

OUR LIVES

CANADA'S FIRST BLACK WOMEN'S NEWSPAPER

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Vol. 2 No. 2-3

BLACK WOMEN'S DAY

BY BLACK WOMEN FOR BLACK WOMEN



Ba-Thari Day was organised by Black women for Black women. It was a celebration of Black women's lives. Black women were able to come together and share common needs and find alternatives to what exists for us in this society.

There is usually never any place where Black women can get together to do things for ourselves. Being constantly concerned about the welfare of our children, our families, our lovers and our responsibilities in the work force leaves little time for ourselves, with no support. This creates a vast sense of isolation.

Women came to Ba-Thari Day from the suburbs, the innercity, out of town and other isolated regions. Women who never have access to events like this one or who don't have other Black sisters to talk with about issues we would feel uncomfortable raising in another setting. It was wonderful! One hundred and fifty women attended. We talked, we argued, we empathised, we joked, and we drummed and danced at the end of the day. Women were asking, when can we do it again? How can I get involved? One woman commented, "I always knew that if we ever got together it would be like this. I knew that at the end of the day we would sing and dance." Those of us who were part of the planning were deeply gratified. We were overwhelmed. We left on a real high.

Days after the event I was talking with another Black sister who did not attend Ba-Thari Day but who criticised the fact that the workshops were open only to Black women and not our brothers or our fathers or our lovers or non Black people. Even though Ba-Thari Day provided a place for everyone to browse through artwork and books by Black women, partake of food and see dynamic Black women performers like up and coming comedienne Ita Sadu in the entertainment section of the day, still some like this sister found it difficult to understand the necessity of having workshops for Black women only.

As Black women we are constantly being told to make room, accomodate everyone else first. In our community its men and children into the lifeboat first because often we're the captain of the ship and have to go down with it. But as Ba Thari taught many of us, it's okay to pat yourself on the back sometimes; it's okay to commune with your sisters. As a matter of fact it's healthy and energising. You discover that you are not alone.

Ba-Thari Day was a successful beginning for Black women to empower and strengthen ourselves in a society which treats us harshly. Forward to Ba-Thari next year.

OUR LIVES
the cutting edge

Inside

Ba - Thari Day * The Anatomy of working with white
Feminist Collectives * Why reading keeps children alive
The Effect of Poverty on the Health Care of the Black
Family * Sisterwrite * Great Black Women *
A Woman is Killed *

A WOMAN IS KILLED COMMUNITY IS SILENT

The incidence of violence against women in our community is high as evidenced in the recent brutal machete murder of Lesline Senior, a Black woman in Toronto, by her husband whom she had been fleeing for some time. Her efforts to find a safe place for herself and her four children, took her to one of Toronto's shelters, the Red Door, from which she moved to a place in Scarborough.. But there is no safe place for women who want to keep male violence out of their lives. Lesline Senior had called the police many times in fear of her life, but the police never pressed charges against the man, Cardinell, even though it was their legal duty to do so. Lesline had been threatened before by Cardinell with a machete and the police knew about the threats. She had also been hospitalised many times for the beatings she received. She also had ulcers from stress. In her efforts to escape Cardinell, she went to the Red Door Shelter in late March of this year going back home in mid-April when he was supposed to have left for New York. He was still there so she returned to the shelter. Fearing for her life, Lesline tried to get welfare to move her outside of the city. They refused. She finally got a transfer to another OHC apartment in late May. But it did not save her. On June 20th. 1987, Lesline Senior was brutally murdered, her neck practically severed, by the man who had terrorised her life.

There has been no outcry from the Black community, no call to curb this terror which women live with daily and are blamed for, no

demonstrations. None of the men or groups who usually rush out to speak for the community seem to have observed that a woman is dead. If Black women complain about physical abuse too strongly we are told how hard life is for Black men and that it is hard times which cause them to be abusive. Well what does that mean? Does it mean that times are not hard for Black women? Does it mean that Black women should lie down and take it? Or be killed?

Another excuse used is that these men who abuse are insane and need help. They might well be but that is no consolation to a dead woman and the truth is that most batterers are quite ordinary, 'normal' males who think that it is their right to slap, hit, punch or beat a woman. It is common behaviour in the Black community and it is endorsed everyday as young men in the Malls slap their girlfriends and learn to degrade women.

Through the tacit conspiracy of the police, the welfare system and the society's and our community's acceptance of violence against women, Lesline Senior lost her life. Her four children are in the hands of the Children's Aid. What will happen to them?

The silence from the community is deafening on the death of Lesline Senior. Our community has a responsibility to account for this death and it has an obligation to prevent further deaths and violence against women.



Darts and Daggers to 'Contrast', the eyes, ears and oops! of the community for presenting the most backward, bigotted, ignorant and retrograde editorial on homosexuality and aids. Nah chat so much foolishness!

Lumps and Bumps to Brian Mulroney and his new refugee policy.

OUR LIVES

Carol Allain, Beatrice Bailey, Donna Barker, Dionne Brand, Grace Channer, Afua Cooper, Marie Dennis, Debbie Douglas, June Gabriel, Patricia Hayes, Kim McNeily, Faith Nolan, Pauline Peters, Angela Robertson, Special thanks to Alberta Johnson for her magnificent effort and once again thanks to the Posties at Station P.

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SHELTERS for BATTERED WOMEN and their CHILDREN

Shirley Samaroo House
249-7095

INTERVAL HOUSE

924-1491

ERNESTINE'S

746-3701

NORTH YORK'S WOMEN'S SHELTER

635-9630

STOP 86

922-3271

EMILY STOWE

264-4357

FINALLY,

After much "hemming and hawing" we have finally got this double Issue of OUR LIVES out. The whole act of coming together as a group is somewhat difficult when each of us has a personal deadline to meet. This makes for a very late Issue of our paper. I am sure all would be forgiven if you only knew the 'terrors' of working on the computer, which means losing half of the articles you have just typed and having to do it all over (I hope you are all feeling sympathy at this moment). Anyway, to offset our lateness, this Issue is simply bursting with tonnes and tonnes of 'goodies'. We hope you enjoy every last word!!!

Chief Cook and Bottle washer,
Carol Ann Allain

EDUCATION

World education for women means the access to fully participate in contemporary industrial and in most cases western capitalist lifestyle. Education as it exists for women means that a few individual women become token politicians, writers, doctors etc. and the others are persuaded into the "soft subject" areas like the caring and supportive roles of nurse, secretary or teacher and away from math, physics, chemistry and engineering. This pattern exists across the world in most countries.

Real and complete education for women would mean a shift in the way

women are seen globally. Much of the negative attitude toward women's education stems from the roles women play in patriarchal societies which limit their participation in world politics and influence.

Another part of women's education is Literacy. The term Functional illiteracy refers to people being unable to read a classified ad section or the labels on medicine or the street signs in an industrialized city.

44% of the Black population, 16% of the white and 56% of the Hispanic in North America are functionally illiterate. 60% of this total amount are women.

WHY CHILDREN FAIL

reprinted from the New Internationalist

Schooling can develop potential or crush it. Scene: any classroom, any two children playing. First child: 'I can tell what you are going to say next.' Second child: "What?" First child: "What?" (Both dissolve into fits of giggles)

There's nothing new about this phenomenon: the self-fulfilling prophecy. We've all heard about the TV news crew that go in search of sensation - and find that the presence of their camera inspires it. Or the stock market tipsters who let it be known that they expect certain market movements, and thereby cause them. These stories pivot on the same point: one person's prediction about another's behaviour becomes accurate simply by virtue of the prediction having been made.

But it's not just when people are speculating on the future that self-fulfilling prophecies have a powerful effect. An increasing number of studies are showing that people who purport to be dealing with cast iron 'facts', whether educationalists, scientists, politicians, researchers or journalists have actually found the results they are looking for. Sometimes they 'see' selectively what they want to see. In other cases they actually bring about the results they are there to record.

There is far more at stake here than a simple grouse that they are not exacting enough in their work. For what happens when such self-fulfilling prophecies invisibly permeate the 10,000 hours of education which in the west shape each member of tomorrow's society? Are the huge number of children whom the education system labels as 'successes' or 'failures' being marked for life by teachers who are influencing them to live up or down to the teachers own expectations?

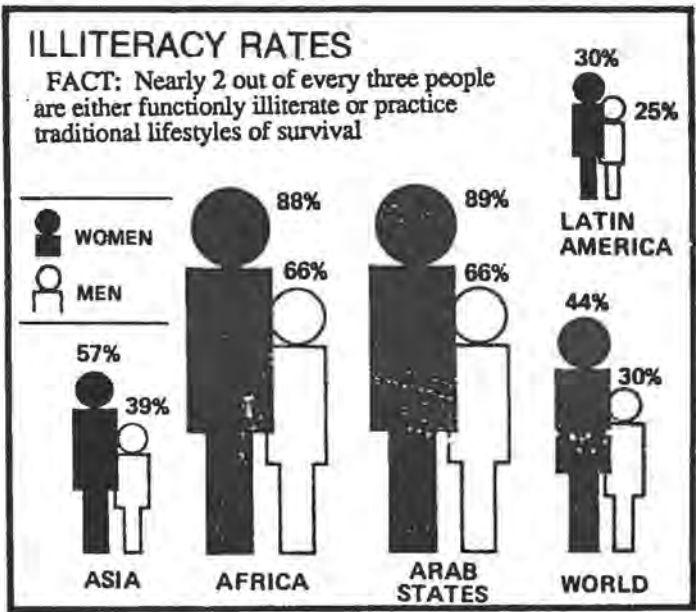
One of the most penetrating examinations of this phenomenon was a series of delightfully sneaky experiments by Robert Rosenthal. He told teachers in the US that he had given their pupils a new type of intelligence test which would pick out the bloomers and spurters in

There are however people who do not need to use the prevalent industrialized languages and forms of communication such as English and contemporary advertising in order to survive but who are still considered Functionally Illiterate.

This happens to be a very large portion of the worlds population who practice and survive through traditional forms of lifestyle in traditional environments. In these environments many of which are on the African continent women carry the major burden of its survival while men control. It is not surprising therefore that most of the population of Functional Illiterates refers to Black women.

Two thirds of all the worlds work hours are performed by women. Rural women and women in traditional societies do 50% -80% in Africa of all the agricultural and agrarian work in the world. Women do virtually all the domestic work in and outside of the home. In industrialized societies women do 90% of all the secretarial and support staff work. Approximately 52% of the worlds households are run by single mothers, This figure in North

America is 40% and 80% in the Caribbean alone. Practically none of the worlds cities have adequate if any daycare facilities.



When only 1/10 th of the worlds income is recieved by women and less than 1/100th of the worlds property belongs to women the need to allow women proper access to world politics and influence through purposeful and complete educaton is serious.

This calls for nothing short of a shift in what is globally respected as education and work and therefore values. It means recognizing the importance of the enormous contribution women make to the survival of the world.



the classroom- i.e children whose potential was about to flower. He and his associates then picked on one in five children at random passed their name on to the teachers and quietly sidled out of the classroom. The teachers were told on no account to let on to the children that they were extra-bright. The tests were repeated at various intervals through the year,

to see if the teachers heightened expectations of the selected children had born fruit. They had. Bloomers had bloomed and spurters had spurted. The teachers unconscious expectations had been fulfilled.

Rosenthal had built up the study by other experiment. For example he cheerfully told blatant lies to researchers informing them that they would find particular rats easier to train to perform simple tasks in return for food - and the researchers as cheerfully produced detailed charts showing he was right. It was thought that the researchers more frequent handling of the 'clever' rats might have gone some way towards helping their results. But that was not a factor in the following experiment. Two American scientists did similar tests using researchers and the worm planaria - one of the lowest organisms to have a rudimentary brain and possibly among the least cuddly animals in the world. The researchers were told: these worms over here have been trained to turn in response to stimuli while those over there have not. In practice just as the researchers expected the educated worms turned far more elegantly - though of course they had had no previous training at all.

An angry and deservedly famous book spotlighting the negative consequences of the self-fulfilling prophecy was William Ryans 'Blaming the Victim'. Ryan looked at the subtle shift in attitudes towards people who were poor and Black in america during the late 1960's. It's a period generally thought of as liberal and relatively enlightened but Ryan believed the shift was only from naked racism to unconscious racism.

OUR LIVES

the cutting edge

WHY CHILDREN FAIL

cont'd

Ryan tells of a Black woman friend who was worried because her bright daughter was apparently not progressing well in reading. She went to see the teacher, who smiled reassuringly and said: 'Don't worry. Donna is doing very well for this neighbourhood' Those ominous words - 'for this neighbourhood' - gave the game away. Donna was from a poor Black part of town. She wasn't expected to read well. Therefore by reading badly she was doing fine. No more was expected of her.

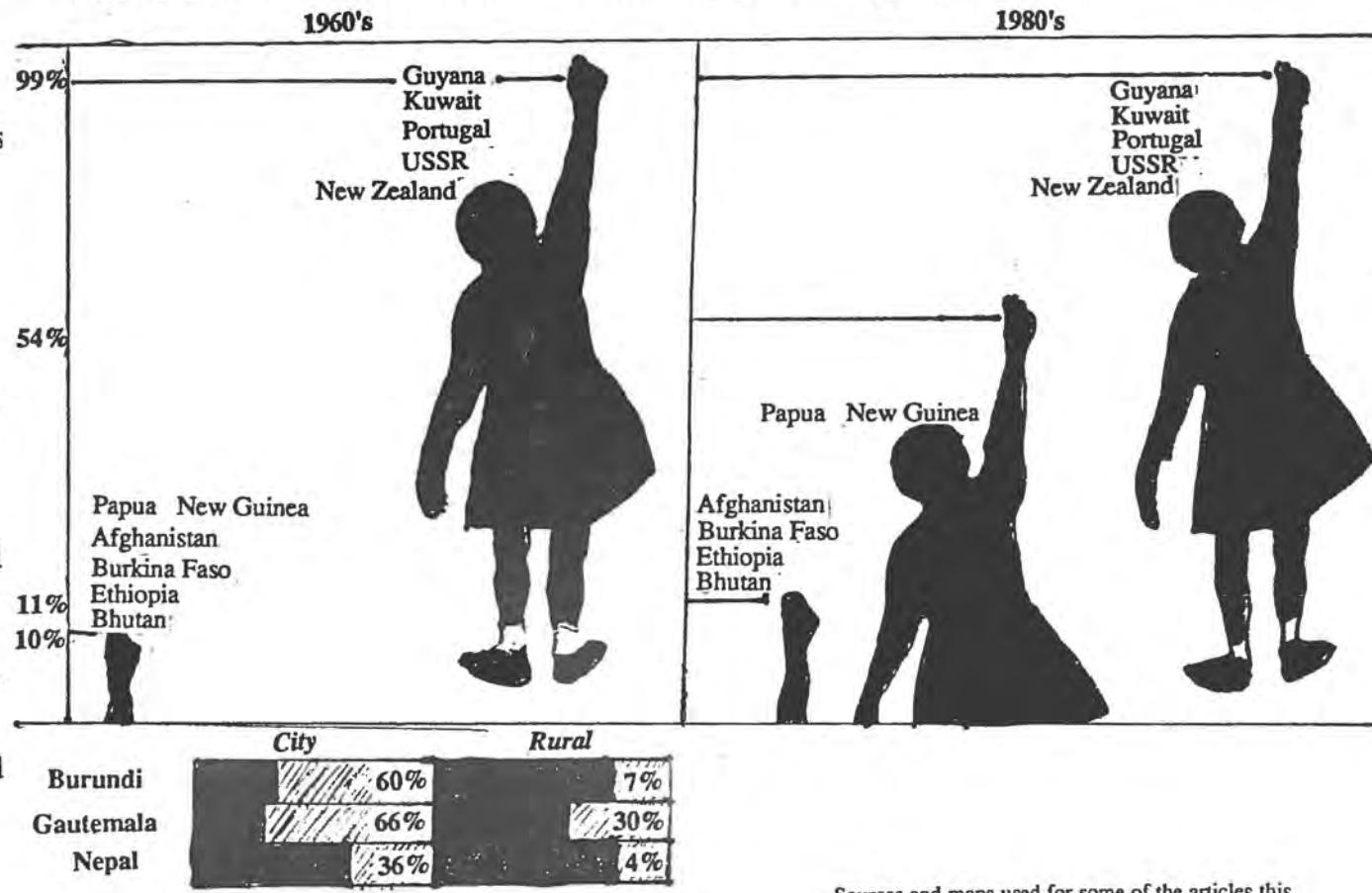
Ryan argues that liberals have merely replaced the barbaric notion of genetic racial inferiority with a subtler fallacy which goes like this: Blacks are not *born* inferior their cultural values have *made* them inferior. Either way the Black child is labelled by the white community as intrinsically inferior - and the white community is able to turn a blind eye to its gross failure to provide equal educational and social opportunities. It's a sophisticated form of apartheid.

Has much changed since Ryan's day? Apparently not. Depressing news comes from a report published this summer (1986) after a five year study of educational achievements among London's school children. Called 'The Unequal Struggle' the report points to the continuing 'devaluation' of Black children by their teachers.

The conclusion? Behind the walls of statistics which are continually presented to us as hard facts there is a changing hard to measure human factor which we need to perceive if we are going to go anywhere near getting the whole story. If such an element is clearly demonstrable in statisticians' conclusions on unemotional experiments with worms then it must contribute to a far greater extent to the way in which we grade and label children - especially if they are Black, poor and female.

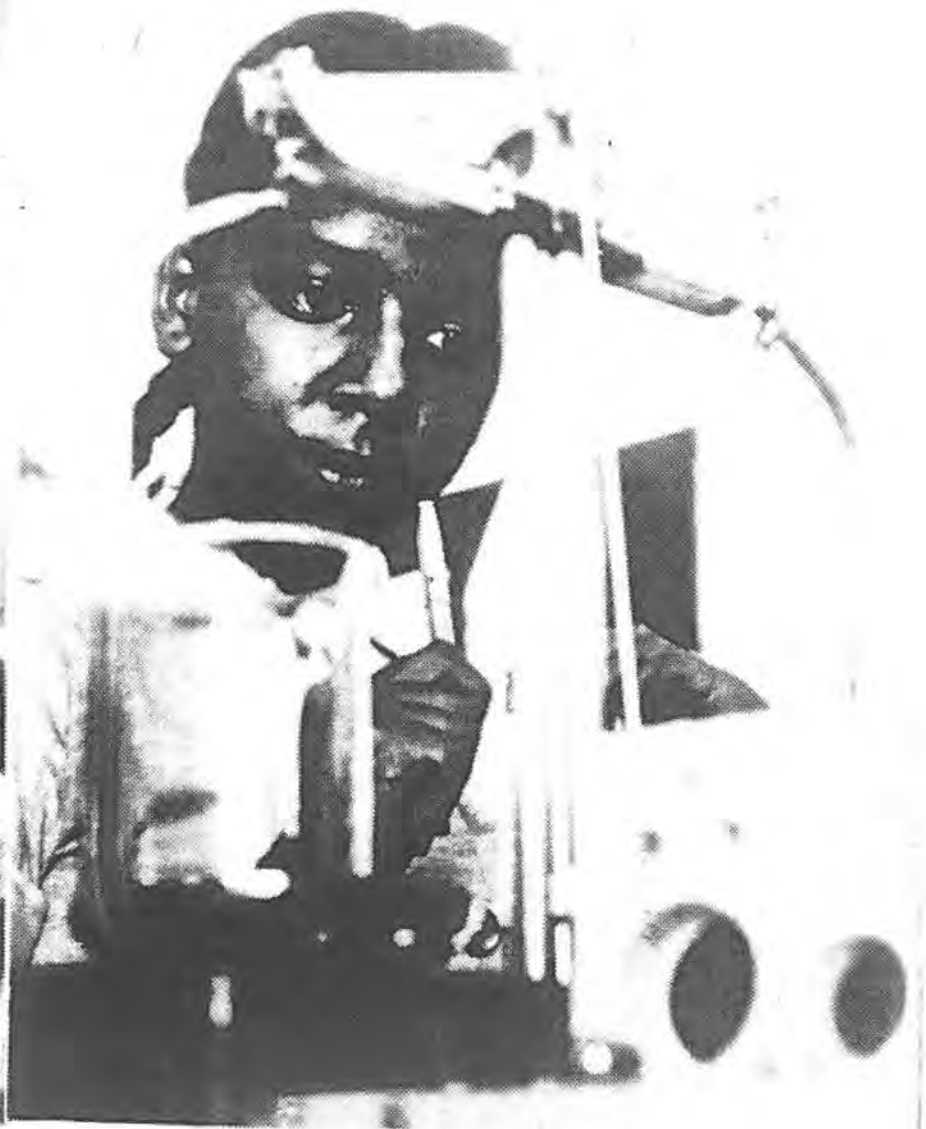
Nury Vittachi is a freelance journalist and sub-editor who lives in London.

Basic Education - School Enrolment (Primary) For Girls



Primary school enrolment of girls in the city compared to rural area of region.

Sources and maps used for some of the articles this issue are Women in the World International Atlas by Joni Seager and Anne Olson, Our Own Freedom by Buchi Emecheta and the New Internationalist.



OUR LIVES is a non-profit newspaper run for, by and about Black Women.

If you are a Black woman, you've got something to say. Say it Here! Send stories, articles, poems, letters, reviews and ideas.

OUR LIVES invites submissions from Black women living all over Canada.

THE EFFECT OF POVERTY ON THE HEALTH CARE OF THE BLACK FAMILY

Access to good health care is a direct result of education and employment opportunities. When it comes to the researching of the quality of health care to Black families in Canada, statistics are unavailable, so it is believed the same health care is available to everyone. This does not take into consideration the ability to pay for health care, and that health care in Canada has a class bias — crowded medical offices in working class and immigrant neighbourhoods, racist medical assumptions about Black women, hurried examinations and radical treatment. The more money you have the better care you can afford and we do not have it nor do we have, as is mistakenly believed, a "Universal Medicare System."

The Black woman is the main stay in the household. It is the woman who is in charge of the well being of the entire family. The poverty of most Black women is not separate from the family, in most cases the women is the head and sole support of a family consisting of several children. This is political - the politics of economic and social power. Poverty and racism are the basic causes of ill health and eventual death for Blacks. It is not only poverty and racism but a specific form of patriarchal dominance, of female oppression. Black women receive more "abusive and damaging care", and are more likely to be used by researchers and doctors as guinea pigs for drug and disease experimentation. These are just some of the realities of our lives under capitalist-patriarchy.

Individual Choices

Beatrice Bailey

Individual choice, safe contraceptive methods as well as safe abortion when necessary, this is birth control as it relates to Black women's needs.

The historical record of safe contraception is based on blatant racism and class exploitation. It has been known to advocate involuntary sterilization of women on welfare especially Black women. In the Third world pharmaceutical companies use these women as testing and dumping grounds for many of their untested or unsafe drugs pulled from the shelves of North American drug stores. A very excellent issue in the New Internationalist of November, 1986, on World Health is a good read for this topic.

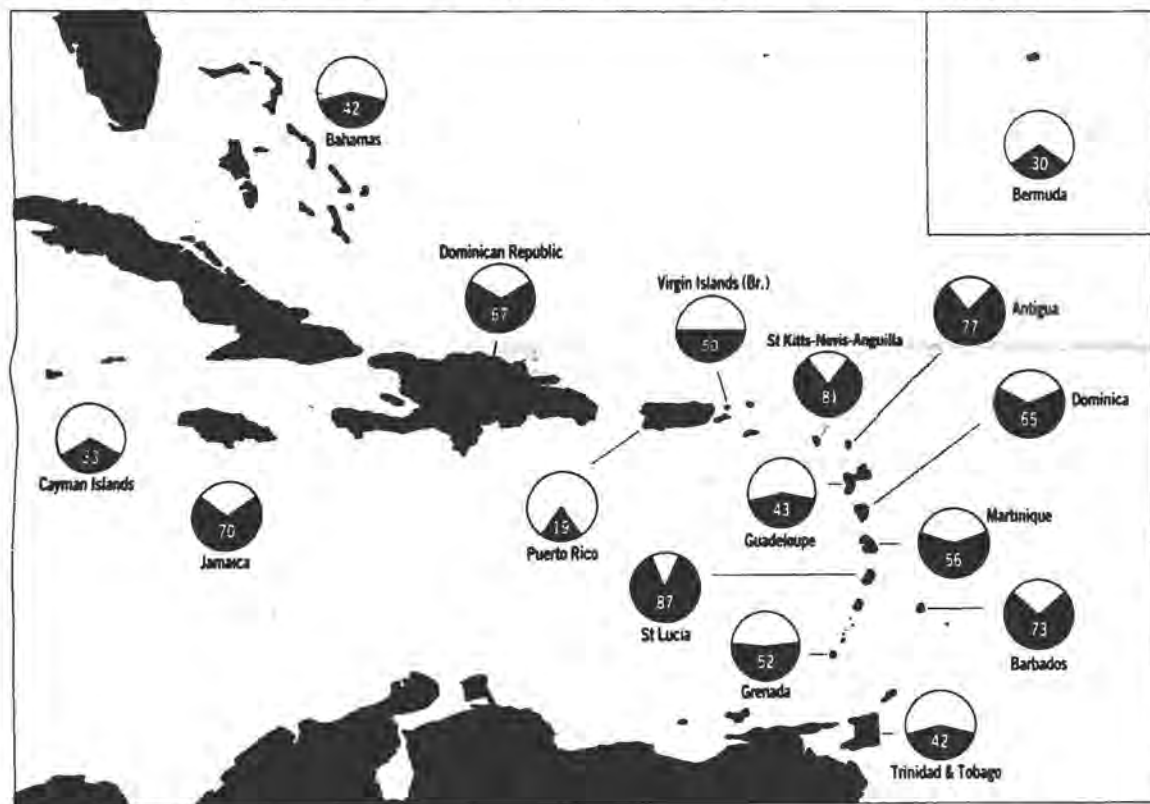
As for abortion rights, Black women have been having abortions since the days of slavery, not because they want to be free of their pregnancy, but because of the despicable social conditions which dissuade them from bringing new lives into the world. A lot of Black women see abortion rights as part of a holistic political program including relief from the poverty and oppression of racism.

Men, Black men and white men, use violence against Black women - rape, battering, sexual assaulted and harassment - to gain and maintain their power over our lives, to restrict and control us. The daily acts of violence in this country and around the world create a state of fear and powerlessness. This serves as a tool to keep down and punish Black women.

A recent article published by the "Sun" describes how a white man gave a contract for work to an Indian woman and in the contract it was stipulated that she had to have sexual relations with him. This shows how deep institutionalized sexual harassment against minority women is.

MANY WAYS TO BE MOTHERS

Births to mothers who are single or in a union other than official marriage as a proportion of all births, Caribbean, where known, early 1980s, percentages



Sickle Cell Anemia is peculiar to Blacks and is transmitted genetically as a dominant trait. The sickle cell trait in Black North America is estimated at between 8-10 percent and sickle cell anemia is found in 1 in 400 newborns. It is one of the most important and pressing public health problems in this country. For those who are concerned, information is available from the Ontario Sickle Cell Association. Write to or phone: Sickle Cell Association of Ontario 47 Don Mills Road Ontario. Phone: 423-1410

(IN)VISIBLE

Carol Thames' new play will be opening on September 10th. to 13th. and 17th to 18th at A Space, 173 Bathurst St.

This realistic drama is about a teacher, invisible as a lesbian yet visible as a Black woman. As both, Nancy Walker receives the thrust of the double edged sword of oppression. Hired on a multicultural ticket into an all girl school, she is fired for her sexual orientation but gains support from some of her students.

This first play by Black woman playwright Carol Thames deals with the hardship facing lesbians, Black and white, in contemporary Canadian society.

(In)visible was first workshopped as part of the Lavender Shorts production "Labour Pains" and later reworked for the Simon Nkodi Anti-Apartheid Benefit. Now Thames has developed it into a full length, two-act production under her direction.

The AIDS virus does not discriminate.

Black men, women and children are getting AIDS.

In the United States, Blacks represent 25% of the total AIDS cases. More than half of the women with AIDS and nearly two-thirds of the children with AIDS are Black.

AIDS is hard to catch.

AIDS is caused by a virus that is spread through blood, semen and vaginal fluids.

You can prevent AIDS.

To protect yourself and others, insist on using a condom during sex. If you use drugs, don't share needles or syringes.

It's our issue too.

For more information about AIDS call The AIDS Committee of Toronto, 926-1626.

This flyer is produced by AIDS Project, an ad-hoc committee made up of members of the Black community and the AIDS Committee of Toronto. To become a part of it, offer advice or get more information, write: AIDS Project, c/o Box 7289, Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X9.

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Job Ghettos Inside the Job Ghettos

Canada's work force is hard enough for what is commonly known as "minorities". We have to cope with all the daily pressures of the various jobs, the constant put downs. But as if that wasn't enough we have to cope with exploiters from our own community too. Job ghettos inside the job ghettos.

Some companies hire mostly "illegal" people, and immigrants with their status pending, all for the sake of cheap labour and escaping paying workers' benefits. Knowing fully that these workers will usually never question the treatment, or the salary that they receive. Most of these workers are womyn. Womyn who have to support their children; or just keep themselves alive.

These labour intensive and clerical ghettos are the death to us as womyn. I met this womyn — call her Ms. Bea. Ms. Bea worked with a small Black owned company for a year and a half. She was hired as the company's receptionist and did some bookkeeping. She was legal but some of the other employees were not or some were pending their status. This meant that they couldn't say much about the low wages that they earned. They were just thankful to have a job. The employer was Black and played on a lot of sentimentality to get the workers to work harder or made out that it was Black solidarity why they were taken on as workers. Sometimes the employer would tell the workers that they had to wait on their salaries for a week or so. And the workers would have to take it because they didn't have any alternatives. Ms. Bea watched the scene with pity for her co-workers who were being bamboozled.

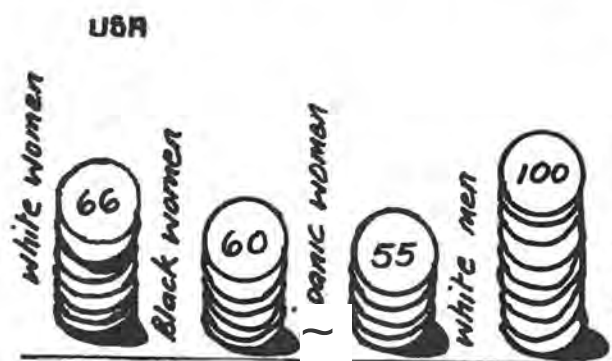
Now, the company that she was working for started to go through some financial problems. The owner of the company approached Ms. Bea to take a drastic cut in wages but to keep on doing full-time work. That was the only way Ms. Bea could keep her job. Ms. Bea was in a quandry. Her alternative was no work or this highway robbery. Ms. Bea quit.

Most of the people that this sort of thing happens to are womyn. The labour intensive and clerical ghettos are where most of us work. What these womyn need are stronger voices, more unionization of companies and more protection from the Labour Board.

Now Ms. Bea who quit her job is part of the welfare statistics. Should we now stand and praise the petit-bourgeois Black employers who abuse workers. I guess Ms. Bea and the other workers met small time capitalism at its height.

MAMA

SOME WOMEN EARN EVEN LESS



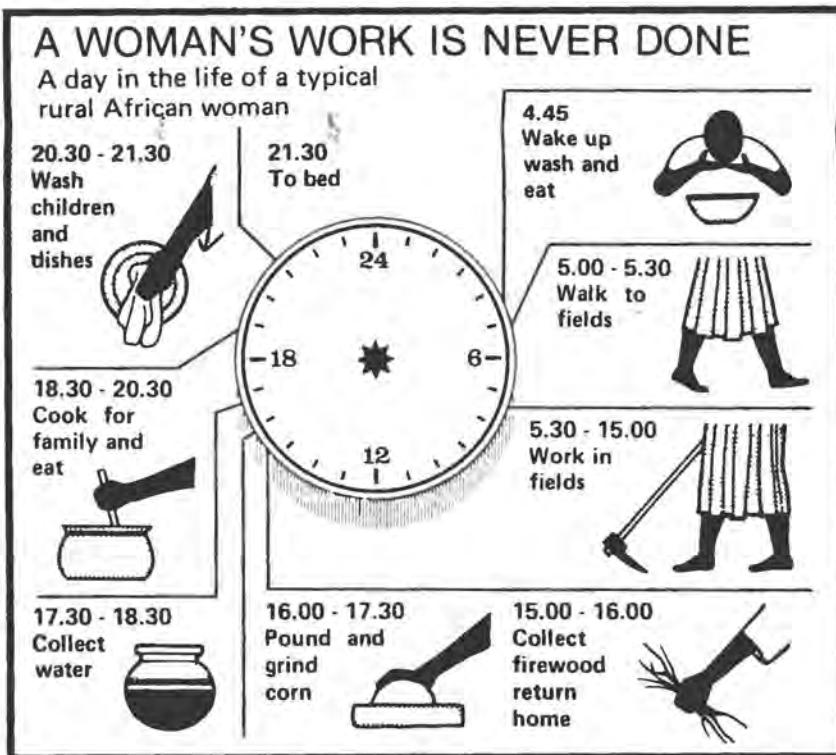
Women's earnings as a percentage of white men's earnings, early 1960's



Black women's earnings as a percentage of white and Black men's earnings, early 1960's



The seventeen hour day



'Women and girls constitute one-half of the world population and one-third of the official labour force, perform nearly two-thirds of work hours, but according to some estimates, receive only one-tenth of the world's income and less than one-hundredth of world property'.
● *Women at Work*, International Labour Organization report.

Farming
and fieldwork

WOMEN'S WORK IS NOT RECOGNISED

National statistics for the economically active usually omit women's work in the subsistence sector yet:

* In the Himalayan region 70% of agricultural work is done by women



* In Africa 60 - 80% of all agricultural work is done by women



* Rural women in the developing countries as a whole account for at least 50% of food production



BA - THARI DAY

A SUCCESS !

Sexuality Workshop

Led by Erica Mercer

The purpose of the workshop was to begin a discussion on sexuality from a health perspective. The emphasis therefore was sexual and reproductive health.

The structure provided for information and sharing of experiences in an informal and relaxed atmosphere.

Issues discussed : Fertility Awareness / How women can become knowledgeable about their fertility patterns by observing and learning to interpret secretions from the vagina.

How to use this knowledge to:

1) determine when during the menstrual cycle a woman is most likely to conceive, so that she can plan desired pregnancies and avoid unnecessary and painful mistakes.

2) check vaginal health related to infections and sexually transmitted diseases and learn the significance of this knowledge in the prevention of complications of infections like P.I.D. /pelvic inflammatory diseases (P.I.D. is the result of an untreated chronic vaginal infections and can lead to scarred tubes, ectopic pregnancies and sterility.)

3) appreciate the importance of knowing the sexual practices and sexual histories of your partners. Be aware of the fact that men are notorious for transmitting everything they pick up on their sexual rounds. Generally vaginal infections present little or no problems to then men, but can be deadly for the women.

Monogamy is useless for women if their partner is the "sex machine" of the community.

4) select a contraceptive method that is suited to your lifestyle and sexual practice. Birth control pills and the IUD do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases. For the woman with a history of vaginal infections, or many sexual partners the IUD should not be a method of choice. The IUD has been identified as a key factor in PID and Infertility.

Many other issues from entering puberty to menopause were touched upon. This was indicative of the age range of the participants. All felt That this was an important and useful workshop and expressed appreciation for the knowledge gained.



Your Child Racism In Education

Led by Debbie Douglas

Issues discussed: streaming - effects of streaming, dead end levels, beginning at public school, absence of Black children in French immersion, lack of information from schools to parents, Black parent's reaction to school system, how to deal with teachers, principals.

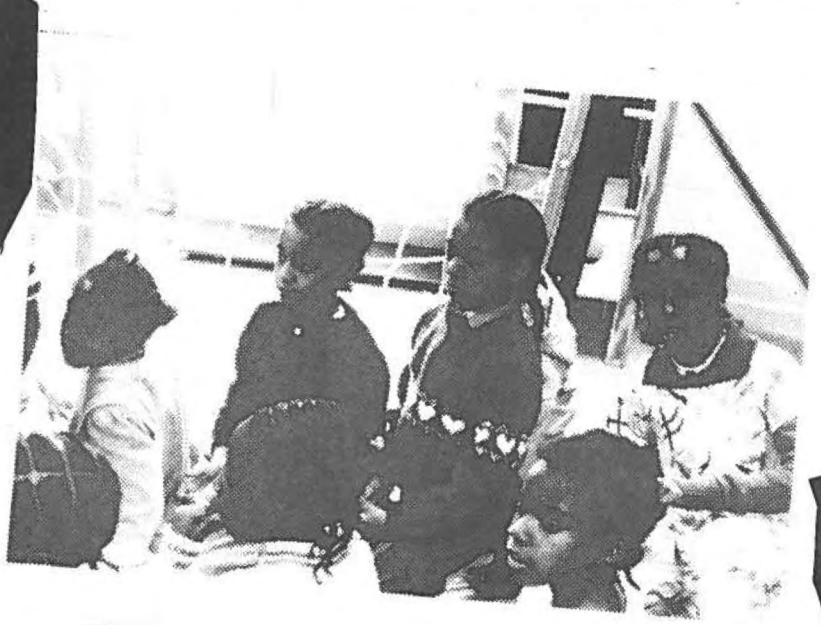
Strategies: parent/teacher meetings to meet other Black parents, forming independent support groups to go to schools.

-Recognition of need for a provincial lobby group which will go beyond the board level to the Ministry of Education.

For followup meeting at Regent Park Community Centre call Debbie Douglas 656-1528.



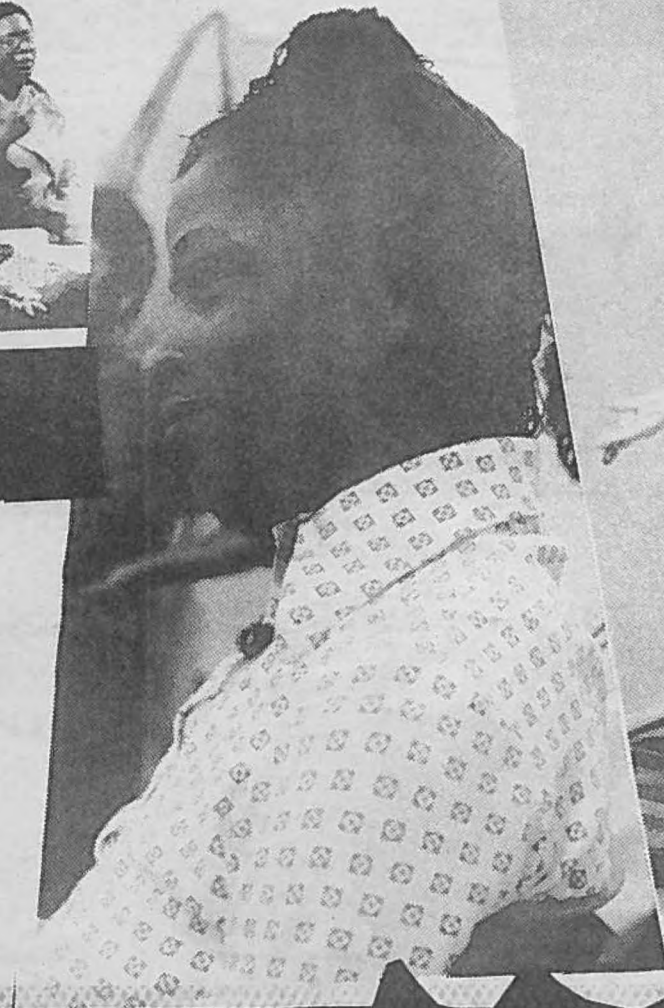
BA - THARI DAY



Photographs
by Kim McNeilly



A SUCCESS !





Women Loving Women

Led by Donna Barker

The participants described their experiences in the Black Community and in society in general. The women tried candidly to confront the issue of homophobia within our community and society in general. To be lesbian, especially a Black lesbian is to be isolated and shunned by other Black straight women and family members. There is no where to go and no where to feel comfortable. Even as women we continue to negate the valuable relationship between women whether they be straight or lesbian. Straight women are afraid of the taboo of being near lesbian women, the taboo being the general homophobia in our society. Friendship between Black women is greatly feared by Black men.

The lesbian women who attended the workshop ranged in age from 16-40. The concerns of younger lesbians is that there was no place for them to be and are always left out of things organized by older lesbians. The response to this was that they are left out because the older women do not want to appear as if they are recruiting.

Black Canadian Workshop

Led by

Adrienne Shadd and Judy Brooks

This workshop was led by Adrienne Shadd, a descendent of the Mary Ann Shadd family who's Toronto history goes back over one hundred years, and, Judy Brooks born and raised in Toronto of the distinguished Brookses. Adrienne spoke of the history and particular Black Canadian culture being centered around the church and social gatherings of her hometown the reknowned North Buxton

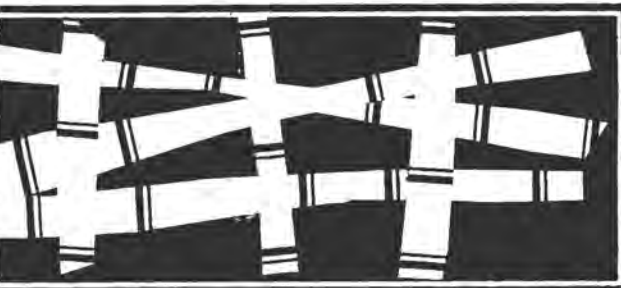
(settlement) and her pride in Black culture.

Adrienne felt removed from the other Black culture in Toronto being Canadian Black because Chatham has such a rich historical reinforcement of Black culture. Judy felt like an outsider with Caribbean women on first meeting but as Black Canadians became more familiar along with Caribbeans of the similarities and differences felt that everyone began struggling together to fight the common enemy of racism. As Black women we struggle against sexism and the economic oppression.

The workshop's outcome was that Black women from the Carribbean, Africa, United States, Europe, Asia are coming together in understanding that we are all displaced outside of Africa through racism caused by slavery and that our economic hardship is justified through racism. This racism is experienced and known everywhere in the world as is sexism and serves only to keep most people poor and very very very few rich. We Black women in Canada must struggle against racism, poverty and sexism to end if our children, ourselves, our people and finally all poor people are to see a better world.



Black Women's Tracks by June Gabriel



Millie

Millie and her sister Masie grew up very close and have remained close. Their relationship is special. Their mother died when they were quite young leaving them alone in the world. Millie married Harold Jackson whose family is rich with Black History. Harold's great-grandfather was one of the first Black families to settle in Toronto, and his grandfather was Canada's first letter-carrier. Harold went off to World War II leaving Millie with young Jay. Millie and Masie busied themselves with work and were valued in the Army and Navy shows. Millie sang with Cy McLean. Then Masie decided to go to New York to live. Millie was opposed to her only sister leaving for New York with two young girls, however Masie was adamant, so off they went to take up their new life.

Now many, many years later Masie was coming home. Where did the years go! Pictures of past times flashed in Millie's mind. Scenes of their children growing up, graduations, weddings, tv. shows, and nightclubs, but all passed by like a movie.

Leslie her niece had come back home, and entered high school. The house was full of laughter and activity with three young people around. Jay and Shawn had embarked on singing careers. She was a grandmother

THE SALSIBURY SISTERS

MASIE COMES HOME

Masie Escoe made her way to her seat on the plane. Heads turned as she passed, admiring glances were directed her way. She was a beautiful, youthful sixty-seven year old Black woman.

She had made this flight many times from New York to Toronto since settling in N.Y. in 1959. This flight was different however, Masie was going home for good. Home to Toronto, her sister Millie and Harold, Millie's husband, and their children, Jay and Shawne whom she adored. Oh! she would come back to visit her daughter Fern and her grandchildren now and then but this time her lifelong friends were eagerly awaiting her arrival. All was in readiness.

Sipping on her drink she was overcome by waves of nostalgia, memories flooded her mind of a Toronto she grew up in. She remembered the old times, growing up when most Black families knew each other. A lot of their parents had migrated to Canada from the West Indies, others came from Buxton, Ont. and some from Nova Scotia and the U.S.A. Her parents were from St. Kitts. Most of her friends came from large families; The Sharps, Jacksons, Bowens, Gibbons, Dorseys and Richardsons to name a few.

The young Blacks in her day had dances at the U.N.I.A. hall on College street. St. Christopher House was their meeting place. The Palais Royale on the Lakeshore did not allow Blacks, also Child's Restaurant on Yonge

street practiced racism. In the 40's when the big bands came to the Palais Royale the Black kids could not gain entrance. They missed a lot in terms of entertainment. She remembered the white children trying to make them feel inferior. Oh! she still felt rage thinking about those times in Toronto when racism raised its ugly head!

now. Marlon her eldest grandson was a joy and helped fill a void in her life. Nathaniel her second grandchild came along about seventeen years later (Jay's second marriage) and she felt blessed. Such a handsome, smart edition to the Jackson family. He certainly kept her and Harold active and entertained when he visited.

Masie came back in her thoughts. She was coming back home at last. The family was ecstatic the house was ready for Masie. Millie felt good.

The sisters talked every Sunday exchanging little tidbits of information about friends and family. Masie came to visit every summer

They enjoyed good times.

Masie had many opportunities to re-marry, but something stopped her. Millie wished some one would catch her sister's eye, somehow she knew her wish was in vain.

The flight was on time. Millie found it hard to control her excitement. She watched as Masie came through the doors. In the dew, little things, the heart reaches it's morning and is refreshed. Reunited at last the sisters made their way through the crowd towards each other. Their twilight years had begun.

In those days, the summer highlight for the Black Community was the Port Dalhousie Picnic. It was an annual event enjoyed by both young and old. A ferry took the picnickers across the lake for the day.

Every Black child looked forward to the picnic each summer. They played games, had races, swam, and ate the good food their mothers had prepared. Masie considered herself lucky to have grown up in an era when Black people were a close knit group.

She married Vern Escoe, Canada's heavyweight champion. Their stormy marriage produced two daughters Fern and Leslie. She had fled Toronto with them in 1959 to start a new life in New York. Now in retrospect she thought of her struggle to raise her daughters. She worked two jobs to give them a decent life. She felt proud that she persevered like her own mother who had raised her and Millie on her own. Her mother had instilled in her and Millie to be strong and not to ever have a defeatist outlook on life. Fate had called upon her to muster up this inner strength when her youngest daughter Leslie succumbed to Lupus at the age of twenty-one years.

Sweet Leslie, whose aspirations were so commendable, was studying at New York University at the time. Nothing could be done. It hurt like hell. Somehow Masie managed to pull forth that strength her mother spoke about and go on.

Her plans for her retirement were altered when she was mugged for the third time in New York. On her way home from work five youths accosted her, threw her to the ground and fled with her purse. Masie was devastated. This was the deciding factor. She was going home.

As the jet taxied on the runway she felt good. New York had been both friend and enemy to her. In her twilight years she looked forward to peace. She had surmounted her problems and paid her dues. Life owed her nothing. She was home. She picked up her steps as she walked towards customs. Her family saw her as she emerged --- they embraced.



OUR LIVES
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"There's no Racism There"

I was hired at the Toronto Women's Bookstore in October of 1986. I worked there without incident or difficulty until February 1987. In February, I presented a proposal to the collective suggesting ways of incorporating a non-white woman's perspective into the store. I believed that the collective's decision to hire a Black woman was an indication of their desire to serve a wider porportion of the women's community, and, an admission that up until this point the perspective represented in the store was largely white and middle-class. Well I was wrong.

My proposal was received coldly and critically. I was told that a) I had not taken the history of the bookstore into account b) the suggestions made in the proposal had already been carried out at various times in the past, and, c) the proposal itself was too strongly worded. I was shocked and hurt by the collective's response. My education in working with white "progressive" and in this case "feminist" organizations was just beginning.

One month after, I was asked to attend an evaluation meeting with three collective members. The reason given for this meeting was that it was a standard three month evaluation. However, I had by this time been at the store for five months, and oddly enough, this was the first time, to my

knowledge, that a collective member, or prospective collective member had been formally evaluated. There was certainly nothing "standard" about this evaluation.

Needless to say, the evaluation was unfavourable. I did not "seem happy" there. One staff member felt that I had not been working hard enough, another felt that I took too long for lunch, another felt she could not help but question whether she could trust me or not. This was the point at which my shock began to turn into disappointment and disgust. I called a meeting with the entire collective to express my anger and ask why no connection had been made between the cold reaction to my proposal and my perceived "lack of commitment" to the store.

More meetings were held. They were long, painful and useless. It had become agonizingly clear that there was no willingness to identify the collective's response to my proposal and their subsequent treatment of me as racist. I was a 'problem'; 'angry', 'hostile' and 'unco-operative', they said. The opinion was put forward that I "hate white women". (At this point this comment was becoming dangerously close to the truth--never mind that many of my friends and even my lover was white. I had never encountered such an obtuse group of women in my life.) These women were so determined to hold on to their privelege and

such a minor privelege at that!--that they could lie to themselves: "you hate white women, we are not racist, you are misinformed, a poor worker, anything.... but we are not racist".

I got tired of taking home a knot in my stomach. I quit. But before I quit a group of sisters offered me their support. We attended a meeting of the bookstore collective and board--uninvited. I explained that the enviroment had become impossible to work in. It was making me sick. Literally. I asked for compensation. Of course I didn't get it. Why should I? "There's no racism there".

I have left out the tedious everyday harrassment. We all know this story. I am writing this not because I think that I am perfect, and that the staff of the Women's Bookstore is detented, but because I really believe that there was a blatant injustice done here and I am not prepared to just let it pass. Silence is condonement. I am asking you not to shop at the Toronto Women's Bookstore, or if you must, ask them why their first and only Black staff member isn't working there anymore. Say you are just curious.

Finally, I want to say that too many of us suffer in silence. I think we have to start making some noise. I think we have to form support groups for those sisters out there working in the white world wondering if they are crazy. If you are interested in forming such a group, or sharing your story, please let me know. Enough is, after all, enough.

Send any ideas, stories of similar experiences to: Pauline Peters, 340 Keewatin Ave., Toronto, M4P 2A5.

Pauline Peters

This situation came to Our Live's attention in February '87. We were convinced that it could be resolved amicably. In feminist practice there should be give and take. The fragile nature of our links need mature thought and consideration by all of us. We were concerned for our sister but we waited for the the normal channels of resolution to be exhausted before printing this testimony.

ANATOMY OF WORKING WITH A WHITE COLLECTIVE

Donna Barker

Recently, I received a call from a sister who had been working in a white feminist collective for about 9 months and she wanted to leave. Before leaving, she wanted to tell the collective why and because she was the only Black woman in the collective she wanted some sisters to go with her for support. I had been following the events as they unfolded and it had been the same old story, the same thing that happens to us whenever we work with white feminists. The patterns are always exactly the same. I asked the sister if I could read a statement at the meeting based on an article I had written about six months earlier on what happens every time a Black women works with white feminists. She agreed and the following is that article.

The Anatomy of Working with White Feminist Collectives

Being the only Black working among white people is always a drag but working in a white feminist collective is particularly treacherous. Treacherous because white feminist rituals include openly expressing feelings and emotions and sharing personal information so that when the inevitable attacks come, they are deeply painful. Painful also because we want to believe that their pronouncements about our common womanhood and an anti-racist feminism will be expressed in their behaviour. We usually go with hope and the smashing of that hope is devastating. I am going to read to you a step by step summary of what happens to every Black sister who tries to work in a white feminist collective. I did not write it about this particular collective, in fact I wrote it before what happened to the sister. It is based on at least 15 years of talking to and

Step 1. The Black women is welcomed and told that they are glad she is there particularly because she is Black. "We hope you will be open with us, teach us, confront us and be fearless." This happens in the first few days of meetings and at some point all the collective members will say something like this to her.

Step 2. An informer is appointed by the collective. This appointment is never formally stated and often the collective is not consciously aware that they have made the appointment but it is always done. The informer has about 4 duties. They are:

a. To make the Black women feel comfortable and liked. She gives the impression that she in particular is on the Black women's side. She makes comments like, "It's about time they involved or hired a Black woman, this collective really needs some changing, these women have lots of work to do on their racism, etc."

b. She checks out basic personal information about the Black woman. Her age, where she was born, whether she's straight or lesbian, coupled or single.

c. She tries to find out as much as she can about the Black women's political life and activities and attitudes.

d. The informer also teaches the Black woman the rituals of the group, procedures, rules and the idiosyncracies of individual collective members.

The informer spends lots of time alone with the Black woman collecting information. She takes her to lunch, walks her to the bus stop and the like. The other collective members

get their information from the informer. They rarely talk to the Black woman directly. The Black woman meanwhile is putting all her energy and concentration into her work performance and presenting an impeccable image because she knows she is being closely watched and that the collective is assuming she cannot understand or do the work. She stays quiet (except with the informer) which is something she would not have to do if she were with Black women. Many Black women leave at this point after the first few months, or if the informer has determined that she is too politically radical with respect to racism, hateful cold stares will drive her out.

Step 3. Once she has settled into the working routine the collective will request that the Black woman lead them into some kind of action having to do with race. They usually ask "What do you want and how do you feel?" and it always means extra work for her. After her presentation, the following statements are allways made.

a. We're glad you did this.
b. You seem so angry, you are an angry person.
c. You came on too strong. If you had presented it differently, it would have been easier for us to hear (they seem unaware that she has already bent over backwards trying to be tactful)

cont'd pg. 13

- d. We didn't know you felt this way. Why did you not say something sooner (this is a crazy-making contradiction to statement c.)
 e. What you said is justifiable and understandable but... (and now their own needs are presented yet again.)
 f. We do not understand. Could you please write, talk, meet, think, etc. more.

This is the point at which things begin to go downhill.

Step 4. Nothing is done about the Black woman's recommendations.

Step 5. Because of their inaction, the white women start to feel uncomfortable, pressured and guilty. They decide to do something. They almost always choose the form of action which requires the least amount of thought, energy or work - the workshop. Workshops are chosen because it allows them to spontaneously express their hatred of Blacks and talk about personal feelings off the top of their heads while maintaining the illusion that by doing this they are dealing with racism. The illusion is reinforced by the fact that the Black woman is present while they are doing this. They require that the Black woman comfort them, forgive them, show them that she is not angry and basically make them feel okay about their racism. By the end of the meeting, there will be more promises of anti-racist action and more requests for work from the Black woman.

Step 6. Nothing is done about the first or second set of recommendations for action.

Step 7. The collective becomes increasingly unhappy about their inaction. They start to blame the Black woman for their discomfort

and start to look for reasons not to listen to her or take her seriously. They try to find ways to tell themselves that their discomfort is because there is something wrong with her personally. They start to pick at everything and tension mounts. The Black woman is bewildered. Everything she does is criticized and everything she says is interpreted in the worst possible way. If she says nothing, she is hostile. She works too hard, she does not work enough. The white women make no sense and any attempts by the Black woman to decipher their confused messages will be futile.

Step 8. The informer, who had held herself out as being the anti-racist one, feels especially guilty about her own inaction and so becomes the most hostile. At some point she fosters a blow up between herself and the Black women or a conflict between the Black woman and someone else. At this point, the collective decides there is a crisis.

Step 9. A major crisis meeting is called to "clear up the tension and talk things out." The problems are always described as personality conflicts, not racism. At this meeting, there is a full attack on the Black woman. They attack everything, her clothes, her hair, her politics, her honesty, her integrity, her communication skills, everything. Everything is dragged up. A minor procedural mistake made 6 months before, a passing insignificant comment made 5 months ago, even private conversation becomes fair game and it is here that the informer can really throw the largest bombs in the attack. At the end of this all out attack, the women will thank the Black woman and tell her they are glad she is there and that they

feel better. The Black woman will be devastated.

Step 10. The Black woman leaves.

postscript

The white feminist collective may well have 'acceptable' 'women of colour' on their boards or on staff. The Black women will not necessarily find comfort or solidarity in this fact. For these women are well chosen as one chooses a necklace to enhance one's appearance without making a fundamental change. Their motives are individual. They may in fact share class with the white women's collective, they may lack consciousness about their own origins, they may be downright sellouts, they may even experience the racism themselves but refuse to acknowledge or deal with it. What they do by not expressing solidarity with the Black woman is reinforce the racist feelings, seen and unseen, which play out under the veneer of liberal policy. They tell the Black woman she's not being fair. They tell her, "Well I need some more details", when it's all staring them in the face. In the end they even benefit from the fight that the Black woman has fought but she's the one who ends up with no job. Despite these women's presence and oftentimes with their tacit or active consent the white feminist collective is ideologically white.

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STOP THE EXECUTION OF



Theresa Ramashamola is a symbol of the thousands of Black women fighting the racist, repressive, inhuman regime in South Africa.

In December 1985, Theresa Ramashamola and five others were sentenced to death by hanging for their alleged involvement in the murder of Khuzwayo Dlamini. As an official in the puppet township government, Dlamini was complicit in the repression of his own people. His killing took place at the onset of the uprising of the Vaal area townships in September 1984, a moment which heralded a new wave of massive opposition to the oppressive conditions of apartheid. The violent repression unleashed on the township communities by armed police and army forces since this time, has resulted in the deaths of hundreds, in the detention and arrest of over 36,000 and the imposition, in 1985, of a state of emergency, continuing today.

The trial of Theresa and the other "Sharpsville Six" was characterized by testimony of torture, coerced witnesses and shaky evidence. Theresa, 23 at the time of her arrest and a worker in a roadhouse, was tortured and later suffered further injuries while in police custody. Theresa's case is not an isolated one.

For women, who hold primary responsibility for the care of children and the sustaining of households, detention is particularly treacherous. Infants accompany their mothers to prison; small children are left behind. Or it is the mothers who are left behind as their children are detained, arrested, tortured. Women in custody are vulnerable to sexual assault at the hands of the police.

Theresa is the first woman in South Africa to receive the death sentence. Join the campaign to stop her execution. For information on what you can do call the ANC in Toronto: 461-4255.

THERESA RAMASHAMOLA



Season's *Greetings!!!!

Yes Summer is the season of freedom - the sun, the greenery, scents from gardens, spontaneous picnics, barbecues on the balcony, in the backyard or the neighbourhood park or just the thought of being able to run out of your house sans heavy coat and boots. This euphoria is short - so enjoy it while you can. Have you seen Bathurst subway in the summer? I swear we are a lovely people! And christ! can we dress!

Congratulations to the planning committee of Bathari Day - held May 24, 1987

The day for Black women about Black women, it was a successful day - well attended - with participants really appreciating the day. Although this writer was unable to attend she looks forward to attending next year's celebration of Black women.

News

I hear the novel "The Women of Brewster Place" by Gloria Naylor which

SISTER WRITE

by Patricia Hayes

was reviewed in this column a few issues ago will become a mini-series to be aired in the fall. Oprah Winfrey has been cast to play one of the seven major characters. The announcement did not state which woman she'll be playing - which character do you think she is best suited to play? I certainly hope a good strong Black production team is involved including a Black director - not another "Colour Purple".

Multicultural Women in Concert have produced a second Faith Nolan album called "Sistership" also available in cassette and songbook.

"Sistership" is a celebration of sisterhood and womanhood. Donations are still required in order to offset the costs of production. You can pre-order a tape for \$10.00, or for \$25.00 you will receive a ticket for the launching party and a tape.

Please send donations and/or order cheque to: Multicultural Women in Concert, P.O. Box 690 Station P. Toronto, M4S 2Y4

If you enjoyed "Africville" then of course you know you have to have "Sistership" in your collection.

Review

"When and Where I Enter - The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sexism in America" Paula Giddings - Bantam Publishers 1984 408 pp.

There is a great comfort in reading this although I would readily agree that not all books written by a Black woman writer will be works that one will agree with and enjoy reading just because it is written by a Black woman. However you know this writer has taken a lot of time, dug to find the truth and has not glossed it over to come up with an excellent comprehensive book narrating the history of American Black women from the landing of the first slaves to the present.

Giddings tries to include every bit of energy Black women have put forth in making any sort of significant contribution. You feel comfortable going on this historical trip for you feel that your guide, Giddings, has that "hereditary knowledge" as a Black woman and in turn is going to give every woman her proper due in a very personal and intimate way.

Go on! Madame C.J Walker first Black women millionaire in 1910. Although white writers of Black American women will highlight Ida B. Wells as an antilynching lobbyist, few write about the fact that she sued The Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad and won in 1884 for being bodily thrown off a train for refusing to leave the first class section for the smoking car..

"When and Where I Enter" proudly profiles a strong defiant army of Black women who have left their mark in the history of woman kind. The whole expression reads "When and where I enter, there in the whole race enters also". Available a Third World Bookstore. 942 Bathurst Street, Toronto.

Upcomming Events

AUGUST

ZAMI-a discussion group of Black and West Indian gays and lesbians, have set the date for their annual summer fete. This year's theme is, "LIMYN", and will be held on August 29, 1987 at ACT (Fall Out Shelter), 456 Spadina Ave. 9pm-Untill.!!!

SEPTEMBER

National Congress of Black Women Presents A Forum with Bell Hooks

Bell Hooks - Distinguished feminist theorist, author of *Aint I a Woman* and *Feminist Theory - From the Margin to the Centre* will be speaking at O.I.S.E. 252 Bloor Street W. at 7pm on Monday September 21st 1987. BE THERE!

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The Black Women's Collective Series

The Black Women's Collective presents a Fall Discussion Series to be presented every Thursday from September 24th--October 29th. at 7.00pm at the Immigrant Women's Centre, 750 Dundas St W. (at Bathurs, Suite 301.

September 24th.
Topic - Violence Against Women

Facilitators - Afua Cooper of Shirley Samaroo House Shelter and Florine Powell-PCL Counselling and Assessment Services, Pres. Congress of Black Women-Toronto Chapter

October 1st.
Topic - Black Women's Sexuality and Reproductive Rights and Freedoms

Facilitator-Erica Mercer - Community Health Worker-Dept. of Public Health

October 8th.
Topic - Black Women and Work

Facilitators - Beatrice Bailey - Machine Apprentice, Black Women's Collective and Cecelia St. Louis - Women in Trades

October 15th.
Topic - Feminism and Black Women

Facilitator - Angela Robertson - York Black Women's group

October 22nd.
Topic - Women Loving Women

Facilitator - Donna Barker-Counselling Services
Place: 24 Bartlett Ave (at Bloor near Dufferin)

October 29th.
Topic - Black Women and Creativity

Facilitators - Grace Channer-Painter and Beatrice Bailey-Painter

For More Information Call Grace Channer at 531-8539

OCTOBER

The International Indigenous Peoples' Solidarity Tour, will be coming to Toronto on October 7th, through October 10th. This years theme is "Solidarity with South African and Native American Political Prisoners". The People's struggle is working towards freeing South African political prisoner, Nelson Mandela and Native American, Leonard Peltier. for more information call - 961-4704

UPDATE-Black Women Rising

Josie Makotoko - The Sudbury nurse's long fight against the Sudbury District Health Unit has been told that the OHRC has ruled that no racism played a part in the matter and that it was a matter of communication and has recommended that the Sudbury District Health Unit hire a communications specialist. You just can't win can you.

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