

# OUR LIVES

CANADA'S FIRST BLACK WOMEN'S NEWSPAPER

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## Women Of Alexandra Park

Faith Nolan

### The World's a Better Place Because Connie's Been Here

Connie Leslie is the director of the Alexander Park Community Center. She was born in St. Catharines Ontario and is fifth generation Black Canadian. Her grandparents, fleeing from slavery arrived in Canada on the underground railway. Alexander Park center has doubled it's budget and introduced many new programs since Connie's arrival. English as a second language, sole support mother's group, een employment program and Foodsharing are a few of the new services available to the Community.

I arrived in Toronto in 1951 working as a sewing machine operator in the various factories around Spadina and King for thirteen years. I made good money. That doesn't mean it was a good job. One thing we had going for us at the time was piece work. I was making equivalent to my step father who worked at General Motors, sixty dollars a week, minimum wage was twenty dollars a week. The management tried to give us an hourly wage but we fought against this and won. Eventually they hired a lot of new immigrants and were able to weed out piece workers. The sweatshops had mostly Italian, Black, Chinese and a few Polish and Japanese people. Most of the Black women came from Nova Scotia and the rest of us were from Ontario. I loved going to work because I learned the different languages and showed the others English. In the sweatshops you had a lot of different people from many places coming together. Canadians would be in a minority and those Canadians would be Black. So you could tell it wasn't a choice job because only immigrants and Blacks worked there. Many Black women worked in Service (domestic work). My Aunt had a hairdressing shop and on Thursdays when the women had their time off I would go there to hear the stories about home and things that were happening in their lives. That was a fun time for me it was really interesting and I know this contributed to my interest in community work.

In the fifties Black immigrants could enter only as domestics no matter what your qualifications. There were only a handful of Blacks who got jobs at the U.I.C and that was based on who they or their family knew not on experience. Going to University wasn't common for Blacks here in the fifties. If you were encouraged by your family you were discouraged by the guidance teachers at school. They would tell the kids 'your father's a truck driver you should be one too'. In 1962 I took a course in book keeping at George Brown College and got a job in a one woman office. In 1969 a community worker came to my door at Donmount Court and I became involved in



volunteer community work. I was concerned with our environment, housing and education. I joined the Riverdale

Community organization and three months later I was elected chairperson. To me a good chairperson needs people skills they need to understand and allow for everyone's different opinions and not put words in peoples mouths.

We struggled for streetlights where our kids were being hit by cars and when we didn't have heat in our houses we petitioned our landlords. We petitioned schools because children weren't able to read and write by grade eight. From a handful of people our organization grew to represent eight thousand people. The injustice in society really triggered me and I could see how it affected my everyday life. I met some people willing to deal with it so I was ready to help them. In my position I still struggle against the injustices and I still approach it in the same way. Sometimes that doesn't go over well but the community is satisfied and that's what's important. If you can look back and think "the worlds a better place to live in because you've been here it's a good thing. I remember hearing that from my grandmother who taught me to always have time for people because she said "no one is an island". People move on and forget where they came from and where they were going. We must remember where we come from if we want to go forward. Our politicians must not be ashamed of being Black and helping other Black people.

"This is not a place for bosses and chiefs this is a fair Community Center"

Mary Walls is treasurer of the Alexander Park Community born in Halifax Nova Scotia she grew up in Toronto, she is a dedicated Volunteer Community Activist

I moved in to the project in February 1984 and because I lived in the area I volunteered. People thought it odd that with children I could still volunteer and afford not to be paid or have free time. They didn't understand that their should always be time. The kids are at the center, in the gym while I'm at meetings. The reward is feeling good about myself, people think I'm energetic because I raise my children as well. I'm being rewarded, I feel good about my work and knowing there's something I can do as well as learning about the community. Everyone here has as much right to the center be they on the executive the board or a volunteer. Anyone in the community is free to come and use the center and there's always somebody there to assist. There's no discrimination or prejudice. All kinds of ethnic groups can use the center. We even find room for some who aren't in the community. Before I lived here I didn't know where to go to volunteer so I phoned ads in the newspaper but I wanted to do something in

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## Womantalk

## What South Africa Means For Us.

Watching the recent killings of our people in Soweto, hearing the hypocritical statements of white western governments regarding sanctions against the racist regime in South Africa and waiting for South Africa to fall (which is only a matter of time), I am filled with a strong unwavering sense of optimism about the future of Black peoples in the world. If I were to pay heed to the western media and the pessimism which they distribute daily on my peoples I would despair completely about a free South Africa. But one has to learn to read the western white media. One has to ignore the propaganda which they say isn't propaganda. For example, whenever they concentrate on what western governments think about South Africa, about sanctions, ignore them. It is not Western governments who will free Black people in South Africa, it is Black people in South Africa who will do it and are the most important force in their own liberation.

Whenever they concentrate on what the west thinks, be sure that they don't want to concentrate on what the people of South Africa think. Whenever they talk about Blacks killing Blacks in South Africa or tribal disputes it is merely to detract from whites killing Blacks on a massive scale with weapons supplied by the 'West'.

Whenever they talk about the hardships that Blacks will suffer if western governments impose sanctions, we must be sure to understand that it is multi-national corporations who will suffer most from sanctions.

Can we really believe that Botha would deport hundreds of thousands of mine workers to Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia and Namibia if the west imposes sanctions?! Hell No! The diamond and gold industry would collapse and so would the influence of gold on international currency. So the threats trumpeted by the western media are empty and purely in the interest of over rich western government and the racist regime of South Africa.

The unending struggle of our people in South Africa, their daily battles with the South African army and police, sticks a fist in the eye of these threats and we Black people here should rally around their courage. South Africa is the last hold on the freedom of all Black peoples in the world. Can we imagine what it would mean when it is over! As I say I cannot but be filled with a great optimism. I realise that it is this optimism which has swept us along for the last three centuries and has quickened our progress over the last fifty years.

Recently the Black Women's Collective and Our Lives attended a Brunch put on by the Universal African Improvement Association to celebrate Marcus Garvey's birthday. We were deeply moved by the presense of the Elders in our community such as Mrs Violet Blackman, Mr Donald Moore and Mrs Harry Gairy and Mr Ed Clarke. They recounted for us their part in the Garvey Movement of the 20s and 30s in their struggle for

Black liberation in Canada. One elder recalled that when Nelson Mandela was jailed in South Africa, the U.A.I.A. mounted a picket and protest in Toronto against his incarceration. Leading the picket was a great Black woman, the late Jean Daniels who also founded the Library of Black Peoples Literature. So, we come from a long and great line of African liberationists. These Elders in their 80's and 90's were telling us that it was our turn. You would not believe the glow in that room, the light of our ancestors and our Elders who believed in our freedom and had dedicated their lives to taking it. So finally it does not matter what western governments think or do, it does not matter what their media says. They will not bring us the news about our freedom. What matters is our will and the will of our kin in South Africa to be free.

Send guns and food,  
Our Lives.

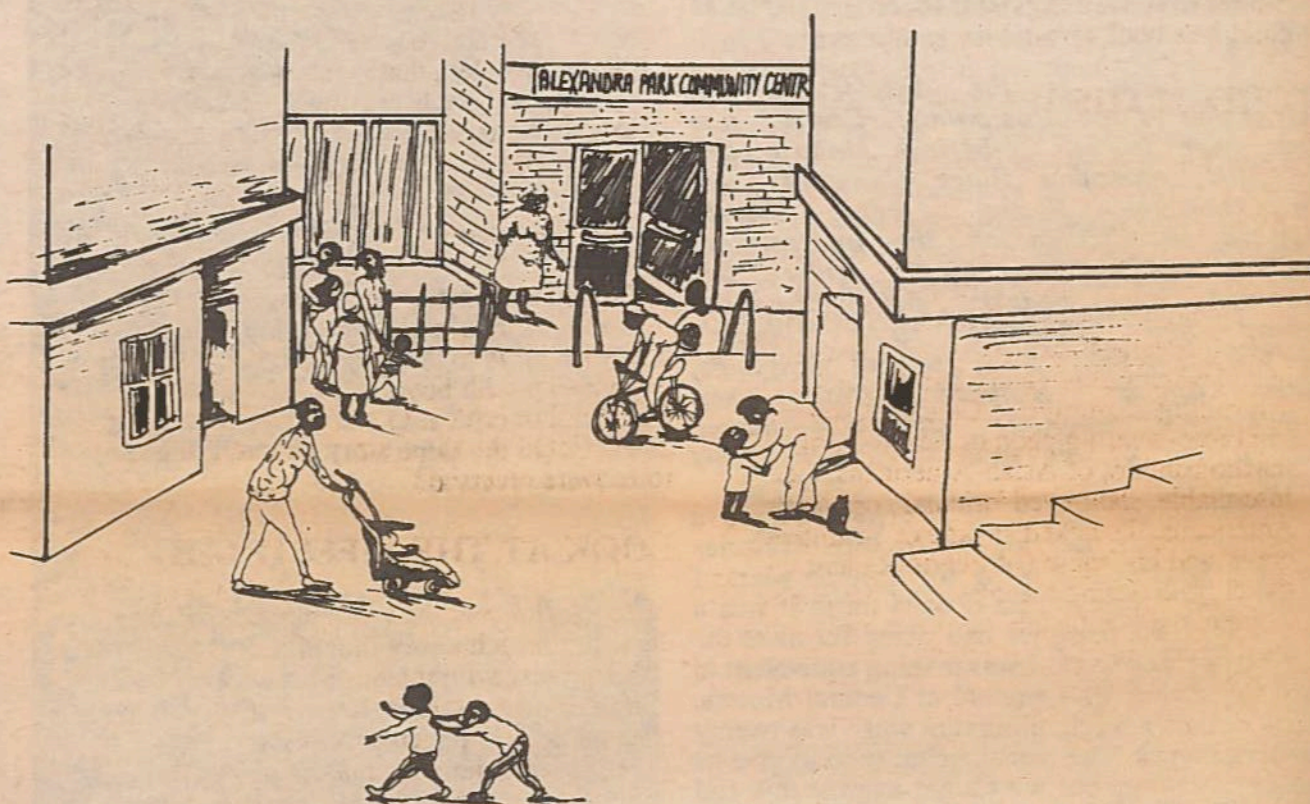
## Great Black Women



This issue's 'Great Black Woman' is

Mrs. Arlie C. Robbins.

Mrs. Robbins was born raised and lived in North Buxton. A historian she devoted her life to uncovering the history of Elgin Settlement and North Buxton, two of the oldest Black settlements in Ontario Canada dating in the 1800's. She said "to have a memory is a blessing, to share a memory is to be blessed." She was well known and respected within our community. Her passing is mourned. She leaves behind an important historical work "Legacy to Buxton," She recounts the fight from slavery through 100 years of Black settlement in Canada.



## COMMON GODDESS

By Terri Jewell  
of Lansing Michigan

This woman has weight,  
crosses the river in anklets  
of brass, copper and gold,  
takes up space substantial.  
She moves the earth with breathing,  
sweats like she got sense enough  
to know her skin gonna stay  
smooth,  
carries her eggplant breasts in lace  
and a great round belly in crimson  
while stretching muscles unashamed in song.  
This woman laughs in heart  
and cries from hollow spaces,  
grows her hair or not,  
chooses fruit and meat as much as she  
wants,  
dances in a tense lover's soft hand.  
She is keloid ripe in the sun,  
a Bessie Smith

who will not die  
from being too full  
of herself.

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community work. This community has given back to me a sense of caring, knowing I can help somebody who needs more. If you are willing and able to help it makes you feel as though you've accomplished for that moment.

My younger children are in the nursery school program and the others are in the summer program. In the fall there is the after four program with arts and crafts and baking. My eldest daughter helps with the smaller ones and has a summer job. I want her to have a career. We all have hard times but my children have enriched my life. It's good to know you can have children and a career. If my children see that I help in the community they feel proud of me.

The roots of this community are that it was a Black ghetto before they ripped up all the old slums and built the projects. This was a Black populated area. A lot of people came from the west south north and the east coast and settled here. After the projects were built there was nothing for me to do besides go to Saint Christopher House so the community decided to get this place built. The community wanted a place to call our own.

Now we need more facilities for children. Instead of hushing kids up and telling them not to break up the trees they should make something for them to swing on, a playground for the smaller children and toddlers. Single mothers need to know how to organize themselves by having something to look forward to. I will work in the community until I see that there is nothing else that needs to be fixed or made better.



# RACISM AND SEXISM IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Both in school and out, young children are exposed to racist and sexist attitudes. These attitudes - expressed over and over in books and in other media - gradually distort their perceptions until stereotypes and myths about minorities and women are accepted as reality. It is difficult for a librarian or teacher to convince children to question society's attitudes. But if a child can be shown how to detect racism and sexism in a book, the child can proceed to transfer the perception to wider areas. The following ten guidelines are offered as a starting point in evaluating children's books from this perspective.

## CHECK THE ILLUSTRATIONS

### Look for Stereotypes

A stereotype is an oversimplified generalisation about a particular group, race or sex, which usually carries derogatory implications. Some infamous (overt) stereotypes of Blacks are the happy-go-lucky, watermelon-eating Sambo and the fat, eye-rolling 'mammy'; of Chicanos, the sombrero-wearing peon or fiesta-loving, macho bandito; of Asian-Americans, the inscrutable, slant-eyed 'oriental'; of Native Americans, the naked savage or 'primitive brave' and his 'squaw'; of Puerto Ricans, the switchblade-toting teenage gang member; of women, the completely domesticated mother, the demure, doll-loving little girl or the wicked step mother. While you may not always find stereotypes in the blatant forms described, look for variations which in any way demean or ridicule characters because of their race or sex.

### Look for Tokenism

If there are racial minority characters in the illustrations, do they look just like whites except for being tinted or colored in? Do all minority faces look stereotypically alike, or are they depicted as genuine individuals with distinctive features?

### Who's doing what?

Do the illustrations depict minorities in subservient and passive roles or in leadership and action roles? Are males the active 'doers' and the females inactive observers?

## CHECK THE STORY LINE

Liberation movements have led publishers to weed out many insulting passages, particularly from stories with Black themes and from books depicting female characters; however, racist and sexist attitudes still find expression in less obvious ways. The following checklist suggests some of the subtle (covert) forms of bias to watch for.

### Standard for Success

Does it take 'white' behaviour standards for a minority person to 'get ahead'? Is 'making it' in the dominant white society projected as the only ideal? To gain acceptance and approval, do persons of color have to exhibit extraordinary qualities - excell in sports, get 'A's, etc? In friendships between white and non-white children, is it the child of color

who does most of the understanding and forgiving?

### Resolution of Problems

How are problems presented, conceived and resolved in the story? Are minority people considered to be 'the problem'? Are the oppressions faced by minorities and women represented as related to social injustice? Are the reasons for poverty and oppression explained, or are they accepted as inevitable? Does the story line encourage passive acceptance or active resistance? Is a particular problem that is faced by a racial minority or a female resolved through the benevolent intervention of a white person or a male?

### Role of Women

Are the achievements of girls and women based on their own initiative and intelligence, or are they due to their good looks or to their relationship with boys? Are sex roles incidental or critical to characterisation and plot? Could the same story be told if the sex roles were reversed?

## LOOK AT THE LIFESTYLES

Are minority persons and their setting depicted in such a way that they contrast unfavourably with the unstated norm of white middle class suburbia? If the minority group in question is depicted as 'different', are negative value judgements implied? Are minorities depicted exclusively in ghettos, barrios or migrant camps? If the illustrations and text attempt to depict another culture, do they go beyond oversimplifications and offer genuine insights into another lifestyle? Look for inaccuracy and inappropriateness in the depiction of other cultures. Watch for instances of the 'quaint-natives-in-costume' syndrome (most noticeably in areas like clothing and custom, but extending to behaviour and personality traits as well).

## WEIGH THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE

Do the whites in the story possess the power, take the leadership and make the important decisions? Do racial minorities and females of all races function in essentially supporting roles?

How are family relationships depicted? In Black families, is the mother always dominant? In Hispanic families, are there always lots of children? If the family is separated, are societal conditions - unemployment, poverty, for example - cited among reasons for the separation?

## NOTE THE HEROES

For many years, books showed only 'safe' minority heroes - those who avoided serious conflict with the white establishment of their time. Minority groups today are insisting on the right to define their own heroes (of both sexes) based on their own concepts and struggles for justice.

When minority heroes do appear, are they admired for the same qualities that have made white heroes famous or because what they have done benefitted white people? Ask this question: "Whose interest is a particular hero really serving?"

## CONSIDER THE EFFECTS ON A CHILD'S SELF-IMAGE

Are norms established which limit any child's aspirations and self-concepts? What effect can it have on image when she reads that boys perform all of the brave and important deeds? Black children to be continually bombarded with images of the color white as the ultimate in beauty, cleanliness, virtue, etc and the color black as evil, dirty, menacing, etc? Does the book counteract or reinforce this positive association with the color white and negative association with black?

What about a girl's self-esteem if she is not 'fair' of skin and slim of body?

In a particular story, is there one or more persons with whom a minority child can readily identify to a positive and constructive end?

## CONSIDER THE AUTHOR'S OR ILLUSTRATOR'S BACKGROUND

Analyse the biographical material on the jacket flap or the back of the book. If a story deals with a minority theme, what qualifies the author and illustrator to deal with the subject? If the author and illustrator are not members of the minority being written about, is there anything in their background that would specifically recommend them as the creators of this book?

## CHECK OUT THE AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE

No author can be wholly objective. All authors write out of cultural as well as a personal context. Children's books in the past have traditionally come from authors who were white and who were members of the middle class, with one result being that a single ethnocentric perspective had dominated children's literature in the United States. With any book in question, read carefully to determine whether the direction of the author's perspective substantially weakens or strengthens the value of his/her written work. Is the perspective patriarchal or feminist? Is it solely Eurocentric, or do minority cultural perspectives also receive respect?

## WATCH FOR LOADED WORDS

A word is loaded when it has insulting overtones. Examples of loaded adjectives (usually racist) are 'savage', 'primitive', 'conniving', 'lazy', 'superstitious', 'treacherous', 'wily', 'crafty', 'inscrutable', 'docile' and 'backward'.

Look for sexist language and adjectives that exclude or ridicule women. Look for the use  
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## OUR KIDS OUR FUTURE

A Photo Journal  
By Grace Channer and Beatrice Bailey

Black children in Regents Park were able to create a huge mural about things they feel and think about all on their own.

Given the support and reassurance that to call themselves beautiful was not a bad thing creative juices flowed over the thirty foot construction wallboard at Sackville Green. Although the mural will be only temporary (as long as construction



*Painted and repainted the mural was a conversation in paint.*



*"I'm from Nigeria but there's no Nigerian people here"*



*"Black people are really nice don't you know"*

## Education The Slight Edge

Carol Allain

Education has long since been a panacea for the problems which we have had to deal with as Blacks, whether in North America or back home. Our parents, grandparents and great grand parents have instilled in us this need to acquire an education so that we can get ahead in a racist and oppressive society. This idea may be true but in Canada we rarely have the chance to prove this theory correct.

When I came to Canada from St Lucia in 1975 I was immediately enrolled in public school, which of course meant that I was put back a grade instead of forward. This move had a definite negative effect on my performance at school as it slowed down my thought process and caused a great loss of confidence in my academic abilities. This problem persisted throughout public school and a great portion of secondary school. Against my wishes I was enrolled in a technical school where I studied typing, shorthand and general office skills, with not much success.

When I finally decided to take my education into my own hands I encountered resistance from teachers and so called "guidance counsellors". At this point I realized that if I had to gain any benefit from my secondary school education I would have to enroll at some other school where I could pursue the education which I wanted and not what the Board of Education thought would be the most beneficial to my future. This

encounter with the education system left me extremely suspicious of the education that we, as Black students, receive in Canadian schools. We were allowed the minimum education so that we could dig their ditches and perform the hundreds of menial tasks which they would not. At this point I had serious doubts about continuing school because I saw nothing ahead of me which was in the least bit encouraging.

University applications and choices were fast approaching and as I had not decided what route to follow, I approached my guidance counsellor for some advice. I was told to "go to college or to find full time employment". I left the office feeling intense anger and more determined than I was before. The very fact that such blatant tactics were being used to keep Black students, especially Black female students, from attending post secondary institutions gave me that final push I needed to make that big decision. I have now completed three years of university with one final one to go. I feel a great sense of accomplishment in knowing that I have beaten one of the many odds which were set against me. This feeling lasts for just a moment because I know that my degree will not automatically open many doors for me when I am seeking employment. I know that my sex and colour are what a potential employer bases his or her decision on. When it comes down to the crunch, my degree only gives me an edge, though very slight. Regardless of all the setbacks which plague our lives, we must definitely keep on pushing for what is obviously ours. We need that piece of paper in

order to acquire the necessary implements to create that much needed community for ourselves and also to occupy the many areas in this society which have been kept from us as Black women. Education will not solve all our problem, but with it, our impact will be greater.

**OUR LIVES is a Black Women's Collective and Our Lives Group publication.**

The sisters are:

Faith Nolan  
Beatrice Bailey, Carol Allain, Donna Barker, Dionne Brand, Grace Channer, Afua Cooper, Marie Dennis, Debbie Douglas, Patricia Hayes and Sky Stollmeyer.

If you would like to join the Our Lives Group call Dionne at 967-6104.  
We need Black woman hands!  
As only we know how to handle money time energy hardship much love,  
Call.



on the new community centre there continues) the experience for all involved will last a very long time.

There was a disproportionate amount of struggle caused mainly by the community agency responsible for funding Black projects in the Park (Dixon Hall) who offered much help. They told us that MTHA (Metro Toronto Housing Association) considered the project

too political and that they (Dixon Hall) thought that the Black residents wouldn't want such a project.

We did our own outreach to Black women and children. We were given recommendation letters and support from all resident community organizations including MTHA, the contractor for the wall site and the residents themselves to go ahead with the project. We rallied sponsors

for the materials and supplies from the local community businesses in the area. Meanwhile members of Dixon Hall advertised to anyone who asked about the project that it was cancelled. The project took place August 16.

At the end of the mural the children ages 3 to 14 years begged to be able to do this again. The project began as an avenue to link Black women and children together in and outside of the Park.



Children ranged from 3 to 14 years.



"It isn't nice to write that there..."



The mural was approximately thirty feet long



**AFRICVILLE** by Faith Nolan - this album is dedicated "to all of our people who believe in freedom"

**AFRICVILLE** is a collection of songs that look at the history of Black Heritage. It is an excellent showpiece of Faith's mastery as song writer and singer. One of the most important cultural workers in our community Faith's feel for Black life and struggle makes her sing the blues as we feel it. This top quality production is aided by some of Toronto's best jazz musicians, Archie Alleyne on drums, Kingsley Etienne on piano, Lionel Williams on bass and guitar and newcomer Tony Ellington on congas and drums. Diana Braithwaite's superb voice is heard in back up vocals.

The Black tradition of telling Black people's history through the "blues" and more contemporary the "reggae beat" gives the listener enjoyable, music plus an education. One can close one's eyes and envisage Bessie Smith or Billie Holiday mournfully singing their blues for themselves and for their people. Certainly Faith's acapella rendition of "Marie Joseph Angélique" a rebellious slave burnt at the stake in Montreal is as haunting as Billie Holiday's

"Strange Fruit". "Mary Ann Shadd", sung by a young Black singing group called The Mary Ann Shadd Singers and the song "Josiah Henson", through their simple lyrics and catchy beat make it easy for young people to get a memorable history lesson.

"Divide and Rule", with its reggae beat, has certainly become the anthem of progressive political work in Toronto over the last couple years. Faith actually wrote it when she was

sixteen. **AFRICVILLE** is an album for all people.

As we go to press, Faith is finishing up a tour in the U.S. sponsored by the Peoples' Music Network.

**AFRICVILLE** available in album, cassette, and, a songbook, at Third World Bookstore or The Woman's Bookstore. For more information write to

P.O. Box 44, Stn. P, Toronto, Ontario Canada M5S 2S6

## Africville



FAITH NOLAN

### Lillian Allen - REVOLUTIONARY TEA PARTY.

For those of you who cannot keep up with Lillian's busy performing schedule then her latest album **Revolutionary Tea Party** is the answer for you. The album is a slicker version of her dub-poetry performances; but nonetheless, her strong forceful social statements regarding the lives of Black people is not lost. Such favourites as "Rub a Dub Style inna Regent Park", "Birth Poem" and "Ridden An' Hardtimes" are on this album. It is hoped that her upcoming tour will be as successful as this album seems to be.

Keep on doing your thing Sister Lillian.

Patricia Hayes



## RECREATING THE EXTENDED FAMILY: A SURVIVAL TOOL

By Afua Cooper

Having children in a large northamerican city is not the same as rearing and caring for them in the West Indies in particular and the third world in general. In the West Indies when women go out to work or just go out in general they usually encounter no problems in finding someone to look after their children. There are numerous relatives and if this is not so the children can be left with a neighbour at no charge.

The situation is different in a large city like Toronto. The first concern of women with children is finding childcare for their children when they are away from them. Even if these women live with others it doesn't mean that childcare is guaranteed. Yet a woman needs to be away, wants to be away from her children sometimes.

A woman who works has the option of leaving her children at daycare or with a babysitter. But daycare costs are astronomical and there are not enough daycare spaces. Finding a suitable and fulltime childminder is also problematic. Mothers are concerned about whether the babysitter will take good care of the children and not abuse them. For those women who are eligible for daycare subsidy, putting their children in daycare is a much more viable alternative.

But what about those women who work shift and whose hours cannot be fitted in with the hours of daycare, what do they do? During the summer I turned down a well paying job because shift work was involved. My first thought was "who will look after my child?" My family lives two hours away by public transport and so there was no way they could help me.

One alternative would be to move closer to them but that is not so easy. A woman I know used to travel four hours a day to and from her child's daycare. She had to do this in order to keep her job. At the end of six months she was a nervous wreck.

There are many sitters of course who keep children overnight (this brings us to the question of 24 hour daycare but that is another discussion in itself), and that is good providing the mother feels secure about letting her child or children stay overnight. A childminder in many cases can become part of a child's family, a part of a child's life. However one question that keeps popping in my mind is what if the mother doesn't have the money to pay (on time). Many middle and upper class women usually have live in helpers to take care of their children. The question of money for them is therefore not a problem.

After much deliberating (between myself and some sistrins) on the question of women, childcare and lack of money I came to the conclusion that women with children need to, have to recreate the extended family in order to make life easier for themselves. What is the extended family? Used in this context it refers to the African concept and family arrangement in which several generations (blood relatives and inlaws) live and work together, love and hate each other. This arrangement revolves around the compound, a huge yard in which there are several houses. This concept was transported to the Caribbean and today it is still the norm to find grannies, aunts, daughters, nephews etc. all living together in one compound. One can ask how this arrangement sustained itself during slavery, since one aspect of slavery was the fact that family members were separated at whim. However those who found themselves together, looked out for each other, acted as kin towards each other, became family. The latter point brings us back to the question of the extended family in Toronto. Most of the people we know and love are not blood relatives. I would like to suggest therefore that we adopt some of these people as family. One objective of this would be to provide unstressful childcare



when needed. The advantage would be that our children would grow in a nurturing and caring community. Having the extended family would complement the nurseries and the babysitters. The idea is not for the extended family to supersede the above facilities. For women living in the inner city recreating the extended family is difficult. For one high rise apartments in particular and apartments in general do not allow for socialisation, the "howdy-do" over the fence. One is locked in one's little apartment not even knowing one's neighbours. Apartments are designed in such a manner that the occupants become isolated. There is no meeting place. Women see each other in the lobby, elevators and laundry but they do not speak to each other. The eternal suspicion prevails. It is the nature of large cities.

What we need to do in order to help break the bonds of isolation is to start networking. Call up women (and men) who have children and the conscious ones who don't. They might not live in your immediate vicinity but inform them that you wish to start a childcare co-op. Then if you are not acquainted with anyone in your building put up a sign in the laundry explaining the childcare co-op and believe me the responses will be positive, as many women will welcome the opportunity and probably had the idea in their heads for a while but was afraid to concretise it. Of course the main objective of such a project is childcare but friendship, solidarity can be created out of such a partnership because that's what it would become.

We know the setting won't be perfect. We won't be able to sit under the mango tree and braid each other's hair while the children play. But there are good parks around where the children can be taken. Collective picnics, trips, movies, play sessions and Black history sessions can be easily arranged and planned. And the question of women obtaining shift work won't be so problematic as sistrins will be around to care for each other's children at no charge.

Black people lived through slavery and countless economic depressions but we were able to survive because of sheer will and because we had someone (ourselves) to help us through.

### SUGGESTED READINGS

**Motherland - West Indian Women to Britain in the 1950's.** Elyse Dodgson (1984)

**People and Culture of the Caribbean.** Micheal Horowitz. (1971) pp. 403 - 76.

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of the male pronoun to refer to both males and females. While the generic use of the word 'man' was accepted in the past, its use today is outmoded. The following examples show how sexist language can be avoided: ancestors instead of forefathers; chairperson instead of chairman; community instead of brotherhood; firefighters instead of fireman; manufactured instead of manmade; the human family instead of the family of man.

### LOOK AT THE COPYRIGHT DATE

Books on minority themes - usually hastily conceived - suddenly began appearing in the mid-1960's. There followed a growing number of 'minority experience' books to meet the new market demand, but most of these were still written by white authors, edited by white editors and published by white publishers. They therefore reflected a white point of view. Not until the early 1970's has the children's book world begun to even remotely reflect the realities of a multi-racial society. The new direction resulted from the emergence of minority authors writing about their own experiences. Unfortunately, this trend has been reversing in the late 1970's, as publishers have cut back on such books. Non-sexist books, with rare exceptions were not published until 1983.

The copyright dates, therefore, can be a clue as to how likely the book is to be overtly racist or sexist, although a recent copyright date, of course, is no guarantee of a book's relevance or sensitivity. The copyright date only means the year the book was published. It usually takes about two years from the time a manuscript is submitted to the publisher to the time it is actually printed and put on the market. This time lag meant very little in the past, but in a time of rapid change and changing consciousness, when children's book publishing is attempting to be 'relevant', it is becoming increasingly significant.

*Originally from the Council on Inter-racial Books for Children. Reprinted from New Women's Times (USA).*

*This article is obviously from an American perspective; we hope readers will make the leap to their own context.*



## Strong Female Ancestral Links Fabric Art

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Winsom studied at the Jamaica School of Art, majoring in mural painting. She regrets that African art was not considered important enough to be included as part of the coursework.

"The shame of not knowing about esteemed black artists when I studied Art History," she said, "is shared by countless others. I believe that it is necessary for us, as artists, to seriously study African heritage."

Having recognised that gap in her education, Winsom wrapped herself in Africa and emerged with a new energy which has not yet subsided. Winsom has been able to deftly mould that experience into living art.

She works mainly with methods and motifs from the Ashanti people of Ghana and the Korhogo of the Ivory Coast which she weaves together with her experience as a Jamaican-Canadian to create a richly textured art.

Winsom's huge collages and textile designs have the feel of African life, strong, bright, bold and warm. She uses a wide variety of West African

### Skye Stollmeyer

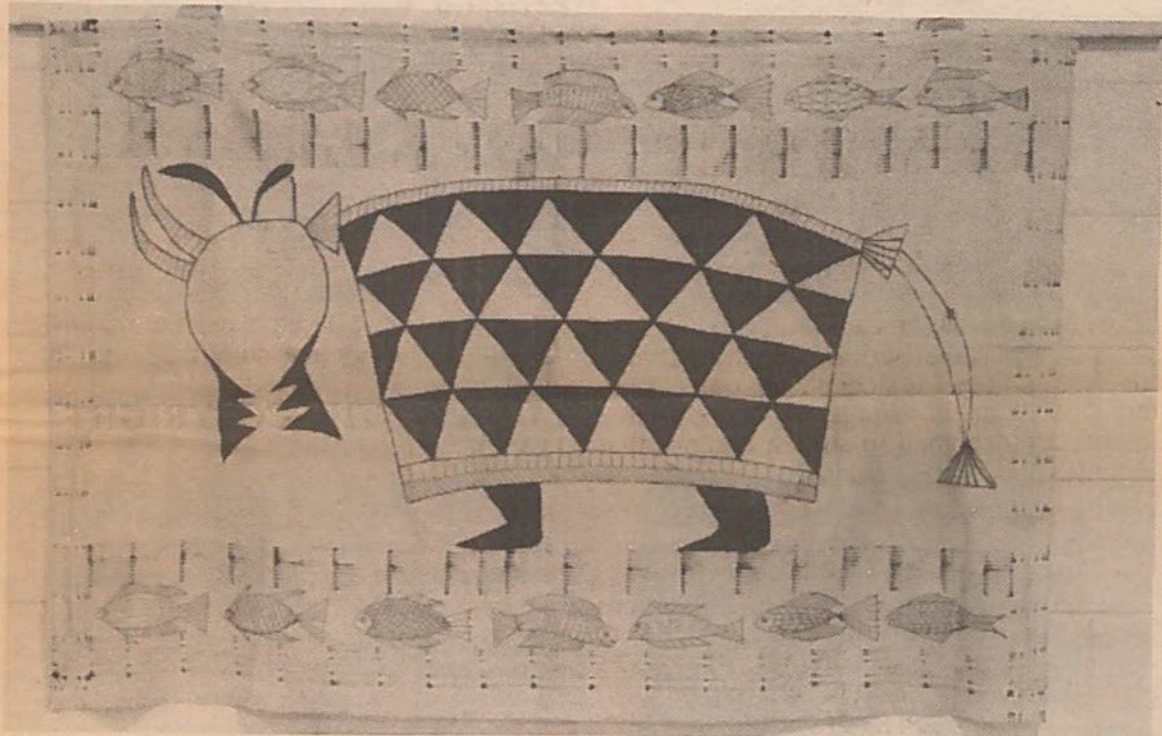
textile designs, which have meaning and value on their own. She also uses traditional West African and Jamaican techniques in dyeing her material. In resist dyeing, for example, the colour is controlled by various methods. Tying, stitching or tight folding of the cloth, before soaking in a dye bath, prevents colour from reaching certain areas of the material. The cloth can also be painted or stencilled with wax or starch (Winsom often uses cassava flour paste), which hardens and prevents the dye from reaching the protected sections of the cloth. When the dye has dried, the stitches, knots, folds, wax and paste are removed and the entire pattern emerges.

Winsom's need to probe her African heritage has led to a new direction and strength in her work, which she hopes will "educate, yet stand on its own as a unique artistic expression." She wants the people who see her work to be able to feel what she has learned about herself and her history.

"Hopefully my art, whether painting collage or textile, will give the viewer a sensory awareness of the rich and great culture of my people."



*Strong Female Ancestral Links  
(gown) 1984*



*"Food Life & Death" 1985*



*"I am that I am"*



*"The Fabric Market" 1984-85*



*"Celebration" 1985*

Winsom has exhibited her work widely in Jamaica and North America, from 1973 to the present. Her most recent exhibition was at Expo/Vancouver.

Winsom lives, and produces her Afro-Jamaican Fabrics in Kingston, Ontario.

### Afro-Jamaican Fabrics



by

**Winsom**



Sankofa

Sydenham Street  
Kingston, Ontario  
Canada K7K 3M6

(613) 549-5782



# BLACK NOTES

**Friday September 12, 7p.m** -Third World Books and Crafts, 742 Bathurst Street, **LUISAH TEISH** - author of JAMBALAYAH, THE NATURAL WOMAN'S BOOK OF PERSONAL CHARMS AND PRACTICAL RITUALS, will be signing copies of her book at Third World Bookstore sponsored by Sister Vision.

**Saturday September 13, 11-6 pm** - 361 Danforth Ave. - St. Barnabus Church. **LUISAH TEISH** - teacher, writer, choreographer, and Priestess of Oshan in the Yoruba tradition will host a workshop on Afro - American and West African Shomanism and Spiritualism.

**Sunday September 14, 12 - 5 pm** - 361 Danforth Ave. - St. Barnabus Church. Children and Youth Multicultural Fair. Luisah Teish will present a Storytelling show called a CALABASH OF MEMORIES which will include tales from African, Southern U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean. There will also be drumming, theatre and face painting. Sponsored by Sister Vision.

**Thursday September 18, 5- 8 pm.** Book Launching. "RIVERS HAVE SOURCES, TREES HAVE ROOTS" at Cross Cultural Communications Centre, 965 Bloor St. West. The book written by Dionne Brand and Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta tells of the experience of racism.

**Thursday September 25 7 - 9:30 pm,** Alexander Park Community Centre. Film and discussion. Film presentation will be on Ela Baker - a Black Civil Rights fighter for many years. Discussion to follow. For more information call 967 - 6104. Ask for Patricia. Sponsored by the Black Women's Collective.

**Wednesday October 1, 1986, 8:30 - 4:30 pm** - Ryerson Polytechnic Inst., Oakham House - 63 Gould St. The Black Secretariat presents "UP THE ORGANIZATION" a conference on people, money and management of services in the Black Community. Pre - registration \$30.00. Registration at the door \$ 35.00 for more information call 531 - 2555.

**The week - end of October 24 - 25.** The Black Women's Collective will host a MOTHER AND DAUGHTER evening and afternoon through artwork, performances, film, discussion and brunch. This is an avenue for women to feel comfortable to talk about their roles as mothers and daughters. Place to be announced. For more information call 967 - 6104 (days) or 534 - 2064 (evenings). If you have any ideas or would like to participate in the planning please call one of the above telephone numbers

**Tuesday October 7 th 4 -pm - 9pm** - Black and white drawings by Grace Channer 25 Ossington Avenue, Second Floor - For more information call 531 - 8539

**OUR LIVES** Canadas first Black women's newspaper is looking for a student who can type at least 55wpm if you are interested please call 532 - 2672

**STRUGGLE FOR A BLACK ART** - Presentation and Discussion by Sivanandan - Friday September 26, 8pm - 25 Ossington Avenue Second Floor - 364 - 3227 or 537 - 0137

## Follow up from last issue

The Black Women's Collective and the Our Lives Group raised \$100. at the yard sale for Sister Desiree.

## WANTED

**YOUNG WOMEN** - TO JOIN SINGING GROUP AFTER 4 PROGRAM AT ALEXANDRA PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE. SEPT. 23 4p.m 367-9603

**WOMEN INTERESTED IN SINGING AND DRUMMING** PLEASE CALL FAITH 532 2672

**SOLE SUPPORT MOTHER'S GROUP FORMING AT ALEXANDRA PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE** CALL CONNIE: FOR INFORMATION 367 9603

## Health

Have you heard about Depo Provera? Maybe you've heard it called "The Injection". It is a drug that was developed for treatment of endometrial cancer[cancer in the lining of the womb] and a condition of the womb called endometriosis. For some years now its been used as a long-term contraceptive method in the Caribbean and other third world countries. Many women there were never told the side effects of the drug which can be quite harmful. The drug is given in the form of an injection every three months and causes your period to stop completely supposedly for that time. However some women have reported that their period did not come long after the specified time. The side effects of Depo Provera include: severe depression, mood changes, some bleeding-either spotting or continuous, nausea, being infertile long after stopping use of the drug, kidney failure, headaches and loss of sex drive. Unlike other birth control methods it is impossible to 'stop' the effects of the drug until it wears off. In studies on animals, the drug was associated with breast cancer and endometrial cancer. The World Health Organisation is doing an eight[8] country study on Depo and you can bet it's not in North America. In fact the drug is not licensed in the U.S or Canada except in the case of disabled women who themselves have concerns about its use. Much drug experimentation has been done on Black and Third world women by Multi-National drug companies, the case of Depo Provera is no

different. The racism that makes that kind of experimenting possible is something that we have to continue to fight. And the sexism which gives us no choice but to use ineffective and dangerous money making contraception is also something we must continue to fight. There is enough technology in the world to come up with safe methods of birth control but this would mean less profit for drug companies and it would give women sexual freedom, so the forces that be are not about to act in women's interests. So we must do it ourselves.

Many women I know from the Caribbean - Jamaica, Trinidad and Grenada especially have been on 'The Injection'. If you know any woman who has been on Depo give her the information on the side effects and tell her to check with her doctor. Better still, tell her to find a women's group who have the word on Depo. Write to friends in the Caribbean and spread the information. The long term effects of the drugs are not known and so some women may be feeling okay now but the price later may be to high.

## Groups with information about Depo Provera:

Canadian Coalition on Depo Provera  
c/o Lyba Spring 414 Rushton Rd.  
Toronto, Ontario. M6C 2Y3

Cari  
Toronto Women's Health Network  
c/o Ann Rochon Ford 24 Lonsdale Road.  
Toronto, Ontario. M4V 1W3

Immigrant Women's Centre  
348 College Street.  
Toronto, Ontario

[The Company in Canada which manufactures Depo Provera, Upjohn Canada, has applied for approval of the drug as a contraceptive despite the dangerous sideeffects.

## HISTORY NOTES

This year marks the sixty-fifth birthday of 'THE DAWN OF TOMMORROW' one of Canada's first registered Black newspapers. It was the most widely circulated Black newspaper after the PROVINCIAL FREEMAN in 1921 when it was founded in London Ontario. One of its co-founders was a Black woman who was a community activist and humanitarian Christine Elizabeth Jenkins Howes. In 1931 She assumed all the editorial work when her husband died.



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M5S 2S4

*Our Lives is a non-profit newspaper run for and by Black women in Toronto. 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.*