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BREAKTHROUGH

FEMINISM & DEMOCRACY  
POSTMODERNISM & THE LEFT  
BLACK WOMEN & AIDS





*Breakthrough* is the political journal of Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC), an anti-imperialist organization working in the international solidarity, anti-intervention, anti-racist, women's and gay liberation movements and other progressive movements in the U.S. PFOC supports self-determination and liberation for Puerto Rican, Black, Native American, Mexican and other oppressed peoples, and freedom for political prisoners and Prisoners of War.

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*Front Cover:* "The Plunder of Latin America," mosaic tile and found objects, inspired by Eduardo Galeano's trilogy *Memories of Fire*. © 1989 Elly Simmons, PO Box 463, Lagunitas, CA 94938, 415/488-4177.

*Back Cover:* based on an original Cuban poster

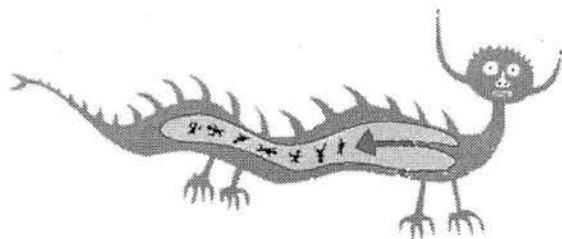
### In Memoriam

*Jackie Winnow*, lesbian-feminist activist, died of metastatic breast cancer on September 7, 1991. Jackie founded the Women's Cancer Resource Center (WCRC) in Oakland, California. The first center of its kind in the U.S., the WCRC provides information, medical referrals and support for women with cancer and their families. She struggled in the lesbian and gay community and in the broader women's movement that cancer is a political issue. This was an important contribution in 1985, when breast cancer was not recognized as the epidemic that it is now. We honor and remember Jackie Winnow, the many other women activists, and the rest of the 49,000 women who will die of cancer this year alone.

*Clayton Van Lydegraf (1915-1992)*, a lifelong anti-imperialist, died on March 30, 1992 of cancer. Van was a contributor to the book *Prairie Fire* and one of the founding members of Prairie Fire Organizing Committee.



# GOODBYE, COLUMBUS: THOUGHTS ON WESTERN CIVILIZATION



by Jimmy Emerman

**I**N CASE YOU MISSED THE BIG NEWS, SCIENTISTS AT the annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union in December in San Francisco were treated to a series of dramatic, planetary-scale environmental engineering schemes to rescue Earth from human progress. Among the quick fixes proposed were:

- Sending millions of small balloons into the stratosphere to reflect sunlight back into space.
- Partially shading the planet with giant space umbrellas, each covering hundreds of miles.
- Dumping 50,000 tons of propane per year into the stratosphere above Antarctica to absorb ozone-depleting pollutants.

These suggestions — dismissed incidentally by most of the geophysicists present — have the bizarre logic of

from Spain on the first leg of a voyage that will bring them to San Francisco on October 12, Columbus Day, 1992, culminating the quincentennial of the quintessential Voyage of Discovery.

Columbus and the ozone hole? You ask, “What’s the connection?” Over the course of 500 years, a passable sailor, a man obsessed with greed for gold and fame, and a thoroughly incompetent administrator, who ended up being brought back to Spain in chains, has been elevated to the stature of a god. The Columbus Quincentennial, among other things, is a celebration of Western civilization’s spirit of adventure, rugged individualism, the triumph of science and technology over nature.

The Age of Discovery, the Renaissance, and the Modern Age it ushered in, exploded one of the guiding principles of feudal thought, the divine order of nature, with each species having a relationship to the whole of creation. Instead, the individual and his (sic) aspirations represented the pinnacle of progress. Technological advances over nature would lead to a utopia of economic, intellectual and spiritual well-being. Societal

good would be fulfilled through the granting of individual liberty. Humankind would achieve the stature of gods. A small leap to a quick fix for global warming.

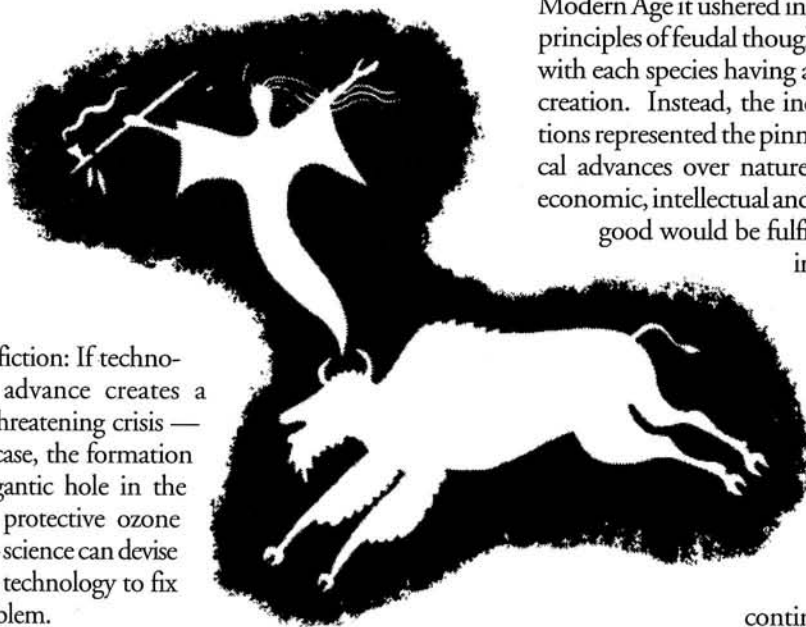
Nearly 500 years after Columbus hit land in the Americas, technology and “progress” — the twin icons of Western civilization —

continue apace. What better time

to look at what five centuries of Western civilization have meant — for the continent, for Europe, for the planet — and for the way we frame our discussions of

science fiction: If technological advance creates a world-threatening crisis — in this case, the formation of a gigantic hole in the Earth’s protective ozone layer — science can devise a better technology to fix the problem.

Meanwhile, on another cultural plane altogether, replicas of Christopher Columbus’ fleet, the *Nina*, *Pinta* and *Santa Maria*, set sail



social change.

Western values — “progress,” “science,” “individualism” — have become so entrenched in our thinking that it is almost impossible to separate ourselves from them, to think about them critically, or to imagine society governed by other, alternate assumptions. We assume that humanity, utilizing science and technology, will progressively conquer all obstacles to the just society. Social problems like racism and sexism will give way to a unity in diversity. Nature? Well, if it's not an outright enemy, it's certainly just another obstacle to be overcome on the road to the future.

What's wrong with this picture? Everything! Start with the obvious — the degradation of the environment. Just how thoroughly the concept of coexistence with nature has been suppressed in modern Western thought can be seen in comparing the Europe of 1492 with the world of 1992. Columbus sailed away from a civilization which had already devastated its natural environment — both from a fear of nature and from the voracious needs of an expanding population and industrial base. Kirkpatrick Sale in his excellent study of Columbus and the Columbian legacy, *The Conquest of Paradise*, points out that:

...no alteration of the landscape was so profound or so purposeful as the erasure of the European forests. There are no statistics on this destruction — the medieval age was not one to think that way — but considerable circumstantial evidence points in the same direction, and it is not even a matter of much controversy. Europe's was a civilization literally made of wood... All the great forests with which it had been blessed — an essential energy resource denied, incidentally, to the civilizations of the Middle East and much of Asia — were steadily and recklessly depleted to serve that civilization, and by the sixteenth century there were virtually no old-growth areas, no natural ecosystems, left.

Five centuries later we can add the old growth forests of North America and the rain forests of the Amazon, Malaysia, Indonesia and Central America to the list of victims of progress. (Of course, the “dirty triangle” formed by the coal districts of the former socialist countries of Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland, whose forests are dying from acid rain and other chemical insults, stands as a stark reminder that this mindset isn't limited to capitalists.)

How far-fetched is it to link these occurrences, separated by 500 years and immensely varied social, economic and technological systems, to a dominant ideological paradigm — one that values technology and science above wisdom, human economic advance above and against nature, and European men above everyone else in the species?

If we cut through the advertising hype, we survey not a landscape flourishing with human potential, but one littered with the wreckage of civilizations and cultures which did not conform to the European norm. *La*

*Conquista*, the bloody colonization of the Americas meant the genocide of entire nations of Indian people. It set the stage for the African slave trade, the colonization and devastation of the African continent and of relegating people and cultures of color to a permanently inferior status.

The Quincentennial of Columbus' landfall conveniently puts all of this history behind us. Two of the dominant approaches to the approaching extravaganza are: (1) the history of the past 500 years traces a basically upward slope of progress brought to the world by the superior knowledge and civilization of Europe and then Euro-America; or (2) yes, there were horrible things done in the name of civilization and, tragically, many important cultures have been lost, but what's past is past and what's important now is learning to value diversity in order to maintain our distinctly “American” national identity.

The first, clearly white and male supremacist, line is easy to dismiss. The second, though, is more complex. It responds to demands articulated by people of color, women and gay and lesbian activists that their histories, contributions and viewpoints are just as valid as those of white men and must be included — in the workplace, in the school curriculum and elsewhere.

At the same time it co-opts these demands and transforms them into something else — adjusting the system to include the “Other”, while still maintaining a white male frame of reference. From the new California social studies curriculum to the pages of *Association Management*, (a professional publication for heads of non-profit associations) whose November 1991 issue was devoted to diversity issues, this is the approach being taken by key social institutions to respond to demands for inclusiveness. It's hard to find an organization — public or private — these days, which doesn't have its “Diversity Task Force.”

This approach enables representatives of the dominant ideology to plead that they're already doing their share, when marginalized groups demand more than tokenism or really question underlying assumptions. “What do you mean, teach history from an African perspective! We already have an entire chapter on slavery! And you can't expect us to cut the rest of U.S. history out of the book, can you?”

When all else fails, the “danger” of destroying our “national unity” in the name of diversity is raised. Although this is the favorite argument of the right wing, from English Only to Patrick Buchanan, the progressive movement isn't immune from this nationalism-baiting. Thus, we can see a growing attack being mounted against efforts to change the way we are taught, think and organize society — even in the name of diversity itself.

This is a real live struggle that all the Columbus celebrations won't be able to paper over. The fact that the U.S. is looking less and less European — not just in its standard of living for people of color, but in the actual



demographic makeup of its cities and whole regions, such as the Southwest, means that the pressure to fragmentation and polarization will grow. All the discussion of “managing diversity” won’t alter this and, unless conditions of life for people of color, women, children, gays and lesbians, the elderly, the poor and the disabled change dramatically, the melting pot is headed for meltdown.

Would a different view of the human enterprise — one that valued women as much as men, all cultural traditions rather than just one, the biological integrity of the planet over the technological superiority of homo sapiens — have made such a mess of things? It would be nice to think that socialism could have done a better job had it successfully survived the onslaught of the capitalist system — and that it will do better in the future. Still neither the Soviet nor the Chinese versions of socialism have really attempted to address these issues.

Time and again socialist governments told their people that it was the best system yet devised for economic advance. As long as these are the terms on which progress is judged, the system with the greatest ability to “deliver the goods” — or at least the ability to give the impression that it can do so — was bound to carry the day. And no other terms have been in vogue for the last 500 years! In this sense, socialism’s failure to compete with capitalism in the global image market was inevitable.

In the process of the Conquest and the ensuing centuries, alternate views of the place of the human species in relation to the rest of nature and to the planet have been suppressed, although not destroyed. One upside of the Quincentennial has been the unique opportunity afforded us to look at the world through the eyes of indigenous peoples. As the anthropologists, historians, and eventually the media jump on the 1992 bandwagon, we are getting new views of the world as it existed in 1492. Much information which was never taught to most of us is becoming popularized. This includes the fact that in many ways Indian cultures and

civilizations had achieved levels of agriculture, science, technology and mathematics which surpassed those of Europe.

Just as important, we are being given glimpses into the intellectual, spiritual and philosophical life of indigenous peoples. Many Indian cultures, from the Lakota to the Iroquois, had achieved a way of life that fully integrated human beings with the rest of nature. People were stewards of the land, not its owners, with responsibility for protecting and preserving the harmony of nature.

Regrettably, the tendency among the socialist and progressive left has been to see these worldviews as quaint forms of spiritualism, nice but somehow inadequate for life in the real high-tech world. Indian approaches to nature and life have been trivialized, just as struggles to preserve native land, hunting and fishing rights, and culture have been outside the interest of the mainstream white left.

In the past few years, indigenous struggles have emerged at the heart of much of the resistance to the latest schemes to rape the world’s remaining forests, wilderness areas and mineral-rich territories. From the Amazon to Big Mountain to St. James Bay and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the struggle for native rights coincides with defense of the Earth. This is the year to join those struggles, to support Indian issues including the fight for Leonard Peltier’s freedom, and to open our minds to an alternative way of thinking about what exactly constitutes “progress.”

The world created by Western civilization, from that morning in 1492 when Columbus set sail for parts unknown to the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, is a high-tech marvel. This isn’t all bad, of course. Advances in medicine have prolonged and enriched human life. But even in medical science, high tech is prized above prevention and issues of universal access. Despite all the technological glitter, the world is still a human disaster. After 500 years of male European power, it’s time to try something else! □



### INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND OPPRESSED NATIONALITIES IN THE USA

On October 12, 1992, the US government and its European counterparts plan to hold lavish celebrations honoring the 500th Anniversary of Columbus’ “discovery” of the Americas. But for the majority of the world’s people — people of color — this will not be a time of pageantry and celebration. It will be the International Day of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples. A time to mark a legacy of racism, genocide, crimes against women, environmental destruction and colonialism. A time to mark *500 years of resistance*.

Against the backdrop of the Columbian Quincentenary, an **International Tribunal of Indigenous Peoples and Oppressed Nationalities in the USA** will take place in San Francisco during the weekend of October 1-4, 1992. Led by the American Indian Movement, the Tribunal will bring together people from the northern and southern hemispheres, Africa, Asia and Europe. This unique global gathering will hear testimony and hold discussions about the massive, systematic violations of human rights and international law against people of color. Special emphasis will be placed on the impact of the Columbian legacy for people of color within U.S. frontiers.

For more information, contact the International Tribunal, 2940-16th Street, Suite 104, San Francisco, CA 94103 (415) 626-1875.





El Salvador

# *The Road Ahead*

Interview with FMLN Representative Ramon Cardona



Credit: Doug Spalding/Breakthrough

**O**n February 1, 1992, El Salvador entered a new era as twelve years of full-scale military conflict came to a halt. 250,000 people filled San Salvador's Plaza Civica, to celebrate the formal institution of a cease-fire between the ARENA government of Alfredo Cristiani and the forces of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). Waving red FMLN flags, Salvadorans from all walks of life cheered guerrilla commanders appearing in public for the first time in years. Twelve years before, in this same Plaza, army snipers shot down scores of demonstrators protesting the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Now a huge portrait of the Archbishop overlooked the Plaza, as young men and women wearing FMLN armbands formed a security cordon around the stage. The celebration lasted





throughout the night.

The peace accords, worked out under the auspices of the United Nations, establish a basis for a new and vastly different El Salvador. The pact will be supervised by a ten-member commission called COPAZ, representing both the government and the opposition. The FMLN has become a legal entity, able to engage openly in political and electoral work. The Armed Forces, once considered untouchable, are supposed to reduce by half and are stripped of their internal security function. The much hated elite battalions will be

disbanded as will the Treasury Police, the National Guard and the National Police. A new National Civil Police will be created, including in its ranks thousands of former FMLN combatants. Constitutional reforms codify basic human rights and civil liberties, and a "Truth Commission" will determine culpability in some of the most horrific cases of human rights abuse. These include the El Mozote massacre, where hundreds were killed by the Armed Forces; the assassination of Archbishop Romero; and the bombing of the offices of FENASTRAS (a trade union federation) just prior to the 1989 FMLN military offensive. The FMLN has agreed to dismantle its military structure as the accords take effect.

Land remains the most explosive issue. The accords guarantee respect for land tenure rights of campesinos and cooperatives in zones of conflict "until a satisfactory legal solution is arrived at." Yet absentee landowners have already moved to reestablish the old order. In one incident, the outgoing National Police forcibly evicted campesinos who had worked land for twelve years in Usulután, a zone of conflict. The National Association of Private Enterprise has set up an office in this fertile region to assist landowners in carrying out further evictions. But evictions won't happen without a fight. "If the rich want to come back here and work, we invite them," said Ricardo Villacorta, president of the La Conciencia cooperative in eastern El Salvador. "But they will have to come to work and not to watch others work from their hammocks as they used to. This land has cost us blood, sacrifice and suffering."

Certain things haven't yet changed in El Salvador. Death squads have already assassinated seven people since the signing of the accords. In early February, a member of FEASIES (Federation of Independent Associations and Unions of El Salvador) was murdered, his body mutilated. An activist with CODYDES (Committee of Fired and Unemployed Workers of El Salvador) was picked up by members of the National Police. The next day, people found his bullet-ridden body. Despite the peace pact, the U.S. Congress recently approved a Bush Administration request for an additional \$75 million in military aid over the next two years. And ARENA remains in power, at least until elections scheduled for 1994. Their economic plan — developed in coordination with the U.S. — fails to address any of the root causes of the war. Instead, it calls for rebuilding the country's infrastructure back to pre-war levels, further privatizing industry and the state sector, breaking up cooperatives, and reestablishing the export-based economy controlled by large landowners. This puts ARENA on a collision course with the popular movement.

What led to the signing of the peace accords? And what are the prospects for their implementation? Will the FMLN be able to achieve necessary social and economic changes? How will the popular movement defend itself in this new period? Breakthrough asked Ramon Cardona, U.S. Representative of the FMLN, to address the complexities of this new stage in the Salvadoran revolution. The interview was conducted immediately prior to the February 1st cease-fire.



*Breakthrough: Why do you think that a peace agreement was able to be signed at this particular moment in Salvadoran history?*

**Ramon Cardona:** The Salvadoran government was under very heavy pressure internationally as well as within El Salvador. If the war and political instability continued, the ARENA government knew it would miss out on any chances for economic development, including the possibility of new investments from Japan

new approach to the Salvadoran situation. And in Congress there was less will to support the war. The Bush Administration was left pretty much alone if they decided to continue looking for a military victory.

In El Salvador, it was only minority sectors of ARENA, the military, and the oligarchy that supported the continuation of the war. The rest of the society — the church, the trade unions, the campesinos — were demanding an end to war. And this was a heavy pressure. There was even growing disenchantment among the soldiers within the army in the face of the clear lack of popular support for the war.

All these different elements were combined. Of course, you have to consider the fact that the Salvadoran Army could not militarily defeat the FMLN in a short period of time. And they understood that. Colonel Ponce, the Minister of Defense, accepted this fact, and he said it publicly for the first time a few months ago.

On our side, what we see is this. The ultimate goal of the FMLN, from its very beginning, was to achieve power, and to deal with the roots of the conflict — the lack of democracy, social injustice, repression. That continues to be our goal. But we have had to respond to many changes over the last twenty years.

We were able to build a massive popular movement in the 70s. This popular movement helped to create a revolutionary situation in 1980. But we were not ready to fight for power at that moment. And, of course, what came after was heavy repression between 1980 and 1983 that practically dismantled all the popular organizations. At that time, the FMLN was in the process of building our army. But it wasn't until 1983 that we were able to create a truly powerful military force. If we had had that military force in 1980, we would be talking about a different situation right now.

We continued to increase our strength in the 1980s, with many adjustments in our strategy. Overall, our tendency was to grow, despite all the government counterinsurgency plans. And, in 1989, we made an extraordinary effort to achieve power through our offensive. That goal was, of course, not achieved. But we made

many advances. We changed the balance of forces in El Salvador in that moment, and we created an advantage for the revolutionary forces that would be reflected in the peace talks.

There are other phenomena that have been affecting us. While it's true that we never depended on the



In an impoverished shantytown community in San Salvador, families are building their own homes as part of a collective construction project.

Credit: Kat Schwab

and Europe. In addition, the U.S. was not in the mood to continue supporting an indefinite war. The anti-communist rationales for counterinsurgency in El Salvador — like the domino theory — were rendered meaningless with the fall of the Soviet Union and the developments in Europe. They were forced to adopt a

socialist bloc for substantial material aid, the changes in the world do have a deep impact on us. There's now practically one single power in the world, the United States. There is no longer a bloc or a country that can counter-balance U.S. foreign policy. This we need to accept. I don't mean accepting it and not fighting it, but accept it as a fact and figure out how to move forward in such a situation. We need a new revolutionary strategy, not just the same one we've had for the past ten years.

There was also a deep political effect within the FMLN after the Sandinistas lost the 1990 election. After all, Cuba and Nicaragua were like our brothers and sisters. What would be the future of our own revolutionary process? How could we develop a new revolutionary strategy? Where could we look for international solidarity? And we concluded that we were on our own. Now, it's true that there will be some kinds of solidarity, and this will continue. But it will be limited, and it will not qualitatively affect the military situation.

After eleven years of war, we had reached an equilibrium at the military level. We couldn't decisively defeat the Salvadoran Army militarily, and they certainly couldn't defeat us. There is no assurance that either side could win even if fighting continued for many more years. Under these conditions, practically all the political and social forces in our country were demanding an end to the war. But they were also demanding a peace accord that advanced our people's fight for economic, political and social democracy.

We decided to end the war, but not at any cost. End the war, yes, but create an opening to continue the fight for power in the political arena. To achieve that, it was necessary to win changes in the constitution, the army, human rights — all things that we fought for in the negotiations.

We are establishing the conditions that will allow this confrontation to happen on equal terms. Not with an army that is enforcing its will on the entire society.

The UN also played an important role, as political brokers. At the beginning of the negotiations, the U.S. tried to undermine the UN. When it realized this wasn't possible, they slowly changed their attitude. In the end, the U.S. understood that the negotiations could not proceed without the UN and, even though they disagreed with some UN positions, they accepted the UN role.

*What are the aspects of the agreement that you think provide the basis for moving towards a more open democratic space?*

The key aspect is that the military's power is going to be undermined. Of course, they are going to maintain some power. But the reality is this: the negotiations provide mechanisms to submit the military to civilian control. That's the key achievement of the negotiations. Many things are going to be dismantled — the civil

defense, the civilian patrols and, of course, the hegemony that the military has created over the entire security apparatus. They could attempt to recoup that kind of power, but they will be forcefully opposed in that case. For example, the FMLN isn't going to dismantle its military apparatus until we see that the agreements are on an irreversible path toward being fulfilled. We will have nine months between February 1 and October 1 with our military force as a guarantee that those agreements will be implemented. Don't forget that we have accumulated a great deal of military experience during these years of war. You don't lose that just because you aren't fighting for a year or two. If we need to, we have the potential to put together a new military force in a short period of time.

We are also hoping that the peace agreement will open up the conditions for all the other social and political forces in our country to play a role right now, and to develop the mass struggle. And not only that. The international community will be involved in the verification of all the agreements.

*How can you achieve fundamental economic change in El Salvador, given that the power of the oligarchy hasn't yet been broken, and that they will have the support of international monetary agencies and the U.S. as they put forward their economic models?*

First, through negotiations we achieved the written commitment for the continuation of the agrarian reform program. We also won a guarantee for a line of credit for the poor producers, and we also were able to guarantee that land in the areas of control of the FMLN is going to be given to the people that are living there. The government fought that, arguing that only people who own land right now should have ownership rights. But there are many people who are living on land in the zones without legal right to it, who have not been able to work the land because they don't have credit, or because they were bombed or forced to move again and again. Under the peace agreement, these people will get their land.

We have to accept some realities right now. One of them is that capitalism is not going to disappear overnight in El Salvador. We do not accept the capitalist solution, but we understand that until we change the correlation of forces to our favor and achieve political power, we will have to be in the opposition. And we'll be a strong opposition. We are completely convinced that the FMLN is the most influential political force in El Salvador. And this is an advantage that we have right now.

Everything in El Salvador will be upside down in the next few years. So many things will change — the military, the constitution, etc. But in the middle of that will be a class struggle, the rich versus the poor. The poor will have better conditions to wage that fight than they had in the past. That is the difference.



We believe that the ARENA government has already made a big mistake in their economic strategy. If they accepted some kind of deal or compromise with the FMLN and the popular movement around economic issues, they would be in a better position to win the elections of 1994. So far, however, they haven't even accepted basic things like establishing price controls, and raising the minimum wage. That sets the terms for a big fight over these things this year. And the instability is going to continue.

*What economic role do you see Latin American countries like Mexico, Brazil or Venezuela playing in El Salvador over the next few years?*

The Latin American governments are really nervous about the international situation. They know that the U.S. is going to try to impose its will on them, and this is feared. On the other hand, all these governments need financial support. They try to create a balance between these two factors. Also, these governments need to project an image of leadership if they want some independence from the United States. That's why Mexico, for example, was so involved with the negotiations in El Salvador. So there's a small space in which we can work with these governments.

In terms of expecting massive economic support from Latin America, forget it, that's not a reality. All the governments in Latin America know that it's necessary to develop economically. They know that the only way to get help is from the industrial countries of the capitalist world. But they know that many of the economic policies of the capitalist world, like the austerity programs of the IMF, work to undermine any support they might have among their own people. This has been the dynamic — and you can see that nobody stays in power in Latin America for more than one term. That's why all these governments are trying to implement the IMF policies cautiously, by doses, not by shock therapy.

In the case of El Salvador, the U.S. has an obligation to finance — for at least some period of time — the reconstruction. Why? After all the commitment the Reagan Administration made to winning the war in El Salvador, if they now simply say "good bye," what image will it project as they try to provide leadership to the world? At least they have to cover their backs.

*So you expect them to aid ARENA?*

Not necessarily. They face a tricky situation. Two forces exist, one couldn't defeat the other. This hasn't changed yet. The U.S. may not want to just keep pouring money in while the social unrest continues.

*But don't you expect them to provide some level of*

*economic support to ARENA in order to help ARENA win the political struggle?*

Definitely! They're going to do that, but at the same time they're going to look for ways to avoid a social confrontation. Because if they only give the money to ARENA, and ARENA imposes an economic austerity package, this is not going to work in El Salvador. They have to recognize that there is another powerful force in the country. That force is the FMLN and all the organizations around it, in alliance. Those are hard realities that the United States has to accept.

Of course we're going to be at a disadvantage in terms of financial resources, but remember that, with our meager resources, we have been fighting this war for eleven years. We are quite capable of doing more with less.

*You've talked about the advantages that you see for the FMLN in the current situation. What do you see as the dangers in entering this peace process?*

The dangers we see are these: First, that a sector of the army and ARENA will try to open up a dirty war. That's for real. They are going to try to transfer what the security forces have been doing to a new clandestine network. We don't see how they will succeed. Of course, they can kill some compañeros and compañeras, but they won't be able to overturn the process just with death squads.

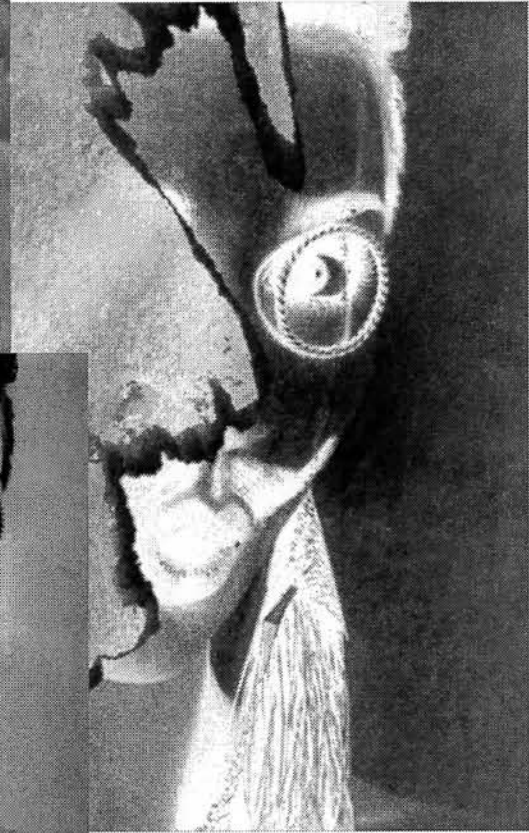
The other danger we see is that the army still remains a power. How the army's hands will be tied is not yet completely clear. So that is a danger. But they will be weakened and they won't be receiving the same levels of military aid, or command the same percentage of the Salvadoran budget.

The third danger would emerge if the death squads and army combine and don't allow the accords to be implemented. Then the election of 1994 will be a fraud, and you will see a new war opening up in El Salvador. Because this is not something that the FMLN is just going to accept. That's the worst case scenario, but we don't see the conditions for this to occur right now. There are too many political forces involved with this process, there are too many tendencies that support the negotiations and support the agreements. I'm not saying that ARENA can't work to change these conditions, but they will have to confront a massive popular upheaval if they try.

We see these agreements as a partial victory, because we're not yet in power. But these agreements are going to transform Salvadoran society. We're still going to be competing with ARENA, but we're transferring that confrontation to a different field. It will be a difficult struggle, but if we succeed, we will have shaped a new strategy that will have tremendous impact throughout Latin America. □

# A FEMINIST GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

BY JUDITH  
MIRKINSON



**T**HE “B” WORD HAS BEEN SHOWING up in my vocabulary lately. I thought it had been banned forever — a symbol of women’s oppression that I, for one, would not use. But I’ve caught myself thinking it and almost saying it out loud — that “bitch.”

And I’ve been called it more lately too, and heard it used to describe other women all the time. “Fucking bitch,” says the man who couldn’t pass me in his car. “Fucking bitch,” says the woman of another ex-friend.

Bitch, bimbo, cunt: all words to describe women that have no parallel in words to describe men, words that are all too common in our vocabulary and that neatly describe the situation of women these days.

And then there’s that “F” word which is becoming *less and less* common and is almost a dirty word in itself. You know which one I’m talking about: feminism. It’s being blamed for everything from sexual dysfunction to unhappy children.

Given how these two words are being used or abused, I shouldn’t have been so surprised by the mass media’s “objectivity” as male *and* female anchors pontificated about the believability of both Hill and Thomas, or that



they ignored the fact that over a thousand Black women had published an ad in the *New York Times* condemning the confirmation of Thomas. But I have to admit I was taken aback. No, given the situation of feminism and women-hating, none of the garbage that was the Thomas confirmation hearings should have been that surprising to anyone, especially women.

Nor was the next public humiliation — the William Kennedy Smith rape trial, when after no time at all he was declared *innocent* — that surprising. Hadn't I just bet my office mate that he'd be acquitted, just as I had bet my "but-is-flirting-all-that-bad" boss that Thomas would be confirmed?

So I wasn't so surprised when, after the Thomas/Hill hearings, one of those altogether-too-common white male murderers decided to gun down women in Texas. After all, hadn't he just been given permission to disrespect, disbelieve and despise women by the Thomas confirmation proceedings?

their husbands or the discussions at work. Millions of women are angry and confused. It's no wonder that Susan Faludi's book, *Backlash*, has become a bestseller, so much so that *Time* put her on the cover with Gloria Steinem to discuss the backlash against feminism.

At the same time, it is very curious, not to say upsetting, that feminism is getting such a bad reputa-



Poster by Fireworks Graphics and Prairie Fire Organizing Committee. Original Art by Robbin Henderson, "White Men in Suits"

No, none of it was all that surprising, but it was shocking in every sense of the word. During the Thomas hearings and the subsequent Smith trial, I felt that I was on trial. As Anita Hill described being humiliated and harassed, I, along with millions of women, knew what she was talking about. And, as she was questioned and harassed by the committee, I felt exposed and humiliated myself: assaulted, stripped down, my legs forced wide open, ripped apart.

I wasn't alone in those feelings. Nor was I alone in the feelings of deep all-encompassing rage at what was going on. Many women described the fights at home with

tion, even among women. Even women who are feminists are "distancing" themselves. The phrase, "I'm not a feminist, but..." is becoming very popular. (Unfortunately, so is, "I'm not a feminist and I'm proud of it.")

Why are people so threatened and so worried?

What is the essence of feminism? At its core, feminism shatters the notion of woman as object, a thing, less than human, to be owned, controlled and commodified. By doing so, feminism strives to give us as woman — and, by extension, children and men — back our humanity, for it challenges basic power relationships

which make some people more equal than others. Its goal is to make us full participants in our society, in our culture, to give us the full range of opportunities to do whatever, think whatever, be whatever. Feminism allows us to look at the way society is organized from a different perspective and to judge what is important from the experiences of women.

Feminism also allows us to love each other as lesbians, if we so desire; and it lets us be full sexual human beings rather than objects of male power and rage.

Sounds good, right? But then, in this age of "re-thinking" and "re-analysis of the socialist experience," why isn't a discussion of feminism and the radical transformation of women's condition an integral part of the discussions of the failure of socialism? Why aren't these discussions a vital part of any democratic process?

### FEMINISM AND DEMOCRACY

The left seems to be as mired in male supremacy as the right. For the most part, left-wing revolutions have refused to acknowledge the impact and significance of patriarchy in the way they analyze history. This affects their analysis, of course; but it also severely limits their vision — how they're going to change this whole mess.

For openers, let's discuss the former "socialist" societies. Do you remember all those pictures of the leaders of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe? They were seas of white men in ruffled suits. An occasional woman could be found. True, childcare was provided, abortion was legal and there were many women in the professions. But the care of home and family remained the responsibility of women. The attitudes towards women and sexuality remained very traditional, as did those towards lesbians and gay men (which, to put it mildly, left a lot to be desired).

In discussing the question of democracy in these countries, the left has not focused enough attention on women and their lack of participation in society. In fact, one can see the consequences of the failure of socialist bloc policies on women in the "post-socialist" countries of Eastern Europe. A major part of the "democratic backlash" is *the suppression of women*. The mass media has focused on how horrible it was for women under "socialism." And yet, neither the right nor the left is analyzing why the backlash against women has become such a strong component of these new societies.

Revolutionary movements usually acknowledge that women have a vital role to play, with women leading many aspects of work (although rarely in top leadership positions). All too often, however, this is seen only in the context of "furthering the revolutionary process." Freeing up women from their traditional responsibilities is seen as necessary only when this tradition is so oppressive that it holds women back from participating at all. Even when women are involved in large numbers (as in El Salvador, the Philippines and Nicaragua), this is often limited to support roles. These can range from the traditional cooking and cleaning and caring for the

children to the roles of planners, community organizers, medical and educational personnel. Often too, when the "revolution" has been won, women are relegated back to the family.

There are exceptions to this general rule. For instance, Cuba has perhaps the most advanced set of laws concerning the rights of women and children (although the practice still lags well behind the principle). In Eritrea, women fighters made up a high percentage of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. Feminist organizations exist or are emerging all over the world to struggle over the direction of women's organizing.

One of the strongest women's organizations is GABRIELA, an umbrella of over 100 women's groups in the Philippines. GABRIELA began as a women's organization to defeat the Marcos dictatorship, but, as time went by, its membership and mission changed. Today, it is an out-front, women's-only, feminist movement dedicated to bringing women's concerns to the national struggle and vice versa. It looks at national issues through women's eyes. Thus, women's rights are seen as human rights; violence against women is discussed in the context of women political prisoners, women battered at home, women raped by the military, and prostitutes who work at the bases. The issue of women's empowerment is vital to GABRIELA's view of overthrowing the U.S.-backed regime and the establishment of a democratic state. The Philippines is also one of the few countries with a clandestine women's organization, MAKIBAKA (part of the National Democratic Front), which is dedicated to insuring that the rights of women are part and parcel of any nationalist transformation.

But despite the efforts of both individuals and organizations, it is rare that revolutionary struggles take up women's issues as ones that affect the whole society and therefore must be addressed by everybody. Advancing women is still not seen as an integral part of democratization and overthrow of colonialism and imperialism. In fact, the opposite is sometimes true. Citing a need to return to traditional values, nationalists often embrace the most repressive attitudes towards women.

The suppression and oppression of women has always been an essential part of colonialism and part and parcel of western "civilization" and control. Aspects of western-style male supremacy have crept into every colonized culture and society, sometimes supplanting the indigenous culture's view of women, sometimes combining with them.

This relationship between male supremacy and colonialism must be explored much more thoroughly. Too often people ignore the differences between women from colonized nations and the colonizing country, claiming that all women are the same. On the other hand, issues of male supremacy are frequently dismissed as irrelevant to the anti-colonial struggle, and feminism is written off as a western (colonialist) ideology. Both errors have had a disastrous impact on the development of feminism and feminist



consciousness.

So, women's progress stagnates. In revolutionary movements around the globe, the published ideologues are usually still men; the leaders are also usually men. Even in situations where women are the main participants (such as textile workers), men will be in the leadership of the union.

A case in point: last summer the FSLN held its first party Congress since their election defeat. There was a huge struggle within the party about the election of leadership and democracy within the Sandinista Front. For one thing, the proposed leadership was all male, some of whom were under criticism for corruption and male supremacy, among other things.

One of the most well-known and respected women leaders of the Front, Dora Maria Tellez, was put forward to be added to the body. The suggestion was roundly defeated. Feeling backed up against the wall by Chamorro, the U.S. and the general situation, it was decided that the National Directorate would be voted for as a single slate. Otherwise, it was claimed, differences among the leadership would be viewed as weaknesses within the party. Yet, in the end, two more men were added to the leadership, while Dora Maria Tellez was not. Clearly the leadership saw nothing anti-democratic or contradictory in all this.

Why have communist parties, revolutionary organizations and socialist fronts acted as if somehow there can be fundamental change without the liberation of women? Why is the liberation of women often posed in contradiction to national liberation or socialist transformation, rather than as a fundamental part of it? Why do so many activists, both men and women, insist that "women's issues" are "secondary"? Why are so many people afraid that if you talk about the needs of women, somehow society is going to suffer?

### DEEP, SONOROUS VOICES

It's amazing how many rationales there are for not dealing with the liberation of women. Do these deep, sonorous voices sound familiar?

"Women don't want to be a part of the leadership; they feel inadequate. It's not on purpose, it just turned out that way. There just weren't any qualified women. Does it really matter?"

"Women *are* represented — as a sector, just like workers or teachers. We asked all the different forces/groups/organizations to send representatives/speakers/leaders...and they just happened to be men. What difference does it make anyway?"

"Feminism is old hat. Even women don't think it's important. It doesn't matter that nine-tenths of the speakers are men; women are equal already."

"You're just elevating the question of women over the needs of everybody."

"Yes, battering is very bad, but if we advertise that men in the movement are beating their wives, it will be

very bad publicity."

"Discussions of sexuality are secondary. Besides, if we talk about women's sexuality, we will alienate people."

"Homosexuality is decadent; it upsets the family. Lesbianism doesn't exist. Besides if we talk about gayness, it will alienate people."

"If we advocate abortion, we will alienate people."

"If we advocate men doing domestic work or taking care of the children, we will alienate people."

"Women don't want to be combatants — they're better at the nurturing roles."

"Women's issues will be recognized when women organize about them."

"Sexism is important — but don't you think all your struggles with the men are a bit extreme?"

"The women's question is an important one, but it is secondary."

"Women will win their equality through the process of socialist revolution and after socialism has been established."

It's interesting that the concepts of socialism or revolution — which revolutionaries, after all, have tried to teach to people for the last 50 years — are thought to be so easily understandable, but the idea that women can be equal to men is just too hard to fathom.

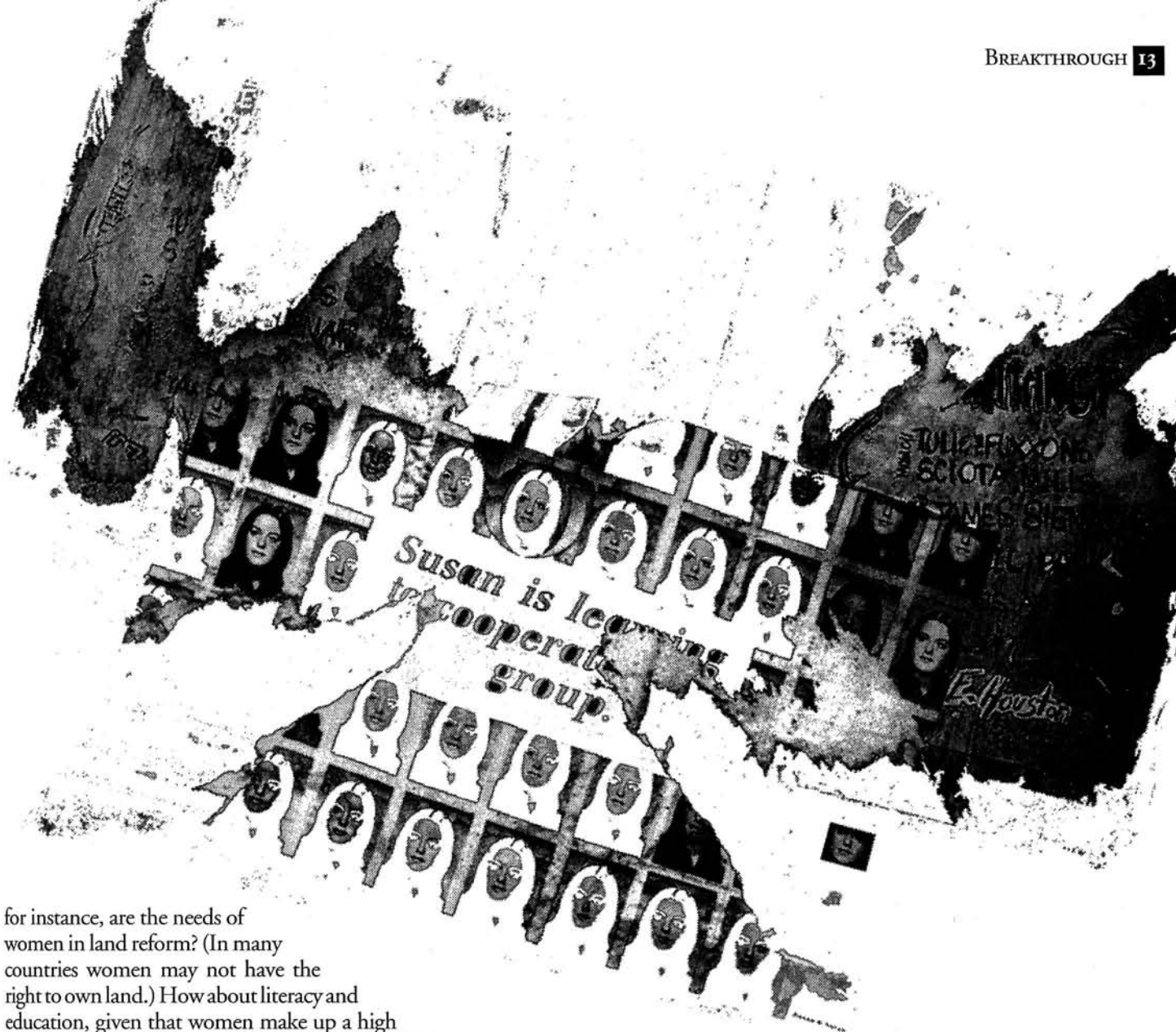
To all this, I have the impulse to respond: "NOT!"

I would argue instead that feminism has to be one of the cornerstones of any progressive movement, and that one of the ways to judge a movement for democratic and social change is by analyzing the progress of women within that movement and its program for women.

Is it so difficult to understand that the male supremacy of revolutionary movements only contributes to their lack of democracy? From the very beginning, anti-democratic power relations go unchallenged by the "most conscious" people. When organizations continue to have only male leadership or spokespeople, they reinforce the idea that women are incapable. The idea of leadership stagnates and becomes one-dimensional. Only certain attributes — male attributes — are considered to be of leadership quality.

If women survive and become leaders in this atmosphere, they either do so as exceptions — thus furthering the distances between themselves and most other women — or they are castigated for the very qualities that seem so attractive in the men they are emulating. Aggressiveness and decisiveness are far more tolerated in men than in women. Most women feel they don't have the self-confidence or brilliance to lead. One has the feeling that most men secretly agree with them.

Another way people like to deal with the issues of women is to talk about them as a "sector" like students or the church. This is too narrow, although it does guarantee that there will at least be some women's representation. Instead, the needs of women need to be integrated into strategies for every aspect of life. What,



for instance, are the needs of women in land reform? (In many countries women may not have the right to own land.) How about literacy and education, given that women make up a high percentage of the illiterate. Women's sexuality, full reproductive rights, violence against women, sexual harassment and equal pay for women must become issues for everyone to discuss. So, too, should women's needs in health, housing and employment.

When women are encouraged to participate in their own liberation, as well as the transformation of their society, all their strengths come into play along with all their commitment. When this does not happen, women become alienated or sink back into the reigning patriarchal and reactionary culture — the exact opposite of what is really needed.

Women's knowledge of life is long and deep. The ability to survive and to nurture demands extraordinary creativity and intelligence. Yet women's participation is still considered secondary by most political movements.

At the root continues to be the idea that gender relationships are natural, that, ultimately, biology is destiny. For thousands of years, women have been told that our minds and abilities are inferior to men. Our achievements have been denigrated, made impossible, hidden or stolen. How many women artists had their

works stolen or plagiarized? How many women have been denied an education? Even today women are not allowed to be the great artists and creators. Just recently yet another study documented that in the U.S. (and it's sure to be true elsewhere, as well) girls are given an education inferior to that of boys, especially in the sciences.

Yet in the early days of herstory, women were the creators and men were the outsiders. Women had control of the most basic element on the earth, the reproduction of life, and the responsibility for creating an environment for that life to survive. There is more and more evidence that women were the first makers of tools, the first to domesticate animals, the first to develop agriculture, and the people who passed this knowledge down through the generations.

Family and property were passed down through the mother and the women relations within family groups. Women were revered and controlled their own persons and bodies.

The overthrow of matrilineal and matrifocal societies



did not occur overnight (a real discussion would fill the pages of many books). But one thing is clear: to have power, men had to control reproduction, which in turn meant controlling women's very being. Sex was linked to procreation which was linked to marriage and property relations. Women's sexuality came to be defined by and for men. Sexual control took, and still takes, many forms: marriage, rape, the ideas of chastity and virginity, compulsory heterosexuality, making abortion illegal, keeping knowledge of women's sexuality to a minimum.

That's why one of the first things that feminist organizations have done, whether in the U.S., Nicaragua, South Africa or the Philippines, is begin to talk openly about women's sexuality. CONAMUS in El Salvador lists women's orgasm and sexual satisfaction as two of women's basic rights. Women's self-examination, and the discovery of their own "insides," is a basic part of international feminism 101. Diagrams of women's anatomy out of books like *Our Bodies, Our Selves* are copied all over the world. When Ann Koedt wrote *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm*, it was eagerly distributed and read by literally millions of women. The very notion of the clitoris as the main source of sexual pleasure for women was a great discovery. Not only was the simple "in and out" unacceptable, but, lo and behold, women could get great sexual pleasure without men!

However, this sexual liberation turns out to have two sides. On the one hand, women's sexuality is acknowledged. But the sexual imagery remains very narrow. Women are still judged more by their looks than by anything else. And the looks have to conform. Just look at the covers of 75% of the magazines. There isn't a lot of diversity in body type out there. Women's self-esteem may be at an all-time low. In the U.S., there's more anorexia, bulimia and eating disorders than ever before. The Dow-Corning breast implant scandal has exposed the lengths women will take to be what they think is more attractive to men. There's a constant double message: if we don't dress to please men, we're told we're uptight. If we do, we're literally fair game.

### WOMEN AS OBJECT...AGAIN

Is it a male conspiracy? Not exactly. It's gone beyond that. No, women's personae is embedded in the culture. Women's position, whether on our backs or fronts, has to be seen as *normal and natural*.

Feminism doesn't accept the norm. It questions, raises challenges. Obviously it has to be contained and beaten back. The best way to do that is to incorporate those parts of women's liberation that are tolerable and to blame the rest for women's unhappiness. Sure, some women can become doctors and lawyers and journalists; but the reality is that most women have to work outside the home anyway.

But, according to the new line, consciousness-raising and "man-hating" have to go. Feminism can't be seen as a source of real power. It makes everybody uptight; it's responsible for women becoming lonely, miserable, old maids.

The transformation of the home has screeched to a halt (75% of the housework is still done by women). Male violence can still be examined, but only *outside* of the context of women's oppression and objectification. The commodification of women remains paramount in the working of the society. Sexuality is still tied to the same old images. Motherhood is being re-exalted. Millions of teenage women think the only way they can get love and respect is by becoming a mother at an age when they haven't even finished needing mothering themselves.

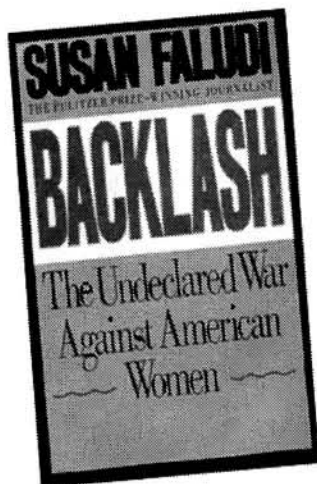
And on the other side? "Bitch", "whore" — god, even "chick" is making a comeback. Woman as object remains a powerful archetype.

The statistics are repeated often about rape, child abuse, poverty, health care and so on. The reality is that, although the situation in some ways for women is vastly different than twenty years ago, in all areas of life, women are less equal than men.

And around the world? Millions of women are mutilated and tortured through female "circumcision." Illiteracy of women in many countries is the rule. Trafficking in women is all too common. The selling of women as domestic servants and brides is a cornerstone of Philippine economic life. The same is true in Thailand and it's rising in other Asian and African countries. The *New York Times* recently reported that one out of six women in South Korea are sex workers "servicing" U.S. servicemen. In many areas of the world, childcare and health care do not exist. Women from Peru to Bolivia to Romania are forced by economic conditions to sell their children for adoption to American or European families or abandon them to the streets.

Women work the fields, do the word processing, assemble the microchips and, yet, see little, if any, of the wealth from these activities. When this work is done, women go home and take care of the family, cook the food, wash the clothes, tend the children and the husband, if the husband is there.

We come from different cultures, histories and traditions, but all of us have been affected by Western imperialist culture in one way or another. We can all ask, "Why should violence against women be tolerated in any society? Why should sexual mutilation be condoned? Why should millions of women be condemned to lives of poverty, illness and illiteracy? Why should women be viewed as property along with their children? Why should women feel that our self-worth is less than a man's or dependent on a man's vision? Why should women's voices not be heard as often as men's? Why should women's creativity not be seen as often as men's? Why should women not be an equal part of the decision-making process? Why should women not be able to control our own reproduction and sexuality? Why should women have less money than men? Why should women have less power than men?" These are some of the questions that feminists ask. How we answer them will mean a society doomed once again or one that will go forward toward transformation. □



## “BACKLASH: The Undeclared War Against American Women”

REVIEW BY SALLY THOMAS

**T**WENTY-THREE WEEKS (AND COUNTING) ON THE BEST-SELLER LIST MEANS that by now, like thousands of others, you have already read this hefty volume documenting “the undeclared war against American women.” If not, you’ve almost certainly heard some of the debate set off by the success of Susan Faludi’s surprise hit, *Backlash*. I myself couldn’t wait for the paperback, and coughed up twenty-four bucks to read all about it. I also squeezed into my local bookstore on the night of Susan Faludi’s guest appearance. I wanted to know who this brave soul was, and what she had to say.

You don’t have to be too perceptive to recognize that in the last ten years feminism has sustained some outstanding blows. In the last year alone, the broadcasts of the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court hearings and the William Kennedy Smith rape trial put millions of women through an emotional wringer. At best these occasions gave us an opportunity to speak out about the issues of sexual harassment, violence against women, and the relative powerlessness of women in American society. But in the end, the same old dirty laundry came through in the wash, and women were left carting it around on our backs. One of the few bright spots in this period was the publication of a book whose title sums up our predicament and provides us with a cogent argument of the not-so-happencstance downfall of feminism.

The recent turn of events has forced a lot of women to gulp and take a harsh look at how women were never able to successfully wrestle power — or perhaps more importantly, change the terms of power — from the white male establishment. So here we are all over again, essentially at square one.

If you wonder how this dismal post-feminist period came to pass, check out Faludi’s book. It’s packed with loads of documentation, tons of facts you probably overlooked, and a powerful set of arguments pointing out the whys and wherefores of the attack on feminism. This book is especially for all of you who “don’t get it,” who, for one set of reasons or another, think that women aren’t more oppressed than men. This book is also for all of you men who give lip service to the fact that women are oppressed, but who don’t usually give it a second thought until a woman points out (again) that she’s tired of your sexist behavior. So all of you exceptionally astute leftists, count yourselves in!

Faludi shows us how this most recent backlash on American women follows a pattern similar to those that have taken place in periods following intense waves of political action and organizing by women on their own behalf. “These outbreaks are backlashes,” writes Faludi, “because they have always arisen in reaction to women’s ‘progress,’ caused not simply by a bedrock of misogyny but by the specific efforts of contemporary women to

improve their status, efforts that have been interpreted time and again by men — especially men grappling with real threats to their economic and social well-being on other fronts — as spelling their own masculine doom.”

Faludi, like many of us, was irritated by some of those landmark “studies” that attributed modern women’s unhappiness and increasingly infertile status to feminism. Not willing to take them at face value, she did some investigation and found that, contrary to the findings, women had benefitted more from feminism than from these bogus studies. For example, Faludi cites the 1982 findings of studies printed in the *New England Journal of Medicine* claiming that women between the ages of thirty-one and thirty-five risked a 40% chance of being infertile. This was news — most previous studies found that women’s fertility began dropping only in their late thirties or early forties — and all the major newspapers and magazines scooped it up for their front covers. As Faludi points out, the study included not just a statistical report, but also a “paternalistic three-page editorial, exhorting women to ‘reevaluate their goals’ and have their babies before they started careers.” Later, many prominent demographers disputed the sample of women studied and the researchers’ conclusions. Even the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics reported in 1985 that fertility had actually *increased* slightly for women in their early thirties. These findings got little if any attention in the major media. The hype had started, and the “biological clock” stories were a great success. Besides, it gave the media and popular culture an opportunity to lay blame on feminists — it was great soap-opera material, and gave women something to worry about.

This study is just one of many examples Faludi examines to uncover a clear bias aimed at independent women. Soft-spoken and unassuming, Faludi had the incredible knack of getting behind-the-scenes details of major anti-feminists. She observed the domestic tyranny imposed by antiabortion fanatic and founder of Operation Rescue, Randall Terry, on his wife, Cindy. (“I told her you don’t talk,” Terry warned his wife, afraid that she might steal some attention.) Faludi also shared



a brief lunch with the drum-beating guru “wild man,” Robert Bly, to observe not only his men’s movement contempt for feminists, but also his violent temper and mood swings. Faludi also reports on similarly revealing meetings with Guess Jeans magnate Paul Marciano, liberated-turned-conservative (the former “Gloria Steinem of Men’s Liberation”) Warren Farrell, and anti-feminist philosophy couple Michael and Margarita Levin, among others — some of the major backlash trendsetters.

Faludi’s in-depth documentation covering so many corners of American life has led some readers to dismiss her for promoting a simple-minded conspiracy theory. Actually, Faludi claims, precisely because there is no conspiracy, women face a greater challenge opposing the backlash. “It is most powerful,” Faludi writes, “when it goes private, when it lodges inside a woman’s mind and turns her vision inward, until she imagines the pressure is all in her head, until she begins to enforce the backlash, too — on herself.”

It is this point that I find particularly interesting to ponder — how simultaneously subtle and blatant anti-feminist mechanisms serve to disarm all of us, even the most pro-feminist. Sometimes it is just the language. For example, how many of us, without thinking twice, use the term “pro-life” when we refer to antiabortion activists? Faludi makes it clear how terminology like “pro-life” came into use — and it was not accidental. Antiabortion leaders like Joseph Scheidler consciously identified the importance of language in helping them win the abortion debate. Scheidler emphasized the value of presenting terms like “pro-life” to the press in his manual *Closed: 99 Ways to Stop Abortion*: “[R]arely use the word ‘fetus.’ Use ‘baby’ or ‘unborn child’.... You don’t have to surrender to their vocabulary. They will start using your terms if you use them.” He was right.

Faludi is adept at unraveling the progression of anti-feminism in popular culture. Women were quietly, but surely, Faludi illustrates, instructed to surrender in their battles with men in countless advice manuals of the era. Take your pick: *Smart Women/Foolish Choices*, *Women Men Love/Women Men Leave*, *How to Marry the Man of Your Choice*, *If I’m So Wonderful, Why Am I Single?*, *No More Lonely Nights: Overcoming the Hidden Fears That Keep You from Getting Married*, ...these manuals and more all carried versions of the same message. As Faludi concludes, “The ’80s advice writers...seemed to go out of their way to urge women to stop challenging social constraints and to keep their thoughts to themselves — to learn to fit the mold rather than break it.” Certainly the left was not immune to the effects of this line of thinking. They’ve done their own share of stirring the pot. I know plenty of men in this category who have admitted to being at least secretly happy when women retreated from the early days of rage. And though these men may outwardly agree that feminism has been unduly vilified, internally they all know that a rebirth of feminism will make them more accountable to change. Get ready, boys!

Now here’s where I make a *big* exception to my wholehearted fanfare of Faludi: I was particularly disappointed that Faludi steered clear of linking the backlash on lesbians to the backlash on women. It’s not an act of generosity to include lesbians in an analysis of feminism — it’s on target. Unfortunately, feminists like Faludi, whether they intend to or not, still imply that lesbian oppression is less important than women’s oppression when they shy away from overtly affirming lesbianism. After all, how many women are afraid of the label “feminist” *because* it might imply that they are “man-haters” (i.e., lesbians). Faludi could have easily made this point, and should have. How can women achieve independence and sexual freedom if, just under the surface, lies an unchecked taboo on lesbianism? Setting the parameters of feminism in a framework of what is socially acceptable is not freedom.

Need a recent example of this kind of mentality? *New York Times* columnist William Safire booted “macho feminism” (read lesbian-tainted feminism) and announced the new and sensible trend for the 90s: “womanism.” (NYT, 1/27/92) That way, you can have your cake and eat it too (as long as it’s *natural*, a point he emphasized in case there was any confusion)! “Militant feminism,” he wrote, “whose shock troops were necessary in their day, is now undermining the cause of equal rights.” He quotes novelist Sally Quinn to back him up: “Many women have come to see the feminist movement as anti-male, anti-child, anti-family, anti-feminine, often with overtones of lesbianism and man-hating.” For most of these counts, Faludi’s *Backlash* is a great source to turn to, documenting how feminism came to be identified with everything *unnatural*, especially being single and infertile. So why did Faludi stop there? I can’t help but think that she purposely left out the topic of lesbianism to make her book more palatable to the mainstream market. Faludi is so great with tearing apart “groundbreaking” statistical stories — I only wish she formulated some of her own statistics with a quick tabulation of how frequently the “F” word is discredited by the “L” word.

Nonetheless, it’s heartening that this book has received a lot of coverage — excerpts have been printed in dozens of magazines and newspapers. Faludi even made the cover of *Time* with Gloria Steinem. This book’s very success has made some people suspicious of its value. We’ve become used to feminism’s unpopularity in the mainstream. Or maybe we’re sad to see it still so dominantly represented by white middle-class women. While it’s true that this book is not the best source for learning about the specific realities of women of color, I believe that its triumph is its visibility in a period of major defeats for women. Maybe this will be the first in a steady stream of books and other works, that seize wide public attention, by women who are saying, “We’ve had enough of this shit!” We need everything we can get our hands on to work us up enough to get back on the streets, and to talk back the next time some man (or group of men) tries to pull one over on us. □



# de Ambiente

*interviews  
with members of  
the Nicaraguan Movement  
of Lesbian Feminists  
and Gay Men*

**I**n June of 1991, Nicaraguan lesbians and gay men were interviewed on the Sandinista radio station; the country's first openly lesbian poet, Lupita Sequeira, read her erotic poetry at the university; and gay and lesbian organizers held a dance and forum. All these activities were part of Managua's first gay and lesbian pride celebration and marked the emergence of an openly political gay and lesbian movement in Nicaragua. That same month Arawn Eibhlyñ and Tede Matthews interviewed Alfonso Gonzales at the 13th annual conference of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), held in Acapulco, Mexico.

Alfonso is the coordinator of the gay men's collective of the Nicaraguan Movement of Lesbian Feminists and Gay Men. He and Lupita Sequeira, representing the lesbian feminist collective of the Movement (who was interviewed a few months later) talked to Breakthrough about the conditions of lesbians and gay men in Nicaragua, their experiences under the Sandinista and the Chamorro gov-

ernments, and their organizing efforts among lesbian and gay Nicaraguans.

The Movement is currently trying to raise funds to acquire a center to house a lesbian and gay men's archive, an office, and space for workshops, meeting rooms and recreational activities. Contributions can be sent to the Sochequetzal Lesbian and Gay Foundation, Aparto Postal C1, Centro Comercial Managua, Managua, Nicaragua. For further information, contact Hazel Fonseca (lesbian feminist collective) or Alfonso Gonzales (gay men's collective), both at the same address.

Arawn Eibhlyñ is a member of PFOC and ACT UP! San Francisco. Tede Matthews is a member of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and the Modern Times Bookstore Collective in San Francisco. Matthews is presently writing a novel based on the life of a Nicaraguan gay man.





# interview

with

alfonso

gonzales

*Arawn: Could you tell us a little about yourself and your group?*

**Alfonso:** My name is Alfonso Gonzales. I work with a group in Managua that is made up of two collectives: one of lesbian feminists and one of gay men. I'm coordinator of the gay men's collective.

This group began with some lesbians and gay men meeting together in people's houses. This has been going on informally for four or five years. We started out by talking about AIDS in Nicaragua. The yellow journalism of the periodicals, which stated that AIDS was a homosexual plague, bothered us a lot as gays.

We asked some of our friends from outside the country to send us some information. Four years ago, we formed a group called CEPSIDA (Popular AIDS Health Education Collective).

Out of all this we started thinking more about what we could do for ourselves as gay men and lesbians, about the problems that we have on the individual level. We saw that many of us shared the same problems: repression, discrimination; and we felt very bad. We thought that by talking about AIDS we could also organize lesbians and gay men. Up until this point a collective of gay men and lesbians had never existed in Nicaragua.

After a while our meetings had more than 100 people and we saw the need for a separation between the AIDS work and the lesbian and gay work.

*Tede: Could you describe how you organized other gay people?*

**Alfonso:** First we began to meet in the parks, because we wanted to go where gay men were. The Central Park in Managua is the main cruising place, along with some of the market places. We started to go there, to tell our stories, to talk together and to other people. That's how we attracted people and brought them together.

After this we started to meet in the houses of gay men and lesbian friends, those who were accepted by their families and whose families would let us meet in their houses.

*Tede: What kinds of problems do gay people in Nicaragua face?*

**Alfonso:** First, there are problems with our families.

Most gays live with their families, but they hide their gayness. Many families figure it out and throw them out of the house. They end up living in friends' houses, moving from house to house. That's very difficult.

There are also problems wherever we study. Some teachers discriminate against gays. We might end up feeling bad and having to leave school. So we're turned out of our houses, turned out by the community, thrown out of school; we can't find work. If somebody figures out that we're gay, they kick us out of work.

The country is in a horrible economic situation. More than 50% of the active working population is unemployed. For those who are working, when somebody is fired, we're always first. They say, "You don't have any children, you don't have obligations, so you should go first." Therefore they're saying that as gays we have no rights.

*Arawn: How do you react to anti-gay remarks on the street?*

**Alfonso:** We've talked among ourselves about how people express their homophobia and how we should react. It depends on how they approach us, how they treat us. It depends on the gay person, too. Some of us are very effeminate, very gay. And people start saying, "Hey, little faggot, little queen." In some cases, they have gotten physical. They'll throw a rock at them or something. The reaction to drag queens is much more aggressive in Nicaragua. And the drag queens then have to defend themselves. They start screaming at the attackers, "Oh, you're an idiot, here you are hitting a woman. How dare you hit a woman?"

Quite often other people intervene. They say, "Leave her alone. It's not important how she is. Why are you doing this to him?" So the aggression gets diffused. Generally the drag queens are more aggressive. They break bottles; they throw bottles back; they throw rocks; they create a big scandal.

Those who have the worst problems are those who try to hide their homosexuality. When they experience aggression, they just go further back into the shadows. They don't react to the homophobic treatment. It affects their self-esteem too much.

*Arawn: Has the experience of organizing lesbian and gay men changed from the Sandinistas to the Chamorro*

government?

**Alfonso:** After the triumph of the revolution, although there was never an official policy of repression on the part of the party, it was the same in our workplaces: they questioned us. Party functionaries at middle levels were given free reign to treat homosexuals any way they wanted to, without there being an official policy. It's the same now. But there has never been a definite position by either government about us. And it probably has to do with the fact that until recently lesbians and gay men haven't been open and public.

Now we're going to see a reaction, because we have appeared in public as a movement of lesbians and gay men, fighting for our rights. We just celebrated Gay Pride Week and held some public activities. And the first commentary came out in the press.

We're really expecting to see a very strong political repression. We know who's in government now. They're an older crowd, very conservative, moralistic, hypocritical. Shortly after the new government took office, there was a report in *La Prensa* (the right-wing paper) by a member of UNO [Chamorro's party—*Ed*], recommending that the first thing the mayor of Managua had to do was clean the central park of homosexuals and lumpen and delinquents.

**Arawn:** How do you see the relationship between the work you're doing and that of the Sandinistas?

**Alfonso:** A large number of us gays and lesbians who formed the Movement are members of the Frente Sandinista. We've all devoted ourselves to various parts of the revolution. But we decided that our movement wasn't going to be aligned with the FSLN so that we would be able to attract everybody. Still, we have a positive collaboration with certain members of the National Directorate of the Party who have offered us help. Ex-President Daniel Ortega is one of our supporters. In the film *Sex and the Sandinistas* he was asked about the struggle of gays and lesbians, about machismo, and about the repression against gays and lesbians. He was really open, saying that struggle against machismo and its consequences isn't just a struggle of gays and lesbians; it's a struggle of all Nicaraguans, because machismo attacks everybody.

I feel especially vindicated by this because I was basically kicked out of the party for a short time when word got out that I was gay. So when I was invited to come back into the party, I did so as an openly gay man. I protested verbally that, if they were going to accept me as a militant of the party, they had to accept me as a gay person. I'm going to die a homosexual. Nobody can do anything about it. The higher-ups in the party said, "OK, that's no problem. You should go ahead and keep working."

**Tede:** What kind of work did you do as a member of the Sandinistas?

**Alfonso:** I organized with the Frente in the final offensive against Somoza. I personally was a fighter against the dictator and when the



credit: Tede Matthews

**FSLN** triumphed I joined the army. For ten years I was an executive and a director of the Sandinista army. Afterwards I wanted to work in civilian life. So I started working in a factory; that was where I started doing party work.

**Tede:** In the years that you were in the army, were you openly gay?

**Alfonso:** I was in the closet for most of those years. I wasn't very clear that I was gay and I was very repressed. I was also very frightened that they would find out and I would have problems. So I never had any relations with men within the army. I led a heterosexual life and had various compañeras.

As I was leaving the army, I began to question myself. I thought, "I don't like this way of being. I love men." I decided, "No more women." Since that time I haven't been sexually involved with any women.

When I left the army, I had no friends in civilian life. So I began to make friends. We'd go out to the movies, hang out. On one of these outings I happened to be in the central park, and I had my first experience with homosexuals there. I liked it. I had a great time. So for about three years I hung out in the park.

But I had a lot of problems there. At my work stories



started that I went to the park and was seen with homosexuals. So they started to question me. My base committee and my local party committee said I shouldn't go to the park and hang out with homosexuals because I was a militant of the party and shit like this.

So those were my first gay contacts. But that's also where I first made contact with the men and women of the AIDS education collective. They started talking to me and they asked me if I wanted to work with them. From that moment on I became a militant in the movement.

*Arawn: What kind of work is the collective doing now?*

**Alfonso:** Right now we're doing consciousness-raising among ourselves, the collective members, to accept our homosexuality and to help each other come out of the closet. We're forming our collective politically and ideologically as gays and lesbians. So that each of us with our consciousness can then go out and help to incorporate others. The lesbians are doing all-day workshops more or less every two weeks about sexuality, self-acceptance, and lots of other things. And also together we have formed some self-help groups.

We've started working with some gay psychologists to help the process of consciousness-raising and self-acceptance. These gay psychologists might not have had the opportunity to talk much before about gay identity. So their consciousness is raised and they, in turn, as professionals, can help us.

*Tede: You are also organizing parties. Please tell us about this.*

**Alfonso:** As we know, gays are harassed at home and everywhere. So we decided that once a month we'd have a party. These are really nice. It's great to have this one night when you can just go out and forget all your suffering. We rent a house one day a month, the Benjamin Linder house. It's run by a group of internationalists.

*Tede: What's the relationship with these straight internationalists?*

**Alfonso:** You can imagine what kind of prejudices we might encounter with people like that. One of the groundskeepers saw some guys making love during a party. They told us that we couldn't keep renting the house, that we were supposed to be having a party, not a place to make love in.

We pointed out that our parties are closed, that people have to pay at the door, that the neighbors never complain. But they were reactionary in that way. So for two months we didn't do anything, because that was the only house that supposedly accepted us as homosexuals.

We went to speak with the committee. They readmitted us, but they said they had certain rules. We had no other place, and all the gays demanded that we start doing the parties again. In all of Nicaragua there's

not a single gay bar where we can go and dance. So that's the reason we started the parties up again.

During the parties we project a political and cultural line. We also work with drag queens. They do their show, although now that we've seen what they do here in Acapulco, we realize that we're a hundred years behind the times, because of the poverty in which we live. Wigs are very expensive. The drag queens get their purses robbed. They have to borrow high heels and dresses from their sisters or straight women friends.

These activities make people really happy. It makes them feel that they're among their own people. We all speak the same language.

*Arawn: Can you talk about the impact on the men of feminism and working with the lesbian feminist collective?*

**Alfonso:** Up to this point we've been just starting to understand what feminism and machismo are all about. Mainly we've been trying to strengthen our collective and understand ourselves as homosexual men.

*Tede: Are their tensions between gay boys who aren't politically active and the lesbians?*

**Alfonso:** They come to parties together. At this point there hasn't been any big fight. Since they're all at the stage of raising their consciousness, they realize that they're in the same struggle and they have to work together. They all realize that most of the world rejects us. So we have to join together to defend ourselves.

There's more fear on the part of some of the women about getting involved in these kind of public activities. A lot of them are just getting their first contact with gay men. They're just starting to see what gay men are like, and how they act.

*Arawn: How do you see the role of the lesbian and gay struggle within the overall struggle of the Nicaraguan people.*

**Alfonso:** We think the struggle against homophobia, against gay repression, has to be a struggle of the whole society. Homophobia affects us the heaviest, but it affects everybody. The revolution opened many new ways of thinking. The great majority of young people participated. This political work made them think more openly, make personal decisions, break with the past. It gave them the strength to question, and to make a decision to be brave, to come out.

Before the revolution, people were more conservative, more submissive. They were more likely to hide behind the veil of heterosexuality to please their family. There are a lot of men who at this point in their lives have become grandfathers who could have been grandmothers. And vice versa.

*Arawn: Have you had any discussion about how you can educate straight people about lesbian and gay rights?*

**Alfonso:** The people aren't going to support us unless  
see Alfonso, p. 21

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

# interview

with

*lupita*

*sequeira*

*Arawn: What has been the impact of feminism and feminist organization on the lives of women in Nicaragua generally?*

**Lupita:** The impact has been strong; it has affected the lives of many women in Nicaragua, housewives, peasants, industrial workers. It has made them realize that they have to struggle for social justice, but also to change everyday reality. For example, there is a campaign in the feminist movement against those methods of abortion which have been responsible for women's deaths. The campaign is based in sex education, in giving women a broad orientation about the sexual issue. But there is a lot of attention to medical, social, legal and psychological issues as well.

*What about the relations between men and women? How has that changed?*

Machismo still exists in Nicaragua. It's something which is present in people regardless of their ideologies. And it's difficult to change the mentality of people in fifteen years. But in Nicaragua the revolution has created the social conditions to open people's minds to ideological and political changes — more consciousness, in other words. So, women who are now awake can awaken others little by little. The men can feel these changes too. The behavior of the men has changed a little bit more, more than in 1978.

The participation of women in the revolution is a big force for change. Women have been involved in all the tasks of the revolution, and men have to deal with this in one way or another. Usually, when a couple breaks up, it's because there is another person in the life of one of them, but I have known many couples who have broken up because the machista mentality of the man couldn't accept the woman participating in activities that meant staying out of the house.

Another example: Many, many men in Nicaragua now participate more in household tasks and take more responsibility for the children. These men are learning something new. Commandante Daniel Ortega says, "There are still machista vestiges and we have to overcome these vestiges." This commentary appears in the movie, *Sex and the Sandinistas*.

*To what extent have Sandinista organizations like*

*AMNLAE been able to empower women to change their own lives?*

AMNLAE was created by the Sandinistas to organize women specifically in terms of the revolution and to change society, in general. It wasn't really created to change concrete aspects of women's lives. But, aside from AMNLAE, those who have been at the vanguard in the women's movements have been Sandinistas.

*Have lesbians played an important role in helping to develop the feminist movement? Before the Nicaraguan Movement of Lesbian Feminists and Gay Men formed, were there many lesbians involved in the feminist movement?*

The impact of lesbians has been large. There are lesbians everywhere, some who are open and some who are closeted.

*What about the impact of feminism on lesbians in Nicaragua?*

Yes, feminism has also been very important in the lesbian community and we have been accepted by the rest of the feminist movement as an active part of this movement in all of our activities. A concrete example is the March 8th International Women's Day celebration in which the lesbians had our own booth.

The struggle for feminism has been more open than the struggle around lesbianism. Particularly since the Sandinistas lost the election, the leaders of the party realize they made mistakes. One of those mistakes was not taking the role of women seriously enough. Another was trying to centralize everything and not to let the people express their creativity, be themselves and organize. The defeat in the elections has also made people realize what their desires for liberation were — not for development, but for liberation.

*What is the FSLN's position on lesbians and gay men?*

The leaders of the FSLN are men. And these men have a chauvinist and machista mentality. They too have had to start learning. When the revolution started, homosexuality wasn't even an issue that they thought about or that was discussed. Homophobia was accepted as part of the movement.



*Does the FSLN have at this time an official position on lesbians and gay men?*

Not official.

*But you feel that there's forward motion, that lesbians and gay men are in struggle within the Frente and that attitudes are changing?*

Yes. Certainly. That can be felt. But, for us it is less important to have a position paper than to feel the change in the behavior and the attitude within the Party.

*When we spoke to Alfonso and others of the Nicaraguans who were in Acapulco in July (1991) they expected that there was going to be a resolution at the Sandinista Party Congress to recognize the struggle of lesbians and gay men. Can you give us a little update?*

We were expecting something concrete for gays and lesbians to happen there, but that didn't happen because there were other issues that needed more attention, were more immediate, like unity and freedom, independence from the U.S., sovereignty. The same could be said about the feminist movement and for women, in general, that there were more urgent things that needed to be dealt with. What they did have was a discussion, a working group about gays and lesbians.

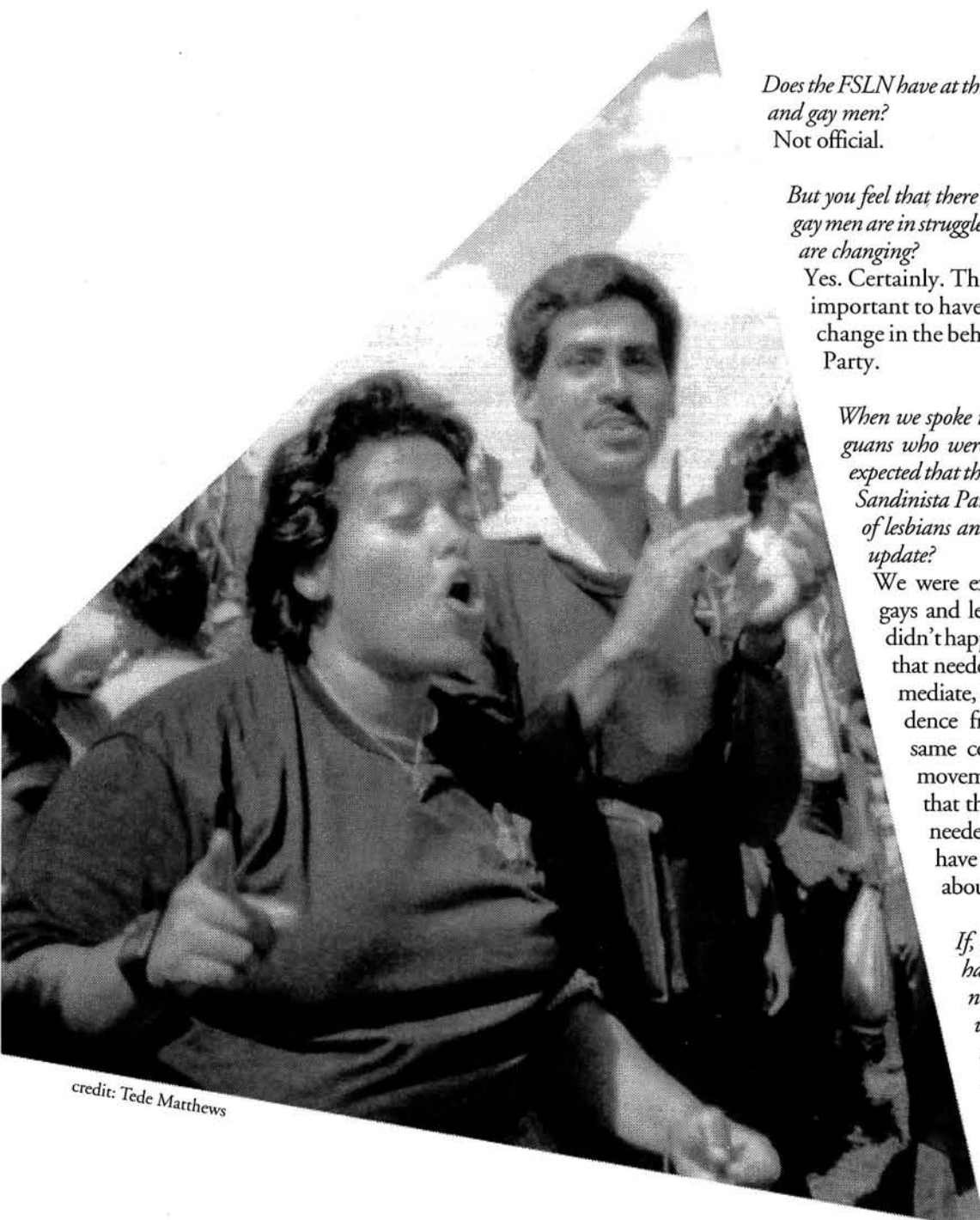
*If, as you said earlier, the Sandinistas have recognized one of their mistakes as not taking the role of women seriously, why wasn't this a more important and central issue at the Congress?*

Because the Congress wasn't a feminist Congress. Because there is still machismo in the minds of the leaders.

*Do you think, as lesbians and gay men, that you have a unique political or ideological contribution to make to a revolutionary process in Nicaragua?*

A good question. I think so. We have demonstrated that we are not abnormal and that we have a political consciousness and also that we are Nicaraguans. We are showing that we are everywhere within Nicaragua, whether we are students or professionals or workers, even if we have a different political association, even if we are not Sandinistas, but that we are everywhere. We have shown that we have the ability to love and also to fight and to defend our own rights. And that the task of struggling also involves educating — not just the gay and lesbian community, but also people in general.

Nicaraguans are open-minded, and they are willing to incorporate new things and to change. As we were



But the Revolution created the conditions for people to have more open minds. And that's what happened to gays and lesbians. When we were part of the Sandinista movement, our consciousness as gays and lesbians started to grow or to develop. We became aware of our homosexuality in political terms, and we combined that with our social and political activities as part of the Revolution.

That has been an element that we have brought to the rest of the revolutionaries in Nicaragua and that has served to educate them. The proof of this is in the interview with Daniel Ortega in the movie, *Sex and the Sandinistas*, in which he says that the struggle is not just for homosexuals, but for everyone to become involved and to learn and to leave behind all the prejudice that we grew up with.

credit: Tede Matthews

saying before, the Revolution has created conditions for this to happen. This is my experience and the experience of the gays and lesbians that I know in Nicaragua. Homophobia exists or has existed because there hasn't been sex education. As the consciousness of gays and lesbians grows, that gets reflected in our daily lives. Because, even if people haven't had any sex education, getting to know gays and lesbians who are proud of themselves makes a difference. There is respect and interest.

*And now Chamorro is President. What has the impact been particularly for the struggle for women, but also the lesbian and gay struggle?*

There has been no impact because the movement of gays and lesbians and of women continues. We know that she represents conservative values and ideas and that at any moment she can do something against us. The immediate changes have been in the educational system. The revolutionary movement didn't have religion classes in school, and now she has established them. The Sandinista Ministry of Education had texts ready for school that taught sex education free of prejudice, and those books were burned and the sex education they are teaching now is biased. I think that's an attitude that affects not just gays and lesbians, but people in general.

Our advantage is the youth who have had 12 years of education and experience and the teachers who are, for the most part, organized in revolutionary unions. For example, I was a teacher and the sex education that I was doing was different from the one in the text. I was an

English teacher, but even so I was doing sex education with my students free of prejudice and incorporating elements of AIDS education, because I am also an AIDS educator.

*Do you see the work that you are doing among lesbians and gay men on the streets as part of a process that will hopefully continue with the return of the Sandinistas to power — or do you see that as totally separate?*

We are willing, and we want to continue our work independently from the kind of government that is in power.

*Is there anything that you would like to add?*

I would like to say that in Nicaragua the struggle continues! The struggle is daily. Above all, we feel a commitment to continue because I believe that we are the main motivation for other gays and lesbians to leave aside their internalized homophobia.

We have met many gays and lesbians from all over the world, mainly from Central America, Latin America and the U.S. We are working towards maintaining this international solidarity, to continue learning from other struggles in Latin America and the rest of the world.

But mainly we want to consolidate this international network of gays and lesbians in Latin America because we have the same culture and the same social and political reality. Even if our experience is Nicaraguan, it also reflects the experiences of other lesbians and gays throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. □

▶▶▶▶▶ *alfonso, from p. 20*

we make them realize it's a struggle for everyone. This past week we held an activity that presented us to the public as gays and lesbians. In all of our publicity we said that this wasn't only an event for gay people; it's for people in general.

At the event, three different straight women spoke, a very well-known sexologist, a poet, and a well-known journalist. They were presented as women who are supporting us, who are very conscious women, well-known women. And *they* said this struggle doesn't have to be only of gays.

The father of Lupita also spoke, as the father of a gay person. And a pregnant lesbian spoke. She wanted to break through the myth that because a woman's a lesbian, she can't have children. She said, "I'm a lesbian, but I want to have a child. It's my decision. I have self-determination. So I made the decision that I was going to have a child."

*Araun: Do you have any observations on the ILGA conference?*

**Alfonso:** Basically the conference has been success-

ful. One of the most important things for us was to meet leaders of groups from all over the world, find out what they're doing, how to contact each other, and how we can cooperate and have a stronger network of support.

Earlier in the week there were problems. The whole issue of voting really upset the Latin Americans. Only those groups or individuals that paid their membership could vote. A lot of us had to struggle just to get here and to feed ourselves. We had to pay the registration fee, and we just didn't have the money to pay for membership. The Latin Americans thought, "What is this shit? We made all these sacrifices to come here, and we can't vote?" How could the Europeans, the Americans and the Japanese make the decision that we couldn't vote when we were in the majority?

Finally, we came to an agreement that everyone who registered could vote. We aligned ourselves with groups that we felt had good lines and positions. We reached an agreement to form a Latin American lesbian and gay network to fight for our own civil and human rights. We formed an organizing committee for an autonomous Latin American network. This was very important for us, because we are part of Latin America. □





**Will Postmodernism**

**Kill**

**the Movement?**

**by Les Gottesman**

credit: T Forman/*Breakthrough*

**I**MAGINE YOUR LIVING SPACE IS A CAPSULE IN ORBIT. It is small: a room or two plus kitchen and bath; but it is enormous with information. With minimal body movements, you can, through microprocessing, miniaturization, push-buttonization, and telecommand, call up vast networks of space and time (including personal memory), pleasures (consumption, leisure, play, social life) and work. The number of channels, of

screens available to you is without limit, your control of them is perfect and complete.

Political regimes topple....Your country goes to war....Scandal and controversy disrupt the orderly business of banking, Wall Street, or a Supreme Court appointment....

Video, direct from planes, courtrooms, or Senate hearings is beamed to your capsule. Reports, analyses,

virtual extension of your mind, in its lonely orbit.

You've got the postmodern feeling.

### LEFT OUT

I have adapted French theorist Jean Baudrillard's capsule metaphor to highlight the "condition" and problem of postmodernism. But there's nothing in this metaphor that isn't proposed by the electronics department at Macy's. Author and millionaire marketing consultant Faith Popcorn has characterized the 80s and 90s as decades of "cocooning," Americans holing up in their well-stocked homes. Popcorn spots trends for the corporations who sell the electronic paraphernalia to furnish our capsules — the computers, phones, faxes, TVs, and VCRs — if we can afford them.

But the equipment is incidental. The real commodities of postmodern society are images and information — and the screens are everywhere; we're plugged in at home, on the bus, on the highway. Look down at your t-shirt: you're a screen, too. We're in a world of messages, not things — or rather a world where things are valued not for their thingness but for their messageness. And the message is always persuasive, is always: buy this thing...thought...attitude...identity. Postmodernism, in Fredric Jameson's famous formula, is "the cultural logic of late capitalism." Lest we think this busy marketplace is somehow a happier, kinder, gentler development in capitalism's history, Jameson reminds us:

American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror.

Not only does the left instinctively know this, the left has been bloodied in the image wars. The left knows it has failed to present, to the channel-switching public, a credible version of reality — a plausible story with even the possibility of a happy ending — and has failed to do so on a global scale. Yet, for a number of reasons (see "PM and the Left," page 29) the left has had little interest in PM's arcane theories of image, identity, and capitalism.

Why should the left care about these theories? First of

commentary circle the action. You are at the humming hub of the universe of information, and still at home.

Now, isolated as you are, you may wonder about the truth of the images that flash across your screens. But you can call up more screens, harder to find, but available: critical screens, oppositional screens, radical screens, voices you know, politics you share, images you trust. Your information command post is truly yours, a



all, because *we* are postmoderns. Who we are, privately and publicly, is shaped by the images we live among. Postmodernism describes our own responses to the events flashing across our TVs (the Gulf War, the Clarence Thomas appointment, the Columbus quinquennial) and the larger movements (the eclipse of Leninism, the triumph of conservatism and fundamentalism, the war on women, the destruction of non-white communities), most of which we experience and attempt to engage through the media.

Furthermore, in an age when capitalism's success depends on almost total media manipulation, postmodernist analysis provides some weapons of resistance. We need to understand the PM positions and strategies that will work for human liberation.

Finally, postmodern theory directly addresses the major problems the left faces as a movement: fragmen-

tation of our constituencies, privatized agendas, personal and collective suspicion of each other, and the confusing, sometimes antagonistic discussion of "whose" subjectivity (whose conditions of life or political knowledge) provides the correct window on reality, the correct view of what's going on.

So what does postmodern theory have to say?

### THE LOGIC OF CAPITALISM

In Jameson's analysis of late capitalism, by expanding into "hitherto uncommodified areas," capitalism has become more capitalistic. How? Not by inventing new products, penetrating new markets, or internationalizing capital, though capitalism has done all of these. Rather, what never used to be merchandise is merchandise now, primarily information and images. The ads themselves are the merchandise. "Images, styles, and representations are not the promotional accessories to economic products," says British scholar Steven Connor, "they are the products themselves" — just as they would be in Baudrillard's capsule, for what average Americans *already* do at home for five and a half hours a day is consume images, as every study of Americans' TV-watching habits affirms.

It is in this sense that MTV is perfectly PM. On MTV the program *is* the commercial — and then there's the commercial!

But the new commodification goes beyond the usual pop and fashion markets. All culture is commodified; that is, everything cultural is for sale. A recent *Nation* review of worldbeat recordings assures us,

One of the nicest side effects of the fracturing of the postwar world during the past few years has been that cultures previously relegated to the margins have become suddenly, even faddishly visible. As the imperial order gives way to a more naked corporate order, cultural artifacts gain access to international markets in part because of the cash-flow imperatives of growing entertainment conglomerates. Still, music has always followed the trade routes, and for the short term, at least, we benefit.. So consider the albums below — as cultural dividends.

Welcome to the Imperial Record Club! Send in your new world order form today.

### CULTURE EXPLODES

Not only is everything cultural for sale, but, according to Jameson, *everything is cultural* (and



**subject to  
fashion trends**

for sale). Through images crowding into, filling up, and taking over the life we experience, "everything in our social life — from...state power to...the very structure of the psyche itself — can be said to have become 'cultural.'" In a recent *New York Times* piece titled "Now Playing: Real Life, the Movie," Neal Gabler asserts,

Everywhere the fabricated, the inauthentic and the theatrical have gradually driven out the natural, the genuine and the spontaneous until there is no distinction between real life and stagecraft. In fact, one could argue that the theatricalization of American life is the major cultural transformation of this century. Devoured by artifice, life is a movie.

No distinction between real and reel? ABC provided an example on October 6: *Heroes of Desert Storm*, a TV movie with a 30-second intro by President Bush. The film was preceded by a disclaimer which a *New York Times* reviewer called a postmodern joke: The film "interweaves news footage and dramatizations with actors and actual participants. To achieve realism, no distinction is made among the elements."

In the "explosion" (Jameson's word) of commodified culture, even "countercultural forms of cultural resistance and guerrilla warfare" — punk rock is Jameson's example — can "achieve no distance" from the capitalism they seem to criticize. Susan Rubin Suleiman explains,

opposition simply becomes one more image.... It is as if the revolvers so prized by the historical avant-gardes had all turned into toy guns distributed by the culture industry — "Take one, they're free, part of our new advertising campaign!"

One of Baudrillard's examples addresses political activism even more directly: a bomb attack "could equally well be interpreted as the work of leftist extremists, or of extreme right-wing provocateurs, or of centrists concerned to discredit political extremism." Of course, there *is* a real perpetrator of the bombing, but that doesn't matter: "The responses are all preprogrammed, all equally available, and can all be activated at once." Following through on Suleiman's and Jameson's ideas, even if the bombers were known and the bombing applauded by the populace, the likely outcome would be brisk sales of "I Bombed the Bank" t-shirts. Baudrillard concludes that "every act terminates at the end of the cycle having benefited everyone and been scattered in all directions." Explains radical educator Henry Giroux, "For theorists like Baudrillard, the masses have become the black hole into which all meaning simply disappears."

### RANDOM WORLDS

As commodities, images can take any form. They no longer point to a real world of things and relationships. Images create pure and random new worlds of

their own. In this situation, capitalism appropriates and creates culture, including cultural difference, to offer it for sale. Your rebellious, anti-capitalist identity, radical sexual persona, and the emblems of your solidarity with the liberation of fill-in-the-blank are all available, \$12 for the t-shirt, \$18 for the earrings.

Capitalism now doesn't fight cultural difference; it pulls difference out of the gutter, dusts it off, dresses it up, and thrusts it into the spotlight (this was literally true of the homeless doll recently criticized by homeless activists) to see if it sells. Every cultural or social difference can be famous for...a 15-second spot between sitcoms.

In the media barrage, questions of truth and accuracy lose meaning. Media analyst Neil Postman explains the problem:

We know how to analyze what people say to us. We know how to measure the truth or falsity of something. Now let's take a McDonalds commercial: we see a young father taking his 6-year-old daughter into McDonalds and they're eating a cheeseburger. And they're ecstatic. Question: is that true or false? Is the picture, the image, true or false? The words don't seem to apply to that sort of thing. That just is. There's no way to assess that, the way we assess statements, linguistic utterances. And so we can build a whole world of images where basically we're out of the realm of logic, and perhaps into the realm of esthetics. You either like Ronald Reagan or you don't. You either like McDonalds or you don't. But you can't talk about their truth or falsity.

During his presidency, Reagan was regularly revealed as making factually inaccurate statements; these revelations had no effect on his popularity; in fact, the same polls which revealed overwhelming support for Reagan showed popular *dissatisfaction* with his policies.

Language too is moving toward an image-like esthetic (that's what a sound bite is, a language image). Bush labels a civil rights bill (pick one) a "quota" bill and the language of the bill itself disappears from public view. "If we say it's a quota bill, it's a quota bill," a Republican official told *The New York Times*. The label itself short-circuits public discussion of the bill (whatever it says) and of quotas (whatever that means).

### SPECTACLES IN ONE HOUR (OR LESS)

Awareness of a society in which image dominates life is not new. In the 1960s, the French Situationists described the "society of the spectacle." Situationist Guy Debord wrote, "The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images." That is, we learn who we are and how to be from the images that surround us. Ken Knabb describes the Gulf War as "a glaring expression" of the spectacle.

The PR campaign was as important as the military one. How this or that tactic would play in the media became



a major strategical consideration. It didn't matter much whether the bombing was actually "surgical" as long as the *coverage* was; if the victims didn't appear it was as if they didn't exist. The "Nintendo effect" worked so well that the euphoric generals had to caution against too much public euphoria for fear that it might backfire. Interviews with soldiers in the desert revealed that they, like everyone else, depended almost totally on the media to tell them what was supposedly happening. The domination of image over reality was sensed by everyone. A large portion of the coverage consisted of coverage of the coverage. The spectacle itself presented superficial debates on the new level of instant spectacularization and its effects on the spectator.

If war is politics carried out by other means, says Trinh T. Minh-ha in her film *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, then images are war carried out by other means.

### SIMULACRA AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

So, what do we really *know* in the information-rich postmodern world? The image industries — movies, advertising, TV — imagine the world for us, but the images, spectacles, and pseudo-events are ads and more ads, airbrushed, tweaked, colored, cropped, and framed to sell us a product, an idea, a candidate, a way of thinking about ourselves that makes no worrisome demands on the logic and practice of capitalism. In this process of image-manipulation, the images (and words) no longer have real-world referents — actual objects or relationships. The pictures refer only to other pictures. This, says Jameson, is the world of simulacra — identical copies for which no originals ever existed.

All of history has been turned into such simulacra. We are surrounded by images of the past — its surfaces, its "look — regenerated into fashions, neo-this and retro-that, 1930s-ness or 50s-ness. "The history of esthetic styles displaces 'real' history," says Jameson. What's lost is the lived experience of previous generations, even ones still alive! Their struggles, losses, victories, and possibilities come down to us as...a haircut. The past as we know it now never had a present.

However, *we have only the present*. Since the past exists only as commodified variations on our present, we learn nothing from the past — nor even from our own experiences as day by day and decade by decade they slide into the past. To live now is to live in an endless present of successive moments, each isolated from the past and future. As the sense of history — of continuity — breaks down, the "experience of the present becomes powerfully, overwhelmingly vivid," like the sensory world of the schizophrenic.

The schizophrenic, Jameson tells us, "does nothing, since to have a project means to be able to commit oneself to a certain continuity over time."

### DYING IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR

This is where postmodernism will kill the movement — in the present. Unless we use postmodernism-the-logic-of-capitalism to reach our own, not capitalism's, conclusions, we will be unable to mount a political project and carry it into the future. We will die in front of the mirror, looking for a winning image.

For Jameson, our encapsulation and schizophrenia, is a "spatial as well as...social confusion."



The postmodern body — whether wandering through a postmodern hotel, locked into rock sound by means of headphones, or undergoing the multiple shocks and bombardments of the Vietnam War...is now exposed to a perceptual barrage of immediacy from which all sheltering layers...have been removed.

The solution is not simply one of providing more

truthful images, more accurate information. A wealth of images and information still disarms *meaning*. Revolutionary and oppositional messages sink under the weight of the media that carry them. Steven Connor cites Baudrillard's example from the French student and labor revolts of 1968:

The mass media, Baudrillard declares roundly, "fabricate non-communication." The experience of the events of May 1968 in France, in which radio and TV stations were taken over by revolutionary groups, was that every form of subversive message can be made harmless by this means, since "transgression and subversion never get 'on the air' without being subtly negated as they are...they are eviscerated of their meaning." The revolution *cannot* be televised — if Baudrillard is right.

### FALSE TOTAL

Can postmodernism offer any openings, any solutions, to the bleak scenarios of its own theories?

of men toward women. Our non-freedom in "inscribed" on our bodies, our clothes, in the shape of the spaces we live in, in the layout of cities. Women know they are constrained in a million ways by society's requirements of what their bodies may or may not do, look like, or feel. The result is that, in whatever position society has assigned us, we've come to look, act and feel the same, but we've forgotten why. The effects of power, Jane Flax contends, "can be seen whenever a population

### POSTMODERNISM AND THE LEFT

The activist left has had little use for postmodernism. The impenetrable vocabulary of PM's "discourses," its styles, and "attitude"-as-attitude, have seemed barely worth the effort of engaging, except perhaps to cultivate the anti-fascist impulses of some punk rockers. But then "punk is dead."

The left has ignored postmodernism partly because we believe in distinctly *modernist* ideals that postmodernism rejects: a belief in reason, universal human values, the continual and progressive unfolding of history. How can we relate to worldviews which seriously question these values?

Then we have the "post" problem. All these posts — post-industrialism, post-feminism, post-empiricism, post-Marxism — they don't even have their own names! Aren't they just intellectual

excuses for dodging the struggles and commitments of the movements they've so presumptuously wiped out with a prefix?

And postmodernism as a *style!* Those cobbled-together fashions — steel-toed boots and lace lingerie? — that include everything but say nothing, seem to belittle the struggles, the *humanity* of the past they so glibly raid, in a style *so* disrespectful, and *so* politically confused about history.

Even taken more seriously as, uh, discourse, postmodernism is maddeningly confusing. Let's see, is postmodernism a new *period* in history? Or is it a set of *theories* about the period we already knew we were in?

Besides, postmodern theory mixes literature, art, architecture, drama, sociology, and political theory all together — this reading list is too long! Activists like clean, clear theory — so we can act, right?

And aren't all those postmodern theorists just white male professors trying to get tenure? Postmodern theorizing takes place almost entirely in elite universities — and we stopped talking to anyone who stayed there after 1969. Ditto for the "leftists" who write for the cultural journals and magazines, all of the places we watched the energy and direction of the movement at its 60s-70s heights seep away into, as people wriggled out of activism and into their careers and hip/yup lifestyles.

So we have some problems with postmodernism

And the postmodernists are not going to clear up the confusion. Postmodernism is about difference — cultural, sexual, worldview multiplicity and difference. Postmodernism rejects final truth, ultimate knowledge, and grand theory as the delusion of grandeur, the mask of power, and the rationalization of domination. Postmodernism seeks a conversation "between different ways of thinking, being especially careful to search for and include those voices that sound foreign to or critical of our 'native' ones," says Jane Flax, a psychoanalyst and postmodern theorist.

But *this* is why activists should be paying attention. We're *not* going to get a clean, clear picture of how cultures struggle for survival and liberation on a late capitalist planet. But we'd better get some ideas. Soon.

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## are deadly fiction



Postmodernism's analysis of power suggests a strategy. Power is always complex, not the function of a single system or institution, but rather is reproduced in a million details of everyday life. There's power in the mere look, the gaze, of a policeman, but also in the gaze of a doctor, a bureaucrat, or



appears to be homogeneous, unconflicted, orderly," when our states are united and our leaders speak for us all. "Such order always depends upon the subjection of localized, fragmented knowledges, which is a necessary condition for the appearance of the 'totalizing' discourses of authority." Discourses — postmodern jargon for, one might say, the stories that explain us to ourselves — are totalizing when they claim to apply to everyone, when they define "human nature," "common" sense, "obvious" truths, "American" history. Native American artist Jimmie Durham asks,

What made the Iron Age the Iron Age? What if there were some much more important developments at the same time which we overlook because the age has been assigned to iron? My folks, then, were in the Stone Age when you guys showed up. But if groceries were the standard, we were in the Maize, Tomatoes, and Beans Age and you were in the Turnips Age. For you, today is the White Bread Age.

Euro-American insistence that progress is our most important product determines our view of all human history; then we turn around and use history to "prove" that our faith in technology is justified (a faith shared, by the way, by Marxism and capitalism). PM theory asks whose interests the myths of science and technology serve. All thought systems — science, history, economics, psychology — which *claim* to be everyone's property and to serve all equally — are totalizing discourses. These are the philosophies and knowledge systems which tell a total story: heterosexuality is natural; scientific knowledge is objective knowledge; technology brings progress; capitalism guarantees freedom; socialism guarantees freedom.

Postmodernists hope to open up spaces in which suppressed knowledge stemming from difference can surface. The gender myths, history myths, and science myths which have accompanied, allowed, and justified the development of Western society must be questioned and challenged; otherwise, different, localized wisdom will always succumb to the reason and the logic of the center. Who can argue against the "compelling logic" of the "scientific method" or "the march of progress" in "the course of history"? But these systems of knowledge which claim to work always, everywhere, and for everyone are subtle disguises of domination. If progress requires that irrationality and superstition be subjugated by reason and science, then irrational peoples must be colonized for their own good; even Marx thought so. These totalizing rationalities are not "conservative politics" — they are Western ideology, and the left has its share of discourses — including, Jane Flax points out, "defining women as a 'question' or the 'sex' or the 'other' and men as the universal or at least ungendered 'species-being'" — that are *not* alternatives.

True alternatives, Flax writes, "must necessarily pay attention to varieties of experience and value whatever they can find of the local and particular. They cannot

offer *a* viewpoint, *a* universal subject, *a* way to liberation, development, or happiness, or *a* truth that will set us free." But they can challenge the dominant power by exposing that its totalizing thought systems are total — and often deadly — fiction.

### WHAT OTHERS SAY

PM theory reverses the polarity of domination and Otherness. Simone de Beauvoir developed the concept of the Other in *The Second Sex* (1953) to explain how in patriarchal culture woman is set up as the abnormal opposite of the male. In *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), Shulamith Firestone argued that gender, not as anatomy but as *idea*, structures every aspect of women's lives. Now the Other is extended to include all who, from the dominant culture's point of view, are outsiders: not man, not white, not heterosexual. These definitions can be literally true, as poet Gwendolyn Brooks discovered:

Here is what my little green *Webster's New World* has to say about a world shaking word:

black (blak), adj.... 1. opposite to white: see color. 2. dark-complexioned. 3. Negro. 4. without light; dark. 5. dirty. 6. evil; wicked. 7. sad; dismal. 8. sullen....

Interestingly enough, we do not find that 'white is "opposite of black." That would "lift" black to the importance-level of white.

white (hwit), adj.... 1. having the color of pure snow or milk. 2. of a light or pale color. 3. pale; wan. 4. pure; innocent. 5. having a light-colored skin.

It's through definition, by language and image, that racism, sexism, heterosexism are inscribed in society. Rigid definitions of identity are spread throughout mass consciousness by the simple device of repetition of stock images. "On television," Ishmael Reed observes, "black men are typically shown naked from the waist up, handcuffed, and leaning over a police car."

Yet Black feminist bell hooks makes

a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structure and that marginality one chooses as a site of resistance, as location of radical openness and possibility.

hooks argues against accepting a simple formula for identity and against "essentialisms" that constrict identity to any one determinant such as race alone, gender alone, or sexuality alone. Posing identity as a complex intersection of gender, race, and class position, she criticizes feminists who believe that "women who work to resist racism are not supporting feminist movement" and black women who "fear that they will be betraying black men if they support feminist movement." For hooks, essentialism or "identity politics" easily falls prey to the "logic" of dominant culture; for example,

the discourse of black resistance has almost always equated freedom with manhood, the economic and

see *Postmodernism*, p. 39



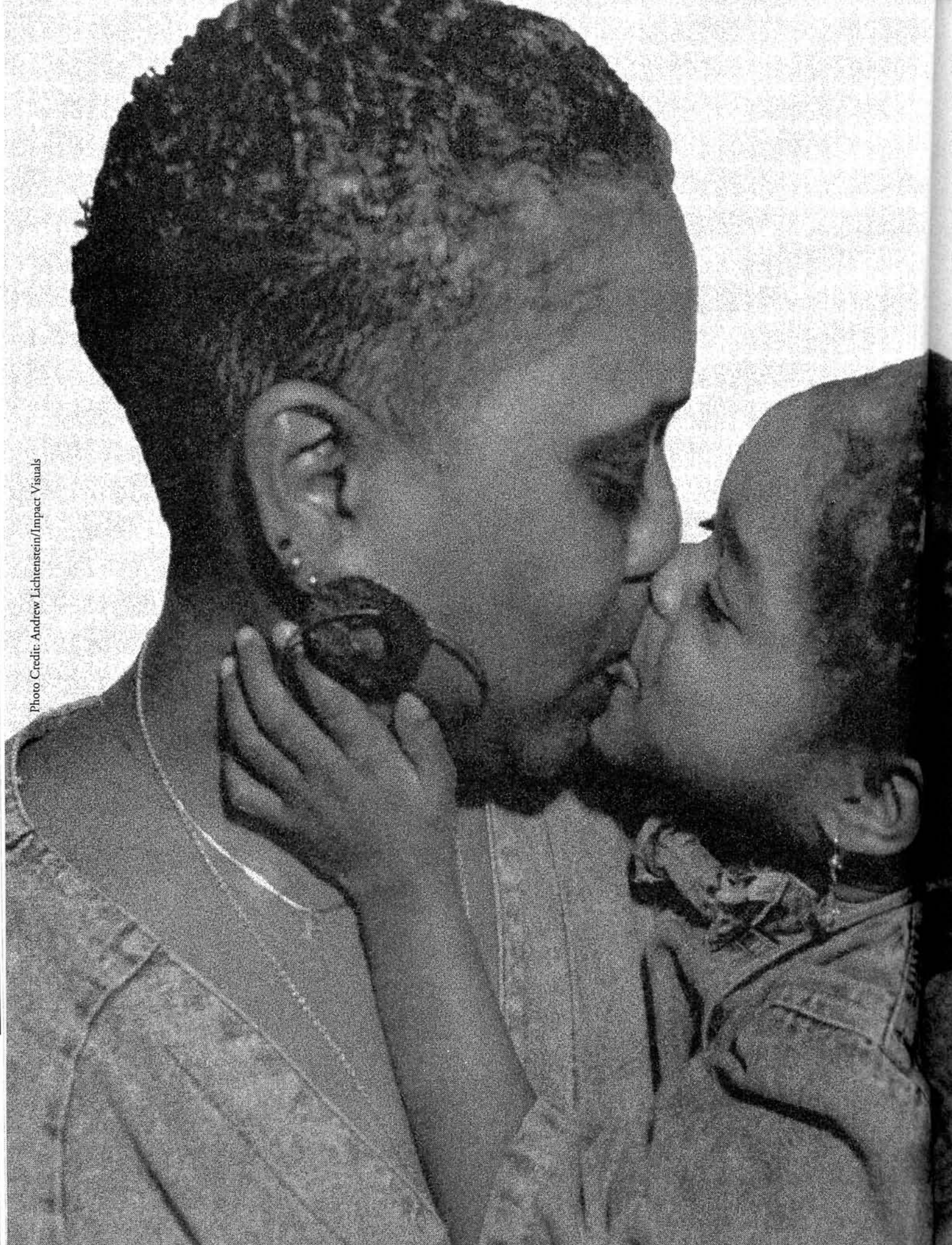
**REAL**

**or**

**REEL?**



Photo Credit: Andrew Lichtenstein/Impact Visuals





# BLACK WOMEN AND AIDS: THE SECOND EPIDEMIC

by  
Judy Gerber

*When AIDS first emerged in the early 80s, activists debated whether struggling against homophobia could be separated from fighting AIDS. Many people concluded it could not. Ten years later, we still combat homophobia in the battle against AIDS. Now, as the epidemic expands to include a greater percentage of people of color in the United States, Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American people are exposing the racism also inherent in the U.S. government's response to the AIDS epidemic. For people of color, fighting AIDS means confronting a health care system that is already a complete failure at meeting their communities' needs.*

*In writing this article, I interviewed Black women, those who are living with HIV disease and those who are organizing to stop its spread. None of them said they want white people to go into the Black community to fight AIDS. They see that as their job. But at the same time, they expressed concern that white people include them when putting forward demands.*

*Over the past years I've been involved in AIDS activism and have participated in a number of AIDS demonstrations organized by the primarily white gay male movement. Clearly there have been efforts made at addressing the issues raised by different populations affected by AIDS. Yet a sharp debate continues over how best to do this, and how much of a priority to place on it. When I attended the 1990*

*World AIDS Day conference, organized by Black women in Atlanta, I heard a perspective on AIDS that rooted itself in the Black community's experience of the health care system — an experience different than that of much of the predominantly white AIDS movement. Hearing these women reinforced my sense of the importance of incorporating into the AIDS movement's perspective an understanding of the epidemic's impact on women and people of color.*

*Having lived most of my life outside the south, I know how little the vast majority of the movement elsewhere, let alone the population at large, knows about conditions here. Through many years of anti-racist work, I've become acutely aware of how health care, or the lack of it, functions as a weapon in this country's war on Black people. It is no accident that health conditions in the south, where the Black population is concentrated, are the worst in the country.*

*As the face of AIDS expands, activists in the predominantly white movement are being challenged to understand what AIDS means to Black people. It is true that the disease doesn't discriminate. Yet its impact on a community is defined not by T-cell counts, but by social and economic conditions. The more clearly the AIDS movement can understand the unique perspectives and issues of different affected communities, the more effective it will be at bringing the epidemic to an end.*

*[This article was written in September 1991. — Ed.]*

EVERY FRIDAY MORNING FROM 8:30 TO 12:30, women living with AIDS gather at the Infectious Disease Clinic (IDC) of Grady Hospital in Atlanta. The IDC runs the only on-going group in the region specifically for women dealing with AIDS, at the only public clinic in the region that treats women with AIDS. Some of the women are service providers. Most are women with HIV waiting to be seen by a doctor. Taking advantage of the interminable wait, the clinic established a support group where women touched by HIV can come together. Shirley just lost her partner to AIDS. She has four children and comes in exhausted and depressed about how hard the daily routine gets dealing with the kids alone. The other women remind her how lucky she is that her youngest came up negative and therefore healthy.

Pat is a 40-year-old Black woman with four grown children. One daughter is in jail for crack abuse and left her infant in Pat's care. Pat was in a relationship with a man who, it turned out, also used crack. He had not considered himself bisexual, but saw his sexual activities as just exchanges for crack. Pat didn't know he had HIV until he ended up in the hospital. She talks about being afraid to let her children know her HIV status, and puts herself down for impatience with her children.

One by one, the women talk about what's hard and what's been good in their week. Some of them live in Atlanta, others started out as early as 4:00 in the morning to drive from northern Florida, Alabama or rural Georgia because Friday is women's clinic at the IDC. They come to this group at Grady to vent their frustrations, share their strategies for coping, get support they so badly need and learn about their options. This week, the group facilitator reported on a new treatment being successfully applied to women in Africa.

Women living outside Atlanta drive the distances to Grady Hospital because they cannot find knowledgeable health care providers locally. Most small town doctors are unwilling and unable to deal with AIDS. In addition, because HIV is a stigmatized disease, most people fear they will be completely ostracized in their communities if word gets out that they are infected.

These are some of the faces behind the statistics that tell us that, in the U.S., 74% of women with AIDS are women of color: 53% are Black, 21% are Latino, less than 1% are Asian and Native American. In New York and New Jersey, AIDS is the leading cause of death for women of color between the ages of 14 and 44. The media make it sound as though the problem for women is limited to the northeast. But the situation in the south, less familiar to most people, can be instructive when we're trying to understand the enormity of the problem.

Black women are the fastest growing population of PWAs in the south. In 1985 the ratio of men to women with AIDS was 18 to 1. In 1991, the ratio was 9 to 1. Georgia has the eighth highest number of AIDS cases in the country. Between 40% and 50% of the people

testing positive for HIV in the Southeast Georgia Health District are women (*Athens Observer*). In this state, 74% of the women with AIDS are Black. Almost half of these women live outside Atlanta.

### THE STATE OF BLACK HEALTH

Here in Georgia, the problem begins with the state of the health care system. Georgia leads the health care crisis in the south, and the south in general has the worst health care in the nation. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported last spring that the mortality rates in the south are well above the national average. Black life expectancy nationally stands at 69.5 years, six years less than for whites. Life expectancy for Black people in over half of Georgia's counties is only 60 years. The Black infant mortality rate in Georgia is 55% higher than the country's overall rate. The same newspaper report indicated that "the strongest predictors of a high death rate were low per-capita income and a high percentage of minorities in a county's population."

Little real health education and next-to-no services exist for Black women in Georgia. In fact, the IDC at Grady Hospital is the only medical center around that provides health care to PWAs who have no insurance. The waiting list to get in is up to six months long. ACT UP Atlanta took up a campaign proposed by health workers at the Infectious Disease Clinic. ACT UP's campaign put pressure on the hospital administration to recognize the urgency of expanding the clinic. The state agreed to allocate the necessary funds to expand the clinic. Now the group continues to pressure Grady to follow through on its promise to expand. Such campaigns make a difference for people with HIV who have no financial resources or health insurance.

For all the limitations of the IDC, the women seen there are the lucky ones. They're getting *some* medical attention. For too many women there is nothing. When a disease has no known cure, experimental drugs are the only treatment. Groups like ACT UP have shaken the medical establishment into approving drugs more quickly and diversifying the range of drugs explored. This fight has helped forestall the onset of opportunistic infections for thousands of people with HIV disease. However, over 90% of the participants in drug trials are white and less than a dozen of the current trials specifically address women's health. Until activists force the government to make health care really available to everyone, these drugs' effectiveness will be limited to those with access to medical care.

The medical establishment places little value on the lives of women. It focuses on women as "vectors" of HIV, people who transmit AIDS to their children, not people who get AIDS themselves. The media sensationalize coverage of the infant "victims" of HIV, but we almost never hear about what happens to their mothers. The media are not alone with this problem. The NIH has devoted half the already limited budget focused on women with AIDS to studying transmission from



mothers to fetuses.

Over the course of the past two years, AIDS activists, particularly women, have struggled to make the government and medical establishment deal with the fact that women are dying of AIDS. In mid-1991 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced plans to expand the definition of AIDS to include a positive antibody test and a T-cell count under 200, instead of defining AIDS only by whether someone has certain opportunistic infections. [This change, scheduled to take effect in April 1992, was postponed until July 1992, because it would triple the official count of the number of people with AIDS, and AIDS service providers had no funds to handle the sudden increased case load. —Ed.]

But, in any case, this change doesn't go far enough. Women are dying before their T-cell counts get below 200. Chronic, untreatable yeast infections, PID (pelvic inflammatory disease), aggressive cervical cancer — these infections, which are often the early signs of AIDS in women, need to be added to the CDC's definition. This would enable women with these diseases to receive at least the same medical benefits and treatment available to other people with AIDS. It would also send a clear signal to physicians that these medical problems affecting women may be symptomatic of AIDS.

The NIH has standards of compliance for participants in drug trials, like taking the drug in the prescribed quantity at the prescribed time, and showing up for appointments at specified intervals. Non-compliance is grounds for elimination from the study. For Black women and children, this system doesn't work. They are considered poor risks for experimental programs. But when a woman is too sick to make the four-hour trip to the doctor, when she is trying to hold down a job, when she needs someone to watch her children, compliance is difficult to maintain. Rather than looking at how the studies make compliance so difficult, the medical establishment blames the patients.

Further complicating matters, a history of racist medical experimentation has made Black people wary of the medical system. People question whether they will be used as guinea pigs because Black people are viewed as an expendable population. This question "must be heard against the backdrop of the larger society's historic disregard for the sanctity of Black people's lives" (*AIDS in Blackface*, p. 220). People remember the infamous Tuskegee experiment of the 30s and 40s, where Black men were used as guinea pigs to study the progression of syphilis, without being told there was a cure. Women of color have been used as guinea pigs to test birth control pills. Today, in many states, women of color are being forced by the courts to undergo implants of the birth-control drug Norplant. No one knows what the side-effects of this drug may turn out to be.

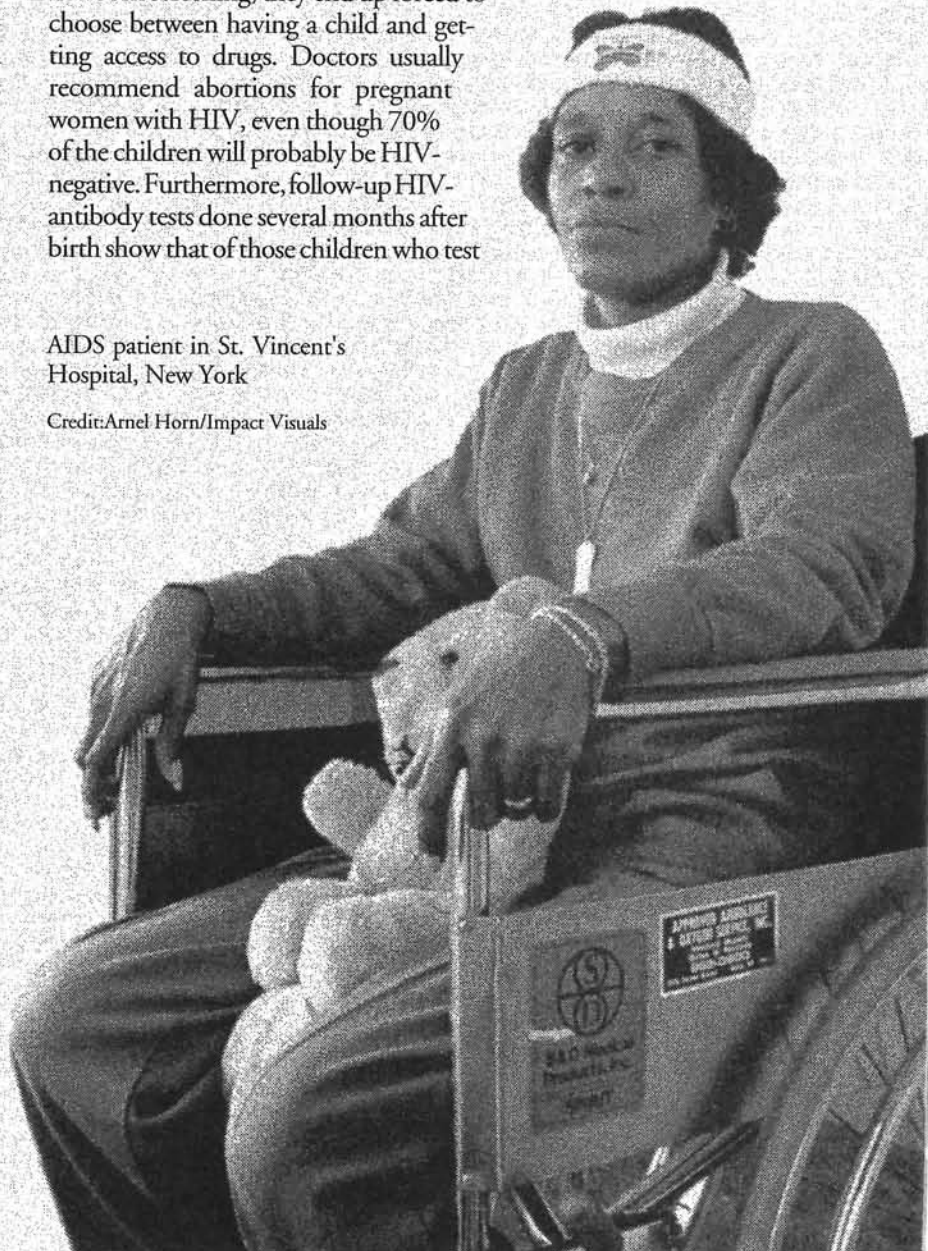
In clinical drug trials, as in everything else having to do with AIDS, models which serve the dominant white population don't work for Black

people. Of course, the movement has to fight hard for the government to include Black women in clinical drug trials. But simply paying lip service to inclusiveness by setting quotas for people of color and women won't work unless the research is designed to meet the women's health needs and is based on an understanding of their current and historical experiences.

Those women lucky enough to find out their HIV status early on who may be interested in experimental drugs find many roadblocks exist. First, they can't be pregnant and must prove that they use some form of birth control. They must take pregnancy tests throughout the study, and are dropped if they become pregnant. Second, some studies are completely closed off to women because the researchers say they don't know what their drugs will do to a woman's child should she ever decide to have one. Therefore, a woman of childbearing age is automatically excluded from some drug trials. Given that most women find out their HIV status through pre-natal and newborn screening, they end up forced to choose between having a child and getting access to drugs. Doctors usually recommend abortions for pregnant women with HIV, even though 70% of the children will probably be HIV-negative. Furthermore, follow-up HIV-antibody tests done several months after birth show that of those children who test

AIDS patient in St. Vincent's Hospital, New York

Credit: Arnel Horn/Impact Visuals





positive for HIV antibodies at birth, 50% are actually negative.

If racism and/or sexism weren't problems affecting doctors' medical views, and if every woman faced her choices with a supportive personal physician, perhaps it would be possible to trust the doctor's recommendations. However, most women with HIV see a doctor in a public health clinic who is too overwhelmed to treat each woman as an individual facing real choices. Abortion becomes the standard recommendation, no matter what a woman's current health status and life circumstance. The irony is that even abortion doesn't provide a simple answer. Even though the medical profession's prevailing "wisdom" is for antibody positive women to terminate pregnancies, few doctors are willing to deal with the women.

According to a recent article in the *New York Times*, in 80% of U.S. counties women can't get an abortion. The gag rule prevents federally funded clinics and hospitals from counseling women about abortion. Of course, no public funds are available. Atlanta's public hospital provides abortions in the first trimester only — but there's a three-month waiting list. One of the abortion clinics in Atlanta said there's a discount for someone with no insurance who brings in cash. First trimester costs \$340. A second clinic charges \$300. The "cheapest" one, which has a reputation for being a factory, costs \$225. When I asked about the cost for a woman with HIV, the first two said no difference. They don't ask for HIV status. However, should a woman volunteer the information, she risks a doctor's refusal to perform the abortion, even if the clinic's administrative policy permits it. The "cheap" clinic tags an extra \$200 onto their fee — a rather absurd practice when childbirth puts doctors in contact with much more blood than an abortion.

### WOMEN'S MULTIPLE ROLES

When we talk about Black women with AIDS, we're dealing with a myriad of problems. Janet Cleveland, former outreach coordinator of the AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta, argues that:

AIDS not only affects women as people with HIV disease. It also affects their multiple roles in society, such as being wives, mothers, income providers and caretakers. In attempting to fulfill all of these obligations, women rarely have access or the time to get the health care that they need. Add on to that the fact that, for many of these women, AIDS is just another in a long list of health and social problems that have to be battled — and I do mean battled — on a daily basis. Issues such as violence, drugs and crime — all these are very real, immediate types of problems for these women. And then when we start to talk about health choices, well, my goodness, their health choices are already very poor to begin with, so where does that leave us?

Women instantaneously become socially vulnerable

when diagnosed with HIV disease. Just by virtue of being a woman, there's a lack of equal access and opportunity for education, information, health services, social rights — and the list goes on and on. The bottom line is there are few services available to women with HIV disease that specifically meet their economic, social, emotional, health and cultural needs.

Childcare is a good example of the kind of support many women need to deal with HIV. Even when sick, a woman is expected to fulfill her social role of taking care of the children and her partner. Her family expects her to be there, no matter what, and she will be judged harshly by the society if she fails. Yet the public health system has made no provisions, has created no buddy system in Atlanta that helps a woman support her family. When seeing a doctor at the IDC means a four-hour wait at the clinic, what does a woman do with her kids? If a woman is too sick to deal with her children, Georgia provides no funds for hospice care so the family can stay together, nor are there support services set up to provide help. As a single mother with AIDS put it,

I want to tell you the way things should be for us women. There should be more trial drugs for us. We need more support groups for family. We need counseling for our self-esteem. A place for us to live with our children. There may be a time I can't live where I live. I need to go somewhere with my son.

Crack and other drug addiction is also integrally related to HIV among Black women. Concentrated pockets of AIDS cases have followed the crack epidemic into rural Georgia. Although in Atlanta more women use crack than IV drugs, they often support their habits through prostitution, and expose themselves to HIV infection. Tony Jackson of Streetreach, an AIDS prevention group targeting users of illegal drugs, described the enormity of the problem:

Women stay in these places the entire weekend, just having sex to get a bit of their rock. By the end of the night they may have had sex with, who knows, I don't even know, I got to the point I don't even count, over 20, over 30, gets to the point it doesn't even phase you anymore, but the bottom line is there are women out there addicted to drugs, into prostitution, that are not in any type of treatment.

Once these women become addicted, "safe sex goes out the window." The women:

just keep running down, running down until they either die from the drugs or eventually the AIDS virus will get them. I've seen a woman out there turning tricks that was so skinny, she had on five pairs of pants just to make it look like she had some body. Her arm was as big as my finger. I asked her about AIDS, she said she knew all about it, but said she didn't have it and I'm looking it dead in the face. Drug treatment for addicts is key in reducing AIDS infection.



In Atlanta, a poor woman wanting to get clean has only *one* place to go because Atlanta has only one public drug and alcohol treatment center. The line of people trying to get in every morning goes down the block. Not everyone who wants treatment can get in.

Around the country, including Atlanta, activists recognizing this problem have taken on needle exchange as a way to at least combat the spread of AIDS among IV drug users (IVDU) — just as it was activists alone who initially dispensed condoms for prevention. These efforts don't stop IVDU AIDS transmission completely, but, as a 1991 New Haven study indicates, needle exchange can put a dent in it. Once again, the movement provides a service that should be provided by the government. Yet only the government has the resources to reach maximum effectiveness if it so chooses.

Needle exchange is a stopgap measure that is fraught with controversy, particularly in the Black community. The biggest concern is the question of whether needle exchange encourages drug use. All sides of this issue are represented among Black people concerned about AIDS. Harlon Dalton, in *AIDS in Blackface*, raises questions that point to the need for AIDS activists to understand how their work affects the Black community.

You say that making drug use safer won't make it more attractive to our children or our neighbors' children. But what if you are wrong? What if, as a result, we have even more addicts to contend with? Will you be around to help us then, especially if the link between addiction and AIDS has been severed?

These issues only touch the tip of the iceberg. To explore all the ramifications of a program like needle exchange would take an article of its own. Let it suffice to say that programs

like this have to be developed with the full involvement of the population most affected.

### SISTERLOVE

In Atlanta, one organization that deals exclusively with women and AIDS is Sisterlove, founded and run by Dazon Dixon with one other half-time staff person. Dixon provides education and outreach, and encourages the "development of self-help support for healthy behaviors" by addressing all the issues that have an impact on women. It is the only agency in Atlanta specifically designed to deal with AIDS and women. [Since this article was written, Atlanta's Feminist Women's Health Center started an AIDS hotline for women, providing information and referrals. — *Ed.*] Dixon sees AIDS as only part of Black women's health agenda, which includes "having access to accurate information that can be used, being counted, being recognized, and having access to health care that makes sense. Really, having access only to Grady and sitting there for hours is not what makes sense for most women."

AIDS education, particularly if presented in ways accessible to all cultures, can go a long way in raising awareness about AIDS. However, information alone does not change behavior. For women, issues of violence, power, and self-esteem enter into one's ability to

Damien House in Washington, D.C. is the only residential home for women with AIDS in the country

Credit: Donna Binder/Impact Visuals





change behavior around safe sex. Dixon believes that the only way to really be able to make these kinds of changes comes through group discussions that lead to self-empowerment. Dixon brings AIDS information to groups of women through a "healthy love party." She brings literature and information to dispense on safer sex, IV drug use and AIDS.

The presentation goes beyond a clinical lecture on AIDS to help women create a broader definition of healthy sexual practices. Understanding that not all women feel they can demand that a man use a condom, she demonstrates how to put a condom on with your mouth, so the man doesn't even notice. She also carries a grabbag of common household items from which each woman gets to choose and say how she would use it as a sex toy. Dixon tries to return to the same groups a second time to ask about changes — what's hard, what's easy, what kinds of support do the women need to change, how can they help each other. The experience has shown her that just handing out information without providing some kind of support system among women to make the necessary changes doesn't work.

However, Dixon gets no public funding — she is forced to run Sisterlove through private grants. In fact, funding for people of color to do AIDS education has been extremely difficult to come by. The CDC recently cut 43% of the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention's 1992 budget. The task force is the only national program addressing issues for gay and bisexual men of color, one of the most invisible groups of people being devastated by AIDS. Dixon said finding people to fund programs for women has been extremely difficult. Only in the last six months have funding sources opened up, because people can no longer ignore the problem of AIDS among women. "Progressive foundations in the northeast and on the west coast give money, but most of it stays local. In the south, there just aren't many progressive foundations with money available." Such a situation only serves to underline the fact that the government should be allocating much more money to confront this epidemic.

### CHALLENGES TO THE AIDS MOVEMENT

As the nature of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S. has evolved, so has the need for a multifaceted and more complex response by AIDS activists. When AIDS was seen as a disease affecting primarily white gay men, the challenges to the movement required addressing head-on the homophobia of U.S. society and political and medical establishments. These issues are by no means behind us. The response to Magic Johnson's announcement that he was HIV positive — but *not* gay — indicates, among other things, that gay sexuality and its stigmatization by most of society is still one of the first things that people think about when the subject of AIDS comes up.

Yet the changing demographics of the AIDS epidemic, particularly the impact AIDS is having on

women of color, is pushing the AIDS movement to address issues which are unfamiliar. As this article has attempted to show, the concerns of Black women with AIDS are complex and, despite some similarities, quite different from those faced by gay men. Issues such as needle exchange, the design of research studies and protocols for clinical drug trials, and historic medical experimentation on African Americans are problems that gay white AIDS activists need to understand.

Looked at in its global perspective, the vast majority of the millions of people infected with AIDS in hard-hit countries in Africa and other parts of the developing world are heterosexual. Gay men make up a small percentage of the population affected. Discrimination against gay men, though, is real and AIDS would have been more effectively treated if straight white people had gotten AIDS first. At the same time, gay men have been able to tap into greater resources, education, connections and money to fight with the medical establishment, and to gain access to the inner circles of government health institutions to pressure for change. This has had a positive impact on the extent to which AIDS is even discussed and recognized as a crisis. Yet, as Dazon Dixon points out, this positive power of gay activists sometimes has a negative side, sometimes resulting in limiting other people's access to money and political clout in the struggle. "It is ironic that activists have struggled so hard to convince people that risky behavior, not risk groups, are at issue, yet because of the oppression gay men suffer, the movement is reluctant to let go of AIDS as primarily a gay-defined issue."

Dixon gave an example of how this problem came down, but was successfully resolved through struggle. In 1990, World AIDS Day focused on women and AIDS. When she proposed a conference at Spellman College (a Black women's school here in Atlanta) focusing on Black women and AIDS, with all African-American presenters, she ran into resistance from white gay men. The men objected because they felt that the World Health Organization, which sponsors World AIDS Day, would never declare a focus on gays. Dixon agreed that the situation represented the homophobia of the WHO. However, she also felt it was important to talk about women and AIDS, since women are the fastest-growing group with AIDS in the country and, in a global perspective, women are a large percentage of the people with AIDS. In the end, the conference happened with a focus on Black women, after which there was a unity rally and march through downtown Atlanta, where everyone fighting AIDS could be represented.

The AIDS activist movement has long said that AIDS is a *medical* crisis, and should be dealt with as such, rather than as a game of political roulette. But to resolve the medical crisis requires recognizing the differences between cultures and societies and seeking the leadership of other affected communities in how to best organize a coordinated demand for health care and an end to the AIDS epidemic. □



## POSTMODERNISM, from p. 31

material domination of black men with castration, emasculation. Accepting these sexual metaphors forged a bond between oppressed black men and their white male oppressors.

### NEW MAPS

Making new discourses, according to Steven Connor, "is a matter of taking hold not only of actual power, but also of the languages, systems of metaphors and regimes of images that seem designed to silence those whom they embody in representation." From the Bible to Freud, men have controlled the representation of women. "Representations are put to use in the domestic economy of an imperial society," says Edward Said; as a young Palestinian, he was taught English history and culture but "nothing about my own history, Arab history." For Jameson, "The political form of postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale." Cognitive mapping means that we stop interpreting others' experience by our definition of objective reality; rather, we have to use others' accounts of *their* representations, languages and images to learn how our own views are partial, constructed, and projected — projected perhaps onto others as domination, violence, and imperialism. The mapping of the dominant culture by its outsiders has been carried on in the "post-colonial discourse" of Third World postmodernists going back to Franz Fanon and Malcolm X. For white activists, used to occupying the center of our constructed reality, cognitive mapping would be an anti-Columbus voyage of discovery in which we are the territory to be explored. hooks says:

One change in direction that would be real cool would be the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness. It would just be so interesting for all those white folks who are giving blacks their take on blackness to let them know what's going on with whiteness. In far too much contemporary writing — though there are some outstanding exceptions — race is always an issue of Otherness that is not white; it is black, brown, yellow, red, purple even. Yet only a persistent, rigorous, and informed critique of whiteness could really determine what forces of denial, fear, and competition are responsible for creating fundamental gaps between professed political commitment to eradicating racism and the participation in the construction of a discourse on race that perpetuates racial domination.

### A DEMONSTRATION MAP

For an actual, if not earthshaking, example of cognitive mapping, I will describe a demonstration against

the Gulf War led by the Pledge of Resistance in San Francisco. The problem: to bring together diverse oppositional communities — women, gays and lesbians, concerned clergy, political punks, environmentalists, anti-war Vietnam vets, solidarity organizations, the traditional old and new left — into a unified, effective blockade of the Federal Building which occupies one square block in S.F.'s Civic Center. Dialogue among these communities is limited, when it exists at all, and not always friendly. The solution, simple as it seemed, was based on a sympathetic familiarity with these communities, their specific histories, and the history of their interactions. This cognitive mapping of the situation led to a maplike solution. A Pledge leader described the plan:

We tried to give the religious community the whole front of the building where they could stage their own type of demonstration as long as they felt okay that all around the rest of the building there were going to be different styles of demonstrating. We gave one side of the building to the lesbian and gay community, the Polk Street side, and that was an attempt to really highlight the concerns of that community and let them *define* their particular style of protest. And in the back there was a women's contingent that was trying to highlight the demands of women and also the presence of women in the action. And on the side there were the Central America movement and the environmentalists.

This was a postmodern demonstration, a pastiche of "subject positions" united by a collective intention. It gave space to each group to express its concerns and develop its style of protest. Yet the experience was, for anyone who walked around the block, a virtual village of opposition. For the several hours of protest that day, the map became the territory. □

### SUGGESTED READING

Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture* (Basil Blackwell). Explains and critiques a wide range of theories.

Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (University of California Press). A fascinating dialogue among three systems of thought; the best introduction to postmodernism.

bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (South End Press). Personal and theoretical; puts fighting racism, sexism, and imperialism at the top of postmodernism's agenda.

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press). Complex, wide-ranging, provocative, always insightful, sometimes brilliant, despite jargon and academic in-jokes.



# SUPERMAX:

# Control

*Speech by Nancy Kurshan, April 1991*

*In November, 1991, the international human rights group, Human Rights Watch, charged U.S. prison authorities with numerous human rights abuses through the increasing use of super maximum security prisons. After visiting more than 20 prisons around the country, all modeled after the Federal Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, Joanna Wechsler, director of the group's prisoner's rights project, said she was "outraged at some of the incredibly harsh conditions...It's practically impossible to forget some of the things we found." Some state institutions, Wechsler charged, violate United Nations standards for the treatment of prisoners. Among conditions cited were windowless, overheated cells in the Q-wing of Florida State Prison; prisoners stripped and required to "earn" clothing and bedding at the Oregon State Penitentiary; and prisoners confined to such prisons without administrative hearings.*

*If these were conditions in South Africa, much of the progressive movement would know about them and be actively protesting these human rights violations. Yet they are occurring right here in the U.S. and many of us may be learning about them for the first time.*

*In the past year, these inhumane conditions have met with resistance by prisoners themselves. In 1991 a rebellion occurred at the New York State correctional facility in Southport, NY. A hunger strike at the Indiana State Prison in Westville, IN was met with force-feeding of inmates. This resistance will continue as long as prisoners human rights are violated.*

*The Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, formed in 1985, has been working end the lockdown of Marion prison, and to expose, stop the construction of, and abolish all control-unit prisons. In September, 1991, CEML held a day-long conference in Chicago to commemorate the 1971 uprising at Attica prison. Out of that conference came a call for nationally coordinated demonstrations and activities on the weekend of May 2-3, 1992. For more information about the demonstrations or for a list of CEML resources (videos, articles, "Walkin' Steel" newsletter), write to: CEML, P.O. Box 578172, Chicago, IL 60657-8172.*

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**B**EFORE GEORGE BUSH PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED HIS NEW WORLD Order, *The New York Times* acknowledged there was a new order within the prisons — a "New Order with an Iron Hand," the headline read.<sup>1</sup> The novelist Dostoevsky said that to understand a society you must look within its prisons. We in the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown agree. We believe that a look behind the gates, through the



barbed wire, and under the gun towers reveals a great deal about the nature of Bush's New World Order. The New World Order does not simply exist in the Persian Gulf or other farflung parts of the globe. It is also a domestic order. We should take a serious look at the kind of "democracy" U.S. troops were fighting to defend.

The most conspicuous feature of this new order within the prison system is the development and spread of control unit prisons. Prisons have always been destructive places, but these prisons will intensify by far the terror, brutality, and destructive capabilities of the U.S. prison system. The control unit prisons do not even pretend to rehabilitate. They are purely about the business of physical and psychological control and brutality. Leading this new order in the prison system, and defining its direction, has been the federal penitentiary in Marion, Illinois. When the notorious Alcatraz

visits. Conversation takes place through a plexiglass wall and over the telephone, while guards closely monitor and tape all visits. The prisoners have to undergo finger probes of the rectum before and after visits. Marion is the only prison in the United States that has been cited by Amnesty International as violating virtually all the United Nations' minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners.

Marion's history indicates that although we may be experiencing a New World Order, what we are seeing in these control units is a product of careful preparations and groundwork.

Marion opened in 1963, when the infamous Alcatraz closed down, but the first control unit was not officially instituted until July, 1972. In fact, I just heard the story first hand from a man in Colorado who was there at the time. Jesse Lopez, a Mexican prisoner, had escaped from Marion, the only prisoner to ever do so. After he was recaptured, the guards beat him up badly. In protest, the prisoners refused to go back to their cells. In response, officials took 60 prisoners and locked them down in cells in one wing of the prison. The peaceful protest at Marion in response to a guard's beating of Jesse Lopez was part of a coast-to-coast movement of prisoner resistance. You can probably recall the historical context: nine months before, the Black revolutionary prison leader George Jackson had been murdered in San Quentin prison in California; and eight months before, prisoners at Attica in New York state had rebelled. So the invention of the control unit at Marion was a key element in the system-wide repression of a developing revolutionary prison movement.

One of those 60 prisoners locked up in that first control unit was Puerto Rican independentista Rafael Cancel Miranda, who did 8 years at Marion. He was sent there in the first place because they said he had led a strike at Leavenworth. At Marion, they accused him of leading a strike again. Rafael has said, "I spent 18 months in the control unit. When the Prolixin and the

# U nit

prison closed in 1963, Marion opened as its replacement. And now the federal prison at Marion is to be superseded by a new, "state-of-the art" control unit prison in Florence, Colorado.

## CONDITIONS AND HISTORY

Describing the conditions at Marion is the best way to convey the reality of a control unit. The men live in solitary confinement in 6 by 8-foot cells for 22 and a half hours a day. They eat, sleep, and defecate in this cell. Solitary confinement is a permanent state of affairs, not a temporary disciplinary measure. Most prisons have some type of "solitary," "the hole," "isolation," etc., where they send prisoners to punish them. But at Marion isolation is a way of life. There are virtually no work programs, nor does the prison allow congregational religious services. The prisoners get out of the cells for about one and a half hours each day for exercise, recreation, and showering. And they are sometimes chained spread-eagle to their concrete slab beds for hours or even days at a time.

Visiting with friends and loved ones is an awful ordeal. Unlike almost all prisons, there are no contact

# P risoners

Thorazine and the Valium didn't work, they beat you. They used the big stick... It was common for them to beat a prisoner in the control unit and then say he killed himself. Quite a few prisoners killed themselves like that."

For 10 years, the control unit wing of Marion remained in place, experimenting with many different behavior modification techniques. Then in October, 1983, two guards were killed in the control unit by two prisoners. Although there was no associated rebellion, prison officials violently repressed the entire prison and turned it into one huge control unit — despite the fact that the guards had been killed in the control unit wing, the most repressive area in the prison. The control unit was obviously generating violence, yet the response was to turn the entire prison into a control unit.

As part of this process, the guards went cell by cell beating people and ravaging their possessions. The entire population at Marion was collectively, severely, and permanently punished in a calculated move by the Bureau of Prisons. I say "calculated" because the immediate dispatch to Marion of BOP executive staff members, senior wardens, and guards from other institutions suggests that the lockdown was planned well in advance. In fact, a congressional investigation uncovered a 1981 BOP document that detailed plans for the transformation of Marion into one big control unit.

### WHO DOES THE CONTROL UNIT CONTROL?

Who are the people the control unit was designed to control? The BOP claims that Marion is for the "bad apples," the worst of the worst, who are so bad they cannot be contained safely in other prisons. But is this really the case?

Up until now there have been six levels of security in the federal prison system. Level 1 is minimum security. Marion is the only Level 6 prison. In fact, the Level 6 rating was invented for Marion — to set it apart. According to a congressional study, the BOP's own figures indicate that 80 percent of the men at Marion are not designated to be at Marion, do not have Level 6 ratings, and yet they are there. Marion clearly does not contain the "worst of the worst." Most prisoners convicted of violent crimes are in state prisons, including the mass murderers who garner media attention. Marion does, however, have a disproportionate number of jailhouse lawyers, leaders of prison protests, religious dissidents and others who refuse to fit in at the prisons they came from. Rafael Cancel Miranda and several others have been sent to Marion merely for leading strikes in other prisons. One third of Marion prisoners are from overcrowded state prisons. Many Cuban *Marielitos* were sent to Marion after protesting conditions at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary.

There have been — and continue to be — a large number of political prisoners, such as Rafael Cancel Miranda, at Marion. Leonard Peltier, the Native Ameri-

can leader, was there for years. Imari Obadele of the Republic of New Afrika was there, and more recently Sundiata Acoli, Sekou Odinga, Oscar López Rivera, Ray Levasseur, Bill Dunne, Tim Blunk, and Alan Berkman. Some political prisoners have been sent there straight from court, exposing the BOP's lie that prisoners end up at Marion as a punishment for their behavior in other prisons. In fact, a former warden of Marion, Ralph Arons, has stated in court that "the purpose of the Marion control unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and in the society at large."

### RACISM AND IMPRISONMENT

Perhaps the most disturbing dimension of Marion and the prison system overall is the role that prisons play in the containment of people of color.

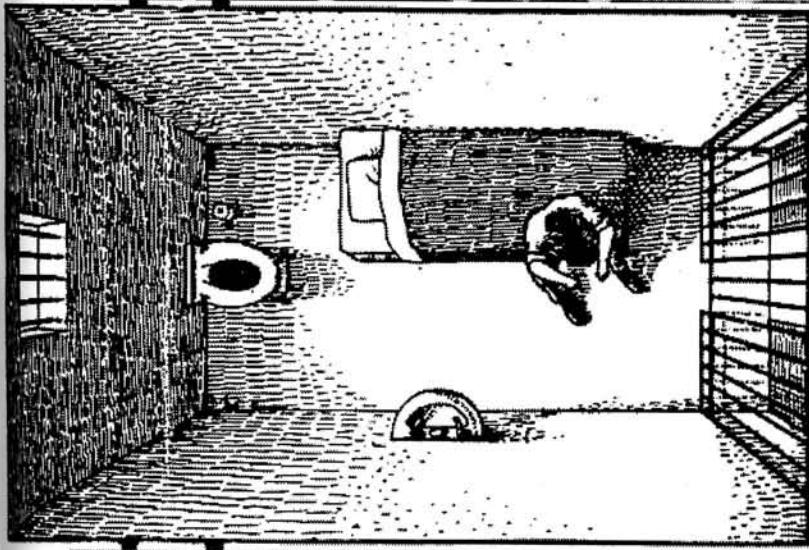
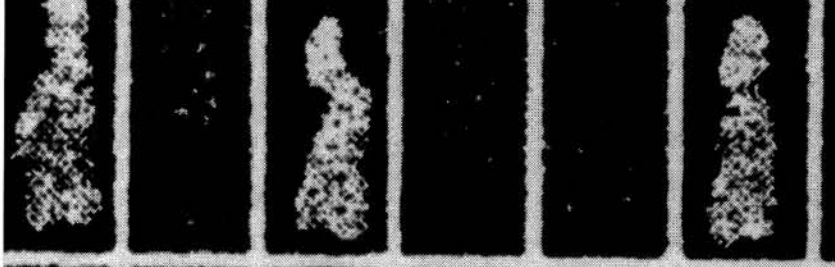
Imprisonment rates in the United States are unrivaled anywhere in the world. More than a million people are incarcerated in the U.S. And over 3 million are under the control of the criminal justice system. That is about the size of the population of the city of Chicago or the whole of Nicaragua. But what the generally high rates mask is that while imprisonment rates for white people in the U.S. parallel those of, for instance, European countries, the rates for Black people are of concentration camp proportions. Government statistics reveal that a Black person is almost 8 times more likely to go to prison than a white person. Black people in the U.S. are imprisoned four times more frequently than Black people in South Africa. And about one out of every four Black men will go to prison in his lifetime. There are more Black men aged 20-29 under control of the criminal justice system than there are Black men of all ages in college. A friend of ours, who is a prison minister in a large urban center, describes entering one such prison, looking at the mass of Black faces, and feeling like he has just walked onto a modern-day slave ship. Marion is the final step of this thoroughly racist prison system; Marion's purpose is to suppress dissent in that system. Not surprisingly, over 75 percent of the men incarcerated there are people of color.

We are not saying that the prison system alone is racist. Prisons are the brutal end product of a system based on white privilege and power. And there are life-and-death implications of such a vast discrepancy in wealth.

The only way these enormous inequities of wealth and health — and those of education, employment, and housing — can be maintained is through the violent repression and containment of the Black population. The prison system has been made a prominent institution in Black communities.

When Black people rebelled in the 1960s, the whole country was shaken to its foundations. One response was the skyrocketing of imprisonment rates, particularly for Black people. It was, in fact, 1972, the same year the control unit opened at Marion, that imprisonment rates started rising, never to come down again.





decided to build a control unit prison from the ground up in Florence, Colorado. Scheduled to open in 1993, the prison's state-of-the-art technology will eliminate even the minimal levels of human contact prisoners have at Marion.

A glimpse of the future at Florence is already available. The model for Florence is the Security Housing Unit at Pelican Bay State Prison in California, which opened in December 1989 (built to hold 1,056 prisoners, it's already 20 percent over capacity). Prisoners are confined to 80 square-foot cells with solid steel doors for 22 and a half hours a day. They are allowed out only for a 90-minute "exercise" period, alone in an empty concrete yard the size of three cells

## TWO...THREE...MANY CONTROL UNITS

Marion is the prototype of the New World Order prison. But the BOP will not stop with Marion. When Marion first came under criticism, the prisoncrats maintained that having a repressive institution such as Marion meant that the rest of the prison system could operate much more openly, having been relieved of all such "bad apples." We in the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown maintained as far back as 1985 that this would not be the case. We noted that there were many tours being conducted at Marion; Marion had become a showcase and there was talk of the "Marion model." We predicted that Marion would serve as an anchor pulling the prison system in increasingly repressive directions, that there would be a proliferation of control unit prisons.

Unfortunately, we were right. Some 36 states now operate some form of super-maximum security prison or unit within a prison. Now the BOP has determined that Marion itself is inadequate, since it was not originally built as a control unit prison. Therefore, they have

- White families have 10 times the median family wealth of Black families.
- 50% of Black children live in poverty.
- The Black infant mortality rate is twice the white rate
- The Black maternal mortality rate is three times the white rate.
- The death rate from AIDS in East Harlem is eight times higher than it is in Queens.
- Black people die, on the average, seven years sooner than white people, and the gap is increasing.
- The annual number of "excess deaths" among Black people (the number of Blacks who would not have died each year had they experienced the same mortality rates as white people) is 60,000. These are more people in one year alone than the U.S. lost during the nine years of the Vietnam War.
- In 1987, more young Black men were killed in the U.S. than had been killed in the Vietnam War. In that year Black men were about seven times more likely than white men to die of homicide and police violence. The vast majority of those killed by the police are Black.

with 20-foot high walls and metal screens overhead. Guards open the sliding cell doors by remote control and use loudspeakers to direct the prisoners in and out. Prisoners moved off the cell-block for any reason are shackled and flanked by two guards wielding truncheons. Except for the sound of a door slamming or a voice on a speaker, the SHU is silent. Prisoners report the use of "hog-tying" (the intertwining of handcuffs and ankle-cuffs on a prisoner), "cock-fights" in which guards double-cell enemies or otherwise allow them to attack other prisoners, and forced cell moves using stun-guns, gas guns, and batons.



### CONCLUSION

Marion may have been the exception in penological procedure. But unless we do something about it, we will wake up one day and it will be the norm.

The brutality and dehumanization of these dungeons are all the more disturbing because they do not result from lack of resources or old, broken down structures. They are the result of deliberate, systematic, high-tech planning and implementation — at the highest levels of the U.S. government. The President appoints the Attorney General and the Attorney General appoints the Director of the Bureau of Prisons. It is a very short line of command.

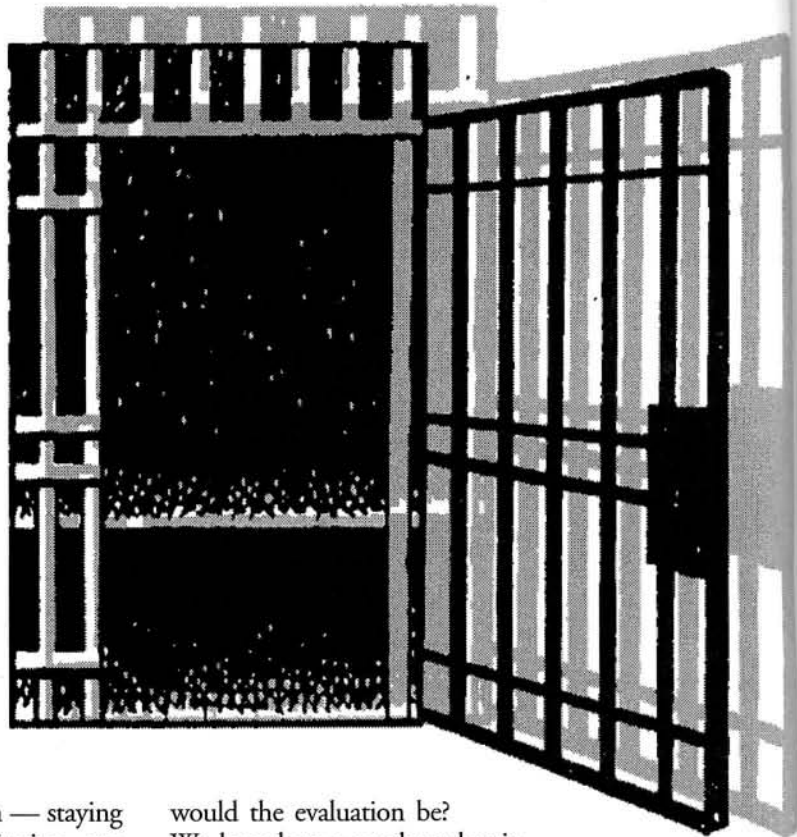
So what are they trying to accomplish?

There are three general explanations for imprisonment: rehabilitation, deterrence, and punishment. There is not much talk these days about rehabilitation. Recidivism rates are extremely high, about 50 percent. That means one out of every two people return to prison. And that is the narrowest conception of rehabilitation — staying out of prison. In measuring true rehabilitation, one would have to ask, are the other 50% become fully productive and healthy members of society? Or are many in ill health, drug and alcohol addicted — or dead? Imprisonment does not rehabilitate. In fact, the best predictor of recidivism is whether or not a person was incarcerated as a juvenile. We can therefore say that imprisonment is criminogenic, that prisons probably generate more criminality.

Prisons don't rehabilitate and they don't deter people from committing crimes. Despite the highest imprison-

ment rates in the world, there is no reliable evidence that threat of imprisonment or time served has a measurable impact on the crime rate. This is not a radical idea. It is acknowledged by many mainstream criminologists. In a 1987 review of the literature, prominent criminologist Christy Visher stated that imprisonment "appears to have been only slightly more effective in averting crimes in the early 1980s than in the 1970s, despite a near doubling of the U.S. prison populations."<sup>22</sup> New York's Rockefeller drug laws put in place severely punitive mandatory sentences and yet the Correctional Association of New York acknowledged that "the state's new policies have been staggeringly expensive, have threatened a crisis of safety and manageability in the prison system, and have failed to reduce the rate of crime or even stop its increase....The citizens of New York are more likely to be victims of crime today than in 1971."<sup>23</sup> Yet the policy of New York since those findings has been to intensify imprisonment.

If we were talking about a corporate product what



would the evaluation be?

We have here a product that is defective at least half the time and probably a lot more. We are spending \$25 billion a year on this product — the budget of the criminal justice system (more than half goes to prisons and jails). Yet even the Director of Corrections in Alabama has said, "We're on a train that has to be turned around. It doesn't make any sense to pump millions and millions into corrections and have no effect on the crime rate."<sup>24</sup>

Noam Chomsky has wondered, in discussing the tasks that confront activists,



Can the ideological rubble be cleared so that the reality of the world becomes visible? Can people become organized to protect themselves from the system of coercion and control, discover and articulate their real interests and act to achieve them? The issues are not limited to war and peace. They reach to the question of whether we will live in a murderous totalitarian culture or a functioning democracy. The stakes are not small.

It seems, however, that clearing away the ideological rubble is no easy matter. Many liberal criminologists, aware of the facts, nevertheless cannot make sense of the imprisonment situation. Elliott Currie, for instance, has written a very intelligent and informative book, *Confronting Crime*. However, in examining the situation, he accepts as a given that the role of prisons is rehabilitation or crime control, and he poses this question: "If we know as much about crime as we think we do, why haven't we acted more consistently and constructively?"<sup>5</sup> Currie echoes the Alabama Director of Corrections; for these reformers it just "doesn't make any sense."

Well, it is true that if either crime prevention or rehabilitation is the goal, prisons have been miserable failures and make no sense. If, however, the purpose is the warehousing and containment of people of color, then perhaps they make a good deal of sense and are doing just fine.

What should we do about all this? I am reminded of a joke I once heard: A person is walking down the street, and sees a man on all fours. It was a curious sight, so the passer-by asked, "What are you doing?" "Looking for my wallet." "Well, where exactly do you think you lost it?" "Oh, about two blocks that way." "Well, why are you looking here?" "Oh," he explained, "the light is much better here."

The light may shine brightly sometimes on one area of political work, sometimes on others. It's great when there are large demonstrations that deal with environmental issues, that deal with animal rights, or certainly with Central America or peace. We should support and join with progressive motion in many areas. But now, more than ever, it is critical to concentrate and focus a substantial part of our energies towards dismantling these racist and repressive prison institutions. No matter how difficult the task may be — perhaps because it is so difficult — this work must be at the top of the list, even if that means that we leave other important work for others to develop

and implement right now. We have to pay attention to what will be essential to the transformation of this society and the New World Order it promulgates. As long as we refuse to deal with the ideology and concentration camp reality of the prison system, we are avoiding the task of confronting the destruction of the most valuable natural resource, the human resource. Black people's struggles for human rights has always pushed this country toward democracy. That was true in the 1860s and in the 1960s. At those times, we have seen the possibilities of a real transformation. If we don't deal with the prisons, we will never see a movement for a new society, because the prisons will swallow the resisters and revolutionaries. The question for us is not where is the light the brightest but where must we look to find what we need. □

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, November 1, 1990, p. A8.
- <sup>2</sup> Visher, Christy A., "Incapacitation and Crime Control: Does a 'Lock 'Em Up' Strategy Reduce Crime?" *Justice Quarterly* 4, 1987, p. 519.
- <sup>3</sup> Currie, Elliott, *Confronting Crime*, 1985, p. 349-350.
- <sup>4</sup> Ticer, Scott, "The Search for Ways to Break Out of the Prison Crisis," *Business Week*, May 8, 1989, p. 80.
- <sup>5</sup> Currie, p. 18.



*During the past months, U.S. courts and the FBI have stepped up persecution of political prisoners and prisoners of war. Although the following cases represent only a partial account of the repression currently taking place, they reveal that the attack on resistance movements — begun under J. Edgar Hoover's infamous COINTELPRO — is widespread and continuing. We urge our readers to contact us to find out how you can support campaigns for freedom for political prisoners and POWs.*

### Dhoruba Bin Wahad

On December 19, 1991, the New York Court of Appeals opened the door for the *reimprisonment* of former Black Panther Party leader Dhoruba Bin Wahad. In March 1990, after serving 19 years of his life in prison, Dhoruba proved that he was the victim of an FBI/police frame-up, won a reversal of his conviction, and was released without bail.

Now, in an effort to deny him his freedom, New York's highest court has rewritten existing law and overturned the reversal of his conviction. In its 1991 opinion, the court ruled that if the District Attorney withholds evidence until a defendant's direct appeals are

exhausted, it then becomes the defendant's burden to prove his/her conviction was "prejudiced." This means that Dhoruba, and anyone else to whom this law applies, must rely on the racist court system which railroaded them to admit that information was withheld — and that it would have affected the jury's decision.

At press time, Dhoruba remains free but faces upcoming court appearances which may result in his reimprisonment. Contact: Campaign to Free Black Political Prisoners and POWs in the U.S., Kingsbridge Station, P.O. Box 339, Bronx, New York 10463-0339. (718) 624-0800.

### Richard Williams

In November 1991, North American anti-imperialist and father of three children, Richard Williams was convicted on charges of killing a New Jersey State Police officer. A working class revolutionary, Richard is part of the group collectively known as the Ohio 7, which has undergone many political trials for its resistance activities. Richard and co-defendant Tom Manning were

first brought to trial on the New Jersey charges in 1986-87; Tom was convicted and Richard got a hung jury. Testifying at both trials, Tom maintained that the shooting was in self-defense and that Richard wasn't even at the scene. In a militarized courtroom, filled with armed police, the government got what it wanted: Richard was convicted and sentenced to life.

### Joseph Doherty

After a nine year political/legal battle, fought in U.S. courts and in the court of public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic, Joe Doherty was deported to England in February 1992. A fighter against British colonial domination of Ireland, Joe was a member of the Irish Republican Army in whose active service he was arrested three times. In 1981, during the IRA hunger strike in Long Kesh Prison (in which Bobby Sands and other political prisoners gave their lives), and while he was on trial, Joe and seven other IRA volunteers escaped from jail. In June 1983, he was seized by federal agents

in New York and charged with entering the U.S. illegally.

Over the years that followed, Joe's support grew from the Irish and progressive communities in the U.S. to the halls of Congress. In New York, a street was named after him. Despite numerous court rulings in his favor, the government prevailed and whisked him away to England before an appeal could be filed. It's worth remembering that the British government has many times been condemned by Amnesty International for torture and other cruel punishments against IRA members.

### Luis C3lon Osorio

Puerto Rican independentista, Luis Alfredo C3lon Osorio, was captured by the federal authorities in Puerto Rico on March 16, 1992. A member of the legendary clandestine Puerto Rican organization: Ejercito Boricua Popular-Macheteros, C3lon Osorio is one of the remaining people still facing charges in the Hartford, Connecticut conspiracy trial. On August 30, 1985, in an attack the independence movement describes as the "second invasion of Puerto Rico," over 300 FBI

agents carried out widespread arrests of activists on the island, charging them with participation in a successful 7.1 million dollar expropriation of a Wells Fargo depot in Hartford. Proceeds from the action, one of the largest in U.S. history, are reported to have benefitted the independence struggle.

In September 1990, C3lon Osorio went underground with Comandante Filiberto Ojeda Rios, who was also due to stand trial in Hartford.



# WRITE THROUGH THE WALLS

*The U.S. government says there are no political prisoners or POWs in this country. Yet the partial list below shows this claim is a complete lie. We urge you to write them and to send literature. These women and men represent the best of the movement. Make their struggle yours. "The Real Dragon" sponsors a continuing book drive to political prisoners and POWs. For more information or to send contributions write: POB 3294, Berkeley, CA 94703-9901.*

## **Puerto Rican Prisoners of War**

Edwin Cortes #92153-024  
Ricardo Jimenez #88967-024 A-2  
Alberto Rodríguez #92150-024 B-3  
FCI Lewisburg  
PO Box 1000  
Lewisburg PA 17837

Carlos Alberto Torres #88976-024  
FCI Oxford  
Box 1000  
Oxford WI 5952-1000

Alicia Rodríguez #NO7157  
Box 5007  
Dwight IL 60420

Luis Rosa #NO2743  
P.O. Box 711  
Menard IL 62259

Oscar López-Rivera #87651-024  
USP Marion  
PO Box 1000  
Marion IL 62959

Elizam Escobar #88969-024  
FCI Colorado Unit  
PO Box 1500  
El Reno OK 73036

Adolfo Matos #88968-024  
Lompoc Fedl Penitentiary  
3901 Klein Blvd  
Lompoc CA 93436

Dylcia Pagán #88971-024  
Lucy Rodríguez #88973-024  
Alejandrina Torres #92152-024  
Carmen Valentín #88974-024  
FCI Pleasanton  
5701 8th Street  
Camp Parks  
Dublin CA 94568

## **Puerto Rican Political Prisoners**

Norman Ramirez Talavera #03171-069  
FCI Danbury  
Pembroke Station  
Danbury CT 06811

Luis Cólón Osorio #03172-069  
FCI Otisville  
PO Box 1000  
Unit 5  
Otisville NY 10963

Antonio Camacho #03587-069  
FCI McKean, Unit 2  
PO Box 8000  
Bradford, PA 16701

Juan Segarra-Palmer #15357-077  
FCI Marianna  
PMB 7007  
Unit Navajo B  
Marianna FL 32446

Roberto Jose Maldonado #03588-069  
Federal Medical Facility  
3150 Horton Rd  
Fort Worth TX 76119

Haydeé Beltrán #88462-024  
FCI Pleasanton  
5701 8th Street  
Camp Parks  
Dublin CA 94568

## **New Afrikan/Black Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners**

Herman Ferguson #89-A-4621  
c/o Ctr for Constitutional Rights  
Attn: Joan Gibbs  
666 Broadway  
New York NY 10012

Herman Bell #79-C-262  
PO Box 338  
Napanoch NY 12458-0338

Abdul Haqq #89T-1710  
s/n Craig Randall  
Greenhaven State Prison  
Drawer B  
Stormville NY 12582

Teddy (Jah) Heath #75-A-0139  
Mohaman Kori #80-A-808  
Jalil A. Muntaqin #77-A-4283  
s/n Anthony Bottom  
Shawangunk Corr Facility  
PO Box 700  
Wallkill NY 12589

Adbul Majid #83-A-483  
s/n Anthony LaBorde  
Sullivan Corr Facility  
Box A-G  
Fallsburg NY 12733

Bashir Hameed #82-A-6313  
Maliki Shakur Latine #81-A-4469  
Clinton Corr Facility  
PO Box B  
Dannemora NY 12929

Albert Nuh Washington #77-A-1528  
Auburn Corr Facility  
135 State Street  
Auburn NY 13024

Robert Seth Hayes #74-A-2280  
Wende Corr Facility  
1187 Wende Road  
Alden NY 14004

Robert Taylor #10376-054  
Attica Corr Facility  
PO Box 149  
Attica NY 14011

Thomas Warner #M3049  
Drawer R  
Huntingdon PA 16652

Sababu Na Uhuru #673-0-016  
s/n William King  
PO Box 17236  
Meadersburg PA 17236

Kojo Bomani Sababu #39384-066  
FCI Lewisburg  
PO Box 1000  
Lewisburg PA 17837

Kazi Toure  
s/n Chris King  
FCI Lewisburg  
PO Box 17837  
Lewisburg PA 17837

Cecilio Chui Ferguson #04372-054  
Drawer K  
Dallas PA 18612

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FCI Raiford  
UCI 68-2018 Box 221  
Raiford FL 32083

Richard Mafundi Lake #79972-X  
100 Warrior Lane 4-93B  
Bessemer AL 35023

Sekou Kambui #113058  
s/n William Turk  
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Elmore AL 36025-0056

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7475 Cockrell Bend  
Ind. Road  
Nashville TN 37243-0471

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141 First St.  
Coldwater MI 49036

Larry Guy  
Jackson State Prison  
Box 49204  
Jackson MS 39204

Sekou Odinga #05228-054  
s/n Nathaniel Burns  
Richard Thompson-El #155229  
USP Marion  
PO Box 1000  
Marion IL 62959

Sundiata Acoli #39794-066  
Mark Cook #20025-148  
USP Leavenworth  
PO Box 1000  
Leavenworth KS 66048

Mondo Langa  
s/n David Rice  
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Lincoln NE 68502

Gary Tyler  
#84156 — Ash 4  
Louisiana State Penitentiary  
Angola LA 70712

Rickke Green #84244  
DCCC  
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Hominy OK 74502

Haki Malik Abdullah #C-56123  
s/n Michael Green  
Corcoran Prison  
PO Box 3456  
Corcoran CA 93212

Kalima Aswad #B24120  
s/n Robert Duren  
CMC  
PO Box 8108  
San Luis Obispo CA 93409

Tariq James Haskins #40075-133  
Mutulu Shakur #83205-012  
Lompoc Fedl Penitentiary  
3901 Klein Blvd  
Lompoc CA 93436

geronimo ji-Jaga (pratt) #B40319  
PO Box 1902B 1C-211U  
Tehachapi CA 93581

Ruchell Cinque Magee #A92051  
Pelican Bay CF  
PO Box 7500 SHU 4C-105  
Crescent City CA 95531

Hugo Pinell #A88401  
Pelican Bay CF  
PO Box 7500 SHU C8-101  
Crescent City CA 95531

## **Move Prisoners**

Charles Sims Africa #AM-4975  
PO Box 99901  
Pittsburgh PA 15033

Michael Davis Africa #AM-4973  
Mumia Abu Jamal #AM-8335  
Drawer R  
Huntingdon PA 16652

William Phillips Africa #AM-4984  
RFD 3  
Bellefonte PA 16823

Edward Goodman Africa #AM-4974  
PO Box 200  
Camp Hill PA 17001-0200

Ramona Johnson Africa #007564  
Debbi Sims Africa #006307  
Consusuela Dotson Africa #006434  
Janine Phillips Africa #006309  
Merle Austin Africa #006306  
Janet Holloway Africa #006308  
Sue Leon Africa #006325  
PO Box 180  
Muncy PA 17756

Delbert Orr Africa #AM-4985  
Carlos Perez Africa #AM-7400  
Drawer K  
Dallas PA 18612

**Virgin Islands 5**

Malik El-Amin #96557-131  
s/n Meral Smith  
FCI Lewisburg  
PO Box 1000  
Lewisburg PA 17837

Hanif Shabazz Bey #9654-131  
s/n B Gereau  
USP Marion  
PO Box 1000  
Marion IL 62959

Abdul Aziz #96521-131  
s/n Warren Ballentine  
USP Leavenworth  
PO Box 1000  
Leavenworth KS 66048

Raphael Kwesi Joseph #96558-131  
Lompoc Fedl Penitentiary  
3901 Klein Blvd  
Lompoc CA 93436

**Native American  
Prisoners of War  
and Political Prisoners**

Eddie Hatcher #DL213  
Odom Correctional Center  
Rt 1 Box 35  
Jackson NC 27845

Leonard Peltier #89637-132  
USP Leavenworth  
PO Box 1000  
Leavenworth KS 66048

Rita Silk Nauni #Box 1000  
Mable B...  
Oklahoma #K 73136

Standing Deer #83947  
s/n Robert Hugh Wilson  
DCCC  
Box 220  
Hominy OK 74502

Norma Jean Croy #14293  
CIW Chowchilla  
PO Box 1501  
Chowchilla CA 93610

**Mexican Political Prisoners**

Alberto Aranda #300823  
Ellis 1 Unit  
Huntsville TX 77343

Luis Rodríguez #C 33000 SQ  
San Quentin Prison  
Tamal CA 94974

**Cuban Political Prisoners**

Ana Lucia Gelabert #384484  
Rt 2, Box 800  
Gatesville TX 76528

**Irish Political Prisoners**

Gerard Hoy #17480-038  
Richard Johnson #17422-038  
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Raybrook NY 12977-0300

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PO Box 8000  
Bradford PA 16701

Brian Fleming #08022-002  
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Atlanta GA 30315

Kevin McKinley #27801  
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Talladega AL 35160

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**Japanese Political Prisoners**

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Marion IL 62959

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Political Prisoners**

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Walpole State Prison  
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S Walpole MA 02071

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Richard Williams #79372-SH  
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Trenton NJ 08625

Kathy Boudin #84-G-171  
Judy Clark #83-G-313  
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Great Meadow Corr Facility  
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Comstock NY 12821

Timothy Blunk #09429-050  
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Lewisburg PA 17837

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Atlanta GA 30315

Roy Bourgeois #01579-017  
PMB 1000  
Tallahassee FL 32301

Silvia Baraldini #05125-054  
Marilyn Buck #00482-285  
Susan Rosenberg #03684-016  
FCI Marianna  
PMB 7007  
Shawnee Unit  
Marianna FL 32446

Barbara Curzi-Laaman #1213-053  
FCI Lexington  
3301 Leestown Road  
Lexington KY 40511

Carol Manning #10375-016  
Laura Whitehorn #22432-037  
FCI Lexington  
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Monroe WA 98272

Paul Wright #930783  
Box 500 HC63  
Clallam Bay WA 98320

**Ploughshares/Disarmament  
Prisoners**

Randy Kehler  
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Deerfield MA 01342

William Frankel-Streit #03809-052  
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Orisville NY 10963

Moana Cole #91-891  
Blair County Prison  
419 Market Sq Alley  
Hollidaysburg PA 16648

Jennifer Haines  
c/o Denver Cable Worker  
24 W. S. S.  
Denver CO 80205

Margaret Millett #32118-008  
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Dept 1785  
Phoenix AZ 85027-7006

Mark Davis #23106-008  
FCI  
R.R. 2, Box 9000  
Safford AZ 85546

**Military Resisters**

**Convicted**

Jody Anderson #243-43-8434  
Robert Beard #568-31-3629  
Kenneth Boyd #384-76-9267  
Paul Cook #500-64-1670  
Shane Fisher #545-79-7908  
Kendall Langley #437-49-1308  
Glen Mulholland #147-54-5186  
Jean Claude Rainey #215-06-4420  
Ken Sharpe #307-72-5424  
Marine Corps Brig  
Bldg 1041 MCB  
Camp Lejeune NC 28542

Michael Bell  
Ft Knox Box A  
Ft Knox KY 48121

Sgt Robert Pete  
Drawer A  
Ft. Leavenworth KS 66027

William Allen  
David Childress  
Faith Grasso  
Tracy Robb  
MP Co Bldg 1490  
Ft Sill OK 73503-5020

William Walker  
8320-1 Smith Drive  
Fort Hood TX 76544

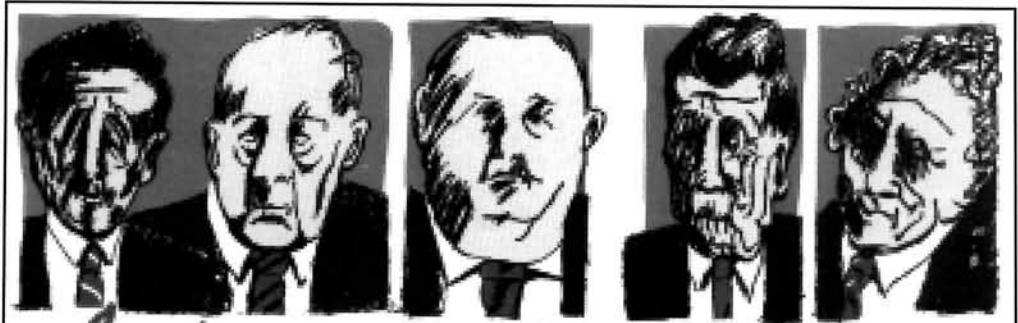
Tim Silvey  
Ft Lewis Bldg 1450  
Ft Lewis WA 98433

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