Us About Marx,” published here for the first time.

The writing is lucid and without jargon. The ideas, never abstract, spring from the experience of organizing, from trying to make sense of the successes and the setbacks, and from the need to find a way forward.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Selma James is a women’s rights and anti-racist campaigner and author. From 1958 to 1962 she worked with C.L.R. James in the movement for West Indian federation and independence. In 1972 she founded the International Wages for Housework Campaign and in 2000 helped launch the Global Women’s Strike, whose strategy for change is Invest in Caring Not Killing. She coined the word “unwaged,” which has since entered the English language. In the 1970s she was the first spokeswoman of the English Collective of Prostitutes. She is a founding member of the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network. She co-authored the classic *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, which launched the “domestic labour debate.” Other publications include *A Woman’s Place* (1952), *Women, the Unions and Work, or What is Not to Be Done* (1972), *Sex, Race and Class* (1974), *Wageless of the World* (1974), *The Rapist Who Pays the Rent* (1982), *The Ladies and the Mammies—Jane Austen and Jean Rhys* (1983), *Marx and Feminism* (1983), *Hookers in the House of the Lord* (1983), *Strangers & Sisters: Women, Race and Immigration* (1985), *The Global Kitchen—the Case for Counting Unwaged Work* (1985 and 1995), and *The Milk of Human Kindness—Defending Breastfeeding from the AIDS Industry and the Global Market* (2005).



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