

# OtherWise

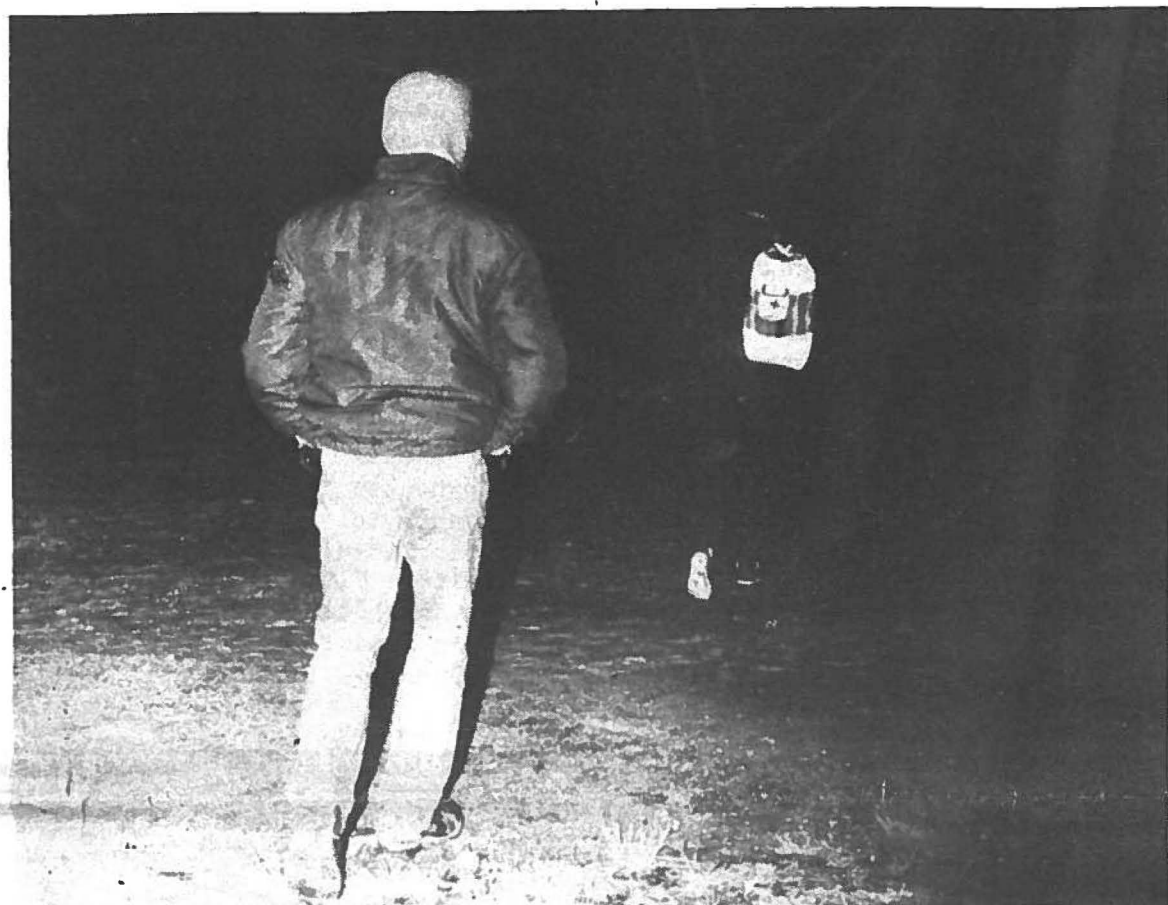
*A Feminist Newspaper at U of T*

Volume 2, Number 3, December 3, 1985

ReMembering,



Basiran, Page 8.



Jennifer Gillmor

## SAC Women's Commission Produces A Safety Map Maps Are Not Enough

by Helen Armstrong

A Safety Map was recently produced by the SAC Women's Commission at the University of Toronto. Ashley Newman, the Women's Commissioner, says that the map was put together partly in response to the brutal rapes that have occurred on the U of T campus in recent years. She mentions the high school student who was raped and murdered two years ago after leaving Robarts Library one evening. Newman thinks that "a lot of incidents aren't reported" by women and hopes that the safety map will change this by showing women that the issue of rape is being taken seriously.

Yet how can women take seriously the advice on the back of the map that tells women to "Listen for footsteps

and voices nearby" when walking home at night and to "Try walking down the middle of the street", where, one might surmise, she could risk being run over. Newman seems to think that women need to be given common-sensical advice. She feels that the map is a helpful tool and does not agree with the criticism that it is a bandaid measure. Yet nowhere does the publication even allude to the real problem -- that women are frightened, afraid to walk home alone at night. This is indicative of the lack of independence and power that women have in our society. The map skirts the fact that male violence pervades women's consciousness.

Newman must be unaware that the majority of sexual assaults occur be-

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## Racism or Ethnocentricity?

by Lisa Cormier

Neither the word "racism" nor "ethnocentricity" appear in the Oxford English Dictionary, the bible of most English students. Does this mean that these words do not exist in the English language? Of course not, but it does reflect an attitude of English scholars generally. It represents a bias towards the literature of Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada and it represents a lack of general awareness of English-language literature written outside of these three countries.

The problem is not simply one of what countries' literature is included and excluded from the curriculum of English courses - although this is a major starting point for racist assumptions. In the calendar year 1985-86 at U of T, no English graduate course deals with the literature of a country other than Britain, the U.S. or Canada. The lack of awareness of literatures other than our own is more than just an omission due to ignorance. It is an ethnocentric attitude which denies the validity of "other" literatures by valuing only our culture's production. There is a large and vibrant body of English-language third world literature, mostly from countries which were at one time colonized by Britain, which is summarily ignored. This ignorance comes from the deeply rooted racism of North American society.

The following comments are not intended to condemn the U of T English department, nor do I pretend that they are indicative of the state every English department, but are speculations on the possible reasons for the ethnocentric (or racist?) attitudes towards "other" literatures in the English departments with which I am familiar.

The attitudes of students is, perhaps, easiest to understand. English students' general lack of awareness of

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**MORE OTHERWISE ...**

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From The Boys*

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**FEMINISM**

and

*Racism: Making  
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## From The Collective

Although it is 1985, racism has not yet disappeared. We feel this issue needs to be addressed, yet our initial concern was whether a predominantly white, middle-class collective could legitimately and adequately make pronouncements on the topic. We have decided that we cannot wait for racism to hit us in the face; it is our responsibility to learn about racism. Although our experiences may be limited and vicarious, and our views possibly naïve, expressing our opinions here enhances the dialogue between all women on the subject of racism. Increased consciousness cannot worsen the problem. Furthermore, feminism must necessarily encompass an attack on racism.

Feminism can be defined as a theory which recognizes that all people are structurally oppressed in a variety of ways and limits its focus to women who are recipients of these various oppressions. If feminism does not address the problem of racism, it is, as Barbara Smith says, merely female self-aggrandizement; feminism is meaningless if it doesn't encompass all women's problems. To understand a black woman's concerns, we must understand racism. If we do not make ourselves aware, we will impose our priority of concerns on women whose lives necessitate completely different ones. We would be irresponsible to assume that a Puerto Rican woman places her greatest concern on her right to choose to have an abortion when in reality, her greatest worry is whether

or not she'll be forced to undergo sterilization. It is crucial to the women's movement that feminists do not become complacent: we must be aware of all women's situations and of the focus of work being done, in Canada and internationally.

We also wish to refute the liberal idea that some people are racist while others are not. Society is fundamentally racist and so, consequently, everyone is affected. People continually make, to a greater or lesser degree, racist assumptions and everyone benefits in subtle ways from the racist structure. People can afford to drink three cups of coffee a day because the coffee labourers are paid poverty wages in Latin America. It is easy for Westerners to look across the Atlantic and point an accusing finger at the South African regime, but it is difficult to see racism in our own society. There are blatant examples of racism, such as the opposition to the efforts to set up a Native Housing Cooperative in Scarborough. Residents of the neighbourhood complained that their property value would be lowered. The astonishing treatment of Japanese Canadians during World War Two is becoming increasingly understood. Many were sent to concentration type camps, families were torn apart, some were forcibly sent back to Japan, and many had all their property seized. Another example of racism is the simple fact that people still suffer verbal and even physical abuse because of their

colour, their accent, or whatever makes them different from what our society establishes as the norm.

But racism in North America is often more subtle than these previous examples. Our textbooks still present us with a very white (not to mention male) perspective; our attention to people of colour is usually token (NEW260Y has one week devoted to black feminism); and our everyday lives are filled with small yet significant solipsisms such as pale pink crayons labelled "flesh tone". Due to this subtlety, Canadians seem to be lulled into the belief that they live in a country free from racism. Few Canadians are aware that there exists a very large black ghetto in a suburb of Halifax, called Preston, where few whites will walk and where the separation is so great that the blacks have retained an accent which other Nova Scotians find difficult to understand. This sort of situation is not unique.

In the 1960s, the Liberals began distinguishing Canada as possessing a "cultural mosaic" versus the "melting pot" of the United States. But this only amounts to a patronizing attitude that in Canada, you are perfectly welcome to keep your exotic ethnic quirks. It probably enhances our tourism. But if you truly want to participate advantageously in Canadian society, you had better "melt". Ultimately, the power elites will do whatever suits their best interests. As feminists, it is in our best interest to fight racial oppression.

OW

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Special thanks to all are Mums, just because it's not Mother's Day. And thanks to Helen for the retreat

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OtherWise is a University of Toronto feminist newspaper and is independently funded. Any donations will be most welcome. All articles published in OtherWise do not necessarily represent the views of the collective. Only those articles and editorials signed by the collective have been agreed upon.

## From Our Readers

Dear OtherWise:

Love your mag! I'm new to Toronto, and OtherWise is really one of the first things I've encountered that lives up to my expectations of this town.

Especially germane were the articles about fashion and feminism. For months --nay, years--I have been asking: "Ma, can I be a feminist and shave my legs?" and "How can I maintain credibility while wearing Fiorucci footwear?" But fear of being attacked by sister in her poo-coloured, corduroy, more-socialist-than-thou togs kept my mouth shut. Thanks to you, OtherWise, I feel I can finally step out of the dressing room.

I won't listen to some man who says that I'm not professional if I don't wear a suit, or to anyone who says that caring about fashion is bowing to the great god Materialism. Life is theatre, and a costume change makes the show more fun. Now I shave my legs if I feel like it, let it grow if I don't, and give away my Fiorucci's to someone who appreciates but can't afford them.

Thanks again,  
Janette Platana

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# Black, Lesbian, Feminist: *Barbara Smith* and the Challenge of Coalition Politics

by Sunset Roach

Despite her somewhat ordinary name, Barbara Smith is no ordinary person. She is a woman of great depth and intelligence. Smith is a Black Lesbian feminist who has been working in the U.S. feminist movement for the past nine or ten years. She came to speak here in Toronto this October as part of SISTER VISION's efforts to increase the flow of information and culture among and between white women and women of colour.

SISTER VISION: Black Women and Women of Colour Press, the first publishing house of its kind to be established in Canada, began a year ago. It has already sponsored a concert with the duet Casselberry-DuFree in April; and has since sponsored a concert in November with the quintet Sweet Honey in the Rock following Barbara Smith's two appearances on the 23rd and 24th of October.

On the evening of the 23rd Smith appeared at A Space on Spadina where she spent the bulk of her presentation on three of the short stories she has been working on since last fall.

Smith opened her presentation with a brief but substantive introduction before reading from her humorous short stories dealing with a couple of Black women talking to each other about current events in the news. She expressed her concern for people of colour around the world, noting that though we may be in the minority in the United States and Canada, we people of colour are the majority on the globe.

Barbara Smith echoed the claim made by W.E.B. DuBois, often considered the father of modern Black militancy, that the topic of the twentieth century would be the colour line. She also gave her definition of feminism, which she had originally articulated in her 1979 article "Racism and Women's Studies" found in *But Some Of Us Are Brave* (1982):

The reason racism is a feminist issue is easily explained by the inherent definition of feminism. Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of colour, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women - as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism but merely female self-aggrandizement.

Upfront and actively organizing as a Black Lesbian feminist is dangerous, said Smith. However, she believes that the numerous issues she mentioned must be integrated.

Thus coalitions play an important part in the women's movement as well as other movements.

Smith completed the first part of the evening presentation with a sound statement concerning long range planning within the struggle. The solution to oppression may not be in our lifetime, Smith said, but we can get inspiration knowing that the small commitment we each make to the struggle will collectively and over time make a big difference. All we have to do to see that this is true is to look back in history to see the progress we have made.

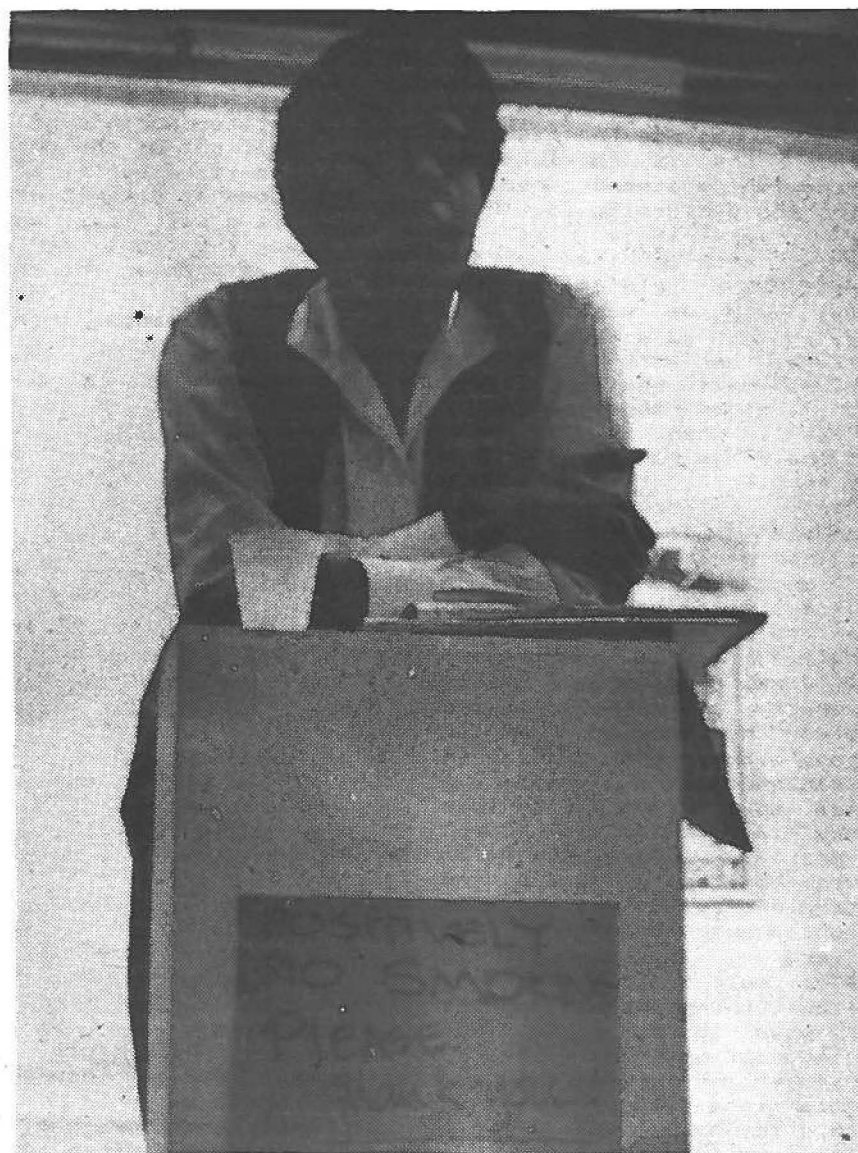
Following Smith's reading the floor was open to the audience. Unfortunately I had to leave right after Smith's presentation, but I was told the audience did not seem to dialogue much with the speaker. This was probably due to the layout at A Space. The room was very long and narrow and Smith stood at the far end of the hall while several rows of people, approximately ten abreast, sat in front of her. Had I stayed for the question period I probably would not have taken the opportunity to ask Smith any questions since, standing at the back, I would have had to shout over the tops of heads to be heard.

The following day Barbara Smith spoke at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) for two hours. About forty people attended this lunchtime talk in one of OISE's seminar rooms. KITCHEN TABLE: Women of Colour Press, Smith told us, is a small press dedicated to a movement that will save our lives, and our lives are worth saving. Right now there is a Black women's movement going on in the U.S.; this is what has brought about the rise of Black Women's Studies.

Smith spoke about the need for we as women of colour to organize amongst ourselves because sexual oppression affects us too. Why is autonomous organizing necessary? Firstly, because there is sexism within nations of colour; and secondly because there is racism within the women's movement of western nations.

Smith gave her definition of feminism, as she had the night before. Again she emphasized that oppression cannot be subdivided. All oppression needs to be addressed by the feminist movement. One need not be a non-racist (which is impossible at the moment anyway) to be an anti-racist.

Because Smith sees oppression as an integrated phenomenon, coalitions seem an apt strategy to combat it. Smith recalled that she first heard of various interest groups allying together some years back at the second national conference of Gays and Lesbians called "A United Rainbow of



Strength."

When Smith speaks about coalitions she is not talking about opportunism. She is talking about the coalitions Bernice Johnson Reagon talks about in her article "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century" found in *Some Girls = A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983). What follows is part of the excerpt Smith read to us:

Coalition work is not work done at home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort. Some people will come to a coalition and they rate the success of the coalition on whether or not they feel good when they get there. They're not looking for a coalition; they're looking for a home! They're looking for a bottle with some milk in it and a nipple, which does not happen in a coalition. You don't get a lot of food in a coalition. You don't get fed in a coalition. In a coalition you have to give, and it is different from your home. You can't stay there all the time. You go to the coalition for a few hours

and then you go back and take your bottle wherever it is, and then you go back and coalesce some more.

As an example of coalition work, Smith explained how she and others in Albany worked with anti-interventionists to be aware of and organize against local violence.

At present Smith is involved in global work. Today, America is the dominant power over the majority of the world; however, that balance of power is changing, says Smith. She ended her presentation optimistically, emphasizing the "long term" view of the struggle against oppression.

I am sure that the majority of the audience, who were white women, enjoyed the chance to hear a different perspective on feminism. Unfortunately, not many women of colour seized the opportunity to hear a message directed to us as women of colour.

The dialogue period at the end was very meaningful since the audience, which was sitting in seminar format, asked genuine questions and made genuine comments while Barbara Smith replied with clear, direct answers. The general opinion of most of the audience and of Smith herself was that the forum was very successful.

## Wise Words

*"We who believe in Freedom cannot rest until it comes"*

- Sweet Honey In The Rock

# Of Politics and Poetry: Afua Cooper

by Nancy Worsfold

Afua Cooper has been performing her poetry in and around Toronto for the past two years. She is careful to distinguish between reading poetry and performing it. For Afua, performance is an integral part of the writing process. She told me that she writes with an audience in mind, as much as a reader. She publishes her work because she believes that she can thus reach a wider range of people, but it is when she performs that she feels her poems truly come to life.

Afua performed at an OtherWise benefit three weeks ago; her performance was brief but impressive. She, a lone poet in a noisy bar, managed to grip the audience's attention tightly.

In June, Afua will leave the University of Toronto having completed her four year B.A. in History with a concentration in African studies. She came to Canada in 1979, "just to look around" and decided to attend university. Afua plans to return to Jamaica to do her masters degree, unless she wins a scholarship to continue her studies.

Afua told me that the most difficult thing she had to deal with when adjusting to her adopted home was the winter:

in this stone cold prison  
in this icy haze  
and frozen skies  
the moonlight I do miss  
I long for it to kiss  
my heart.

Although she started writing many years ago, Afua only started to show her poems to friends a few years ago. In 1984 she published *Breaking Chains*, a slim volume of her

writings. The book is dominated by the image of the moon, a symbol she uses to reclaim lost women-centered religions. She believes that moon worship predates the patriarchal, warrior state worship of the sun. "The light of the moon is cooler and it doesn't blind, but that doesn't make it weak."

Afua is a political woman, as a Black she fights for her race and as a woman she fights for her sex: "I cannot separate my femaleness from my



Blackness, therefore my struggle has to incorporate both."

I asked Afua how she felt about the charge often leveled at explicitly political poetry; do poetry and politics really mix? She replied that she strives to incorporate her political beliefs without "going on the offensive." She believes that poets record and account their realities, and her political vision comes from her reality. She experiences

racism and sexism every day of her life and thus can never untangle politics and poetry.

There was a time when she thought about not writing explicitly political material, writing only about the sun and the moon. The next day she learned that the Harbord Street abortion clinic had been bombed; she realized she felt a duty to bring a political message to those who read her poems.

Afua feels a duty to speak of the reality of her people. "I come from a place where land is being expropriated by multinationals, where people live in such hardship. I may have a B.A. but I come from another reality and so I have a duty to that reality."

In her poem "Family Tree" Afua speaks of the denial of heritage and the mental slavery of Africans in the diaspora:

We talk with pride  
of our Indian grandmother  
our uncle  
who is Scottish  
and that we got such "good" hair  
but if someone  
should mention  
our Afrikan forebear  
we react with indignation  
-all my family  
baan an grow  
inna Jamaica-  
-is only Guyana me know bout-  
-Afrika!  
say what?  
me birth an baan  
inna St. Lucia!-

Some of Afua's latest poetry centers on third world liberation struggles against neocolonialism. Her poem "El Salvador" is particularly interesting. When performing it she combines an almost folk style singing with a refrain of pure "Dub".

It seems that Afua is attracted to movements that are open ended and places where she can

define for herself what she wants to believe. For her, feminism is an "encompassing, dynamic phenomena", it can incorporate all liberation movements. A feminist analysis can be brought to world issues such as the war torn countries of Central America as easily as to family issues like birth control and child care. Similarly, Afua is a Rastafarian, yet she interprets the religion broadly. She doesn't adhere to the strict non-violent philosophies of the Rasta elders, nor is she deeply religious, but rather, Rastafarianism is a part of her cultural identity.

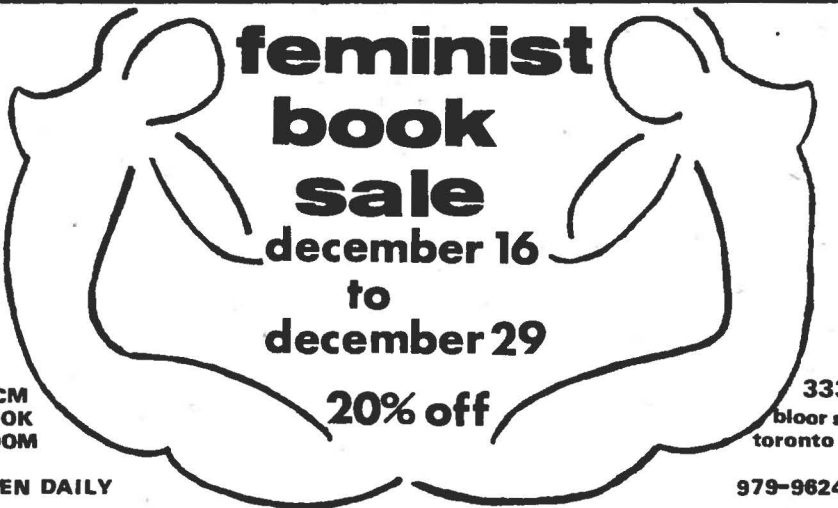
The end of school is in sight, Afua is looking forward

with a mixture of relief and excitement to a time when she can devote her energies into her writing and not school work.

She is currently collaborating with an artist on a children's book. She feels that a story in verse will both utilize her poetic talents and allow her to reflect a Jamaican reality to children who, by lack of choice, grow up reading only of a white reality.

If art reflects life, then only a very small part of life has yet to be reflected. Women artists and Black male artists have been invisible in the white male cannon of art, but worst of all there are almost no Black women recognized as artists. It is only by making art that feminists can change the images that we see "reflecting" the world. For too long, our notion of the world has been dominated by a white male reality. Afua and other women like her are changing our perceptions of reality and breaking that false mirror.

*Breaking Chains*, by Afua, is available at the Toronto Women's Bookstore, DEC, and the Third World Bookstore.



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# Feminist Studies at OISE Under Attack

by Becki Ross

Since 1977, the number of female students enrolled at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) has been steadily increasing while the number of male students has been decreasing. Women now constitute more than 51% of the student population and it is likely that this percentage will continue to increase.

Currently, in response to shifting student interest, OISE offers more feminist courses and has more feminist faculty on staff than other Canadian universities. And clearly, students are attracted to Institute programs explicitly for these reasons.

However, as a collective of student members of the OISE-wide women's caucus has recently demonstrated, there are not enough feminist faculty members to service this year's unprecedented student demand for entrance into the limited selection of feminist courses. These documented observations translate into the following:

1. Overcrowding has necessitated the redesignation of informal lectures as more formalized lectures.
2. The heightened student interest has also compelled the literal "purging" of bodies from oversized classes, with part-time students and those in cross-disciplinary studies as being particularly vulnerable.

3. The energies of overburdened feminist faculty members are further taxed as a result of the inflated number of registrants per course, escalating numbers of these to supervise and intensifying pressure to co-ordinate additional reading courses.

Given that these factors jeopardize the quality of education offered and the conditions under which feminist research is carried out, these solutions are strongly recommended:

1. A hiring policy be drawn up and introduced - more feminist faculty need to be hired in all departments.
2. More feminist courses be established in ALL departments, not simply in those which already maintain a concentration in feminist studies.
3. Student participation in the actual selection and hiring procedures integral to the appointment of feminist scholars be officially instituted across departments.

A petition calling for support for the above demands was circulated at OISE and over 120 signatures were gathered within several days. It is a bitter irony that a recent Ontario Liberal government

directive has so completely overshadowed this student lobby.

The Ontario Treasurer's October budget proposal that OISE be transferred to the University of Toronto has potentially serious implications for the status of feminist research, resources and instruction within the Institute. Effectively, implementation of this tabled piece of legislation could signal a radical threat to the integrity of not the existence of feminist scholarship at OISE.

Moreover, such a policy could set in motion the dismantling of the Centre for Women Studies in Education which houses such unique projects as the Women's Resource Centre, the publication, *Resources for Feminist Research* (RFR), and the Canadian Women's History Project.

The far-reaching consequences most directly confronting a diverse community of academic feminists, and by extension the feminist movement in Canada as a whole, must be critically addressed. It is suggested that those concerned with the future state of feminist studies at OISE write to the Minister of Education and to other prominent members of the legislature requesting that this announced transfer policy be withdrawn.

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## English Departments and Racism

world literature is comparable to the general ignorance of most university students of the political realities of African, Latin and South American, and Asian countries. A failure to take into account these political realities creates major problems in the discussion of novel which explore those realities. Here is one rather extreme example of this, from a Commonwealth Literature graduate course. One student thought that Alan Paton's novel *Cry the Beloved Country*, provided a good solution to the problems of South Africa. This infamous work offers a supremely paternalistic, British imperialist "solution" to racial conflict in South Africa.

Another classroom problem is what I call the "more liberal than thou" syndrome. We, meaning a class full of white middle-class students, are so anxious to be liberal that we extoll virtues of novels which make us "feel" the life of another culture instead of dealing with the real issues and ideas which the novels raise.

The biggest problem is, however, the departments themselves. What, ideally, should an English department teach? I would argue that it should teach:

Continued from Page 1

- 1) Literature written in English
- 2) Literature/theory in translation which has had a significant impact on literature written in English.

Naturally this includes many writers from countries other than the big three, and represents all world literature. But even when English departments do deal with world literature, like a course on Commonwealth literature, the effort is often inadequate since we do not have the analytic tools necessary to do justice to the works. Moreover, the few "classics", or renowned-in-the-western-world novels tend to be taught, and there is no sense of what is happening now in literature in other countries.

The question is, of course, why is this so? I suggest that the English departments, like the other departments in the so-called humanities, are reluctant to confront disturbing issues like racism. The departments thus encourage ethnocentric and racist attitudes by reinforcing students' notions of what books are worth studying, and simply by limiting a student's knowledge of what books exist. I cannot accuse the English

department of purposefully excluding so much of what is written, but racism, like sexism, is not always conscious or intentional. By not bothering to think, by not searching out third world novels for course reading, professors inadvertently create ethnocentric courses.

One may make excuses; like all university departments,

English departments suffer from underfunding, and cannot create new teaching positions, let alone replace existing ones. Nevertheless, even if the financial situation improves, I seriously doubt the focus will change without outside pressure. To ignore so may be bliss, but it is certainly ethnocentric and quite possibly racist.

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# Toys, Boys and Women in the Peace Movement

## The Connections Between Sexism and Militarism

by Helen Armstrong

Four hundred delegates and observers representing 1,000 peace groups from across Canada met recently at Toronto's Convocation Hall to found a nation-wide peace alliance. This Canadian Peace Convention was successful in achieving regional parity and incorporating french translation. Yet, having attended portions of this event it became clear to me that a feminist perspective was not prominent at the convention, despite there being almost as many women as men present.

The Peace Alliance has a formalized structure with an agenda to match. Issues discussed throughout the convention were Star Wars, NORAD, and other nuclear war issues. The basis of unity reflects the predominant concern with the arms race in such statements as "A freeze and reversal of the nuclear and conventional arms race" while no mention is given to the oppressions that militarism results in, such as native oppression, women's oppression, or the destruction of the environment.

Shari Dunnet, a delegate from Vancouver, criticized the structure of the Peace Alliance, which she saw as having a traditional male model where decisions will come from the top down, through the steering committee. She was concerned about the lack of a feminist presence on the steering committee.

The peace movement has often been led by men while women have had more subservient roles. This imbalance has occurred despite the fact that women make up about 70% of the peace movement, as a recent United Nations study revealed.

Donna Balkan, a convention delegate from the National Union of Government Employees said, "Here we are agreeing on what we can do together. I'm learning about weapon systems. I don't know if I care, but it makes me more knowledgeable." Some women may be frustrated with this response, which reveals that women are still

having to conform to men's agendas, while men must be pressured to hear what women think. Clearly, as women we must learn to speak up for ourselves, and challenge the men in their assumptions.

Balkan stressed that both male and female peace activists must be educated, in order to understand that rape, violence against women, and pornography are all closely related to militarism and to the causes of war. She stated that if women get involved in the Peace Alliance they can try to bring their values and analysis to it.

and its relation to other oppressions. An older woman from Saskatchewan stated, "We are living in a world that glorifies war. Until we get rid of war, we'll never get rid of the idea of men as superior beings." While this woman made the connections between the stereotypical male values in our society that militarism reinforces and perpetuates, she, like some other women at the Caucus, felt that the nuclear war issue must be tackled first.

This analysis is problematic for many feminists who do not want to look at issues in

especially when faced with the pressing concerns of sexism in the peace movement and violence against women, both of which are grounded in the patriarchal practices of our increasingly militarized culture.

Women do need the opportunity to get together and discuss the connections between militarism and other forms of oppression. This was clear at the Sunday workshop, Feminism and Militarism -- which had by some error been omitted from the agenda -- when women voiced their concerns about how militarism pervades our lives.

Back in the presence of the rest of the delegates these concerns faded. The only women's concern discussed was gender parity -- having an equal representation of women and men in the Alliance. Women had earlier debated this and reached no conclusion. It was felt by some women that achieving a guaranteed women's presence would be difficult since the Peace Alliance must already face the time-consuming task of achieving a regional parity. However, insisting on gender parity would show male peace activists that women are committed to being involved in decision-making, and to changing the distribution of power in the peace movement.

Having the opportunity to discuss militarism with other feminist peace activists was empowering. Yet as Shari Dunnet pointed out, the loosely structured peace groups and the feminist activists who were present at the convention can find empowerment through networking independently of the Canadian Peace Alliance. Dunnet felt that women have to organize and take action apart from men to get at the roots of patriarchal oppression and militarism.

The degree to which social change is possible within the traditional framework of the Peace Alliance is debatable. We can only hope that some women will persevere with the Canadian Peace Alliance and bring a feminist presence to it in the future.



Dunnet was optimistic that women who understand where pornography and rape come from will see these things as related to militarism. Yet she was not so hopeful that middle class, white anti-war activists "who are steeped in patriarchal ways will make the leap of connecting war issues with women's oppression."

The Women's Caucus met on Saturday, after workshops such as NORAD, Militarization of the North, and Star Wars were held. It quickly became evident that the women present had different agendas, reflecting different understandings of militarism

isolation. While alliances should be formed around issues such as nuclear war, pornography, and the environment, the Peace Alliance does not show evidence of being informed by a holistic perspective.

A number of women at the Women's Caucus felt that the traditional Boycott War Toys Campaign should be a priority for women peace activists. Feminists are surely concerned that children do not develop militaristic values. Yet the emphasis on the Boycott War Toys Campaign need not be the dominant concern for women,

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# Shirley Samaroo

## One Year After Her Death

by Luanne Karn

On November 29, 1984, Shirley Samaroo returned to her apartment to pick up some personal belongings and was murdered by her husband. She and her children had come to stay at the Emily Stowe Shelter for Women in Scarborough, in order to escape from many years of physical and emotional abuse.

One year later, those of us who knew Shirley Samaroo remember her pain and fear, a fear shared by all women who live in this society dominated by male violence. As well, we remember her spirit and strength as she fought to create a new life for herself and her children.

She is not the only woman who has been murdered. She is one of hundreds of women who have died fighting against male violence in their lives. Most of these women we don't hear about in the news. A woman's death is not deemed "newsworthy" as compared to terrorism and assaults on men. When assaults on women are interpreted as "newsworthy",

they are often individualized and sensationalized, i.e. CRAZY RAPIST MURDERS YOUNG PROSTITUTE. The assailant is portrayed as "sick" and/or the woman is accused of provoking the attack.

Most attacks on women are not by the "stranger lurking in a dark alley". Instead they are committed by men who are close to us, whom we trust and often love. The distortion of this important fact creates the perception that assaults on women are not widespread and that men who abuse women are somehow "sick". The silence surrounding wife abuse results in social acceptance of this violence. It is terrorism, torture and murder which is condoned through silence and misrepresentation. One in every ten men who lives with a woman is guilty of this crime.

As women, immigrant women, working class women, middle class women, differently-abled women and elderly women, we are all victims of this violence in some way. We must live with the same fear and anger at the attacks against women. We

suffer emotionally because we must live in fear. If we have not experienced violence in our own lives, we have most likely comforted a friend who has.

Because of racism in our society, non-white women must not only fight their oppression as women, but must contend with the problems created by racial oppression and language barriers, as well. The resulting marginalization and lack of services for immigrant women creates difficulty for battered women in the areas of housing, employment, daycare, welfare, legal aid and police protection. Many immigrant women are afraid to leave an abusive spouse for fear of losing their sponsor and possibly being deported. Without these vital support services, women are often prevented from leaving violent relationships and when they do leave, the options available to them are further restricted.

In order to ensure specialized services for immigrant women leaving violent relationships, a shelter for immigrant women is being established in

Metro Toronto. The Shirley Samaroo House will be opening in the spring of 1986 in the City of York. It will provide shelter and support for battered women regardless of their ethnic origins. However, specific resources will be available to meet the needs of immigrant women. For example, unlike other shelters in Metro, all of the staff at Shirley Samaroo House will be required to provide a second language other than English.

This shelter for immigrant women has been named after Shirley Samaroo so as not to forget her. Shelters provide important support for women escaping from violent relationships. However, violence against women is still widespread in our society. We must not forget Shirley Samaroo and all the other women whom we do not know. Until women are free from emotional, physical and sexual abuse, all women will continue to live in fear.

"And in our work you will inspire us."

We will see your face and remember your smile.

We will talk about you and remember your smile.

Of your courage, your strength, your determination.

And we will talk about the pain that will never leave us.

The pain you knew for so much of your life."

Maureen Adams,  
Shelter Worker.

map

Continued from Page 1

tween people who know each other, a woman would not necessarily run if she heard the footsteps of a guy she'd met in class. However, she admits that she doesn't really know how to get rid of violence against women, stating that it will take "a big societal change."

Newman says that the map will enable women to "see where they can go and where they can't." The map does offer some useful information such as the locations of telephones on campus and buildings which are open 24 hours. Yet by advising women to limit their freedom of movement, this publication smacks of the patriarchal attitudes that don't recognize that women aren't responsible for rape - men are. The pamphlet reminds women of the phrase, "Stay at home at night and lock your doors" instead of helping us to take a stand against rape.

A safety map that advises women to be careful, and paranoid, indicates that we have a long way to go before U of T really begins to examine the causes of rape and to encourage women to become empowered and independent. Nowhere in the pamphlet are women advised to take WENDO, a women's self

defence course, which SAC used to subsidize.

However, the mere presence of a safety map for women at U of T is hopeful since it does get the subject of rape out of the closet and assures women that the problem is in

of T administration for better lighting in parking lots and other areas of the campus.

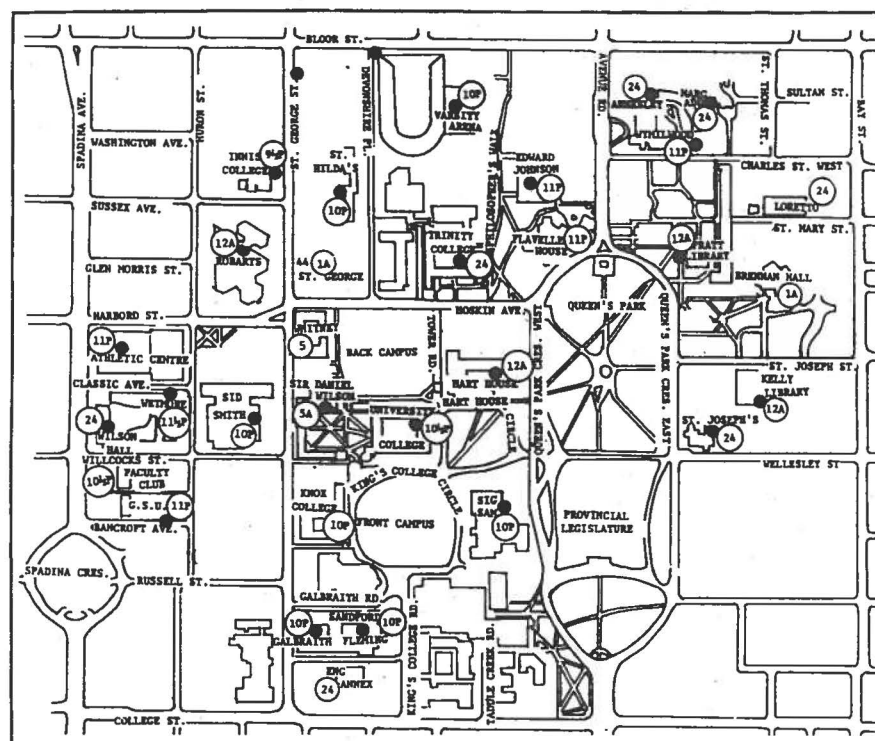
SAC's time and budget are limited, she says, so few large scale projects can be considered that would ac-

modelled along the lines of one that is in place at Sir Wilfred Laurier University. It consists of organized group walks that take place after the university library closes at night, more informal than the services where a man comes to escort a woman he has never met.

The Women's Commissioner notes, however, that Victoria College conducted a survey into the need for an escort service this fall and the response was confusing. While a majority of the women surveyed said that they were interested in such a service, most of them said that they probably wouldn't use one if it were introduced.

Another issue on the back burner for Newman is the need for a night attendant at the subway entrance on St. George Street. The TTC has been approached by Alderman Jack Layton on this issue, but has not agreed to make any changes. Newman feels that a night attendant would give a woman someone to go to for help if she were in trouble at night.

The problem of rape will doubtless remain with us, until the power relations between women and men are radically altered. "Safety Maps" and night attendants are good interim measures, but the fight against rape has only just begun. OW



fact a serious one. Newman recently received a letter from a thankful student and says that the overall response has been good. This positive feedback has encouraged her to consider the possibility of lobbying the U

comply the education that is needed on campus. Newman admits she hasn't thought much about what projects she would like to work on, but talks about films and an escort service. She would like an escort service to be

by Nalini Singh

My grandmother, Basiran, was born in 1918 in what was then known as British Guyana. Her grandparents, originally from some unknown (to us) part of India, were brought to Guyana in the 1850's as indentured labourers to replace the slaves who worked the sugar and rice plantations under Dutch, French and finally British colonialists. I remember her telling me stories, of when father was a boy, but as a child all I pictured were pastoral scenes of cows and pastures. In retrospect, this must have had very little in common with what their realities must have been.

She was one of many children in a poor farming family and, incredibly enough, was sent to school. She loved learning, she told me, and years later, she could still remember her favourite poems. To her lasting regret, although she had won a scholarship to continue on (high school in Guyana, even when I was there, was not free), her father took her out of school. This was primarily because she was needed at home to help raise the younger children, and besides, what was the point of further educating a girl child? At fifteen, marriage was arranged for her by her parents.

She didn't like being married at all; she told me all she wanted to do was to go to school and learn. Her husband was cruel and lazy, leaving her to do most of the work. Children started to come; all but one, my father, were still births. When her husband died two years later, her in-laws with whom she lived threw her out with her baby and the clothes on her back and told her to go back to her father. She did, only to find that she was not welcome. A young mother in a rural village didn't have many options back then so she remarried shortly after, finding her new husband not very different from her first one. She spent the years after that struggling to raise her children in conditions of abject poverty. Like many other women, she worked in the sugar-cane fields, raised a few animals whose eggs and milk she sold along with vegetables that she grew, in the open air market in the city, Georgetown. "Women in those days," she would say, "had their babies at home in the morning and went back to work in the afternoons." One of the biggest tragedies in her life was the death of her three year-old daughter. She had left the child with some neighbours since she was too young to take to the fields, and due to negligence on the part of the neighbours, she fell down the stairs and broke her neck. During all this time, her husband contributed little—he was too involved in village politicking, carousing and begetting

## REMembering

children here and there. Out of her eight children, only two survived past early childhood.

I spent the first three years of my life with her, and my earliest memories are not of my parents, but of this large, strong woman with warm arms and a radiant smile, who told me stories and sang me to sleep with Hindi religious songs. It was difficult for me to combine what I learned about her life with what I knew her to be. She was like a



proverbial pillar of strength and ran her household and business almost dictatorially. By then, mostly due to her labour, they owned a successful general store and a poultry farm and had become quite wealthy. It was hard to imagine that she had lived through years of gross physical and psychological abuse at the hands of my grandfather who she continued to live with until her death of leukemia last December. Those years finally had their effect. By the time I was four, she had had two nervous breakdowns, which I vaguely remember as being connected with her violent temper and mysterious mood swings.

My family emigrated to Canada in 1973, and she followed three years later. She became quite active in the Hindu societies here and earned her living by working for Family Daycare, providing daycare at home. She also took in sewing work for the people who lived in her building. When she first moved in, these same people had circulated a petition protesting their tenancy because they were "undesirable

elements." She knew this, but felt that one had to teach by example that antagonism never accomplished anything. Months later, she thought of them as friends.

My relationship with her was an ambivalent one. Although I loved her deeply, I resented her need to control our lives and her possessive love. When my parents wanted to keep me in line they would say, "You're just like your grandmother", (meaning strongwilled, stubborn, domineering) and "You'll end up just like her." I was afraid of her loneliness, because despite her huge circle of friends and her hectic schedule, she was, I think, a very lonely woman. She centred most of her life around the needs of her children and when they were grown and no longer needed her in the same way, she felt diminished. Although she probably would never have called herself a feminist, she, like countless other women, was very conscious and indignant about the limitations and injustices that were part of being female. Her three favourite pieces of advice to me were that a proper education and a career are the most valuable possessions of a woman, that I shouldn't marry until I was at least in my thirties, and that when or if this took place to "always keep your money separate." As I grew older, we became very close. She was very interested in what I was learning at school and in my work at a women's shelter. Of all my family, she was the only one who was happy when I moved out to live on my own. I know that she was proud and glad to think that her granddaughter had the chance to live differently than she had been able to do.

It has been painful to write about her. I found out through the course of writing this that she had ~~tried to leave~~ her husband and had moved in with my parents when I was quite young, but my father convinced her that her place was with her husband, so she returned. I found out about her Valium dependency. She spent most of the last year of her life in a hospital. We spent long times together there; she felt it was important to tell me as much as she could remember about what her life had been like, without trying to hide her pain and bitterness as she had tended to do in the past. More and more I realize how much I depended on her as my source of family history and as a reservoir of a cultural heritage which I had not always wanted to acknowledge. When she died, she left me an essay in her spidery writing called "Women in the Hindu Religion", her sewing machine, her recipe collection, and the immeasurably valuable gifts of her love and knowledge.

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