

# The PUBLIC

The *Public i*, a project of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, is an independent, collectively-run, community-oriented publication that provides a forum for topics underreported and voices underrepresented in the dominant media. All contributors to the paper are volunteers. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to submit articles or story ideas to the editorial collective. We prefer, but do not necessarily restrict ourselves to, articles on issues of local impact written by authors with local ties.

*The opinions are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the IMC as a whole.*

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### THE PUBLIC I

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You don't need a degree in journalism to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The *Public i* is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30pm at the UCIMC), or to contact one of the editors.

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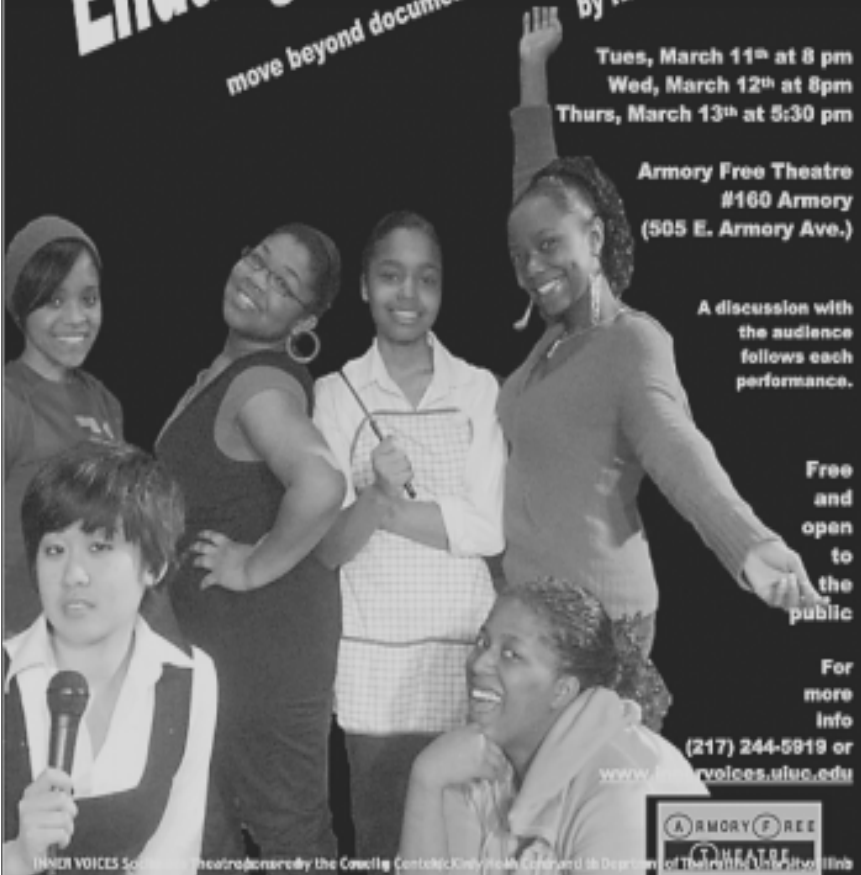
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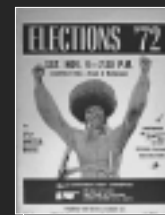
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# The PUBLIC

A Paper of the People

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## Making Sense of the Iraqi War with *Boricua* Eyes

by *Antonia Darder*

*Antonia Darder is a professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is longtime Puerto Rican activist-scholar involved in issues related to education, language, immigrant, workers, and women's rights.*

MARCH 19, 2008 MARKS THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY of the Iraq War. The US has reported approximately 4,000 deaths and 30,000 wounded. In Iraq, the staggering loss is estimated to be over 1,000,000 deaths, by direct or indirect consequences of US military occupation. The objective of this war—the bloody disruption of a sovereign state—has clearly been met. This was a nation-state that for almost 30 years functioned in concert with US offensives in the Middle East. But when it squared off, right or wrong, against U.S. interests, the former ally, now “evil” and unworthy of governing itself, had to be invaded and policed, until its return to compliance with US foreign interests.

As a *Boricua* woman, indigenous to Puerto Rico, who has lived 56 years colonized, it is painful and disturbing, in the wake of such bloodshed, to make sense of this war. State violence and its impact upon my family and my country has been my bedfellow since I was born. The “escape” to the mainland did not leave behind the scars of our impoverishment or the neglected psychic wounds of our oppression. Instead, these were reinscribed daily, through the wholesale enactment of class privilege and the brutality of racialized patriarchy.

When you grow up “not white,” poor, and female in America, you are forced to constantly live under the shadow of inferiority. This shadow walks with you to school, corrects your pronunciation, berates you for your clothing, mocks you in the mirror, reminds you of the doors into which you cannot enter without permission, warns you against the danger lurking behind class crossing, gender crossing, racial crossing, sexual crossing. Borders and fences and walls and glass ceilings are commonplace. The gatekeepers are always waiting to slap your hand, shut you up, or hit you upside the head, if you dare walk into a room or sit at a table, as if you fully belong. In short, we are dispossessed of our humanity.

In assessing what has transpired in Iraq over the last five years, it seems that little has shifted in US foreign policy. As long as the majority of the people dying are poor, dark haired, and dark-skinned, the political ire and fury of the US mainstream remains well contained, notwithstanding scattered pacifist efforts, the posting of non-violent slogans, or occasional protests in the name of war victims. In fact, for some anti-war protesters, all violence, irrespective of intent, is judged the cause of war that must be stamped out.

### A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON VIOLENCE

Yet, for those who have been forced to fight back against physical or psychological assaults that could cost one's life or sanity, the essential notion that all violence is wrong, seems to ring hollow. Why? Because it has been exactly this capacity to fight back—in ways that pacifists might define as violent—that has allowed us to survive.

Hence, perhaps the issue is not whether all violence is wrong, but rather under what conditions and toward what ends is violence, and hence war, an acceptable solution? Might there not be political horrors that make war a just alternative? And might there be times when it may be the only solution for our emancipation from oppression? History would prove us wrong to think that there exist no conditions of tyranny far more unjust than waging war.

Why did over one million Iraqis die? Why were they swallowed up in the military fervor of “enduring freedom?” What protections did this afford us? This was the killing of human beings that, for all intents and purposes, were as unaware of Al Qaeda's machinations as most of us. But the difference is that their land is rich with the resources the West has long coveted. Moreover, they are a people deemed backward, extremist and dangerous, just as the island people of my country have been deemed ignorant, violent, and over-sexed. How convenient it has been for the wealthy and powerful to create mythologies of good and evil, of inferiority and superiority, where the meritorious nature of their goodness is beyond reproach, where the military rape of women in Iraq or the state sterilization of women of color, could be rationalized and justified.

### MYTHOLOGIES OF WAR

In the midst of all the fictitious double-speak—“just war,” “feminist war,” “enduring freedom”—we must challenge mythologies that justify this unjust war. In so doing, the limits of nationalism and patriotic zeal can be exposed; while patriarchal myths of the “brave soldier,” “the good mother,” or “loyal wife” can be shattered, revealing household assumptions that justify poverty, racism, misogyny, and homophobia. Shattering such distortions unveils the fact that, from the beginning of time, women have sought relationships of equality with men. Though the risk to such public assertion has often been great and its practice different across cultures, classes, castes, and societies, women like all human beings have been sparked by the impetus to speak, move, be, and feel, in concert with our own hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits.

To believe in mythologies where women gladly or meekly acquiesce to their oppressive male counterparts, without resenting, resisting and reconstructing alternative strategies of survival to equalize power, is simply short-sighted, demeaning, and just plain foolish. That on the surface, oppressed human beings are forced to physically acquiesce or enact submission, fails to recognize that tyranny, no matter how great, remains forever incomplete.

However, it benefits the US to uphold a mythology in which middle class white women are considered the most liberated on earth—despite the fact that they are still expected to function dutifully to men and children. While in contrast, women of color around the world are depicted as abject, backward, and powerless, oppressed by barbaric men of our societies. Absent is any serious engagement with the history of European and US colonialism and its disruption to the cultural and social fabric of indigenous populations. Ignored is the impact of such disruption upon

recalcitrant forms of patriarchal rule within most societies.

Yet, nevertheless, women exercise powerful social agency, ferocious will, and tremendous wit. As such, they often masterfully survive some of the most frightening and appalling human conditions. Daily, countless women all over the world suffer the traumas of war. They are often separated from loved ones and become victims of rape, torture, and intimidation. Most are civilians caught in the crossfire, who show astonishing resourcefulness and resilience, despite the disintegration of families, the destruction of homes, and the disorganization of their lives.

Despite such formidable adeptness, women who have endured the ravages of racism and poverty seldom share the table with those who decide military actions or make policy decisions. But neither are we often found with those who strategize against the war. Myth, in this instance, clearly overrides reality. Yet who better to include in the struggle for peace and justice, than those whose lives have literally depended upon their ability to navigate unjust violence and brutal repression? Should not the inclusion of those who have been dispossessed be absolutely central to any political project that claims as its objective the end of war and human suffering?

The hidden truth is that without our decisive voices and participation, even solutions for peace and justice unwittingly reinscribe the hegemony of class, racism, and patriarchy—the very ideologies that authorize invasion and justify an unjust war.



Iraqi women on Women's Day

### Sonia Sanchez

Poem for July 4, 1994

This is the time for the creative  
Man. Woman. Who must decide  
that She. He. Can live in peace.  
Racial and sexual justice on  
this earth.

This is the time for you and me.  
African American. Whites. Latinos.  
Gays. Asians. Jews. Native  
Americans. Lesbians. Muslims.  
All of us must finally bury

the elitism of race superiority  
the elitism of sexual superiority  
the elitism of economic superiority  
the elitism of religious superiority.

—Sonia Sanchez

**Sonia Sanchez**, Poet, social activist, scholar and American Book Award Winner for *Homegirls* and *Handgrenades* will give a CAS/MillerComm lecture entitled *Defiant Trespass: Lessons from the Black Arts Movement* for “this place called America.” The lecture will take place Thursday, April 3, 2008, 7:30 PM, Third Floor, Levis Faculty Center, 919 West Illinois Street, Urbana. All CAS/MillerComm events are free and open to the public. For more information, contact the George A. Miller Committee at 333-6729, CAS events line at 333-1118, or web information at <http://www.cas.uiuc.edu/casmillercomm.php>.



# A Toxic Legacy: Douglass Park Residents In Their Own Words

By Douglass Park Residents & C-U Political Action Project

FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN THE DOUGLASS PARK neighborhood, the vacant lot at 5th and Hill has a distinctively toxic legacy. People with a connection to the neighborhood have long suspected that the site was a source of problems. As they have come to learn more about the site's history, they have found it difficult to get answers from Ameren, the company responsible for the site. For many residents, the absence of a meaningful community relations program from Ameren or its predecessor Illinois Power is a part of the site's toxic legacy. So are the health concerns, such as several reports of cancer, that have arisen based on the shared experiences among neighbors.

That's why many neighbors have formed a coalition with C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice and Champaign County Health Care Consumers to form the 5th and Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign. This coalition also involves U of I graduate students who have formed the C-U Political Action Project and conducted a systematic study asking residents a series of questions. These are some of their responses in their own words.

## ALVIA DYSON, DOUGLASS PARK



*When did you first become aware of the situation with the 5th and Hill Site?*

Last year I saw Ameren trucks and stuff digging holes over there; taking dirt out and replacing dirt. That was around 2006. I didn't know

what's going on until [CUCPJ] and [CCHCC] started going around letting people know what is going on over there on that site.

*How would you evaluate the efforts of Ameren and its predecessor company, Illinois Power, when it comes to informing the neighborhood? Do you feel the companies have done a good job helping people become informed over the years? Do you think there is anything they could or should have done differently?*

Poorly, very poorly. They ain't done nothing and they should have told us something when they started digging over there. They should have let everybody know. I'm sitting on my porch watching them do things over there.

They should have come over while I was sitting there watching them and let me know what's going on and why they were doing whatever they were doing. They should have let everyone know in this neighborhood what's going on over there at that site.

*You're part of the coalition between people in the Douglass Park Neighborhood, C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice, and Champaign County Health Care Consumers. Some have argued that the coalition is about the concerns of people outside the neighborhood, rather than about the concerns of people in the neighborhood. What is your reaction to that?*

You all are outsiders, ...[but the people who] own the site don't let us know what's going on... It's the "outsiders" that have come out to let us know what is going on. [Contamination from the site] is under my house, and I didn't know it was under my house till you came out and told me. So [the coalition] is excellent, but I'd like to see everybody [in the neighborhood] pull together more to fight this thing and get everything going.

## M. D. PELMORE, DOUGLASS PARK



*When did you first become aware of the situation with the 5th and Hill Site?*

When [CUCPJ] and [CHCC] mentioned it to us —told us about it, passed out pamphlets, set up a meeting with us [at Douglass Center]...

[Ameren] never mentioned anything about that. No letters. No mail. Nothing.

*How would you evaluate the efforts of Ameren and its predecessor company, Illinois Power, when it comes to informing the neighborhood? Do you feel the companies have done a good job helping people become informed over the years? Do you think there is anything they could or should have done differently?*

Poor. Not very good at all. They did have a meeting, but that was not very informative to me. They sort of said this is not important or this is not dangerous and all that kind of stuff. Now, you know all this stuff can be dangerous so it wasn't very helpful at all... [Ameren and Illinois Power]

could have [done things differently]. They knew about this stuff when they first pulled out of there a long time ago, and they should have taken care of it then. And they should have either sent everybody letters... then everybody would have been aware of it.

## KENYATTA CHAMBERS, DOUGLASS PARK



*What concerns do you have about how the site may have affected people over the years? What concerns, if any, do you have about living near the site today?*

Well, from what I'm hearing, it could cause

cancer and rare diseases in, in people, and I'm one to say that, growing up in this neighborhood, I have been hearing of rare cancers that I had never heard of...my mother being my biggest concern, 'cause I had never heard of multiple myeloma until her case. After her case, I started hearing more about it; people having it. When I found out she had that type of cancer, I researched a little bit, and was told that it was a rare cancer, but it's become more widespread now. So that tells me right there that there's something going on—even if it's not just that site. We also had a neighbor that was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. My grandfather was diagnosed with leukemia.

*You're part of the coalition between people in the Douglass Park Neighborhood, C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice, and Champaign County Health Care Consumers. Some have argued that the coalition is about the concerns of people outside the neighborhood, rather than about the concerns of people in the neighborhood. What is your reaction to that?*

Well, I'm concerned. I live in the neighborhood and I mean, why would anybody outside the neighborhood be concerned unless they're just trying to inform us? So by their informing us of this, it should make all of us concerned. You know, this was something we weren't aware of.

For a full list of questions and answers from residents see [ucimc.org](http://ucimc.org). There will be a part two of interviews in the April issue of the *Public i*.

## 5 Years of War in Iraq!

March 19 (Wednesday) 5:00PM at the Veterans Memorial (Broadway and Main in Urbana, by the courthouse). Vigil marks 5 years of the Iraq war, honoring fallen American soldiers, veterans, and Iraqi dead. Calling for new priorities in our foreign and domestic policy.

## Speak Café March 13

Speak Café will be from 7-9PM, Thursday, March 13, at the Krannert Art Museum (500 E. Peabody). Slices of sweet potato pie will be given away to the first 20 people!

## Rupture, Repression, and Uprising

Raced and Gendered Violence Along the Color Line

April 3-5, 2008, Conference Sponsored by the African American Studies & Research Program University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

# Unofficial St. Patrick's Day and Being Irish

Andrew Ó Baoill

*Andrew Ó Baoill is an international student from Ireland, working on his Ph.D. in the Institute of Communications Research, and is a labor activist with the GEO.*

UNOFFICIAL ST. PATRICK'S DAY is a bar-developed holiday that reduces Irishness to slogans like "Drink Until You're Irish." Compared to the sustained and openly abusive treatment endured by so many individuals and groups, this is a passing and minor issue. For that one day, however—for each of the past 5 years, since arriving from Ireland to this campus—I feel angry, embarrassed, and ashamed.

To see those who can put on or take off the clothing of Irishness (who have, perhaps, an Irish grandparent), or those who "become Irish for the day," generate and reproduce such stereotypes is painful and demeaning.

The narrative of the Irish as drunks and party-animals is derived from an older characterization of the Irish as irrational, unable to control their emotions (see also "Fighting Irish"), and ultimately as sub-human. Nineteenth century cartoons routinely represented the Irish as pigs and apes. While the Irish have in many senses reclaimed this notion of emotionalism and refashioned it to support tourism and cultural exports, there is a bitterness as the history is inexorably linked

(until all too recently) with colonization, with mass emigration, and with general poverty.

It's not that I'm opposed to drinking or drunkennes... hell, partying is fun. But the "drink until you're Irish" concept is simply offensive. If you want to drink, drink. But please don't imply that drinking a bottle of vodka at 8AM captures the essence of my nation.

This is the country that has more Nobel Laureates for Literature, per head of population, than any other country outside Scandinavia. Our economic growth was, for much of the 1990s, three times that of the rest of Europe. Northern Ireland is in the midst of a complex and important peace process. We have free third level education for all and a

musical heritage second to none. And you think you can "drink until you're Irish?"

There are clear parallels with other forms of cultural appropriation across campus. Indeed, a friend of mine was challenged last year by a 'Chief' supporter who asked, "if the 'Chief' is culturally insensitive, how come you never find an Irish person who objects to 'Unofficial?'" In answer, here's one Irish man who does.

I don't expect 'unofficial' St Patrick's Day to go away any time soon—the bars have too much to lose. But perhaps students could just reflect a little. And remember if you really want to be drunk by 9am, you probably don't need to use my culture as an excuse or theme.



# Struggle and Unity in the Politics of Angela Davis

by Sasha Mobley

Sasha Mobley is a graduate student in the department of kinesiology and community health at UIUC, doing work on critical sport studies.

IN FEBRUARY, THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS hosted the annual Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference—Liberty and Justice For All: Voting for Change. The insipid “unifying” theme paralleled the goals of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the wealthiest political action committee for sexual minority rights, which seeks assimilation into the exclusionary institutions of marriage and the military.

Quickly into the first day, the political tenor of the conference waxed tense as political differences surfaced among participants. Several moments of conflict caused some participants to bristle, including a conversation where Candace Gingrich dismissed the possibility of outing as a political tactic. She claimed, instead, that she could only confirm the queerness of people who she had slept with.

By the time the Q & A session for the opening keynote by gay Army veteran Eric Alva—the first casualty of the Iraq war and advocate of “Do Ask, Do Tell”—began, HRC’s well-oiled, feel-good machine hit a roadblock. When students, challenged the imperialist enterprise of the U.S. military’s mission, they were heckled and shouted down. At which point, any illusion of a “safe and ally-rich” gathering began to collapse. In enters Angela Davis, professor of the History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies at UC Santa Cruz, transforming the conference dynamics from one of fear and loathing to one of unity and inspiration.

Yet, it might seem ironic that Davis became the unifying figure, given her controversial history. In 1968, she joined the Communist Party and, subsequently, endured the McCarthyism of the UCLA regents and then-governor Ronald Reagan, who fired her. In 1970, Davis appeared on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list, when a gun registered in her name was implicated in Jonathon Jackson’s attempt to free the Soledad Brothers, which resulted in a deadly shootout at the Marin County Hall of Justice.

Davis served eighteen months in prison until she was acquitted of charges of conspiracy, kidnapping, and homicide. While the more moderate NAACP and SCLC considered Davis’ Marxist politics taboo, the movement to free Angela Davis garnered support across the political spectrum of Black America. In an editorial written in the *Chicago Daily Defender* soon after her capture, Louis Martin expressed the solidarity an older generation of civil rights leaders felt with Davis, as well as a collective pride in her academic achievements. Even if they did not share her political theories, they understood her rage and her yearning for justice.

However, despite this support, Davis still contended with accusations by some of not being radical enough, considering her interest and studies of European philosophers a political contradiction. In her 1974 autobiography, Davis also expresses ambivalence about her travels abroad, which coincided with moments of acute crisis in the struggle for civil rights. She was studying abroad when the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham was bombed by the KKK, killing four black girls she knew from childhood. As she was embarking for her graduate studies at the Frankfurt Institute in 1965, Watts erupted into flames. Her words speak to the conflicts she experienced between completing her studies and the urgency that she was needed in the civil rights movement. Perhaps, contending consciously and consistently with the dilemmas, conflicts, and contradictions in her life are precisely what have given her the strength to instill a sense of unity in people, even in the midst of great conflict and difference.

Davis’ strength as an organizer rests on the long history of her commitment to abolishing the prison-industrial complex and her ability to bridge the differences among generations and political viewpoints. Her compassion and faith in people temper Davis’ iconic image as a “black militant revolutionary.” Her pedagogy invites us to remember those that have paved the way before, invoking the memory of Bayard Rustin (1912-1987), the openly gay civil rights leader who helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Davis’ passion echoes too the post-Reconstruction era anti-lynching advocate Ida B. Wells.



Poster with Angela Davis 1972

The power of her oratorical style draws from the same well as Martin Luther King. It is perhaps the deep values instilled by this tradition, situated solidly in the Black experience, which calls forth the responsibility to act now for the sake of future generations. Angela Davis invites us to join together, regardless of our political affiliation, our race, our gender, or our sexuality, and to consider how we will respond to our children in the year 2030, when they ask us, what have we done to shape the world they will inherit?

## Consuming Icons: A Report from the Field

by Treva Ellison

Treva Ellison is a community activist and graduate student in the department of geography at UIUC.

“I LOST MY LEG SO THAT YOU COULD HAVE YOUR VOICE!” Eric Alva, barked at my friend Bess, as he wrapped on the titanium of his prosthetic leg. Eric Alva, former U.S. Marine and a keynote speaker at the Midwestern, Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender Ally College Conference, focused his speech on the need to formally repeal the policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” used by the U.S. military to exclude people who identify as LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual or Transgendered). Alva emphasized that our “national security” is compromised at every point when we fail to hire and retain highly skilled people in the military services, simply because they happen to be LGBT. In order to stress what he perceived as the ridiculousness of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” he remarked that felons, even felons, can serve in the military.

What was most disturbing about this spectacle, was the gratuitous support Alva received from the audience. Hearty cheers and standing ovations from the crowd punctuated his speech every time he used a buzzword like “freedom,” or “equality, or “rights,” or “enemy.” Desperate to bring some sort of counter-narrative to that of gay-nationalism, a group of friends and I stacked ourselves at the microphones during the question and answer session, hoping to problematize the seeming logic that queers should be fighting for their right to play the role of colonizer.

Me first: “Why should I, as a queer woman of color, or any person who has endured abuses by the state, support the project of advocating for the right to take on the role of oppressor, by joining the military and participating in

state-sponsored violence?” After a few exchanges between Alva and I, to clarify the question, Alva retreats to quoting Dr. Martin Luther King (insert vigorous audience applause here), and insists that even he knows Iraq is “messed up,” but he didn’t send the troops there. My question, according to Alva, would be better posed to a policy maker.



Angela Davis, today

Cue Bess: “But you, Mr. Alva, participated! You are accountable to me because you participated in the military and in the war in Iraq.” Now while I maintained a certain level of respectability, Bess cuts straight to point, demanding some explanation of Alva, to which he responds with an expected incredulity. The audience, by this point, turns vitriolic, screaming at Bess to “Shut the fuck up!” and to “Sit down!” When Stephanie and I stand to clap for her, very few people join us, but the jeers crescendo.

The hostility continued as both Eric and Stephanie questioned Alva’s discourse, noting that discussions of race,

class, and gender would undermine the coherence of advocating for “equal” employment in the military. After the dust settled, we were approached by self-proclaimed “lefties,” “socialists,” and “anti-war activists.” They congratulated us for “doing something in there,” or assured us they understood our message, but “felt uncomfortable with the fact that you guys attacked a handicapped person.” Since when is a person with a disability not granted the same respect or courtesy of engagement as the rest of the population?

Two days later, Angela Davis, interestingly, delivered a keynote speech in which she problematized the liberal, bourgeois ideals of “mainstream” LGBT politics, such as gay marriage and military service. She specifically addressed the contradictions inherent in Alva’s discourse. This time—in sharp stark contrast to their response to questions, which raised similar issues two evenings before—the audience seemed mesmerized, clapping at every opportunity.

Observing all this, I fear that too many of the conference goers were more occupied with consuming Angela Davis, as a celebrity and icon of “good” left politics, than engaging her message. This was not unlike, two nights previous, when the audience was so busy consuming Eric Alva, as an icon of nationalism, that they refused to engage with critiques of the military or the war on terror.

What I witnessed that night was a deep belief in the hegemony of the state and a disavowal of the lived experience of state violence, despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine died in the last decade alone, at the hands of U.S. militarism. It seems folks at the conference still want to eat their freedom fries, only now, with a side of pan-seared radicalism.





# A Legacy for the Next Seven Generations

By Charlotte E. Davidson

Charlotte E. Davidson (Diné, Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara) is a graduate of Haskell Indian Nations University, and is currently a Ph.D. student in Educational Policy Studies at UIUC.

Yá'át'ééh. Shi éi Charlotte Davidson yinishyé. Tó aheedliinii éi nishli dóó Waterbuster Clan báhshichítn. Aádóó Kinlichí'nii éi da shichei dóó Flint Knife Clan éi da shináti.



CharlotteProject C.E.D.A.R.

MY NAME IS CHARLOTTE DAVIDSON. I am born to Water-Flows-Together and I am born for the Waterbuster Clan. My maternal grandfather is the Red House People and my paternal grandfather is the Flint Knife Clan.

In the spring of 2006, Project C.E.D.A.R., (Community Empowerment through Discussions about Respect, Responsibility and Recognition) was established on the U of I campus. It emerged as a space for indigenous women to critically examine ourselves and to reflect about how we have come to know and understand the world.

My mother, Nora Wilkinson, and my aunt, Myra Tso-Kaye were invited to facilitate the last discussion of this

four-part series, *Changing Women: Weaving Ways of Being into Scholarship*. They both reside on Diné Bikéyah (Navajoland) where my mother is a rug weaver, while my aunt is a potter and middle school teacher. They are neither academic professors, nor have they published scholarly pieces, however, they have remained my teachers in “ways of knowing.”

They shared their knowledge about *Asdzáa Nádleehé* (Changing Woman) and how we, as women, embody her in how we live for others selflessly. She informs how we, as women, need to conduct ourselves. When we have insight into our own power, it is recognition of how it is lightning and thunder when we speak. We can make things grow and when we talk, we will things into creation. As human beings, we possess the ability to hurt or heal, humor or humiliate, torture or inspire.



Mother, Nora Wilkinson and aunt, Myra Tso-Kaye.

Indigenous scholarship is beyond defending a paper, it is about defending truth and tradition and producing work that doesn't create suffering. It is our responsibility to ensure that the next seven generations remember and trust their histories, stories, and ceremonies, as we are still arriving. Our stories and knowledge are still arriving. The



Charlotte and her son William at graduation

last session of C.E.D.A.R. was, in fact, not our last session, but became a site of renewal.

In May of 2006, I received a Master's degree at UIUC. I chose to wear traditional Navajo regalia that included a rug dress that was woven by my maternal grandmother, Sally Yazzie, and a sterling silver concho belt that once belonged to my great, great maternal grandmother. I acknowledged the day as a way to remember those who were here before us, as I listen to the voices of my mother, grandmothers, great grandmothers, and their grandmothers—for we are our mother's stories.

Hózhó náhásdlí? In beauty, it is restored.

Hózhó náhásdlí? In beauty, it is restored.

Hózhó náhásdlí? In beauty, it is restored.

Hózhó náhásdlí? In beauty, it is restored.

## Teaching Chicana Power: A Letter to My Daughter

Querida Quetzalli,

Wherever we go, we must find a way to do more than just survive. That's what Chicana Power is. It's about our self-determination as *mujeres* (women), recreating our culture as we fight with integrity against the violence of patriarchy and racialized class relations.

So in the little time I have to mother you, I pray for the strength to teach you to be free. To take yourself seriously and refuse to make yourself small. To know you are connected to all that is alive. To listen to your body and open yourself up to its power. To name the oppression, so as to make it visible and transformable by human action. To master the art of redrawing borders, without losing your center.

And I work to do this by shining along with you, struggling to create the conditions in both our lives that enable us to do so. This means respecting your sovereignty, while teaching you to respect mine. It means letting each other experience the range of our emotions, while letting you witness the intimacy of our relationship and a woman's power to transmute these into creative acts.

This is especially true of our anger, *mija* (my daughter). Especially the kind that comes from knowing our fight is centuries old. And so I share with you the stories of our survival as Chicanas, so you can carry them with you, hold them gently, and one day see them from the perspective of your own experience.

Our time has come, Quetzalli. I know it has! For in our struggle toward consciousness, we find fellow *Nepantleras* (women between cultures), recreating themselves and the culture with every conscious act. They are the ones teaching me how to raise you, without losing myself. They are the ones teaching the world that women, no matter their situation, are never just victims.

Thank You for showing me what it is like to live unafraid of our light.

May our generations embody the revolutionary power of a woman's spirit, so together with our sisters across the globe we can unleash our voices against the mutilation of women in every culture and be beautiful together!

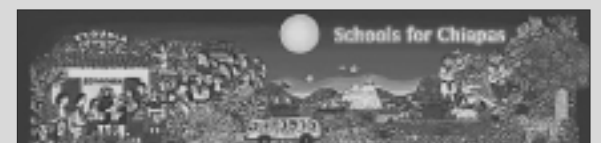
Te Amo,

Mama



Laura Galicia and Quetzalli Feria-Galicia

## Zapatista Women's Coops, Fair Trade, and Commercialization: Schools for Chiapas



June 22 until June 28, 2008

The Delegation's objective is to meet with a variety of Mayan women and men who are producing and distributing artisan, agriculture, and commercial products in the autonomous, indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico. Participants will have the option to visit the ancient Mayan city of Palenque. For more information: [www.schoolsforchiapas.org/english/store/catalog/trip-72.html](http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/english/store/catalog/trip-72.html)



# Sister Dorothy Hennessey: Activist for Peace and Justice

Tom Royer

IN HER EARLY TWENTIES, Dorothy Hennessey joined the Franciscan community in Dubuque. For most of her life she was busy teaching in Catholic schools in Iowa. She remembered that in her early years she was a very conservative person. When she was about 55, she became deeply concerned with the world beyond her classroom. She felt called to be in solidarity with people who are suffering.



Sister Dorothy Hennessey  
1914–2008

One thing that occasioned this change was the realization of the injustice of the Vietnam War. The most important influence in her radical change, however, was the letters she received from her brother,

Father Ron Hennessey, when he was a missionary in Guatemala. His letters described the massacres and terror brought by the government military forces while he was pastor among the Mayan people. Father Ron's letter changed her life. She became angry and began to speak out and join with others in public protests about U.S. policies that have treated innocent people so brutally.

Starting about 1968, Sister Dorothy began to write letters and attend talks and participate in demonstrations against war and the unfair treatment of others. During the Vietnam War she joined protests at the Rock Island Arsenal. During the early 1980s, she visited Nicaragua with Witness for Peace as part of a human shield that protected northern border villages from CIA-backed Contra attacks. She made three trips to protest at a nuclear test site in Nevada during the 1980s.

In March 1986, at age 73, she set off from Los Angeles on The Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament with 1,200 other marchers on a 3,500 mile walk to Washington, D.C. In the 1990s she stood with others almost every Wednesday at a Dubuque city park protesting the US military involvement in Central America. In 1992 she participated in a protest action at the SAC airbase in Omaha and ended up with 36 others in police custody.

In 1997, she began to make annual trips to the School of the Americas. Twice Sister Dorothy got arrested for joining with many others to enter into the area close to this infamous school. In 2000, she was arrested for a third time at the gates of the school. This time she and her younger sister who is also a nun, Sister Gwen Hennessey, were sentenced to six months in a federal prison in Pekin, Illinois. Dorothy was 88 years old at the time of her imprisonment.

Even in her 90s, Sister Dorothy did not consider herself to be in retirement. She attended events, speeches and peace protests whenever she had the opportunity. She stayed in touch with many of the people with whom she marched and protested. She never seemed to grow tired or discouraged in her work for peace and justice. Sister Dorothy died January 24, 2008 at age 94. This ex-con deserves to be remembered.

## Dead-ication

*To my great, great, grandmother, Vinnie Banks, great-grandmothers, Priscilla Subtlet, Julia Jones, Carrie May Scott, my grandmothers Millie Jones-Gamble and Fannie Davis, and all those who have returned through my womb.*

The circle was drawn  
six intersecting lines  
—radius bound—  
dissected its face  
twelve houses, ten planets  
four elements, two nodes  
three crosses, thirty-six decans  
three-hundred and sixty degrees

“this is your life”  
the aging trumpeter,  
my musical mentor  
said

“you, like most women,  
have problems with men,”  
his wives,  
moving about the perimeter  
of our conversation

his trenchant eyes—  
framed by the tangle of colors  
in a thread worn kufi—  
screed my face

“oh,” I said  
reading him back

“but you see here?  
Neptune is elevated  
in your tenth house”

I fought his willing me  
to plunge headlong  
into his particular deep  
a Dogon priest on 75<sup>th</sup>  
and Cottage Grove

“what?” I asked

“you give birth  
to ancestors.”

—By Amira Davis

## Women and Aging

- Women ages 65 or older make up 58% of the elderly population and 7.3% of the total U.S. population. Over the next forty years, this number is expected to double, while the number of women aged 85 and older is expected to triple.
- Since women tend to have lower income at retirement than men, they are bound to experience higher rates of poverty.
- The image of older women in major newspapers has changed little in the past twenty years. Older women are still underrepresented, and less than 1% of the total space is devoted to any coverage of their views, preferences, or needs.
- George W. Bush abandoned major initiatives aimed at amelioration of women's poverty, including that of elderly women. The Bush administration not only eliminated the *Interagency Council on Women*, but also deleted from government websites resources and studies relevant to fighting the feminization of poverty in the U.S.
- A majority of women age 70 and over who still work says they will never retire. These women tend to have a more positive outlook on life than women who do not work.



Grandmothers marching against the war



Grandma Hartke, by local artist Sandra Ahten



The poverty rate for Black elderly women was 23%, twice the rate for all elderly.





## The Big Bad Wongsta

By Cassidy C. Browning

Cassidy C. Browning is an activist theatre scholar and artist. Browning is completing her M.A. in Theatre at UIUC this May.

KRISTINA WONG IS A CHINESE AMERICAN solo performer, writer, actor, educator, activist, and filmmaker living in Los Angeles. She was an Artist in Residence at UIUC last year. Her work has been described as feminist, activist, hip-hop, and most often, hilarious. Her notoriety began with her creation of <www.bigbadchinesemama.com> in 2000, the self-proclaimed “#1 mock mail order bride/Asian porn spoof site in the world!”

Wong created the Big Bad Chinese Mama website as a senior project when an undergraduate student at UCLA. She was motivated by the lack of safe spaces for Asian women on the Internet, a desire to increase her computer skills, and a thorough frustration with the inability of her Women's Studies and Asian American Studies courses to enact the change they championed. While building the site, she copied the metatags from porn sites so searches for porn yielded Big Bad Chinese Mama. She also programmed the site to respond to feminist and Asian and Asian American activist searches. Hence, the guestbook dealt with the lack that frustrated her most about academia—putting the “oppressed” in conversation with the “oppressor.”

Though the site is clearly informed by feminist ideas related to disrupting the male gaze, Wong was hesitant to adopt the label. To her, she was too much of a prankster to fulfill the role of “feminist.” Wong wrote in *Catching a Wave*, “On one occasion, a student put me on the spot and asked if I thought of myself as a feminist. I explained, ‘I don’t consider myself so much a feminist as I do an artist who believes that there is political power in the personal voice.’”

Wong has since reconciled with the term and her tensions about the label. As she defines it in the same anthol-

ogy, “Third wave feminism is about embracing individual experience and making personal stories political. First and second wave feminisms sought to empower women as a united front. Although they offered a political voice for women as a whole, they didn’t acknowledge the varying agendas and experiences of individual women. Third wave feminism is a response by women of color and others who felt homogenized by a movement defined by the goals of middle-class, white women.”

Her projects include guerilla theatre characters such as Fannie Wong, Miss Chinatown Second Runner Up and the full-length piece “Wong Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest.” Wong crashes Miss Chinatown events dressed as Fannie, complete with a cigar, a bottle of Jack Daniels, an acne-covered face, and horn-rimmed glasses. She approaches individuals there to meet Miss Chinatown and insists on giving autographs and taking pictures with these “fans” before security is called to remove her from the premises. In “Wong Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,” Wong explores the alarmingly high rates of depression, mental illness, and suicide in Asian American women.

Wong’s very humorous and interventional tactics challenge popular conceptions of feminism, activism, and academia. In an interview for *Asia Pacific Arts: The Magazine*, she stated, “I look at what my work is doing to explore and question words like ‘activist,’ ‘feminist,’ ‘Asian American.’ For me, these are all words that I’m trying to stretch in definition through my work.” Addressing the intersectionality of identity and the specificity of experience are cornerstones of the Third Wave, as is using these themes to critique daily interactions and systems of power.



Kristina Wong, shattering representations

For more information about Kristina Wong and her work, visit [www.kristinawong.com/](http://www.kristinawong.com/) and/or request a copy of Cassidy’s thesis, which will be deposited in May.

## Independent Media Still Remains Unequal

By Lori Serb

Lori Serb is host of Dog is My Co-Pilot, Friday mornings 6–9AM and Prairie Grassroots every 4th Sunday 10–11AM on WEFT 90.1 FM.

WOMEN’S VOICES ARE JUST NOT HEARD. If you randomly turn on the radio for an hour during any program (music or public affairs), count how many times you hear a woman’s voice and even more rare, a woman of color speaking. Even programs that pride themselves in being alternative to the mainstream fail to accurately report on the contributions of women locally and around the globe. Women have been present throughout history. We continue to be present—but simply unheard. And, unfortunately, a one-week or one-month commitment to women’s programming in March, though helpful, is hardly enough to transform the inequality.

It is the responsibility of media to document and accurately present information to the masses. But, who makes the decisions of what information and whose contributions are presented to the public? Mainstream media has failed time and time again to carry out this important function within a democratic society, a function that has dramatically eroded in the last 30 years, as the monopoly of mainstream media is held in the hands of a handful of huge corporations, predominantly run by men.

Independent media, unfortunately, while considering itself accessible, responsible, and responsive to diverse communities, unwittingly tends to repeat the male-dominated culture of the mainstream industry, in both its operation and programming. Hence, the work of carrying out a democratizing ideal falls short, seldom creating the space for those who have been excluded from media production in the first place, to find opportunities to learn the skills

necessary to break the mystification of technology and media access.

Moreover, rather than establishing a more collective framework of independent media governance and production, the bulk of the responsibility for learning about the field, technology, and program production still falls on the individual. A do-it-yourself tool belt and sheer determination to swim upstream is all a woman finds, when hoping to enter this exclusive arena for the purpose of producing independent media that accurately documents and reports on the lives and contributions of women and other underrepresented populations.

Wanting to be as true to the original source of wisdom, creativity and personality as possible without the filter of my interpretation, I chose community radio to create as direct as possible a channel for those with little access, to bring their voices and their music to a larger audience. In the process, I discovered that my methods often differed from that of male sound engineers.

When planning to record, I met with the person ahead of time. I answered questions about the process, and I incorporated their suggestions into the recording. I worked to demystify technology. Sound gear does not have to be intimidating or mysterious. Yet, it can’t be denied that the one who understands how gear works always has the upper hand. Many male sound engineers seem to enjoy this inequality of power. It allows them complete control of the recording situation and the right to give orders, without being questioned.

In contrast, I found that women sound engineers think more about the audience and take a participatory approach to recording. They see as the goal to assist the performer or interviewee in creating the best audio experience possible, because we know that a negligent sound engineer can ruin the power of radio production. Luckily, more women are developing skills as sound engineers and actively share what they know with other women, in an effort to breakdown the prevalent gender divide found even within independent media production.

Committed to a politics of liberation, which includes the democratizing of the media, I recognize the manner in which independent radio can create a space for listeners to remain anonymous and thus more open to grappling with controversial issues. The listener at home or in the car has personal control over their listening environment. This factor alone can make them more comfortable, heighten their attention level, and permit them greater accessibility to new ideas and different ways of thinking about the world.

Thus, community radio offers more possibilities for the accurate expression of women’s lives and their struggles, since editing the content is not done to protect the interests of big corporations. However, this requires concrete opportunities for more women and members of underrepresented groups to influence both the governance and programming of a station, rather than remaining stuck in the margins of well-meaning talk.



Interviewing Las Krudas



## Women's Resistance in Manipur

By Shivali Tukdeo

Shivali Tukdeo is an international student from India, completing her doctorate in Educational Policy Studies at UIUC.

WOMEN'S BODIES ARE POWERFULLY CODED. As long as they do not disrupt business as usual, they are marveled at, desired, and even respected. Otherwise, they are to be restricted, consumed and fenced. Institutions such as marriage, prison and family are enough to show the prowess of the state on women. Through popularized discourses of the single-mother-on-welfare or the oppressed-third world, the state expresses its desire for supple, malleable women.

In the Northeast of India, state supported violence has been on display for almost fifty years. Preoccupied in its romance with Indian economic growth, the mainstream Indian media has rarely taken note of the region. But it awoke to a rather disturbing story in July 2004. Forty women—twelve of them naked—stormed the Army headquarters in the state of Manipur, holding signs that read, "Indian Army rape us!" The women aged between 45 and 73 also shouted to the astounded guards, "We are all Manorama's mothers."

While it was the abduction, sexual assault, torture, and murder of Thangjam Manorama Devi—a 32 year-old woman alleged to be a member of Manipur's banned People's Liberation Army (PLA)—that triggered the protests, the gendered violence at the hands of the Army personnel had been all too common. With

their protest, the Manipuri women shamed the Indian army by parading the very female body that brought humiliation and death to their sisters. What's more, with their raw anger and amazing mobilization, the women refused to be knocked down by the "rape culture" that counts on a demoralized victim.

Human rights violations in Manipur are connected to the special status of this region in the post-independent India that has led to excessive military presence, often at the cost of essential infrastructure. Efforts of political autonomy and determination on the part of the Northeast were met with heavy militarization of the region. Further, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) of 1958, grants enormous powers to armed security forces to search, arrest, or detain anyone on the grounds of suspicion. The consequence has been the systematic misuse of AFSPA, which has fostered, according to Amnesty International, "a climate in which agents of law enforcement use excessive force with impunity."



Indian women demonstrating

The AFSPA became operative in the entire state of Manipur in 1980s, aiming to curb the "insurgency." Legal protection to military operations has led to unchecked instances of arbitrary detention and torture. It has also made the possibility of political dissent extremely difficult. A pattern of apparently unlawful killings of suspected members of armed opposition groups has resulted

from the systemic use of lethal force, as an alternative to arrest by the security forces.

As if special powers are not enough, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act goes on to provide security forces protection from prosecution! The Committee on Human Rights has documented 55 selected incidents of arbitrary killings of women by security forces between 1980 and 1996; none of the cases have been resolved to date.

The privilege and power enjoyed by security forces in Manipur has unmistakably turned toward the invasion of women's bodies. Threats of sexual violence loom large on social spaces. And the long and tiring judicial battles since the 1970s have not delivered justice. The women of Manipur continue to organize under these tumultuous conditions. The *Meira Peibi* (the torch bearer) is such a collective that started out in the 1970s, documenting arbitrary searches and arrests of civilian men and women.

In a slightly different context, the feisty student leader Irom Sharmila has charted out a defiant civil disobedience. Shramila and her colleagues have been on a hunger strike protesting against an arbitrary public shooting in 2000. Women's resistance in Manipur is not unilinear; it spans over a range of possibilities. Their struggle is very much part of a unique socio-historical frame; and yet it has a lot in common with other struggles around the world. The women of Manipur continue to fight the misogynist state, knowing fully well that the answers may lie in getting rid of it altogether.

The Amnesty report can be found at: [http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session1/IN/COHR\\_IND\\_UPR\\_S1\\_2008anx\\_Annex%20XVI\\_ManipurTheSilencingofYouth.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session1/IN/COHR_IND_UPR_S1_2008anx_Annex%20XVI_ManipurTheSilencingofYouth.pdf)

## Women in Pakistan: A Socio-Political Profile

By Asma Faiz

Asma Faiz is an international graduate student from Pakistan in the department of Political Science.

THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF PAKISTANI WOMEN who attend the University of Illinois. For the most part, the realities of women in Pakistan are seldom discussed or engaged in any substantive manner on the college campus. Knowledge of women in Pakistan is generally limited to perhaps vague references to Benazir Bhutto.

Nevertheless, Pakistani women have persistently worked to improve their social, political and economic status in the post-independence era. Their struggle has been driven in pursuit of four objectives: increasing their literacy levels, gaining representation in the political process, increasing access to employment at different levels, and changing the societal perceptions of the role and status of women in Pakistan. This has been an uphill struggle, in which women have faced numerous obstacles from the state and society.

After the emergence of independent Pakistan, there was hope that the state would take measures to remedy the situation. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, emphasized the need to liberate women out of "the four walls of house," so that they could work alongside their male counterparts in various spheres of life. However, in the subsequent decades the status of women has been intrinsically linked with the discourse on the role of religion.

The 1973 constitution of Pakistan prohibited gender discrimination. This began a period of seemingly rising opportunities for women, as they began to participate in general elections and labor politics. This was concomitant with rising female literacy rates. However, the women's movement received a setback in the form of an Islamization drive by military dictator Gen. Zia-ul-Haq. His efforts were cynically viewed as an attempt to legitimize his military regime and carve out a support base for himself.

Among the Islamic laws introduced in 1979 by General Zia, women were most adversely affected by the provisions regarding the Islamic *Hadd* punishments for crimes such as adultery, burglary, murder, intoxication, and perjury.

Women's rights groups particularly protested the *zina* (adultery) law, which made it very difficult to distinguish between *zina* (adultery) and *zina-bil-jabr* (rape).

In the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of the Huddod ordinance, there were some high profile cases in which women who had been raped and unable to prove the charge were deemed guilty of having committed adultery. For over two decades, the women's rights groups have continued to protest and demand an amendment to the Hudood Ordinance. It was not until 2006, that Gen. Musharraf's government was able to amend this law, by passing the Protection of Women's Rights Bill in the



Pakistani women on Women's Day

national parliament, having faced opposition by religious and conservative parties.

Women's participation in politics has been extremely limited in Pakistan. This is despite the fact that in 1988, Benazir Bhutto became the first female head of a Muslim state. Beyond the domain of leadership, there have been consistent demands by women's rights groups to increase female representation in national and provincial legislatures. After independence, various laws were passed to take "affirmative action" in an effort to create gender balance in Pakistan's elected institutions. Quotas or reserva-

tions were fixed for women and indirect elections were used to elect female members of legislatures. After persistent struggles from civil society, in 2002 the government increased the numbers of female members of legislatures to thirty-three percent.

This is the socio-political context in which the Pakistani women struggle to re-define their contribution to society. In recent years, female students are getting increasing opportunities to study in various educational institutions of the West. At the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), female graduate students from Pakistan aspire to hone their professional skills and hopefully return to Pakistan, in their quest to win individual and collective respect.

### A Six-month March from Dharamsala to Tibet Begins

On March 10th 2008 thousands of Tibetan refugees and international supporters will begin a six-month March from Dharamsala, India across the Himalayan mountain range into Tibet. This date marks the 49th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan National Uprising in protest of the brutal occupation of Tibet by the Chinese government. The March also calls upon the international community to boycott the 2008 Beijing Olympics in light of the continued occupation of Tibet, and China's history of human rights violations. A March 10th demonstration in Chicago has been organized in solidarity by the Midwest Students for a Free Tibet. Please join us at 10:30am at the Historic Water Tower Park (806 Michigan Ave.) for a march to the Chinese Consulate. For more information please visit [www.march10.org](http://www.march10.org). or <http://tibetanuprising.org/>.





# The University of Illinois Experience: From One Muslim Woman

By Amina Sharif Butt

Amina Shariff Butt is a senior in Political Science and Sociology at the University of Illinois. She is also a member of the campus Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Muslim Students Association.

OFTEN, WHEN I AM SITTING IN A CLASSROOM, I cannot help but be fully cognizant of the fact that I look different from everyone else. This is a common feeling for any minority, and I, as a headscarf donning Muslim woman, am not exempt from this. My headscarf, or *hijab*, is more than just a piece of cloth to me, and ironically, it means more than that to others as well. Although for me it represents modesty, self-respect, and dignity, I've come to realize that, to others, it represents oppression, extremism, and religious fanaticism.

That is why, whenever I speak in class, I am well aware that I am probably one of the only headscarf wearing Muslim women, (or possibly even the only Muslim) that my classmates and professors have ever interacted with. Thus, my every action comes to represent what all Muslims would do in that situation. My every word somehow represents what one billion others would also say in that situation.

A Muslim friend of mine, who was an RA in a campus dormitory, recalled an incident to me that epitomized this phenomenon. One day, a girl in her hall said to her, "You know, I used to think Muslims were pretty scary, but you're really

nice!" "Is that supposed to be a compliment?" I thought.

It is terrifying to imagine that for years this individual held such notions of an entire people. And I wondered, how many more of my neighbors share similar sentiments? But don't get me wrong. I appreciate those select individuals who approach me with sincerity and an open mind, wanting to better understand my belief system. However, this is not the usual response.

If Muslims are not all scary, then they are at least foreign and uneducated. When I began wearing the headscarf a few short years ago, I immediately noticed that I was being asked, "Where are you from?" more than I had ever previously been asked. People also began speaking to me slower and louder. But I often sense that classmates and professors are at first taken aback by my outspokenness. It seems to disrupt their comfort zone.

Our student newspaper, the *Daily Illini*, is another force that propagates ethnocentrism. For example, it has made it a tradition to write an article every semester that attempts to explain the Muslim headscarf. It is almost always written by a white male who is sometimes sympathetic, sometimes frus-



Muslim women are 1/2 billion of the world's population

trated, and always misguided. These men imply that Muslim women are either forced to wear scarves to degrade them, or choose to wear it because they are self-righteous.

I did not expect to hear these ideas in an institute of higher learning (to say the least) but from the comments that followed the articles, I learned that many passionately agree with these false, orientalist views. Freedom of speech has become the freedom to opine on how "the other" is in need of civilizing. It is as if one has

the right to minimize or own other humans' experiences and colonize their freedom of expression.

Although there are one billion Muslims in the world, I have learned from my news outlets, my textbooks, and my educators, that the one billion of us are a monolith. We can be painted by one brush stroke. That is perhaps why the university has placed such little emphasis on developing Islamic studies courses and programs of study. For, whatever could American students possibly learn from one-fifth of the world's population and a culture with a recorded history that dates back to the 6th Century?

## The Right Not to Work: Power and Disability

By Sunny Taylor

Disabled people are brought up with the same cultural ideals and ambitions and dreams as their able-bodied counterparts; we too are indoctrinated to fetishize work and romanticize career and to see the performance of wage labor as the ultimate freedom. And yet, for the most part, we are denied access to this fantasy.

If you have a severe disability your likelihood of having a job is 26.1 percent (as compared to a rate of 82.1 percent for working-age non-disabled people). Our largest contribution to the economy is as "beds," as nursing homes call the aged and disabled who fill their vacancies and bank accounts. Shouldn't we, of all groups, recognize that it is not work

that would liberate us (especially not menial labor made accessible or greeting customers at Wal-Marts across America), but the right to not work?

What I mean by the right not to work is perhaps as much a shift in ideology or consciousness as it is a material shift. It is about our relation not only to labor but the significance of performing that labor,

and to the idea that only through the performance of wage labor does the human being actually accrue value themselves. It is about cultivating a skeptical attitude regarding the significance of work, which should not be taken at face value as a sign of equality and enfranchisement.

(Excerpt from article in *Monthly Review* V.55, N.10 2004)

## I Am Not One Of The

I am not one of the physically challenged—  
I'm a sock in the eye with gnarled fist  
I'm a French kiss with cleft tongue  
I'm orthopedic shoes sewn on a last of your fears  
I am not one of the differently abled—  
I'm an epitaph for a million imperfect babies left untreated  
I'm an ikon carved from bones in a mass grave at Tiergarten, Germany  
I'm withered legs hidden with a blanket  
I am not one of the able disabled—  
I'm a black panther with green eyes and scars like a picket fence  
I'm pink lace panties teasing a stub of milk white thigh  
I'm the Evil Eye  
I'm the first cell divided  
I'm mud that talks  
I'm Eve I'm Kali  
I'm The Mountain That Never Moves  
I've been forever I'll be here forever  
I'm the Gimp  
I'm the Cripple  
I'm the Crazy Lady  
I'm The Woman With Juice

—Cheryl Marie Wade

## Paintings by Riva Lehrer: Circle Story Series



Circle Story #4 (above left)

Riva Lehrer, a Chicago painter for over 20 years, is a woman who has lived with a condition known as spina bifida since birth and has had to endure scores of operations over the years. Her art combines personal and activist themes, unveiling the body as inscription, exposing in others what lies beneath.



Circle Story #2 (above right)

Tekki Lomnicki, performance artist and writer, has done numerous solo and collaborative shows. Her work maps her identity as a Little Person, and her costume-embellished pieces explore, parody and manipulate

the ways that small stature is perceived. Her performance, *Letting the Dead Rest*, was featured at a number of Chicago festivals. Lomnicki is the co-founder and Artistic Director of *Tellin' Tales Theatre*, a company dedicated to building community through storytelling in Chicago.

Circle Story #3 (below)

Susan Nussbaum is a playwright, actress, director, and disability rights activist. She has starred in, written and/or directed productions at the Goodman, Victory Gardens, Blue Rider and other major venues. Her play, *No One As Nasty* is included in the anthology *Beyond Victims and Villains: Contemporary Plays by Disabled Playwrights*. Nussbaum, who was injured in a car accident twenty years ago, has examined the disability experience with an unsparing, critical wit.





## From the Inside Out

By Tanya DePeiza

Tanya DePeiza is a licensed social worker and Founder and Executive Director of Women In Progress, Inc. (WIP), a Chicago based non-profit organization that serves women who have been in prison. She was recently a radio guest on 'Higher Ground,' which airs on WEFT, 90.1 FM.

ACCORDING TO A RECENT *NEW YORK TIMES* article, one adult out of 100 is incarcerated. Over 1.5 million adults—largely Black and Latino—have become part of this growing population. Yet, what's generally left out of the discussion is that women prisoners are one of the fastest growing populations today, increasing over 500% in the last 30 years. Consequently, what led them to incarceration and what they need once released is seldom seriously engaged by society.

Seeking to fill this gap, Women In Progress, provides one-on-one mentoring and services to women who have been incarcerated. Many of the women speak candidly about sexual and physical abuse, drug running and selling, domestic violence, forgery, and theft. Many of these crimes are the reasons they have spent a part of their lives behind bars. Now free and ready for change, they face major challenges—challenges society seems unwilling to address.

For many in the community, rehabilitation of prisoners seems a distant reality. If the subject of incarceration, rehabilitation or re-entry surfaces, it's often met with cynicism that change can only occur in an ideal setting. Yet the fact remains, every day women are released from jails and prisons across the country, expected to return to a home they may no longer know and people on the outside, including family and friends, who may treat them with suspicion or low regard.

Moreover, the majority of incarcerated women have children, who are often the "other victims" that are left without a voice, when their mothers are sent away. Lack of education and housing, as well as unemployment, are just a few of the formidable struggles they must contend with, once back home. If women who have been incarcerated are to re-enter society effectively and become viable members of their communities, they need to find support systems in place that counter the poverty, lack of training, and disillusionment that generally led many of them into crime in the first place. The problem oftentimes is not the ex-offender, but the unchanging and unyielding social attitudes that continue to punish and marginalize formerly incarcerated women for their mistakes, long after they have paid their debt through imprisonment.

As a consequence of this negation and lack of support services, many women of color find themselves back in prison. If recidivism rates are to decline, along with the necessary changes in the lifestyle of ex-offenders, it will require a changing attitude and a growing commitment within the larger society. "We," as a collective, must rise to the challenge of transforming attitudes, grounded in the realities that incarcerated women face, before, during, and after their incarceration. This requires a willingness of communities to advocate and support social and economic endeavors that are required, if the women are ever truly to be free.

We know many of the problems that exist within poor and working class communities of color. What we need are real solutions. Building more prisons is not the answer to reducing crime, nor does it solve our basic needs for survival and self-sufficiency. Instead, we must strategize



From *Crimes Against Humanity*

and mobilize to create conditions for social, educational, and economic empowerment in our communities.

When we have strong and capable women who are able to care, support, and provide for their families, we also have stronger and stable communities. Communities must rise and advocate for women who are or have been incarcerated. They deserve the rights afforded to all human beings. However, as Women In Progress has discovered, to accomplish this effectively requires that we work our way forward, from the inside out. Only through our collective work with incarcerated women can we know them, learn their needs, and address their struggles with dignity and respect.

## Crimes Against Humanity

IMAGINE 27 YEARS OF YOUR LIFE living in a space 6 feet by 9 feet. Imagine being confined in isolation with no human contact. Imagine the shakedown, the strip searches and the complete disregard for your humanity. *Crime Against Humanity* is a play based on the real life experiences of fourteen Puerto Rican political prisoners who spent more than two decades in prisons for seditious conspiracy—two of whom are still incarcerated. The play brings us into the U.S. prison system in a way no other play has before, focusing on the politically motivated use of isolation,

selective punishment, sensory deprivation and disproportionate sentences.



Written by poet and activist Michael Anthony Reyes Benavides and former Puerto Rican political prisoner Luis Rosa, the play confronts the physical and mental torture that Puerto Rican men and women endured as political prisoners, over the last 27 years. We gaze into their cells and experience the loss of parents, the transition of children into adulthood, and feel the physical brutality and torture of a government out to make an example of them. In the process, we see them refuse to be victimized and objectified, confronting their hardships and adversities while

maintaining their dignity, and upholding their humanity.

The play is produced by the National Boricua Human Rights Network and Batey Urbano. The two organizations hope to raise consciousness and gain support for the campaign to free the remaining Puerto Rican political prisoners. Its year-long run begins March 3rd, 2008 at 8:00pm at Batey Urbano (2620 W. Division Street). For more information contact reyespoetry@gmail.com or (773) 606-4014.

## Man Up! Being an Ally to Women

by Ross Wantland

Ross Wantland is the coordinator of sexual assault education for the University and co-author of *Buzz Magazine's Doin' It Well*. E-mail: rawantland@gmail.com

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH IS AN OPPORTUNITY to both understand the past and set our sights on our future. Part of this future is men, men becoming allies to women.

When men come to understand sexism, it usually isn't of our own accord. Women in our lives usually have to point out the ways that they experience gender inequity. For the past 15 years, I have struggled to understand my role as an ally—to women, to people of color, to the LGBT community, and so on. For me, it wasn't until I had the opportunity to learn from some wonderful female mentors in my life what they needed from me—then I began to understand what sexism has meant for me, and what my role is in dismantling it.

One of the privileges I experience is that I do not have to think about sexism on a daily basis. As men, we have a critical role in working to dismantle the gender inequities and sexism faced by women and transgendered folks in

our lives. So in honor of Women's History Month, here are four simple steps to becoming an ally to women:

### STEP ONE: LISTEN TO WOMEN

If we don't listen to women in our lives, we cannot begin to understand their collective experiences of gender discrimination at work, growing up, in the home, or in school. We have to ask the questions honestly and curiously, really seeking to understand their experiences.

### STEP TWO: EDUCATE OURSELVES

When we just listen without doing some of our own self-education, we recreate sexist structures of caretaking. We say we would like to help, but we become reliant upon women to handhold us through the process. Pick up a book, attend a workshop, surf the web, talk to friends, but ultimately challenge and educate yourself.

### STEP THREE: RECOGNIZE OUR OWN PRIVILEGE

It is easy to get stuck in a "good guy" space: "I don't rape/abuse/objectify/discriminate against women, so I'm a

good guy." Most of us have committed some level of sexual violence, and all of us have benefited from male privilege in our lives, even if we never sought it out. Recognize and name the ways that you've benefited from male privilege and used this power in your life.

### STEP FOUR: RESPONSIBILITY

One common reaction of individuals in positions of privilege is guilt. Guilt is a powerful emotional reaction to the realization how our actions—and the system around us—have hurt people we care about. Guilt is understandable but paralyzing. When we get stuck in guilt, it becomes all about how awful our experience of others' oppression is.

Instead of guilt, let's think about this in terms of responsibility. What is our responsibility as men for understanding the ways that sexism impacts (and I think harms) us all? Stand up against language that demeans women, subtle attitudes that don't take women seriously, and gender socialization that keeps us all in rigid boxes.

We owe it to women. Frankly, we owe it to ourselves, too.





# Asian Women, US Immigration, and Citizenship

By Lisa Marie Cacho

*Lisa Marie Cacho is a professor of Asian American Studies and Gender and Women's Studies at UIUC.*

ASIANS HAVE BEEN THE ONLY RACIAL or ethnic group in the United States to be excluded by name from immigrating to the United States. In Asian American Studies, we usually point to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 as the first instance of Asian exclusion, but the first national law to bar Asian immigration was actually passed in 1875 and directly excluded Chinese women. In 1875, Congress passed the Page Law, which prohibited Chinese, Japanese, and other "Oriental" women from immigrating to the United States to be used as prostitutes. While purporting to target only Chinese prostitutes, all Chinese women were considered to be sexually immoral.

The law effectively barred almost all single Asian women from immigrating to the United States, setting the context for why Asian communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were primarily bachelor communities. Between 1875 and 1882, only about 1,340 Chinese women entered the United States, but more than 100,000 Chinese men entered. Fifteen years after the Page Law was enacted, the sex ratio of Chinese men to women was 27 to 1. The Page Law coupled with the Chinese Exclusion Act

attempted to control the "Chinese problem" by literally preventing its reproduction.

Examining certain laws from the perspective of white women, rather than women of color or Asian women, can also misconstrue how the US has historically barred Asian women from US citizenship. In 1907, Congress passed the Expatriation Act, which reasoned that wives took the nationality of their husbands, so women who were US citizens lost their US citizenship when they married foreign men, who had not acquired naturalized citizenship or who were ineligible for naturalized citizenship in the United States. For Asian American women, who were US citizens by birthright (Asians could not become naturalized citizens during that time period), marrying an Asian immigrant man would not only strip her of her US citizenship, but make her ineligible for naturalized citizenship if she were to divorce or become widowed.

The practice of stripping US citizenship from women who married foreign men is assumed to have ended in 1922 with the Cable Act. The Cable Act is often considered a legal victory for women, but it only ended marital expatriation for white and black women who had married white and black foreign men. While ending marital expatriation for these women, the Cable Act also mandated that women of any color be stripped of their US citizen-

ship, if they married men who were ineligible for US citizenship (primarily Asian men).

While this act is well known in Asian American Studies and Gender and Women's Studies, its particular effect on Asian American women is not often emphasized.

One such woman, Ng Fung Sing was an Asian American woman born in the US, hence she had citizenship since birth. Sing went to China with her parents, and when she was twenty-two, she married a Chinese citizen, who passed away only two years later.

Upon the death of her husband in 1925, Sing decided to return to the United States, but she was unable to re-enter because she had been stripped of her US citizenship due to her marriage and barred from naturalizing due to her race. In other words, the Cable Act—seen as a legal victory in Women's Studies and understood as the federal law that barred Asian men from forming families in Asian American Studies—is also a particular instance of how race and gender intersect to effectively render stateless Asian American women US citizens. Asian women long felt the consequence of this history, forced to grapple with the racialized nature of their fragile citizenship.

## Respect for Mexicano Families: An Interview with Martina Miranda-Lugo

By Rufina Cortez

*Rufina Cortez is a graduate student in Educational Policy Studies focusing on issues of women and immigration.*

MARTINA MIRANDA-LUGO WAS BORN in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. 21 years ago. She has lived in Urbana for the last 13 years. In 1995, when Martina arrived with her family to the area, she recalls there were no Mexican markets where she could buy tortillas or other familiar Mexican staples. But today, there is a strong Mexicano community in the area, evidenced by the growing number of Mexican restaurants and Spanish-speaking activities.

Despite this reality, when university administrators speak about diversity, they tend to concentrate primarily on White/Black relations, while the Latino immigrant community remains invisible and unacknowledged. Yet, as Martina is quick to acknowledge, there are Mexican immigrants, like her, who have lived for generations in the United States. They come in every skin color. And they identify as Mexican-Americans or Chicana/os or Latina/os; but seldom do they call themselves "Hispanics."

Martina feels a strong connection to this region. It is here that she builds liaisons, works arduously, and learns actively from

Latino families to better understand the issues they face today in the local community. Over the years, she has worked as a childcare coordinator, Spanish liaison, Spanish teacher, teacher assistant, preschool teacher, recruiter for the Migrant Summer School Program, and as a community volunteer. Currently, Martina teaches Spanish as a second language to K-8th graders, in addition to being the ESL liaison for Unit 4 Early Childhood.

Contrary to demeaning views of Mexican women, Martina has experienced first hand, the power and strength of Mexicana mothers in Champaign-Urbana. When their voices have been silenced, the women have joined together to demand that schools provide inclusive spaces for their children. They have strengthened community, to better organize politically. They have demanded bilingual coordinators in the schools and culturally relevant activities such as school plays, anchored in Mexican cultural traditions. Together, the women continue to work to hold educators accountable for the quality of education their children receive.

However, despite the women's courageous efforts, Martina explains there have been repercussions. At times, this has led to not being invited to school events, which they themselves initiated. Through their efforts, the Mexicano families in the area have worked in solidarity to organize

cultural events and celebrations in alternative spaces. Last November, they sponsored a *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) event in the community—celebrated in the traditional style of many communities in Mexico.

Martina is deeply concerned about the ways in which symbols are used to stereotype



Altar for Day of the Dead Celebration. November 2007

Mexicanas/os (i.e., sombreros or maracas on ads), particularly when immigrants from European countries are not subjected to such distortions. Even more disheartening is the impact of such stereotypes on immigrant children. For this reason, she believes that educators have an important responsibility to include the community in educational decisions that directly impact their children. Those in positions of influence cannot

assume to be experts in community matters. They cannot speak for the people, for the people can speak for themselves.

Martina often wonders why the University, situated in the heart of Champaign-Urbana, does not interact and collaborate more with the local community. Why wait until Latina/o students are completing high school to include them in outreach efforts? Why not make university resources more accessible throughout their education? Many families must work 2 or 3 jobs to make ends meet. The university could work with Mexicano families to advocate for better working conditions, create educational programs, and develop recreational activities that support families and their children.

Martina has no doubt that there are good intentions by university administrators, faculty, and officials from school districts and other related units, but the world is full of good intentions. Instead, Martina advocates tirelessly for educators who are conscientious and actively engaged with families, who truly seek to understand the diversity and complexity of immigrant families. Most importantly, we must all acknowledge the agency and wisdom that Mexicano communities possess, rather than assuming they cannot think for themselves.

### Las Krudas: Cuban Revolutionary Hip Hop

*"La Kruda (being raw) is a way of living, existing in revolutionary terms, being woman."*

Las Krudas is a trio of Cuban female rappers who throw down in Spanish with a powerful political bent. As one of the first groups in the history of Cuban rap music, Las Krudas have received praise for their powerful creativity. Their electrifying performance encompasses their own brand of revolutionary messages, which speaks to the struggle and development of political consciousness—a consciousness tied to the tough realities of economic, gender, sexual, and racialized oppression. Their performance at UIUC in February was electrifying! Las Krudas' music is an uncompromising and unapologetic call to struggle and political change.



# Breaking Tradition with "The Way Things Are"

By Amber Carmer

*Amber Carmer is a prevention educator for Rape Crisis Services in Champaign*

IT'S INTERESTING THAT WE, as a society, talk about hate crimes in this country when it comes to race and sexual orientation, but neglect to address the epidemic of hate crimes based on gender alone. Violence against women continues to reach new heights every day (1.3 women over 18 are forcibly raped each minute), yet our communities and even our government treat it as "just the way things are."

As a Prevention Educator for Rape Crisis Services (RCS), I am still barred from many middle and high schools that won't allow me to come to their schools to speak with youth about harassment, violence and assault. This, despite the fact that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18. The government is also complicit in the silence, having cut funding for the Violence Against Women Act and Victims of Crime Act. As a result, our program, like many other social services, is looking at possible staff cuts soon. At RCS, we firmly believe it is time to stop the violence against women and to make a commitment to ending such violence a priority.

Our mission at RCS is to deconstruct rape myths and empower sexual assault victims and survivors through our various services. All services at RCS are free and confidential and include: a 24-hour crisis hotline on which anonymity is an option; counseling for survivors and their supportive loved ones; medical advocacy that allows for a staff/volunteer to meet with rape survivors at the hospital to explain their rights with respect to the medical process; legal advocacy by which we can serve as a liaison between the person and other law enforcement agencies; community education; and professional training for service providers on topics like sexual harassment and child abuse indicators. Services are available to men and women, ages 13 and up who are residents of Ford, Champaign, Douglas and Piatt counties.

Because sexual assault is the least reported crime and few victims ever reach out for help, The Rape Crisis Services staff spend a large amount of energy on creating awareness and providing education about violence against women. We ask the community to join us in this commitment, so that together we can work toward ending violence against women!

## Healing Works Art Exhibit

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. To promote Community awareness of the issue, Healing Works, an event sponsored by RCS, will be a part of the Boneyard Arts Festival for the second year in a row. Healing Works, an exhibit for and by survivors of assault and abuse, includes paintings, poetry, photography, drawing/sketching, collages, sculpture, and other arts. The show will be on display from April 18 to 20. Submissions for the exhibit will be accepted until April 7. For more information about the show or for RCS volunteer opportunities, contact Amber Carmer at [carmera@awomansfund.org](mailto:carmera@awomansfund.org). A complete list of events in April can be found at [www.odos.uiuc.edu/women](http://www.odos.uiuc.edu/women).



## Tippet Hill

*1st place winner of the 2007 Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Award.*

We pull out of the filling station  
and head for the interstate  
Aunt Jane looks at me cockeyed  
Why do you want to know where Tippet Hill is?

I stammer at the unexpected question  
Grandma... she sometimes told about it

I feel strangely defensive  
Why am I so interested in my father's people?  
Blind fingers like the roots of lilies  
probing deeper into the generations  
sifting through the layers of the ages  
reaching back and back and back

She drives in silence for a while  
I am afraid she has forgotten to point it out  
Have we passed it yet? I venture  
No the word is drawn from the side of her mouth.  
Then I see we are coming up on a ridge

the highway cuts into it and a house sits near the top  
There it is she points  
Used to be the highest spot in Central Illinois...  
maybe in the state. (See those silos there?  
that's where the Heaths settled.)  
Some years back they chopped off the top of it for the  
T.V. tower  
They took another chunk  
when the highway came through.

*Used to be three times as high as it is now.*

She drives on and our talk turns to the weather  
and the roadside weeds  
A neighbor passes us  
and waves It is Les Alexander, her brother's father-in-law

Grandma used to tell  
how Anna Porter Heath climbed that hill every  
morning  
to look Eastward for her David  
Waiting for his return  
She climbed Tippet Hill for forty years after  
they brought her the news of his death in Ohio

They said his last words were of her  
Anna's waiting in the sunrise  
and she was

I am stunned at such faith  
the forty year faith of long ago lovers  
my grandmother's faith in the old story

As we round the bend I catch a last sight of the hill  
In the side mirror  
I try to measure where the top would have been  
and I am struck with the thought  
that Aunt Jane was here before the highway  
before the T.V. tower  
She must remember Tippet Hill  
before  
when it stood like a dinosaur on the outwash plain  
Maybe she stood at the top once  
struggling to hold her own against the high prairie winds

She shakes her head  
and I lean forward to catch her words  
Used to be three times as high  
And I wonder where I will go to meet my dead

—Mary Lucille Hays

## Average Little Black Girl

the ones with the straight hair to those with the natural naps

those we see we are to wonder "who do they think they be?"  
lady, miss black sister  
who am i to help these average little black girls?

do you want to be my friend? do you want to play dolls?  
remember when we used to be friends?  
now we callin' each other ho's and greeting  
each other with names like, hey bitch!

average little black girls  
average little black girls  
i ask myself  
is there really such things  
we have different lives

my life  
a two toned secret  
she lives hers with drugs, sex and rape yet  
we are all looked at exactly the same numbers  
not unique african sisters  
i wish i could be an average black girl

—Talisha Kashai, Urbana High School

The Gwendolyn Brooks Award, named for poet Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000) is a major modern poet, and first African American to win a Pulitzer Prize. Named Poet laureate of Illinois in 1968.

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