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Cover: “Vote for Yourself” by Matuschka
Bernadette Devlin McAliskey
A Woman for All Seasons

The great Irish playwright Sean O'Casey filled his plays with women who were strong, outspoken and indomitable. Faced daily with the bitter struggle to survive in a strife-torn land, his women were Ireland's backbone: Steadfast, braver and more resourceful than the men. How he would have loved Bernadette Devlin McAliskey.

If Margaret Thatcher was the "Iron Maiden," Devlin McAliskey can be called the "Woman of Steel." Well-tempered, durable and forever uncorrodible, Devlin McAliskey generates a heat that can either burn or become a source of energy.

This heroic woman can be said to embody the true spirit of Irish unity, a woman who works ceaselessly toward securing an entirely independent Ireland, and one who will not rest so long as her nation remains divided. And this knowing full well she's a target for Loyalist hatred.

In 1981, that hatred nearly killed her. As British troops were watching her house, Loyalist gunmen entered — by the front door! — while she and her family were sitting around the breakfast table. As her terrified children looked on, the gunmen fired a round of shots, severely wounding Devlin McAliskey and her husband, then calmly left. That she and her husband survived the attack is nothing short of a miracle. She was left with a permanent limp and suffers pain to this day.

Many people would have given up at this point. Instead, she came back more determined and with an even more powerful voice. Interestingly, she chose not to discuss this barbarous incident in her interview with us, although she spoke a great deal of the brutality and violence rife in Northern Ireland.

An ardent feminist and advocate of reproductive choice, Devlin McAliskey's activism and outspokenness have not gained her popularity points among many of her own people. Antichoice literature has been circulated calling her a "baby killer," which she shrugs off as she denies it. Her work against discrimination and oppression is as often for the rights of women as it is against the wrongs inflicted on her country. Indeed, she speaks out for the rights of all people, in all countries, including the United States.

This Bernadette has her own song: The song of freedom, all over her land. And everyone's land.

Beverly Lowy
Executive Editor
MERLE HOFFMAN ON THE ISSUES will not appear in the Winter edition of our publication. At press time, Merle Hoffman is in Moscow where she was invited to head an interdisciplinary medical team from CHOICES for a ground-breaking meeting with Russian physicians and feminists on the latest innovations in women's reproductive health care. One goal of the meetings will be to find ways to apprise Russian women and girls of birth control methods in a society where contraceptives are not produced and not socially accepted. On average, every woman born in Russia has four or five abortions during her childbearing years, while 40,000 girls under 17 years of age have abortions every year. It is estimated that there are 18 million abortions per year; 7 million state-sponsored abortions, usually administered without anesthesia; and another 8-9 million “illegal” abortions done by physicians in women’s homes, where a few rubles can buy some type of anesthetic.

The exchange is being hosted by the Moscow Gynecological Teaching Hospital #53, and the Russian Feminist publishing houses of Culture and Traditions and Charm magazines. An in-depth column of Merle Hoffman’s experiences in Russia will appear in our Spring 1993 issue.
Thinking Past Censorship
Having the courage to criticize our allies

In the early years of the contemporary feminist movement, solidarity between women was often equated with the formation of "safe" spaces where groups of presumably like-minded women could come together, sharing ideas and experiences without fear of silencing or serious challenge. Groups sometimes disintegrated when the speaking of diverse opinions led to contestation, confrontation, and sometimes out-and-out conflict. It was common for individual dissenting voices to be silenced by the collective demand for harmony. Non-conforming voices were at times punished by exclusion and ostracization.

Before it became politically acceptable to discuss issues of race and racism within feminist circles, I was one of those "undesirable" dissenting voices. Always a devout advocate of feminist politics, I was from the start also a harsh critic. One powerful lesson that I learned from hanging in there and not allowing myself to be pressured by punishment to give up on feminist struggle was that any progressive political movement grows and matures only to the degree that in theory and practice it passionately welcomes and encourages diversity of opinion, new ideas and critical exchange.

This remains true for the feminist movement, and it is no less true for the Black liberation struggle. In the heyday of the civil rights and Black power movements, folks were often "excommunicated" if they did not simply support the party line. (This was even more true in white male-dominated "left" political circles). Censorship of dissenting voices in progressive circles often goes unnoticed.

Radical groups are often so small that it is easy to use covert tactics to punish members expressing conflicting views. Usually, repression is enforced by powerful members of the group threatening punishment, the most common being some form of ostracization or excommunication. This may take the form of no longer including a dissenting individual's thoughts or writings in relevant discussions, and especially publications. It may mean excluding them from important meetings. And, in some cases, it may mean a consistent effort behind the scenes to verbally cast doubt on their credibility.

Marginalized groups often fear that dissent, especially if it takes the form of public critique, will play into the hands of dominating forces and undermine support for progressive causes. Throughout the history of Black struggle against racism there has been major disagreement over whether or not we should vigorously critique one another, especially in racially integrated contexts. Efforts to censor criticism surface whenever marginalized groups are overly concerned with presenting a "positive" image to the dominant group. Most recently, the outcome of the Thomas hearings shows how misguided Black folks can be if we suppress dissent and critique in favor of a narrow notion of racial solidarity. As Clarence Thomas uses the power invested in him as a member of the Supreme Court to curtail human rights, and to stand in the way of racial justice and the struggle against sexism, those who felt it was more important to support the "brother" because white folks were out to get him — if they are at all progressive — must see the error of their ways. We will never know what the outcome of those hearings might have been had powerful Black leaders all over the United States collectively called for mass support to resist this appointment.

Even though the Thomas hearings forced the American public to confront issues of race and gender, many Blacks (especially men) closed ranks to uncritically support Thomas, just as many feminists closed ranks to support Anita Hill. The essay I wrote on the hearings published in Z magazine, which suggested that we needed to look critically at both individuals and their political allegiances, led many of my feminist comrades (especially Black women) to tell me that the piece should not have been written. A longtime Black feminist comrade accused me of having temporarily lost my mind, as she felt my critique of Hill was a betrayal of feminist solidarity. Again and again I insist that feminist solidarity rooted in a commitment to progressive politics must include a space for rigorous critique, for dissent, or we are doomed to reproduce the very forms of domination we seek to oppose.

The negative responses I received about the essay on the Thomas hearings (now published in my most recent book Black Looks), called to mind other incidents where friends and comrades have attempted to censor my viewpoint. A couple of years back, I wrote a critical piece on the work of a major Black woman writer. Talking about this piece while it was still in process with prominent Black women scholars/comrades, I was taken back when I was told that it was not a good idea for me to write it, that the writer would be...
WIN SOME • LOSE SOME

A Compiled Adaptation of News Items with Editorial Commentary by Beverly Lowy

BACK TO SLAVERY
Sheryl Wu Dunn, N.Y. Times:
As Chinese society focuses more on profit than on equality, and as communist morality loses its influence, women are in some cases losing the ground they gained in the Maoist years.

More now than under Mao Zedong, they are being discriminated against jobs, in housing, in land allocation. Physical attractiveness has become a crucial factor in hiring women. Women are increasingly used as ornaments in the office, or as lures to bring in business.

The proportion of women in the most powerful positions has declined. And traditional practices that the communists had essentially eliminated, like the selling of women as wives, have reappeared on a significant scale.

And from Jessica Neuwirth, director of Equality Now:
In rural China, the bride price paid to the bride’s family makes it two to three times more expensive to marry a wife than to buy one from a trafficker. In the first 10 months of 1990, 11,689 cases of trafficking were reported.

A BLACK & WHITE ISSUE
Denise Mourgès, N.Y. Times:
Marilyn Church, a former fashion illustrator, began courtroom drawing in 1973.

During the trial of the attackers of the Central Park jogger, court artists were forbidden to draw the victim. Church said: “We weren’t told when she was going to take the stand until the last minute. And on the days she did, we weren’t even allowed to take our art supplies into the courtroom. But we weren’t told anything when the victim in the St. John’s [University students’] trial took the stand. It was amazing.”

“Shewas Black, and the defendants were white,” Church said. “She was another rape victim, but she was treated so differently. None of us thought that drawing her was the right thing to do, so we didn’t. In this case the press, which has been very much maligned, brought fairness to the system.”

Justice, it seems is blind—but not color blind.

OF WOMAN & MOVIES
Terry Pristin, the L.A. Times:
Terry Pristin, the L.A. Times: Like the far more commercial “A League of Their Own,” one of the past summer’s biggest hits, and “Fried Green Tomatoes,” last winter’s sleeper, “Enchanted April” is concerned with the way women relate to one another, with men assuming a secondary place in the films’ preoccupations.

Despite these recent successes, such films are rare. The British director Mike Newell believes that the dearth of women-oriented themes has helped to boost “Enchanted April.”

“I don’t think that it has anything to do with sexual politics but it almost certainly has to do with an incredible overlooking of 50 percent of the audience,” Newell said.

The same 50 percent that’s overlooked every time the goodies are handed out.
ATTACK OF THE KILLER LANDFILL
Elaine Rivera, N.Y. Newsday: Dr. Louis Grecco, chairman of the public health committee for the Richmond County Medical Society, Staten Island NY, says doctors have reported an increase over the past six years in the number of babies born with deformities, including missing fingers and limbs or cleft palates. Grecco says that out of the approximately 3,000 babies born on Staten Island each year, the number with deformities has jumped from 30 to about 60 since 1986.

Doctors on Staten Island have also seen an increase in the number of respiratory ailments such as asthma and allergies over the last five years, Grecco says. "We have been getting complaints from dermatologists, oncologists — doctors from every specialty," Grecco says, "who are saying that they're seeing more patients than ever before with diseases related to the environment."

Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island is the world's largest garbage dump. City and state officials say there is no evidence that toxic chemicals are leaking out of the landfill or poisoning the Staten Island air. "We've never seen any evidence that what comes out of the landfill would cause illness," says city Sanitation Commissioner Emily Lloyd.

We wonder what those officials would say if the landfills were moved to their backyards.

THE UNDRESS CODE FOR WOMEN
News Dispatch: The Sands Casino in Atlantic City, NJ is accused in a lawsuit of discriminating against women by forcing cocktail waitresses to wear sexy clothes while letting male waiters dress comfortably.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Philadelphia, which filed on behalf of Anna Grimes, says it's the first case of its kind brought against a casino.

Grimes, who still works at the Sands, says she was forced to be scantily dressed and wear five-inch heels that hurt her feet. Men may wear tuxedos and sneakers or other low shoes.

Those who enforced the regulation should be condemned to a month of carrying trays in tight short skirts, low-cut bodices and five-inch heels. Nothing less is sufficient punishment.

A NATION OF UN-CARED-FOR CHILDREN
Michael Ryan, Parade Magazine: Every day in America, millions of parents struggle to find ways and means to provide care for their children while they go to work or school. Today, two-thirds of mothers work outside the home. One-quarter of the kids in this country live with only one parent. An estimated 25 million children require childcare.

Of those kids, 8.3 million go to licensed daycare settings that are inspected and required to meet minimum standards for health, safety and educational content. That leaves 14.7 million children in unlicensed settings. Some will get first-rate care with highly motivated caretakers. But others will go to substandard settings where they may run the risk of fire or accident and, in some cases, abuse. Still others have no regular childcare. Their parents must depend on a shifting network of friends and relatives, and sometimes, in desperation, even leave their children unsupervised.

Childcare experts report that obtaining good day care is a nationwide problem. It is frequently either in short supply, out of reach financially. "I call it a 'trilemma,'" said Arlyce Currie of Bananas, an Oakland, CA resource center for parents.

In France, a mother would have received free prenatal healthcare, been granted maternity leave and her children would have been eligible for government-sponsored preschools. In more than 100 countries, parents would be entitled to parental leave from their jobs to ensure their children were properly cared for.

In the U.S., "family values" are a precious commodity — only the rich can afford them.
A CLARENCE THOMAS RIPPLE EFFECT
N.Y. Times News Brief: The former supervisor of the medical records unit at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in the Bronx, NY, was indicted by a Federal grand jury on charges that he sexually abused five coworkers over a year. The charges were filed, prosecutors said, after the man's fifth victim told the authorities he had raped her.

The former supervisor, Gregory A. Saunders, 28 years old, was charged with rape and sodomy in the attack on the woman, described in the indictment as his most recent victim. Some of the four women said they did not come forward earlier because Saunders said they would lose their jobs if they reported the attacks, investigators said. One woman said that she had intended to report the attack but changed her mind after the Senate voted to reject the testimony of Anita F. Hill, the law professor who said that Clarence Thomas, then a Supreme Court nominee, had sexually harassed her.

One more disgrace the white males of our government have to answer for.

A MEATLESS MISSION IN MOSCOW
News Dispatch: Animal rights advocates served up a course of U.S.-style political activism outside the Moscow McDonald's. About a dozen demonstrators, including one dressed as a cow, handed out 100 vegetarian burgers during the lunchtime protest to dissuade people from patronizing the gleaming fast-food palace. Most of the soybean sandwiches, however, were snapped up not by potential customers but by the Cypriots, beggars and streetwise teenagers who usually surround the Golden Arches. Well, at least they were eating healthily and humanely.

THE NIGER WITCHHUNT
News Dispatch: In Zinder, Niger, hundreds of people attacked bars and bordellos used by women accused of causing a drought, the official Niger Press Agency said. Police imposed a curfew after the mob injured three people.

The mob was urged on by marabouts—charlatans who claim to be Muslim holy men—who said the women's "indecent" dress and conduct were responsible for lower-than-normal rainfall this year.

It's amazing how quickly men will accept that women are responsible for every ill that befalls them.

ANOTHER GULF WAR ATROCITY
An AP Dispatch: The Army has decided to court-martial an Army sergeant accused of sexually assaulting a woman in his unit during the Persian Gulf war.

The defendant, 1st Class David J. Martinez of Albuquerque, NM who is on active duty in Fort Bliss, TX, was charged with one count of forcible sodomy, one count of indecent assault and four counts of making false statements concerning the accusations by the woman, Specialist Jacqueline Ortiz of Sapello, NM, a reservist with whom he was assigned last year in Saudi Arabia.

Martinez will face a general court-martial, the highest level of criminal proceeding in the military. Ortiz, 28 years old, was among a group of women who testified last summer before a United States Senate committee about sexual attacks against them. Ortiz said at that hearing that she had immediately reported the attack but that officers had ignored her complaint.

The Army at first concluded that the sexual contact between her and Sergeant Martinez was consensual. But it reopened the case earlier this year at the urging of Congressman Bill Richardson of her home state.

We think the officers should also be court-martialed for their assault on Ortiz' veracity and dignity.

THE DAY IT RAINED CONDOMS
News Dispatch: In September, a small plane hired by an AIDS activist group dropped scores of condoms on a maximum-security prison in eastern Wisconsin.

A statement issued by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), said it dropped the condoms to promote safe sex and protect prison inmates from the AIDS virus.

Associate Warden Greg Grams said the condoms were gathered up from the prison yard in Waupun on Sunday and Monday and seized as contraband because they are banned in state prisons.

A strange ban indeed, considering that AIDS is rampant in our prison system.
NORTHERN IRELAND

OPPRESSION, STRUGGLE, AND OUTRIGHT MURDER.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BERNADETTE DEVLIN MCALISKEY

BY BETSY SWART

Bernadette Devlin McAliskey is a pioneer in the campaign for civil rights in the North of Ireland. Seeing herself as a "community activist," since 1968 she has consistently worked against discrimination and oppression in the North of Ireland and at the age of 21 was elected MP for Mid-Ulster. Her term lasted from 1969-1974. She now lives in a rural Nationalist community in County Tyrone.

Devlin McAliskey was interviewed last spring by Betsy Swart, contributing editor to On the Issues. Swart is a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland and has spent considerable time in the North of Ireland.

Betsy Swart: What kinds of choices brought you to the work you do?

Bernadette Devlin McAliskey: Like many other young people, I became involved in the civil rights movement in the '60s when I was a student at Queens University in Belfast. The civil rights movement in Northern Ireland was actually inspired by the Black civil rights movement in the United States. As a result of my activities, the University called me before a disciplinary committee. I was a psychology student, just five weeks short of my exams, and I had never missed a paper. But they wouldn't let me sit my exams. So I left the University without a qualification. I actually thought, "Well, suit yourselves" because I thought I'd just nip out and we'd get our civil rights and I'd be back next year. But now it's some 20-odd years later and, of course, we never quite got to the point where I could go back and do my exams. In terms of American society, by and large people make intellectual choices to take up particular issues. But the very possibility of making the choice in the first place is based on the assumption that you have the socio-economic freedom to make that choice — which most of the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland don't have. So to ask me that, well, it's like asking a Black person why they got involved in the Black civil rights movement. Because it's my life — the only life I've got.

Can you give us some background on the abortion controversy in Southern Ireland regarding the 14-year-old girl who was raped and refused permission to go to England for an abortion?

Those of us who live and work in Ireland weren't at all surprised about what happened. We fought the prolife amendment in the Constitution when it was first proposed and we lost. We lost very heavily. Like America, the southern state of Ireland has a written Constitution. Very often, like Americans, the Irish people are not aware of the responsibility that puts on themselves. People like to roll around the country in agony and blame the government for everything. But the Constitution, for all its weaknesses, clearly defines the people of Ireland as the sovereign will of the state. Every adult over the age of 18 must — in a referendum — make decisions on the Constitution. So it's at this point I fall out with some of my feminist friends south of the border. Because it was not the government's fault that the referendum was passed. It was the people of Ireland — who voted to put the prolife amendment into the Constitution. Very often, like Americans, the Irish people are not aware of the responsibility that puts on themselves. People like to roll around the country in agony and blame the government for everything. But the Constitution, for all its weaknesses, clearly defines the people of Ireland as the sovereign will of the state. Every adult over the age of 18 must — in a referendum — make decisions on the Constitution. So it's at this point I fall out with some of my feminist friends south of the border. Because it was not the government's fault that the referendum was passed. It was the people of Ireland — who voted to put the prolife amendment into the Constitution. These were intelligent, sane human beings who were prepared to go out and make an adult decision on the basis of ignorance, prejudice, self-interest or church-interest. Nobody tortured them
into it. They went out of their own free will and consent and voted for prejudice. And voted for ignorance. And voted for hypocrisy. Because it did not affect them there and then. I worked in Dublin before the election, and 48 hours before polling day, Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) put a leaflet under the door of every home in the constituency and leafleted every supermarket and mass [in Catholic churches] in the constituency. The leaflet said "Bernadette McAliskey Kills Babies." And this started an argument among the people working on the campaign about whether we should back off. People said, "Now that they've raised it, Bernadette, go you out and say that you're against killing babies." And, I said, "I don't kill babies. And I am against killing babies. But I'm not going out there to accommodate SPUC." But the amendment got passed. Afterward, all the things that those of us who had campaigned against the amendment believed would happen did happen. The moral majority have a marked disinterest in born children. Once you're born, your rights are out the window — no rights for the living! And so finally we have this unfortunate child who's 14 years of age and is a victim of rape and is going to England for an abortion. SPUC took out a high court injunction to prevent her leaving the country. Her parents were ordinary people. They had actually left the country; but they were so intimidated by the court order that they didn't know they didn't have to come back! So they came home. And then they found themselves in the position of not being able to leave again. The matter was ultimately resolved in typically Irish judicial fashion. The Supreme Court not only disgraced themselves judicially, they disgraced themselves intellectually, and they took the back door out. They had two choices. The people of Ireland voted for the imprisonment of 14-year-old pregnant girls and the forcing of them to give birth. That's what they voted for. And they ought to have realized that's what they voted for. The Supreme Court, on the one hand, should have said, "That's what you voted for; is that what you want? Or will we have another referendum?" Alternatively, the court should have said, "There are two issues here: One is the constitutionality of the prolife amendment and the other is the freedom of movement. And this young girl has freedom of movement. If she moves out of this country, she can do what she likes." They did neither. They came up with this idiotic idea that the Constitutional amendment that balanced the life of the child and the life of the mother could conceivably be read that the mother might commit suicide. Therefore, on the basis that there was a risk to her life, she would be entitled to have the abortion in Ireland! So now, in order to get an abortion in Ireland, which you can get in spite of the Constitution and the law, you just have to stand at the top of the stairs and shout, "I'm going to jump!" And if you can convince somebody that
you might indeed jump, then you can have an abortion! It's hypocrisy in action and it's saying to you and me and every other woman, "It's not that you have rights. But if you can grovel, if you can despair, if you can get as far down into the gutter as I can put you, I, out of the mercy of my superiority, might allow you certain luxuries in this life — like the right to control your own body. If you get far enough down and beg for it in a manner that is sufficiently non-threatening, then I might allow you your basic human rights as a privilege."

What is life like in the North of Ireland now? We live all of our lives under constant military authority. When people come to Northern Ireland, the first thing they become aware of is how militaristic this society is — more than they ever conceived of. It is, of course, possible within the tourist areas and outside of the Nationalist community, to go to parts of Northern Ireland where the war is totally invisible. You can go to parts of Beirut, too, where you don't see the war. But if you're in the Nationalist community, what is most striking is probably that armed soldiers — heavily armed soldiers — mingle with the pedestrian population, taking people in their rifle sights. Similarly, heavy armored vehicles mingle with the routine traffic, but unlike the civilian traffic, these army vehicles are not required to obey the traffic laws. The native population, of course, knows to look first for the light and second for the military. But a person coming into the country for the first time very often learns that the hard way — as they jump for their lives out of the way of military vehicles.

The other thing that visitors become suddenly aware of is the degree of authority those soldiers who are walking about the streets have. They may stop any civilian and require that they open their purse, open their coat, empty their pockets, give their name, address, identification, inform the authorities where they're going, where they're coming from. People don't have privacy even in their own homes. If the soldier comes to the door, they are required to give the same information. If the soldiers want to come into the house and search, they don't require a reason, stated or unstated. They don't require a warrant.

Our daily lives are led against a background of total military authority over our every movement. There is also a second level of scrutiny — the mechanized authority which becomes more visible as you go into the small rural towns and villages. The surveillance cameras, the military roadblocks preventing and limiting and controlling access to towns centers and so on. Our daily lives are also led with the knowledge that it is very difficult to stay on the right side of this authority — that is, if you want to exercise any degree of independent thought or organization.

This military threat extends over the whole of our lives. There is quite clearly a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland that does not simply originate at the military ground level. It is a policy at the highest level of the British government to use Loyalist death squads in conjunction with British intelligence to wipe out political opponents. A number of people are just murdered outright — and that's represented as "sectarian" killing and they're referred to as Catholic or whatever. Others are killed through what might be called entrapment — which basically means that the British army sets up known Republican activists by creating a situation through which they can kill these persons and

**A Brief History of Ireland**

The English conquest of Ireland was initiated in 1170. The history of Northern Ireland began in the 17th century when the British crown, after suppressing an Irish rebellion, populated much of Ulster with Scottish and English settlers, giving the area a Protestant character in contrast to the rest of Ireland. The question of political separation did not arise until 1886 when proposals of Home Rule for Ireland aroused fears in Protestant Ulster of domination by the Catholic majority in the south. By World War I, civil war was imminent. The Government of Ireland Act in 1920 attempted to solve the problem by enacting Home Rule separately for the two parts of Ireland. Protestant Ulster became the province of Northern Ireland, but the Irish Free State (now the Republic of Ireland), established in the remainder of Ireland in 1922, refused to recognize the finality of the partition.

Sinn Fein, which means "we ourselves," is the Irish nationalist movement that triumphed in the establishment of the Irish Free State. The party gained control of the government in 1932 and advocated separation from Great Britain. A few intragroup merged with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) whose political arm is still known as the Sinn Fein.

In the late 1950s, protest by the Catholic minority against economic and political discrimination led to widespread violence by the "provisional IRA" wing on one side and the Ulster Defense Association, a Protestant terrorist group, on the other. The British government sent in troops in 1969, and assumed direct rule of the province in 1973. Protestant and Catholic activists rejected several efforts at power-sharing, and conflict marked by bloodshed continues.
"SO NOW, IN ORDER TO GET AN ABORTION IN IRELAND YOU JUST HAVE TO STAND AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS AND SHOUT, 'I'M GOING TO JUMP!'"

On March 2, 1992, nearly every woman political prisoner in Maghaberry Prison were brutally held down and strip searched by prison guards. A number of the strip searches also included beatings and sexual assaults.

Since 1982, Irish women prisoners have been subjected to strip searches, sometimes on a daily basis. Some women have been subjected to over 100 strip searches. The brutality of the March incident incited 42 U.S. Congresspeople to send a letter of protest to the British Embassy.

How do you respond to people who say that women in Northern Ireland should initiate a nonviolent response to the war?

People need first and foremost to have a clear idea of what they're doing. The American peace movement against the war, for example, was a peace movement in the land of the oppressing na...
Two types of heroines predominate Hollywood film in the 1990s: On one side is the evil, murderous female of movies from "Basic Instinct" and "The Hand that Rocks the Cradle" to "Final Analysis" and "Single White Female." On the other is the justice-seeking warrior woman made famous by the film "Thelma and Louise." Though the dangerous femme fatale is an historic film figure, the hard-bodied fighting woman is a new turn in the representation of women in film, and she is a figure for feminists to appraise.
REEL FEMINISM

vs

REAL FEMINISM
The hard-bodied fighting woman is a new turn in the representation of women in film

She appeared most vividly in the much-discussed 1990 film "Silence of the Lambs." As she accepted an Oscar for Best Actress for her portrayal of Clarice Starling, Jodie Foster said: "Thanks to the Academy for embracing such an incredibly strong and beautiful feminist hero that I'm so proud of." Foster portrayed a smart and accomplished woman who not only succeeds in catching a serial killer before any of her male FBI colleagues, but matches wits with a brilliant and dangerous cannibalistic male psychiatrist. In fact, the National Organization for Women publicly supported director Jonathan Demme, and screenwriter Anna Hamilton Phelan ("Mask" and "Gorillas in the Mist") told the Los Angeles Times, "I saw this movie as very pro-female, one in which the horror of violence against women is brilliantly balanced by the presence of well-drawn female characters."

Next came the less-hyped "Terminator 2," which featured the single-minded freedom-fighter Sarah Connor. Played by Linda Hamilton, who whittled her padded body of the first Terminator film to boyish, taut, asexual contours, Connor is a muscled machine engaged in a battle against evil Terminators who intend to wipe out the human race. She snarls and fights and kills like an animal, actively changing the course of history to prevent a horrible future.

What's distinctive about these new Hollywood heroines is that, contrary to the dominant cultural logic of gender categorization, they appear at times to be androgynous. It's frustrating to encounter a person who defies easy gender labeling — and it's no surprise that film and television sometimes employ the gender-confused figure as a tool for narrative suspense. But gender confusion can be a catalyst for feminist change: These fighting women are heroic powerhouses whose strength comes from their refusal to adhere to the myth of femininity. Their androgyny illustrates that gender roles are cultural constructions — thereby proving that women are not naturally better nurturers and men are not inherently superior reasoners.

While these new heroines inaugurate a post-gender trend in filmic representation of women (the post-gender man is still too threatening a figure for male audiences, notwithstanding Arnold Schwarzenegger's nurturing tendencies in "T2"), their gender-bending is still in its formative stages. For now at least, it is only skin-deep.

For instance, in "Silence," Starling is clearly seen as inferior to her colleagues because she is a woman. It's impossible to forget that she's a woman among men. Her superior excludes her from a discussion with the sheriff because "this type of sex crime has certain aspects I'd just as soon discuss in private." A prisoner throws a gob of semen into her face and snarls, "I can smell your cunt." In her dealings with Dr. Hannibal Lecter, she is without a doubt positioned as a subordinate — as a woman, patient, daughter and student. At the close of the movie, it is unclear whether Starling will even be able to solve future cases without Lecter's guidance.

The same backlash underpinnings are evident in "T2." Sarah Connor's ultimate value is that of mother to John Connor, leader of the post-holocaust Resistance Against the Terminators. Her "femininity" erupts at a crucial moment — when she has the opportunity to murder Dyson, the man who spearheads the technology leading to the nuclear holocaust. Connor is about to pump bullets into his body when... she cries. She can't bring herself to do it. She is comforted only by her son's embrace. Though Connor does not live by the stereotypical regulations of femininity, she can still be seen to embody mythic femininity. Not only is she a mother, she is a Mother; it is her son who will save humanity.

Or, consider "A League of Their Own," which gives a cursory nod toward subverting immutable gender categories. Director Penny Marshall's chronicle of the mid-1940s' All American Girls Professional Baseball League demonstrates that women can pitch a fastball and earn runs-batted-in as well as any tobacco-spitting man. But the movie is rife with sexist jokes at the expense of a player considered ugly and masculine. And the team star absconds to domestic bliss after one season, when her husband returns from the war.

What, exactly, is a "feminist" film? Definitions are as wide-ranging as the theories of feminists themselves. This is because, contrary to popular opinion, feminism is not a monolith. Many people believe that a feminist film is one that...
Gender confusion can be a catalyst for feminist change
Heralds of post-feminism say that the battle for equality is largely won. But like feminism, feminist film must strive for more. It must promote gender confusion. It must break away from the old-time dualisms of feminine and masculine, positive and negative, CEO and full-time homemaker.

Post-feminism/post-gender conflict erupts in the Ellen Ripley character (Sigourney Weaver) of the trilogy "Alien" (1979), "Aliens" (1986), and "Alien 3" (1992). This chronicle, which spans over a decade, reflects a complacency toward women's rights and the emergence of a backlash mentality. In "Alien," Ripley is a space fighter who remains in control in the face of painful deconstruction and whips her crew into shape when they confront horrifying monsters. Not only does Ripley eschew stereotypical "feminine" roles, but her rebellion is uncompromising to her character. As with "Silence of the Lambs" and "Terry," "Alien" lacks sexual activity since Ripley is nearly asexual. In a final scene, she is practically naked, wearing bikinis underwear and a skimpy undershirt. But her physiognomy seems incidental; the camera barely notices, and certainly doesn't linger upon, her nudity.

But Ripley's androgyny is sucked out of her in each subsequent sequel. In the second installment, "Aliens," Ripley's physical strength and steadfast determination to wipe out the alien creatures can only be expressed through her strong maternal feelings for a young orphaned girl, Newt. Ripley soothes the scared and dirty Newt, offers her hot chocolate, and tucks her into bed. It's clear that when Ripley fights the biggest alien one-on-one, displaying superhuman strength, it's more for the sake of Newt's life than for her own. Ripley is not Wonderwoman—she's Supermom.

In "Alien 3," Ripley shaves her head and swaggers in khaki fatigues, though her former glory days as an androgynous soldier are gone. Her love for her adopted son, Newt, provides an anti-establishment premise. "Thelma and Louise" exposes the weaknesses of our legal system. "Silence of the Lambs" brutally lays bare the failures of our law enforcement system. And "Terminator 2" carries an obvious anti-nuclear message. And the "Alien" movies pit space crew members against the "company"—government/military apparatus that does not care about them and that deems their lives expendable.

Clear, these movies reflect a serious, widely held dissatisfaction with the way men treat women and institutions treat people in general. However, seemingly rebellious films cannot continue to rely upon deeply embedded, tacitly accepted versions of how men and women should act. Otherwise, the subversion of gender will end as audiences leave the theaters.

Laura Tanenbaum is a freelance critic who lives in New York City.
hen Suzanne Hadley said "no" to her boss last year, "it seemed like the most natural thing in the world to say," Karen Pitts and Jackie Brever thought so too when they said "yes" to the FBI.

Little did these women suspect that they would be shunned, harassed and treated like pariahs, all for the crime of truth telling on the job. What happened to them could happen to any one of us in the workplace. In fact, it already has for dozens of other women around the country.

Suzanne Hadley, a Ph.D. research psychologist, was Deputy Director of the Office of Scientific Integrity (OSI) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) when she told her boss, NIH Director Dr. Bernadine Healy, that she could not in good conscience follow orders to re-write her report concerning the scientific integrity of AIDS research carried out by Dr. Robert Gallo. Hadley, who was chief investigator in the Gallo case, had reason to believe, like others, that the eminent researcher had taken credit for isolating the HIV virus when in fact such recognition should have gone to French scientists.

In May 1983, a French team reported discovery of the virus they called LAV. In the interest of sharing scientific information, they subsequently sent a strain of the virus to Gallo at NIH. In 1984, Gallo announced that he had also discovered the cause of AIDS, calling the virus HTLV-III. Although sources say it had been agreed at a meeting in Paris that the French should be credited with discovery of the AIDS virus, soon after the Paris meeting Gallo was given the distinction publicly by then-Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Margaret Heckler. Aside from the ethical issues, there were enormous financial rewards at stake. AIDS test royalties are worth millions of dollars to the U.S. government, and an estimated $100,000 a year to Gallo, who applied for a patent on a blood test for AIDS on the same day that he claimed to have discovered the virus. The French, who had also filed a patent application, contested Gallo's application, but in 1987 they capitulated, agreeing to share credit and royalties. In May of this year, however, the French Government visited the White House to demand royalty reparation. At the same time, despite a press release by NIH that Gallo had been cleared of any wrongdoing, as many as six separate inquiries are in progress. In June, C. McClain Haddow, who was chief of staff at HSS and a key advisor to Heckler, said the Government was misled by Gallo's claim to have been the sole discoverer of the cause of AIDS, and that now the United States has a "moral duty" to turn over the credit and royalties to the French.

Additionally, two independent bodies — a panel of scientific experts from the National Academy of Sciences and the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations — have attacked Gallo and what they said was the Government's limp investigation.

Following Hadley's refusal to alter her report in order to make it more favorable to Gallo and the NIH, harassment set in. First, NIH's legal advisor ordered her to turn over her telephone records from another high-visibility whistleblowing case for which Hadley had also been chief investigator, charging her with a "lack of objectivity." Then, Hadley was barred from attending an important meeting regarding both that case and Gallo's, in spite of an invitation from the Assistant Secretary of Health. Soon after, Hadley was ordered to return all documents and records in her possession and was barred from any further involvement in either of the cases. On July 1, 1991, Suzanne Hadley resigned from any further involvement with those cases.

Later that summer, Hadley began cooperating with the Congressional Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, chaired by Rep. John Dingell, who was irate over what was happening at NIH. In September, she was reassigned into another position at NIH, and given work which was largely clerical.

As her work intensified with the Subcommittee, the Government Accounting Office (GA), and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), so did the pressure. In early 1992, Hadley was subjected to allegations questioning her integrity and her willingness to obey orders. A public statement was issued suggesting that her cooperation with
the Subcommittee was improper. Then, on March 11, 1992, an FBI agent entered Hadley's office indicating that he wished to interview her concerning charges that she had improperly received confidential documents. Inter- 
ferences were made about leaks, and Hadley was told that if the NIH complaint was substantiated, there would be an indictment against her. (The U.S. Attorney General's office has since ruled that there are no grounds for prosecution.)

The next day, while she was out on sick leave, NIH officials padlocked Hadley's office preventing her entry and, subsequently, the premises were searched. Since then, Suzanne Hadley has remained on medical leave. She has filed an official complaint with the Office of Special Counsel.

Surprisingly, Hadley is not suing NIH. "I simply want the raise I'm due, a public statement saying that all the allegations about me are honey, and I want the truth to be told." Hadley is visibly shaken by what has been happening to her, but she is stoic and determined. "I'll wash dishes if I have to," she says. "I've done it before, and I can do it again." Then, with emotion in her eyes, she concedes, "I have never felt so profoundly alone."

Karen Pitta and Jackie Brever have each other — but almost no one else — to share the pain with, so they can relate to the loneliness of whistleblowing. Not only have they been verbally and sexually harassed, their homes have been vandalized and their lives threatened because of their involvement with safety issues at the Rocky Flats plutonium plant in Colorado. Subjected to name-calling, hazardous work conditions, increased sexual harassment (including having men expose themselves), and being portrayed as "300-pound Neanderthal women" by management and co-workers alike, the two women were assumed to be the source of leaks to the FBI because they agreed to cooperate with the agency's investigation of the plant on charges of illegal incineration and violations of the Clean Air Act. Both women firmly deny the allegation.

The Rocky Flats Plutonium Plant, which is owned by the Department of Energy but operated by a company called EG&G Rocky Flats Incorporated, recently pleaded guilty to 10 criminal charges, including five felony counts of violating the Resource Conservation Recovery Act, and five misdemeanor counts of criminal violation of the Clean Water Act. The fine of $18.5 million is "peanuts" says Pitta, who points out that the net profits in 1991 were $600.5 million. "The fine is a little more than three percent of their profits. They could afford to plead guilty to appease the community."

As with the Exxon Valdez case, it is possible that further fines could be imposed.) According to Pitta, although the plant was shut down in 1989, Rocky Flats has since hired 2,000 people so that a workforce of 8,000 is currently on payroll in what is described as a "pre-transition" period. Most of these, she says, are managers and secretaries, not hourly workers like herself and Jackie.

In April 1991, Pitta and Brever were asked to resign and neither has been able to find work since. "We're considered high risk," says Karen. "They see us, they see cancer. But we had to go public when the FBI came in. We had no choice. Then our families and homes were threatened. They were shooting out windows, starting fires. It was just like Karen Silkwood — the union treatment, the reaction of government agencies, the workplace response. We actually made wills because we thought we were going to die."

For Jackie, the consequences of telling the truth about conditions at Rocky Flats have gone from fear to sadness and then anger. "My friends and family have abandoned me. Only Karen and my mother support me. My 10-year-old daughter is a basket case. I had to move because all my old neighbors were Rocky Flats employees and they actually threw rocks and bricks at us. I'm left with a very bitter taste for our government. You fight for your rights and tell the truth, and now I see that the only way to get anywhere is to lie. That's not the way I want to be."

The two women also found their encounters with the legal system to be frustrating. "We filed a lawsuit as a last resort," says Brever, "only to hear over and over again 'we can't help you.' It's pathetic. Eventually they did find a lawyer who supports them. When their case went before the state courts in October 1991, it was referred to federal court where Rocky Flats lawyers attempted to have it dismissed. The case charged conspiracy, wrongful discharge, and harassment. This August, Judge Daniel B. Sparr of United States District Court in Denver dismissed the suit, saying the complaint by Pitts and Brever was not detailed enough to continue with the case. The women's lawyer said an appeal was planned.

Is whistleblowing on the increase among women, or do they simply experience it differently from men?

Washington, DC attorney Lynne Bernabei specializes in defending whistleblowers. She thinks women whistleblowers are a growing breed, partly a function of their increasing numbers in the workforce. "I think, too, part of the reason we're seeing more women is because traditionally they've been on the margins of the establishment. So when they start raising ethical questions about cost, or policy, or legalities, or safety, they get fired or harassed more quickly than men because they're already outside of the power structure."

"It is also a different experience for women. Often they don't have the financial resources that men do, so once they get fired, finding a new job is more stressful. And sometimes they don't have the kind of support from their families that men might have from their wives and others."

But perhaps the most punishing aspect of women's whistleblowing is being labeled crazy or having to endure the psychic stress of being alone or misunderstood. Almost without exception, women who hold out for truth-telling in the workplace enter into psychiatric counseling because of the ensuing depression. Carolyn Nelson is a case in point. Nelson, who worked for the Postal Service for 24 years, was removed from her position when she discovered contractor fraud. "It's 24 years down the drain," she says now. "I lost my house and my car, my mother had a heart attack, and my daughter and I are both in counseling. But the hardest thing is that people you have worked with for so long suddenly don't know you. They're afraid of being contaminated. Something is urgently wrong with the system when that is allowed to happen."

The contamination issue is a real one. Women whistleblowers are virtually
always perceived as troublemakers with an attitude. In 1988, Linda Bruce, a former auditor for Washington State's Public Power Supply System (WPPSS), blew the whistle on crooked procurement practices. For that, she was put on "monitored performance" notice and, two weeks later, fired on grounds that she was a troublemaker and wouldn't "let go of issues." (A subsequent investigation by the federal government found her work to prove her claims in 12 states.) Bruce, who eventually relocated and found employment with the Treasurer's office in Spokane, was rejected by nearly 300 other potential employers after her experience with the WPPSS.

Anna Carroll advocated for a smoke-free environment at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), her employer of 28 years. A persecution campaign and subsequent dismissal followed. "You try to do the right thing," she says, "and then management says you have an attitude problem." Carroll has not worked in three years. She sees the issue as a power struggle between women and men. "Women are the caretakers. They take the risks, and then they're treated viciously."

There appears to be another important facet of the female perspective. Sandra Adams, an Arizona police dispatcher, recently awarded $250,000 in a whistleblowing case, makes the moral point clear. "It was nice to be vindicated," she says, "but either way, you don't have a choice as to what you do." This sentiment was echoed by every woman interviewed for this article. "My behavior is correct," says Karen Pitts, "and I'd do it again in a heartbeat."

That's impressive when you consider the price these women have paid in the name of moral integrity. So for those considering whistleblowing, here is some advice from those who have been through it.

First, says Lynne Bernabei, you have to look at the particular situation and assess your chances for survival if you blow the whistle. "In 80 percent of cases you're going to be destroyed, or your family's going to be destroyed. That's the reality of the American workplace." Bernabei says that while whistleblowers serve society as "agents of accountability," it is very difficult to protect them. She worries that as more of these experiences are shared, there will be fewer people willing to take the risks. "It takes years and years out of your life. Along the way, you may lose your family, your friends, your job, your sense of community. At the very least, you will be viewed as a disgruntled employee, discredited as someone who can't hold down a job. The harassment is so severe that many people end up with severe psychiatric problems, the most common being Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). At that point, they say you are unbalanced.

"If there's any way to blow the whistle without endangering yourself at work, or putting your family at risk, that route should be pursued. That could mean waiting until after you've left a position to act. In some cases it means leaking information without disclosing yourself as a source. We try to advise people that while it may seem like public whistleblowing is the moral thing to do, you may have just as great an effect without going public."

Linda Bruce counsels others to "know what you're getting into. Talk to someone knowledgeable. There's a lot you can do without actually exposing yourself." To that, Karen Pitts adds, "Have sufficient paper to back you up. Document! The worst thing is being discredited for something you did right. And decide right up front whether you are going to be totally anonymous, or totally public. If you commit, you have to go all the way. Get a good attorney and involve the politicians." Anna Carroll cautions people not to believe too much in the system. For Carolyn Nelson, the key is to seek out someone else who has been through a similar experience.

"Think about the ramifications," she says. "Understand the consequences. You really could lose everything."

That's an awfully big price to pay for truth-telling on the job. But then, as Jackie Brever says, "Maybe someday it will change. In the meantime, at least I won't be a disgrace to my gender."

Elayna Clift, a writer in Potomac, Md., is a frequent contributor to On the Issues. Her book of collected essays, Telling It Like It Is: Reflections of a Not So Radical Feminist, was published last year by KIT, Inc.

FINDING SOMEONE ELSE WHO'S BEEN THROUGH IT

Don Soeken knew about whistleblowers. Back in 1978, Soeken was instrumental in halting the practice of government-forced psychiatric fitness-for-duty exams as a way to get rid of unwanted whistleblowers. (After 1984 hearings, the practice was outlawed.) Once the New York Times picked up the story, Soeken was deluged with calls from others seeking advice and moral support. In response, he founded Integrity International, an international foundation providing support to whistleblowers in corporate and government institutions. The foundation works with grassroots and national public interest groups, Congressional committees, the media, and activists to change illegal and repressive policies and "to create a more free and just society."

"Support groups are crucial to keep going," Soeken says. "You have to keep in mind who's doing the right thing. But you can't take on the role of Inspector General," he continues. "You need to get information to them. A whistleblower's role is to point to the truth, not to be confrontation. In a corporation, you will always be fired. In government, you will be pummeled to death until they get rid of you."

Soeken warns whistleblowers about the legal system. "It's a cruel hoax. Unless you have the best attorney, plenty of documentation, and lots of money, you're going to lose."

In his "Ten Steps for Effective Whistleblowing," Soeken, who is a social worker with a Ph.D. in Human Development, counsels people to talk to family and friends, determine what the alternatives are, seek the counsel of trusted peers, discuss the situation with a good attorney, document all relevant facts, leak the information if possible, and "be on your best behavior."

Integrity International also maintains an Assistance Fund. The Fund provides for counseling and other support, and for technical assistance. It maintains a national network of lawyers and is in the process of setting up support groups around the country. For more information, contact Don Soeken at 6215 Greenbelt Rd., Suite 102, College Park, MD 20740. Phone: 301-953-7338.

-E.C.
Sonja Blutgarten scoops another glob of oatmeal into her four-year-old son's dinner bowl. Her other son, age six, wolfs his down by stirring in three packets of sugar. Their food stamps are spent; for the next six days, oatmeal will be their breakfast, lunch and dinner — in globs, in syrups, in baked-hard biscuits. After dinner, she dresses them quickly in second-hand clothes, both wearing Keds with holes in their soles. They rush down to San Francisco's Tenderloin for the low-income women's meeting where she and 15 other poor women are planning their next protest.
Without resources, a poor woman and her daughter find temporary refuge in a battered women’s shelter.
A homeless mother and child in a hotel room. The hotel is often used to house homeless welfare recipients such as they.
Out of breath, Angel Hatfield and her five-year-old daughter hurry into the meeting late because the utilities company cut off her electricity. Any unexpected change — an extra $10 spent for gas — means juggling a $500 monthly Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) check that’s already stretched to support her daughter who suffers from emotional problems. One woman announces that she must leave the meeting early to reserve a bed at the St. Anthony’s homeless shelter down the street.

Gathered around a bare desk in a makeshift office, Sonja gives everyone a handwritten agenda. Something crashes on a table. Two police cars, with sirens blaring, rush by. The women, a mix of Black, Caucasian and Latina, barely notice anything as they vote to attend a rally opposing the state’s budget cuts in education, welfare and public housing.

Already the women have protested at five companies, each of which contributed up to $50,000 to California’s Governor Pete Wilson’s November initiative that cuts welfare benefits by 25 percent. A month earlier they had joined other poor women’s groups and sent hundreds of letters to the manufacturer of Norplant, the new birth control device which is surgically inserted and removed. Wilson passed legislation to have Medi-Cal pay for Norplant insertion into welfare mothers. The women argue that subsidizing one decision — not to have children — over their right to make reproductive choices is economically coercive.

Their meeting breaks up at 6:00 p.m., before darkness settles into San Francisco’s highest crime neighborhood.
and the hookers take over the street corners. Though these women live in this drug-infested neighborhood in run-down apartments and housing projects, they rarely venture out at night.

Sonja gathers up her boys and scurries to catch the bus. Ever since her husband left her two years ago, she has lived in San Francisco on welfare. But after spending a year and a half in transitional housing, something clicked. "I started to see that there was no affordable permanent housing," said Sonja. "I was stuck and the system was working against me." She describes this realization as an epiphany — a moment when she saw that her situation — no home, no money, no food for her two kids — was not all her own fault. With two small children and little education, Sonja found scant support from state social services. She got a job at Taco Bell for $3.85 an hour with no health benefits. After paying for childcare, rent and utilities, she had less money than if she'd stayed on welfare.

With the number of people living in poverty growing at a faster rate than ever before in America, the hardest hit are women, who, like Sonja, are single mothers. Women now represent 62 percent of those living with poverty level incomes and still earn, on average, 60 cents for every dollar earned by a man. Over the last decade, the number of children living in single parent families has increased from nine to 13 million. Fifty-four percent of all children in families headed by women live in poverty. This trend is likely to continue as both presidential candidates have shifted further right, ignoring governmental programs designed to help the poor.

But like Sonja and Angel, growing numbers of women are trying to move out of poverty by taking control over their lives in an emerging new women's movement, a Poor Women's Survival Movement. Across the country, in groups like the Welfare Warriors in Milwaukee, Coalition for Better Human Needs in Boston, The Coalition for Welfare Rights in New York, Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP) in California — low-income women are breaking out of their isolation and learning strategies to survive and to challenge governmental policies aimed at regulating their lives.

For most of their lives, these women have been labeled as poor. And most have felt alone because the contemporary women's movement neglected this segment of the female population as it focused on issues irrelevant to their lives — entrance into professional schools and male-dominated careers instead of adequate food, shelter, healthcare and childcare.

For poor women, the contemporary women's movement has been about assimilation into the male-dominated structure, a structure that doesn't accommodate non-professional working mothers. The more privileged women worked by choice, not out of need. As a result, the measurement of success for fighting back, the theme for the gathering. Scraping together money for transportation through bake sales, car washes, church donations and grants, poor women of all races saved for months to purchase a bus or plane ticket. Some came as far away as the Dominican Republic and Florida. One young Latina woman from East Los Angeles collected money by selling tortillas to neighbors. After raising $78, she and her three children climbed aboard a Greyhound and traveled eight hours to Oakland. For many, it was their first opportunity to travel, leave their communities, and discover that, across America, there are many women living exactly like them.

Most of these women have ingrained into their thinking that they are to blame for being poor. They are quick to view themselves as bad women, failures or dependent. But when they break out of their isolation by organizing with similarly situated women, they begin to see their "personal problems" as institutional ones. And as leaders making decisions about their own lives in a movement, they become more powerful actors. As leaders, their anger and frustration are funneled into protests, letter writing, running candidates for office, (like Dottie Stevens, a welfare recipient and mother of four who ran for governor of Michigan in 1991), and pulling together a convention.

An angry voice echoes through the hallways of the school where the women have gathered. There's a rawness to it, something that grabs your full attention because it's so serious, so desperate. A large Black woman wearing an army coat stands under the banner, crying, shouting, telling the audience about her life eating 67-cent loaves of bread in order to pay the rent, falling to the floor when the bullet starts flying, worrying that her young daughter will be raped or sexually abused. The women in the audience, mostly in their 20s and 30s, listen, nod in agreement, and shout encouragement to her. Behind her, a long line of poor women wait to speak. Again and again, women shout, "I'm not going to take it anymore. I've been silent too long. I am not a second-class citizen. We are raising our kids in war zones."

There was a national welfare rights movement in the 1960s, but this is different. In the '60s movement, men dominated its leadership and it was exclu-
sively focused on welfare. "Now in the 1990s, you can no longer separate problems associated with being a woman and those involving living in poverty," said Mimi Abromowitz, a professor at Hunter College School of Social Work, who sits in the rows of metal chairs listening. "The problems that are being faced have a lot to do with being a woman." Not just African-American women but all women, says Abromowitz, gesturing toward the convention participants who are from all races. By defining welfare as a woman's issue, new connections form to combat poverty and violence against women, sex discrimination at work, and how society defines work.

At the conference itself, those connections start to emerge. One after another speaks of domestic violence. "After being beaten real bad, I left, taking my children with me," said one woman from Wisconsin. "We started out in a shelter because I had no money and couldn't get a job because I never graduated from high school." As these women's lives reveal, half of all women in homeless shelters are there because they are escaping violence. Later, the women vote to support Senator Joseph Biden's bill to end violence against women. They vote to set up meetings with schools to incorporate self-defense in physical education classes. Every woman pledges to talk with 10 women by June 30th about the connection between poverty and abuse.

The next day, the women finalize strategies for survival — supporting national healthcare, obtaining job skills, surviving under budget cuts, fighting sterilization abuse, electing poor women to office and planning their August '92 convention in Detroit. On Sunday, the last day of the convention, Ethel Long Scott addresses the entire crowd to explain where the movement goes from here. Above her head, Scott waves the seven pages of strategies that these women have drafted to solve poor women's issues. "We are moving now," she shouts and the women cheer, hugging each other. On those seven pink pages, everyone agreed that the welfare system needs major reforms. Benefits and the minimum wage must be raised above the poverty line. And once a woman finds a job, she should be allowed to stabilize there before cutting off her grant money and health benefits. But first, they must stop the states' cuts in welfare benefits.

The following week, a group of women from the convention are protesting at the San Francisco Hilton where Governor Wilson holds a fundraiser for his initiative to cut welfare benefits. The governor refuses to talk to the 200 women shouting outside the hotel, so 11 women move into the lobby where they are immediately arrested, cited and later assigned a trial date in September. On the national news that night, anchor-man Peter Jennings talks about the "Hilton 11," and shows a news clip. In the background, the viewer hears, "I'm getting arrested for wanting to feed my kids."

Wearing her two-piece suit, Martha Davis, an attorney with the National Organization for Women (NOW-LEDF) Legal Defense and Education Fund pulls out her legal papers. She is planning a legal suit in conjunction with the NAACP and Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund against Wisconsin's, New Jersey's and Maryland's plan to reduce a welfare mother's benefits when she
The central myth behind the cuts is that poor women receiving welfare are only having kids to receive larger welfare checks," explains Davis. According to Davis' theory, this is a discriminatory stereotype which violates federal law. Her statistics show that the average family receiving welfare has only two children, and that 90 percent of welfare mothers have three children or less. Nor is there any connection between benefit levels and number of children. Another myth is that welfare recipients are lazy. A study conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research shows that at least 40 percent of women on welfare already combine work with welfare. And, almost unanimously, welfare mothers want to work, but when there are jobs, they often don't pay a living wage. Worse, they lose Medicaid benefits — for someone with small children, this can be more valuable than AFDC or food stamps.

Martha was hired by NOW-LDEF a year ago when NOW slowly started to become interested in poor women's issues. One of the largest and best-known feminist organizations, NOW traditionally has given priority to achieving sexual equality, rather than acting on economic or racial issues. But as more middle-income women slip into the ranks of the lower income, NOW is reorganizing its priorities. Although more women now work, the majority still work in service and clerical jobs where pay is lowest. As a result, the basic motivation that inspired the modern women's movement 20-plus years ago — to assimilate into the male-dominated structure — is changing. Issues that poor women have always faced are now being confronted by more women.

"We are in the midst of a huge social revolution in this country," said Scott. "People who thought they were in the middle income are finding how close they live to the edge." Adds Scott, very few families now are not affected by drugs, joblessness, alcohol abuse or battering of women.

In response to these changes, NOW has chosen to work with poor women's organizations by increasing communication, supporting their work and providing resources. At NOW's annual convention in June, members passed a resolution mandating that all its local branches provide technical assistance and support to poor women's organizations in their area. In April, NOW paid for plane fares to Washington, D.C. so that poor women were represented in the reproductive rights march. And the organization donated money to the Poor Women's Convention.

The greatest obstacle to this new movement is resources, says Mimi Abramowitz. "It's difficult to communicate with each other and keep the movement moving without phones, fax machines, cars, money for plane fare." But with support from traditional women's organizations they can fight just a little harder and longer.

During the next day, Angel's house is filled with kids who are dropped off by other mothers who work part-time or just need a break. "I never ask for money from them," said Angel. "It's just something we do for each other." Most of the day, the children play indoors because the apartment building where Angel lives is surrounded by abandoned buildings with windows shattered and dark.

If she gets into a certain program, the school will provide childcare while Angel is in class. As the children run around the apartment, Angel pulls out her GED test book and tries to study. She's planning to take the test soon so that she can go to college. She wants to do something in the healthcare field. If she gets into a certain program, the school will provide childcare while Angel is in class.

When Angel wakes up the next day, she begins to study for the GED again. Around 4:30, Angel takes three of the kids downstairs to meet their mothers. One of the mothers walks up, looking sharp in a dress, hose and pumps. She just got a job as a secretary after finishing typing school at the local community college. She takes her child and walks out of the neighborhood to a safer part of town.

That night, from the kitchen table, Angel makes phone calls, reminding the women about tomorrow's demonstration. She listens to their problems, comforting some and complaining to others. Then, with one last hour of the day before climbing into bed next to Sarah, Angel flips on her small 1950s' GE radio and begins, again, to study for the GED.

Nina Schuyler is a journalist who writes about legal and social issues. Her new book, The Unemployment Survival Handbook, is due next Spring.
BREAST CANCER & THE BODY POSITIVE
the doctor said:

“It’s nothing to worry about.”
GOT TO GET THIS OFF MY CHEST

SHARING IN THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR TREATMENT AND RECOVERY MAY BE THE DECISION THAT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

By Matuschka

In the 1970s, when I was in my early 20s, I spent a good amount of time in front of a camera as a fashion model. I was one of the few models of that era who had large enough breasts to show cleavage for swimsuit and lingerie campaigns without taping or retouching.

During the 1980s, I began to take an interest in photographing my body, particularly my torso. With the help of a tripod and mirror, I became both the photographer and the subject of my photographic compositions. These pictures, incorporating my "Ruin" series in which I went to abandoned buildings and shot nude photos of myself on location, were published in many photography magazines.
On an operating table in New York in the Spring of 1991, I was told that I had breast cancer. When I realized my figure would be changed permanently as a result of the mastectomy, it was only natural for me to adapt my work to fit this condition. I spent several days documenting my body before, during and after the operation by camera and on film. Much of this footage will be used in the feature documentary "Part Time God" to be released this Fall. In October, Fox Five aired a special program on breast cancer in which my posters addressing this health issue were featured.

AN ARTIST FACES BREAST CANCER
When a woman learns that she has breast cancer, she quickly discovers that the options, treatments, opinions, causes and theories are so broad, wide and conflicting that making decisions is a confusing and difficult process — particularly since many of these decisions are irreversible.

The first change I made was my diet. I switched to macrobiotics and embraced the strict healing diet prescribed for cancer patients. Learning macrobiotics — a lifestyle and diet primarily consisting of grains, vegetables, seaweed, beans and soups — distracted me from cancer while improving my health, appearance and state of mind. I felt this was the one thing I could do to increase my chances of survival without assistance from the medical world. According to macrobiotic theory, food would be my medicine, and since my tumor had already been removed by the biopsy, I didn't need one, or two, breasts taken off.

My tumor was less than a centimeter, which is considered an early stage of cancer and is usually treated with a lumpectomy followed by radiation. Instead, I opted for a mastectomy followed by six months of chemotherapy. This wasn't a decision prescribed by doctors — it was a personal choice influenced by the memory of my mother dying of breast cancer at the age of 41. Unlike most patients who become nauseated, weak, sick, bloated, and suffer from various other side-effects from chemotherapy, none of this happened with me. I attributed my strength and tolerance to my new diet.

PHYSICIAN OR MAGICIAN?
Before my operation, my doctor asked me if I wanted a plastic surgeon on site, to install an inflator after my breast was removed.

"An inflator?" I asked.

"Matuschka, an inflator is a small device which is used to stretch the skin after a mastectomy. This helps the body and the plastic surgeon get a better result when an implant is inserted months, or years, later."

"I'm not having a reconstruction."

"You can always change your mind. You have a perfect body to slip in a breast form."

For a moment I thought this was crazy. The implant scandal had just hit the media. We had learned that many of the materials used for these implants were originally intended for upholstery, battle ships, and automobile parts. Annoyed that my surgeon was pushing plastic surgery, I commented sarcastically, "If I'm going to bother putting anything on my chest to replace a missing breast, why not install something useful there, like a camera or a walkman?"

BREAST IN A BOX
In today's society, many women are often influenced by the fashionable trends created and promoted by the media. With cosmetics, clothing, and plastic surgery (to name a few)
IF I'M GOING TO BOTHER PUTTING ANYTHING ON MY CHEST, WHY NOT INSTALL A CAMERA?

Women are taught that a more meaningful and successful life can be procured. A more meaningful life means attracting, and then seducing, the right man. According to these guidelines, a big bust — or at minimum, two breasts — are a requirement for "real" beauty. In the breast-envious 1980s, when the majority of fashion models were having their breasts augmented, many women began to believe that they could only be "desirable" with large breasts. How does this affect women who are facing a diagnosis of breast cancer?

Uncomfortable with the physical and emotional consequences of being "lopsided" after a mastectomy, many women have subjected themselves to lengthy, painful, and frightening operative procedures to build a new breast. Others, feeling the need to return to a normal appearance, wear a prosthesis. It is a woman's right to choose to hide her situation, but this behavior doesn't help to change the attitudes about small-breasted, one-breasted, or no-breasted women in this culture.

MINUS ONE

As I tried to come to terms with my life after my cancer treatment, my sense of recovery evolved. I embraced macrobiotics as a life-long journey—not a death deterrent—and healing, hunger, harmony and happiness began to take over. My illness did not feel like an injustice had been done. I realized quickly that the only real courage is the courage to face yourself, the whole package. But the ease in which I was facing my life did not prepare me for the reaction my mastectomy would bring among men.

After my surgery, I began attracting a lot of men who had no idea that I was missing a breast. I was surprised at how many men I was meeting after my operation, and I attributed this new desirability to my diet, which took 25 pounds off my figure, gave me a natural face-lift, and helped me regain the posture and attitude of my youth.

When I told these men I had had my breast removed, I rarely heard from them again. Even men who had known me for several years surprised me with their reactions to my condition. Although some of them asked me how I was doing, the most common question they asked was: "Are you going to have a reconstruction?" As sculptor Nancy Fried, who also addresses breast cancer in her work, has remarked, I wonder if this society will ever break the tradition of the idealized female figure and create a new norm that looks at every woman's beauty with pride and acceptance no matter what shape her body is in? Will we ever get over the assumption that only flawless bodies are deserving of public display, approval and sexual expression?

RAINBOW AFTER THE STORM

Last spring I celebrated my one-year anniversary, which marks two important changes in my life: Cancer and macrobiotics. Each day I am creating my own life and health. Macrobiotics was an opportunity that helped me become successful in learning to welcome my current circumstances and accept them with love, kindness and compassion. This challenge was exciting because it forged its way into opportunities that uncovered personal beliefs. In this way, my own practice is directly put into my destiny.

When I think about my life and what I've been through, it occurs to me that some might say I've been courageous because I was so open and obvious about my situation. Even though my new body added a different dimension to the dating game, I am happy to report that more than a year after my mastectomy, I am with a man — a macrobiotic man — who loves me very much.

I hope my attitude with breast cancer can serve as an inspiration to the many women who face this disease. For those who wish to lower their chances of a recurrence, perhaps considering a new diet will be a priority. Sharing in the responsibility for your treatment and recovery may be the decision that can save your life. The choice is yours.

Unfortunately, many women continue to be auditioned and inspected each day as they try to make decisions about their appearance and health, while competing with the illusions that the media has created for them. Contending with fantasies that have been designed by the fashion industry, at a time when many women face one of the biggest hardships of all — making a decision to remove or replace a breast — is not an easy call. I look forward to the day Vogue magazine would consider devoting an entire issue to the dozens of beautiful one-breasted women who live all over the world. That just could be a life saver.

Matuschka is an artist, photographer and activist living in New York City.
In 1991, the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine commissioned a survey asking how many women were not yet aware of the connection between diet and breast cancer. The results were dismal: Eighty percent of women had no idea there was any link. Although the federal government funds research on how diet causes breast cancer, it makes little effort to distribute this information to women. Brochures describing how foods affect cancer risk gathering dust at the National Cancer Institute.

What is worse is an active campaign that squeezes the prevention message out of air time and press space. For the past several years, October has been designated National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The President
The things that will destroy us are:
politics without principle;
pleasure without conscience;
wealth without work;
knowledge without character;
business without morality;
science without humanity.

BREAST CANCER
AN EPIDEMIC

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WHAT INCREASES RISK:
- DIETARY FAT: ANIMAL FAT, ESPECIALLY, INCREASES ESTROGEN LEVELS IN THE BLOOD, WHICH IN TURN STIMULATE BREAST CELLS.
- ALCOHOL: EVEN MODEST CONSUMPTION INCREASES RISK.
- RADIATION, INCLUDING X RAYS: OF ALL THE PARTS OF THE BODY, THE BREASTS ARE THE MOST SENSITIVE TO X RAYS.
- TOXIC EXPOSURES: LIMITED EVIDENCE LINKS CHEMICAL EXPOSURES TO BREAST CANCER.
- ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES AND HORMONE REPLACEMENT: THE HIGHER-DOSE HORMONES OF THE PAST CLEARLY INCREASED CANCER RISK. THE DEGREE OF RISK POSED BY CURRENT PRODUCTS IS PROBABLY LESS, BUT MAY STILL BE SIGNIFICANT.
- OVERWEIGHT: INCREASES RISK OF POST-MENOPAUSAL CANCER.
- GENETICS: IN ABOVE FIVE PERCENT OF BREAST CANCER CASES, GENETICS PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE.

*AS WE GO TO PRESS, A JUST-PUBLISHED STUDY FINDS NO LINK BETWEEN DIETARY FAT AND BREAST CANCER.

What the press does not know is that National Breast Cancer Awareness Month is sponsored by a pharmaceutical company: Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI). This firm makes tamoxifen, the anti-estrogen drug used in the treatment of breast cancer. ICI funds the October program and holds approval rights over the materials that are used. And every year since it began, ICI has pushed the message that “early detection is your best protection.” Television news segments spread the message about finding cancer, and lifesaving prevention information is effectively squeezed out. Television and radio stations feel that they are spreading the latest word about breast cancer, not realizing that what they are disseminating is what a single drug company has decided people should hear.

This is not to say that tamoxifen is a bad drug. For women who have cancer, it has a very important role. But with cancer rates going up year after year, and treatments delivering little of what they promise, just finding cancer is not enough. We have no choice but to spread the prevention message far and wide.

It is not only American women who pay a price in the politics of cancer. A tragedy is unfolding in Japan, which, for years, has had the lowest rates of breast cancer in the world. The U.S. State Department has pushed Japan to accept American agricultural products, particularly tobacco and beef. And the influx of American fast-food chains and Western dietary habits has been met by willing victims. Japanese consumption of rice and green and yellow vegetables has dropped dramatically, while meat, poultry and egg consumption has increased eight-fold. Dairy consumption is 15 times higher than in 1950. Fat intake in Japan climbed from nine percent of calories in 1955 to 25 percent in 1987. As the higher-fat diet has increased estrogen levels in Japanese women, the age of puberty has dropped to match that of the United States and Western Europe, which underwent the drop in the age of puberty decades earlier. Meanwhile, breast cancer rates in Japan are climbing steadily.

Research on breast cancer is lost in politics. Cancer advocates have long recognized the need for a large-scale test of dietary methods for preventing breast cancer in American women. But although the cost of treating breast cancer exceeds $50,000 per person, the diet trial was deemed too expensive and has been stalled for years. That may change. A new effort, the Women's Health Initiative, aims to test a modestly low-fat diet for
its effect on cancer incidence. The greatest risk of the trial is that the prescribed diet may be too weak to show results.

Meanwhile, another prevention experiment, putting healthy women on tamoxifen, has rushed forward, much to the manufacturer's delight and despite potential risks. A bill that would have provided $300 million for breast cancer research was proposed earlier this year. It was part of a broad funding bill which, among many other provisions, included fetal tissue research. That made it unacceptable to the antiabortion groups backing the President. On June 23, the entire package was vetoed by President Bush.

Lest we think that cancer research would mean cures in the short run, the experience of AIDS funding is sobering. Researchers have managed to divert AIDS money into projects that are often of no more than academic interest, studying the leaves and twigs while the forest is forgotten and real progress remains stymied. All this will have to change. Because the leading killer of young women is no secret anymore. There is a new push for better treatments, and most importantly, prevention. And a new generation of doctors is fast learning that their patients expect American medicine to embrace not just surgery, chemotherapy and radiation for cancer, but to make vigorous efforts to stop cancer before it starts.

Neal Barnard is President of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, editor-in-chief of the Guide to Healthy Eating, an educational publication of PCRM, and author of three books on health and nutrition, the latest of which will be published by Harmony Press in early 1993.

Free information on breast cancer prevention is available from the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Box 6322, Washington, DC 20015.
BLOOD On Our HANDS

Since 1976, U.S.-funded brutality in tiny East Timor has killed more than 200,000 people.

By John W. Bartlett

"The Indonesians set fire to the dwellings of East Timorese... When [they] protested, the Indonesians turned their guns on them... the troops shot...2000 of the Timorese, some on their knees, others with their hands raised. The victims... included women and children."

—John G. Taylor
Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor

It has been called "the forgotten war." Indonesia's 16-year occupation of East Timor has received little coverage, and that in tiny articles buried deep inside the newspaper, yet this slaughter is worse in per capita terms than has been the case in Pol Pot's Cambodia. Nearly one-third of the population of East Timor, a tiny island nation east of Java and 400 miles north of Australia, has died under a brutal Indonesian oppression which journalist Allan Nairn of The New Yorker calls "nothing less than a calculated mass murder...carried out with American arms."

Timor's plight returned briefly to the world's attention in November 1991, at the Santa Cruz cemetery when Nairn and fellow journalist Amy Goodman of Pacifica Radio survived — barely — the massacre of at least 200 unarmed Timorese mourners by the Indonesian military. "They just walked up in formation, lowered their American-made M-16s, and began firing into the crowd. There was no provocation," reported Goodman.

Such a massacre is the continuation of a murderous policy dependent upon $58 million in American military aid each year, and nearly half a billion dollars in commercial arms sales. The massacre at the cemetery is another event in a long, terrible history.

The known history of Timor — written from a European perspective — begins with a Portuguese colony at Malacca in 1571. The boundary cur...
Currently dividing East (Portuguese) and West (Indonesian) Timor was established through a series of battles between the Portuguese and Dutch in the early 18th century.

The matriarchal and matrilineal society which defined Timor's political and economic system shortly before colonization — a hierarchy of kingdoms, princedoms and clans — was undermined by the expansion of Portuguese influence in the same century. The web of Portuguese commerce reinforced the already-existing system of trade in Timor, although the Timorese continued to have a "strong desire to be freed from the hateful yoke of the Portuguese."

Destruction wrought under Japanese occupation during World War II ceded to a reduction in Dutch colonial power in Indonesia and Indonesian support for Timorese independence — with an eye to future assimilation. The Timorese were more interested in the re-establishment of ancient links between East and West Timor. While Timor's attempts at self-determination were being squashed by the Portuguese, Suharto of Indonesia, who is still president, came into power by coup d'etat in 1966.

Portuguese colonial power was weakened by the 1974 overthrow of the Caetano regime by a leftist coup. Faced suddenly with the need to concretize previously vague notions of self-determination, the Timorese organized into two pro-independence parties, the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) and Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT); a third party, the Apodeti ("the Association for the Integration of Timor into Indonesia") found most of its support in the East-West border area and within the Indonesian military.

In September 1974, the ASDT became the "Frente Revolucionara do Timor Leste Independente" (Fretilin). Realizing the need for a firm agricultural base, Fretilin established a system of farming and distribution cooperatives. An educational system was also established in an attempt to reduce Timor's 93 percent illiteracy rate, with some "fairly dramatic successes."

Fretilin's success with these programs — and later health programs which even included the manufacture of medicines — came from its ability to turn general themes into concrete policies which were both reliable and popular because they were based on experience. Fretilin quickly became the most popular political party, and was joined in coalition by the UDT in early 1975 to move towards "total independence, rejection of integration, repudiation of colonialism, and recognition of decolonization."

Meanwhile, Indonesia had its eye on absorption of East Timor for "security reasons" and for control of the oil discovered in the Timor Sea 10 years earlier. With access to the international press and the support of foreign governments, which little Timor could not muster, Indonesia appealed to the West's Cold War fears of communist expansion, predicting an "imminent Marxist takeover" in East Timor.

Throughout the autumn, Indonesian irregulars struck at towns near the East-West border, burning and looting, only to be beaten back by the well-organized Fretilin forces. After disseminating (false) reports of Fretilin incursions into Indonesian territory, Suharto chose to invade East Timor on December 7, 1975.

The invasion came just one day after a visit to Jakarta by President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The next day, asked for a reaction to the Indonesian attack, Ford replied: "We'll talk about that later." This same approach has been followed by the United States government ever since. Despite the Foreign Assistance Act of 1958 — which prevents the use of U.S. military assistance and material for "external aggression" — and repeated rhetoric about human rights, the United States has ignored its extensive knowledge of the Timor situation for the sake of its own "security concerns."

The story of the first several years of Indonesia's occupation is in one sense a tribute to Fretilin and the determination of the Timorese people. Fretilin, prepared for a full-scale invasion, was supported by a national network based in Timor's many small towns and villages. Their agricultural and education programs continued in areas which they controlled, and an inter-regional medical network was set up to provide care and medicine. Their national communication infrastructure and knowledge of the difficult terrain afforded them several early victories; Indonesian troops, demoralized by their failures, were rotated quickly through their Timor duty.
Ultimately, however, such resistance could not stand up to the vastly superior Indonesian forces. Defeat effectively came in 1980, although Fretilin re-built itself in the early 1980s and inflicted additional damage on the occupying forces. Fretilin still controls a few isolated areas of East Timor, and is currently under the leadership of Xanana Gusmao, who has led the Fretilins for several years.

Indonesia's policy in East Timor is nothing short of genocide. Their rule has seen a litany of mass murders carried out by the military, 90 percent of whose armaments are American. Despite the grand humanitarian show put on for foreign observers (military guidelines suggest that local officials "indicate some building that might serve as a prison...Select some sensible people, particularly among the armed forces, to play the role of prisoners of war who...are being well-treated") and the "Act of Integration" signed by Timorese "delegates" in 1976, more than 200,000 Timorese have died in what the Australian Consul in 1976 to East Timor called "the most serious...contravention of human rights facing the world at this time."

Timorese are killed by the hundreds: Lined up on the beach and shot, dropped from helicopters into the ocean, or rounded up and killed publicly by knife-wielding nanggalas. To read survivors' accounts, one must wonder how anyone could survive such unimaginable atrocities, and what human being or society could commit them:

"The Indonesian troops advanced in groups, organized into long lines, burning crops and villages behind them...simultaneous with naval and aerial bombardment. They captured the majority of the population, but many

continued on pg 55
Now that the media have dubbed 1992 (like 1988 and 1990), the “Year of the Woman,” it would be easy to assume all women in politics are married to either a podium or a presidential candidate. Barbara Bush and Marilyn Quayle vs. Hillary Clinton and Tipper Gore dominated the Republican National Convention (George Bush was even introduced as the “man who married Barbara Bush”) and a chorus line of female candidates topped the Democratic bill earlier in New York. But not all women in the 1992 campaign are tied to marital or electoral apron-strings. In fact, most are not new to politics, and many have never been elected to any office in their lives.

Behind the scenes in both the Democratic and Republican party, women have been policy planners, lawyers, lobbyists, and campaign strategists for far longer than it has taken the media to dub the “year of the woman.” At a time when popular debate is pitting what Dathering Manegold of the *New York Times* called “the retro-mom and retro-granny combo” against a couple of “softened up professional(s),” the backroom women rarely make the headlines. These women have fainter public profiles than the female “leaders” who have attracted mainstream cameras, but they are able to wield comparable power. Unfortunately, their records offer little hope for feminists seeking good things from women in politics. In fact, cheerleaders for the “Year of the Woman” may very well wish many of these behind-the-scenes women would remain obscure.

Consider Deborah Steelman, President Bush’s top advisor on healthcare issues. The same day the Republican National Convention dedicated itself to “The American Spirit and the Nation,” Louis Sullivan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, referred to the U.S. healthcare system as the “gold standard of the
1992: THE YEAR OF WHICH WOMEN?

By Laura Flanders

Healthcare reform — even the limited change proposed by Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton — would put that gem at risk, he said. Prior to his evening address, Sullivan took part in an “issues forum” on health dominated by two women: Marilyn Quayle and Deborah Steelman, the panel’s moderator. While Marilyn’s place in the political limelight is assured by her status as the vice-president’s wife, Steelman, like many women in “shadow government”, has not basked in media spotlight. Indeed, when Mrs. Quayle talked later of women of her generation having “carved out a new public life,” she might well have been talking about the moderator at her side the previous afternoon.

Steelman has had an influence in the formulation of Republican domestic policy for more than a decade. A Washington D.C. lawyer who served Ronald Reagan in the Office of Management and Budget, Steelman took part in the 1988 campaign as a domestic policy advisor to George Bush. Since 1988, she has been a key administration advisor on health concerns, and today she is the president’s principal campaign advisor on health-related issues. In July, 1989, Steelman was appointed by Louis Sullivan to compose and chair a special Advisory Council on Social Security, established to provide “expert” advice and data to policy makers. Between late 1989 and late 1991, when the group disbanded, Steelman’s council issued reports totalling 3,000 pages, including recommendations for reforming the healthcare system and insurance policy. Steelman’s influence as a woman in politics is greater than her low-media profile would suggest. According to a report by the Center for Public Integrity, Steelman, in her position as Chairwoman of the Council on Social Security, “has had access to and reportedly personally briefed the highest officials in the Bush Administration, including Sullivan, Office of Management and Budget Richard Darman, and White House Chief of Staff, Samuel Skinner.” At the same time, however, Steelman was a registered lobbyist representing
health insurance companies — the surefire losers if Capitol Hill approved a switch from private insurance-based healthcare. With a client list that included Aetna, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Missouri and drug companies such as Johnson and Johnson, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, Steelman’s support of the present “gold standard” healthcare system is hardly surprising. Women and men who were outraged by the Bush Administration’s faltering action against silicone-implant manufacturers this spring might have been interested to know that as of November 1991, while serving as the Administration’s top health advisor, Steelman had taken on yet another client and was working simultaneously as a paid lobbyist for the American Society for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, for whom she lobbied on regulatory issues relating to breast implants.

Carla Hills is yet another behind-the-scenes female who made her name long before the so-called Year of the Woman. As the Bush Administration’s Special Trade Representative, Hills is responsible for coordinating and implementing U.S. international trade policy and resolving conflict between the competing interests of U.S. corporations and their contemporaries abroad. Her office has long been considered a well-oiled “revolving door” to foreign lobbying by former office-holders, but Hills holds the dubious distinction of being the first to take on the USTR’s job after having been registered with the justice department as an agent of a foreign corporation.

Hills registered in 1985 as a lobbyist for the Korean conglomerate Daewoo regarding a steel trade deal. She has also represented Canadian lumber companies, Matsushita, Panasonic and Reuters. Hills has vigorously denied that her prior business interests influenced her policy positions since she signed on as USTR, but the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), for which she has been the administration’s spokesperson, seems sure to open new trade possibilities for among others, Canadian lumber and paper firms.

For the record, Hills was one of 20 high-paid consultants hired by developers to obtain HUD grants from 1983 to 1988. Hills reportedly received $138,445, from among others, DRG Funding Corporation, a DC firm that she represented on Capitol Hill. DRG defaulted on their loans at a rate of 44 percent, costing the taxpayers more than $550 million. “I had better access than some,” Hills told congressional investigators, referring to her personal meetings with HUD Secretary Samuel Pierce on behalf of her clients, but she argued strenuously that she had “never had a hint of fraud or wrongdoing from HUD.”

Republicans aren’t the only ones with well-placed women holding questionable records in their ranks. Bill Clinton’s campaign staff has relied on Anne Wexler and Paula Stern since long before the candidate received the Democratic Party’s nomination. Stern, who advises Clinton on economic policy, worked with the International Trade Commission from 1978 to 1987, the last four years as the Commission’s chairwoman. According to Charles Lewis, author of America’s Frontline Trade Officials, Stern testified before the ITC as an expert on behalf of the Japanese Display Industry: “Stern was also hired to do economic analysis by a group of U.S. steel users who were opposed to quotas on steel imports. Her analysis supported the case for unlimited steel imports.”

Anne Wexler, head of a public affairs consulting unit of the public relations firm Hill and Knowlton, is just one Clinton campaign advisor with significant Bush-related ties. A public relations assistant to former president Jimmy Carter, Wexler spent most of the 1980s supporting Republican policy on free trade with Mexico and netting high fees for her high-ranking influence. According to Pat Choate, author of Agents of Influence, Wexler got a generous share of the bipartisan money made on the $6.6 billion takeover of the entertainment conglomerate MCA by Matsushita Electrical Industrial Company in the fall of 1990. Called in to lessen anti-Japanese reaction, Wexler netted healthy sums, says Choate, along with Richard Strauss, a Democratic consultant and Howard Baker, former GOP Senate Majority Leader (both MCA board members). With advisors like Stern and Wexler it is hardly surprising that the Clinton trade program looks so strikingly similar to Bush’s.

The records of these high-ranking women inside both the Clinton- and the Bush-team camps expand and complicate the profile of women in politics in 1992 — the Year of the Woman. Not all women in politics are campaigners like Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois, popularly represented as a “servant of the people” (“This victory is not mine,” she told her supporters, after her victory in the primaries, “It’s yours”); or self-deprecating den mothers (“I’m not here to give a speech,” said Barbara Bush before she spoke to the Astrodome audience this August). Nor are they all sly vixen schemers: George Bush’s deputy campaign manager Mary Matalin was dragged across media coals for her “sleazy” attack on the Democrats; Torie Clarke, her press secretary, was pilloried in The Village Voice for her “cattiness” condemning Clinton.

Nor are all females fodder, as The New York Times would have it with their headline “Women Get Into the Political Football — as the Ball.” Some women have been running with the political ball for many years. Amidst all the enthusiasm over the fact that more women are running for national office in 1992 than ever before, women like Wexler, Hills, Steelman and many others outside of the media spotlight have been pursuing careers and politics for themselves and their well-paying clients for more than a decade. The fact that their influence has coincided with an almost unadulterated decline in the standard of women’s lives — both nationally and globally — reveals the real “women’s issue,” the one the media doesn’t hype. Women’s years can come and go — it is which women, doing what, that counts.

Laura Flanders is host of “Undercurrents” on WBAI Radio in New York City.
An Update On:

THE STRANGE CASE
OF MARK CURTIS

By Fred Pelka

In Spring 1991, On the Issues published an article on the case of Mark Stanton Curtis, who was convicted in September 1988 of physically and sexually assaulting a 15-year-old African-American girl on the enclosed front porch of her home in Des Moines, Iowa. Curtis, 29, and a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), was arrested by two police officers responding to a 911 call placed by the victim's 11-year-old brother, who witnessed a part of the assault. Pushing their way onto the porch, the two policemen saw Curtis, his pants down around his legs, attempting to flee into the back of the house, while his victim told them, "He just raped me." Since then, the SWP has built an international campaign to free Mark Curtis, claiming he was "framed-up" because of his work as a political activist.

That Curtis, a college-educated white man, was convicted by an all-white jury is an indication of the overwhelming evidence against him. And yet, by misrepresenting the facts, exaggerating Curtis' career as an activist, and focusing on the police beating he received several hours after his arrest, the SWP has managed to gather endorsements and financial support from thousands of political activists and celebrities around the world. Many of those listed as supporters of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee are Ed Asner, Coretta Scott King, officers and chapters of NOW, several officials of the African National Congress (ANC), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Pete Seeger, William Kunstler, and dozens of union locals. The success of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee raises many disturbing questions. As I asked last spring: "What does it mean when so many 'politically correct' people are willing to take, at face value, the word of a white man convicted of rape over that of his Black victim?"

In reaction to that article, a counter-campaign, coordinated by the Boston branch of the NAACP, has sent open letters and information packets to hundreds of Curtis supporters, asking that they withdraw their endorsements. The packets are now circulating across the country and in Canada and the Philippines. "In some cases," writes Mary Bertin, chairperson of the Civil Rights Committee of the Boston branch of the NAACP, "the Defense Committee has simply told potential endorsers that Mark Curtis was a victim of police brutality — without mentioning that he was convicted for the assault and rape of a child. In other cases, the Defense Committee has said that Mark was framed. In neither instance has the Defense Committee told its endorsers the truth." The NAACP packet includes the OTI article, a letter from the Des Moines NAACP stating that, contrary to what some endorsers may have been told, that organization at no time has supported efforts to free Mark Curtis, and several flyers by the Boston-based group Men to End Sexual Assault (of which this writer is a member). "The efforts of the Defense Committee" says Bertin "are both racist and sexist. They perpetuate the worse falsehoods about rape: That persons of certain class or political stature could not possibly commit rape, and that the rights of the rapist dwarf those of the victim — especially if the victim is a person of color."

The result, according to Bertin, has been an immediate and widespread questioning of the Curtis campaign. Among the earliest Curtis endorsers to withdraw their support were writers Howard Zinn and Daniel B. Schirmer, Robert Meeropol (the son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg), professor and political activist Gil Green, historian and author Herbert Aptheker, author Margaret Randall, Massachusetts ACLU president John Roberts, and union activists Brian Lang and Meizhu Lui. New letters denouncing the Curtis campaign continue to arrive at the Boston NAACP office.

Says Walter Brooks, president of the Ossining New York chapter of the NAACP, "I think I made a good move [by disendorsing]. The evidence presented by sister Bertin is incredible, and there's no doubt in my mind that this Curtis campaign is phoney."

In response, the Socialist Workers Party has attacked Bertin and the NAACP, this author, the stop-rape movement, and anyone else questioning the Curtis campaign. For example, the SWP has identified Larry W. Carter, president of Des Moines NAACP, Marti Anderson, director of Polk County...
Iowa Victim Witness Services at the time of the trial, and Ila Plascencia, former vice-president of the midwest section of the League of United Latin American Citizens, as joining “an array of police and city officials who have waged a political campaign to try to make the frame-up stick from the day Curtis was arrested.”

Greg McNaghten, a United Transportation Union official in Seattle who has distributed a report critical of the Curtis campaign, has been denounced as being part of a “right-wing shift in politics.” The only “evidence” cited in these attacks is that all these people oppose the effort to free Mark Curtis.

The SWP has devoted special attention to the stop-rape movement. The July 17, 1992 issue of their weekly The Militant even makes the claim that the movement “does not exist.” This echoes similar attacks made in the past, for example, that Des Moines anti-rape activists “work most closely with the cops” and seek rape convictions against men whether or not they are guilty. The Militant, in response to McNaghten’s report, goes so far as to ridicule the idea that 11 year olds such as the survivor’s younger brother should be believed in a sex abuse case. “Is an 11 year old such an inherently reliable witness, as McNaghten would have us believe? Hardly, as some recent cases involving charges of child abuse have demonstrated.”

The survivor of Curtis’ attack, as always, is held up to be mistaken, stupid, or lying — all in an attempt to convince potential supporters and donors that Mark Curtis isn’t guilty.

Curtis is due for parole this November, and the SWP is again pulling out all stops, requesting that its supporters write letters urging his release, and using the event for further fundraising. In or out of prison, Curtis will remain a controversial figure, and a symbol of how far we need to go to root out racism and sexism in our communities.

These excerpts are taken from the letters of former Curtis endorsers announcing the withdrawal of their support:

“We support Mr. Curtis as a victim of police brutality. However, that issue and the issue of his conviction of rape are totally separate. On the rape issue, we’re more concerned with defending the victims of sexual assault, particularly women of color, who have historically received no justice in this kind of case...There are more cases of injustice...that merit national and international mobilization — the Mark Curtis case is not one of them.”

—Meizhu Lui

“It was clearly my responsibility to investigate the facts of the Curtis crime before endorsing the campaign. Had Curtis been African-American and the victim white, I doubt that I and many other endorsers would have so readily accepted the Defense Committee’s accusation of frame-up without looking into the facts first. The Defense Committee has effectively played into racism that not only infects our society, but also infects those of us who say we are committed to combating it.”

—Brian Lang

“As a Latino man, and as an activist who has worked on police brutality issues, I have a moral imperative to question the actions, and the political position, of your committee on this case... The fact that allegations of rape were denied or down-played by your [SWP] committee make me strongly question the group’s integrity.”

—Juan Vargas

“I feel that a young African-American woman — really a child, aged 15 — has been rendered voiceless and invisible in this case. It now seems there is compelling evidence that she was raped by Curtis. I feel that I, as a sister in struggle, have been lied to...In your condescension and withholding, you have hurt everyone connected with the Curtis case. You have also weakened our movement because we will certainly be more hesitant in our future support.”

—Margaret Randall

“It appears that the 15-year-old Black girl is not only a victim of rape but of over-identification with the very real issues of political frame-ups and police brutality. I believe the issue is not ‘left’ and ‘right’ but right and wrong.”

—William E. Alberts, Ph.D.

For more information about the Mark Curtis case, readers can contact Ms. Mary Bertin, chairperson, Civil Rights Committee, Boston branch NAACP, 451 Massachusetts Ave., Boston, MA 02118 or call 617-267-1058.
WORSHIPPING A GRAVEN IMAGE

ANNA FREUD: The Dream of Psychoanalysis by Robert Coles (Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA; $19.95 hardcover)

Robert Coles has written a short book about Anna Freud. The publishers promote it as a biography though it is really a personal memoir. In either case, it conceals its subject and reveals its author. The text is an extended self-canceling refrain: It calls upon us to believe in its subject's virtue through a relentless barrage of praise. Meanwhile, Coles has omitted Anna Freud's actual and often vainglorious struggles to overcome her share of demons and human weaknesses.

The result is the opposite of the author's intention. We are neither educated, nor convinced of the subject's goodness. Instead we become curious about the author's hidden motives. Coles has launched a character enhancement campaign on behalf of Anna Freud. A frequent tactic he uses is to take a commonplace remark and exaggerate its brilliance. Her every word is viewed through the lens of his idealization. For example, he describes a talk she gave: "I was...struck by the directness of the speaker [Freud]. Her willingness to share her knowledge...in an accessible manner. Each sentence seemed a perfectly formed jewel, sparkling and delightful to contemplate." Following her talk, Coles asks her a question about one of his own patients. Her jewel of an answer was, "Who can ever foretell what a child will be like in the time ahead?"

The challenge for the reviewer is not to minimize or diminish Anna Freud's life and contribution, but Coles can't find it in his heart to consider any of her negative aspects. Fortunately, she has two other biographers: Richard Dyer who wrote Her Father's Daughter, The Work of Anna Freud, and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl who authored Anna Freud. While Dyer's book sidesteps the problematical questions in Freud's life by attending only to her professional contributions, in Young-Bruehl's stunning work we learn of Anna Freud's struggles to overcome her inner "nice stories" which hid sexual fantasies and ultimately an authentic subjectivity.

Among Freud's problems that biographers must grapple with is her relationship with her father which became her glory and her sacrifice. She devoted her entire life to the person of her father, to his work and legacy and to the cause of psychoanalysis. She seems never to have regretted this and, moreover, she counted herself successful and lucky. While she was more than willing to pay the price, including waiting until her mother's death when Anna was 43 years old to have her own home, and never having a family of her own, it is no disservice to her if we know and appreciate the cost to her of her father complex.

Coles is not unmindful of this but he is unwilling to consider the problem. For example, he brings up the matter of her analysis with her father. He correctly places it in the context of the time and notes that we now treat the transfer differently than we did in the '20s. Nevertheless, it is possible to examine the problems this analysis posed for her without indulging in the cheap Freud-bashing others have found so convenient. And so Coles writes, "Anna Freud's life might have been different had she worked with an analyst other than her father. Her particular challenge was how to use successfully the unique psychoanalytic experience she did receive as the particular analysis and she happened to be." In other words, if she didn't complain, far be it from Coles to do so.

If we undertake to understand the dark side as well as the light side of Anna Freud, we then can fully appreciate her exemplary life. Her contributions to psychoanalysis, child psychiatry, psychoanalytic training and education were often theoretically elegant and eminently practical. We need only remember her work on ego defenses, especially the mental process she called "identification with the aggressor," or her developmental psychology of normal childhood among the many theoretical contributions that secure her place in psychoanalytic theory. At the same time her work in Vienna and London to establish nurseries, clinics and educational facilities for poor, working class, bombed out and beleaguered children attests to a passion for doing good in the world.

Robert Coles is America's most eminent and humane child psychoanalyst. His work with children from all cultures is a monument to his own dream of psychoanalysis and is a true tribute to Anna Freud. I take the word "dream" in the title to refer to the wish embedded in a dream. Surely the dream of psychoanalysis is to know the fullness of the human condition, to dispel the myths and slanders which oppress us and to come to an understanding of our shared humanity through an appreciation that we all have sexual, aggressive, crazy, unconscious aspects.

Anna Freud wasn't running for sainthood, but maybe Robert Coles is. Is that perhaps the latent content of his dream? Why else would a psychoanalyst think it a compliment to render someone without the full complement of her human attributes?

—Leslye Russell

Leslye Russell, M.F.C.C., is a psychotherapist in Berkeley, California.

"AN UNSPEAKABLE SADNESS"

NATIVE AMERICAN TESTIMONY: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492-1992 edited by Peter Nabokov (Viking, New York; $25 hardcover)

STOLEN CONTINENTS: The Americas Through Indian Eyes Since 1492 by Ronald Wright (Houghton Mifflin, Boston; $22.95 hardcover)

The quincentennial of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas has intensified the debate around who has what to celebrate. These two books, the first by an anthropologist, and the second by an author and travel writer, are invaluable aids and additions to the discussion.

Given the partial overlap of subject matter, there's surprisingly little duplication; the books complement each other nicely. While Nabokov provides a complete overview of the assorted schemes, deals, outright assaults, and well-intentioned blunders that separated Native Americans from most of their country and much of their culture — together with an appalling loss of life — Wright demonstrates in some depth the impact of each new turn of the screw on a handful of nations: Aztec, Maya, Inca, Cherokee and Iroquois.

Set within the comprehensive outline of a long stretch of history, the firsthand accounts in Native American Testimony bring home the truth of human events,
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however, sweeping or cataclysmic. They happen to people. There are some famous quotations here, including the sardonic suggestion put forward by the Sioux Red Dog to treaty commissioners bent on removing Indians from their homelands — "I think you had better put the Indians on wheels; then you can run them about whenever you wish" — and the heartbreaking surrender speech of the Nez Perce Chief Joseph. The words of ordinary people, some of them anonymous, are equally likely to stay with the reader. These accounts range from the matter-of-fact to the humorous, and from the indignant to the sorrowful: An anonymous Omaha, speaking of his native Nebraska, says, "The living creatures are gone. I see the land desolate and I suffer an unspeakable sadness. Sometimes I wake in the night, and I feel as though I should suffocate from the pressure of this awful feeling of loneliness."

Along the way, the collection makes it clear that Native Americans knew all along that they were being shamelessly defrauded on a regular basis, and also that redress was not available to them. "We are not children," the Otoe, Medicine Horse, declared, futilely, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1873. The notion that Native Americans had no idea what selling or leasing land rights meant, while comforting, is a romantic fiction: Rights in hunting, fishing, farming, and foraging territory were held out not only by groups, but also by individuals and families, and were as jealously guarded from generation to generation as any European seigneur's. Modern-day poverty among Indians is not due to some mysterious inability to adapt to change; it is an inevitable result of policies designed to transfer Native American wealth — not only land, but everything on it and in it — from Native to white Americans, with little or no compensation.

Here, too, is evidence of the indomitability of the human spirit. From a low of 237,000 at the turn of the century, the Indian population in the United States has risen to nearly 2 million, counting Eskimos and Aleuts: Neither systematic efforts to destroy the people nor equally determined attempts to obliterate their cultures have succeeded. In the mid-1700s, Iroquois parents rejected a proposal that their sons be raised in white ways — a foreshadowing of the 19th-century boarding schools that punished Indian children for speaking their own languages — and offered instead to train some English boys "in what really was the best manner and make men of them." Two hundred years later, when the commissioner of Indian affairs wondered aloud: "What can we do to Americanize the Indian," an Indian elder shot back that Indians were more worried about "how we can Americanize you. We have been working at that for a long time."

Stolen Continents is both more dramatic as narrative and more polemical than Native American Testimony. Ronald Wright takes special pains, for example, to deflate the fantasy of a "white God" myth that paved the way for European conquest. By Wright's account, only Montezuma, the "inscrutable and mystical" ruler of the Aztecs, imagined that Hernan Cortes might actually be Quetzalcoatl—the plumed serpent god — and even he was quickly disillusioned. Other Indians who came in contact with the Spaniards were as deeply impressed by the invaders' freakish hairiness, barbaric manners, and poor, if not nonexistent, personal hygiene as they were by the newcomers' horses and weapons. Inca investigators described them as "lazy robbers" and "bearded thieves."

The role of disease in the conquest of the Americas is a recurring theme. European and African diseases — smallpox, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, yellow fever, cholera, malaria — wrought on the long-isolated peoples of the Americas a grim mirror image of the Europeans' freakish hairiness, barbaric manners, and poor, if not nonexistent, personal hygiene as they were by the newcomers' horses and weapons. Inca investigators described them as "lazy robbers" and "bearded thieves."

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ON THE ISSUES WINTER 1992

New York City.

“AMBIGUOUS LIVES: Free Women of Color in Rural Georgia, 1789-1879” by Adele Logan Alexander

A disturbing third caste

Vajra Kilgour is a writer who lives in New York City.

“A DISTURBING THIRD CASTE”

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ON THE ISSUES WINTER 1992
descended from a free woman of color named Susan Hunt who was born in 1810. Susan Hunt and her descendents were classified as “free” by virtue of the legal status of their mothers. Around the turn of the 20th century one of Hunt’s granddaughters, Adella Hunt Logan, became a friend and associate of W. E. B. DuBois. She was an activist for women’s rights and a noted educator who taught at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and championed the rights of disenfranchised African-American women in the rural South.

The women whose lives are chronicled in Ambiguous Lives were often born from the unions of “free” Native American or mulatto women and Black or mulatto men (some slave and some free). Others were fathered by white men who often took their families of color into their households. They all had some Anglo-Saxon heritage, often looked more white than Black and always existed in precarious and marginalized family and kinship relationships with the people around them. They lived in small rural farmlands of middle Georgia where their bloodlines could not protect them from the prevailing oppression of a slave society. Although the Hunt women seemed to have escaped these restrictions, the laws governing free people of color mandated that they be attached to white legal guardians in antebellum Georgia. They could be arrested and sold into slavery at any time if they were found not to be employed by whites, and their ability to inherit property from their white kinsmen was often challenged in the courts.

Free women of color led relatively privileged lives compared to Black or mulatto slave women who were often forced into sexual relations and childbearing by the same white men who lived with their more advantaged “free” neighbors. I could not help wondering about the nature of relations between these two castes of women, living as they did in such contradictory circumstances and close physical proximity to one another. This question is largely unanswered in this book, leaving much work to be done by other chroniclers of African-American women’s lives. In the closing paragraphs of Ambiguous Lives, Alexander throws out a challenge and invites other historians to pick up the thread of these and similar stories to “reclaim and reconstruct the lives of many more women, free persons of color and other nonwhite Americans.” Through this ambitious piece of scholarship, the voices of Susan Hunt, her daughters and granddaughters call out to us from the farms and fields of rural middle Georgia. Their whispers now reverberate in our consciousness, teaching us more about ourselves.

—Evelyn Crawford

Studs Terkel calls race “the American obsession.” Like other obsessions, this one serves a variety of destructive functions: It distracts us, taking attention from other matters, and distorts our ability to see, hear, think and act in a rational manner.

Terkel’s latest book, Race, gets to the heart of this obsession. In a series of 84 interviews, this master oral historian gets a wide cross section of people—Black, white, Asian and Hispanic, immigrant and U.S. born, male and female, young and old—not only to speak about the politics of race, but to delve, in sometimes painfully blunt terms, into the personal effects of skin color on daily life.

The book is amazingly free of jargon and dogma. Never once does Terkel mount a soapbox for a tirade against prejudice. Instead, he plants the seeds of wonder, asking where we would be, as individuals and as a nation, if we shed this pathology and dealt instead with hunger, poverty, illness and illiteracy.

Terkel never explicitly states why he chose race as the subject of his sixth oral history. Yet, he is clearly trying to blow the lid off conversations that have until now been largely private. Rian Malan, a member of a powerful white South African family who has lived in the U.S., sums it up. “You can never hope to cure a condition unless you make the correct diagnosis.”

“You can’t make the correct diagnosis
A conversation with Atwater, in which Ellis discovered that her children were having the same school problems as his, was the turning point. “I begin to see, here we are, two people from the far ends of the fence, having identical problems, except her being Black and me being white. From that moment on, I tell ya, that gal and I worked together good. I began to love the gal, really.”

“I don’t know anything that could change us from being friends,” Atwater concurs. “The other thing is — C.P. would never shake my hand. Now we don’t shake hands. We hug and embrace.”

Still, Studs Terkel knows that we have little cause for celebration, that an explosion could be imminent. Nevertheless, Race is an extremely optimistic and hopeful book. By shining a much-needed floodlight on an American pathology, Terkel helps us re-focus and rethink our priorities.

—Eleanor J. Bader

A COMING-OUT BOOK

LESBIAN/WOMAN by Del Martin & Phyllis Lyon, Twentieth Anniversary edition (Volcano Press, Volcano, CA; $25 hardcover)

I have a perfectly clear recollection of the first time I saw this book. It was in 1973, and the hardcover edition published a year before had just been issued in paper. It had a purple cover. I saw it in a bookstore in downtown San Jose, California where I was living at the time. I was married, a deeply closeted homosexual, the only word I knew then to describe my “condition.” Somewhere, though I understood that Lesbian was what I was, and that this book was about me. Even so, on this first sighting I was too afraid of discovery to buy it.

Over the next several days I traveled to bookstores more distant from my home. Eventually, I found it again. With pounding heart, cash-in-hand, I sandwiched Lesbian/Woman between The Nation and another “respectable” title, made my purchase and fled. I read the book in spurts and starts, skipping and skimming, still too frightened to absorb its contents in any meaningful way. It was some years later, nurtured by the Women’s Liberation Movement and by a younger generation of lesbians who attended my classes, that I began to find a way home to myself. What a joy it was, then, to rediscover Lesbian/Woman in
this beautiful, 20th anniversary edition. It is a terrific book.

The authors founded the first-ever lesbian organization in the United States, Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in the 1950s. As a result, they encountered scores of women from all regions of the country in search of help and advice. They listened to their stories, intervened when they could, and for more than 20 years published The Ladder, a magazine of news and opinion geared to lesbians that helped break the isolation of their readers. The stories of these women, and of Martin and Lyon's own lives, provide the source material for the book. The bedrock of their belief was this: "Nothing can be as soul rewarding as being true to yourself, accepting yourself for what you are — a Lesbian — and leading your life, no matter what the obstacles or what other people may think, with the self confidence and conviction that you are a worthy human being in your own right." For any woman like myself who had internalized homophobia, and taken on the paranoia, self-loathing, and psychosis of repression, this is a revolutionary idea. It is the heart of the book.

Martin and Lyon document the struggles of countless lesbians in detail. Successive chapters debunk the stereotypes and myths, psychiatric dogmas and sexual gospel about lesbians. A magnificently sensitive chapter envisions "Growing Up Gay," describing all the confusions of adolescence in a homophobic world. A chapter on "Lesbian Paranoia — Real and Imagined" read like the inside of my mind for the first 30 years of my life.

No mere plea for tolerance, Martin and Lyon repeatedly show the connection between lesbian persecution and the repression of all women, analyzing the absurd, polarized strictures of gender. They also see precisely the significance of lesbian freedom as a bellwether of women's control over their own sexuality and bodies. They argue for the legal recognition of lesbian and gay unions, for equal protection of the laws, and for access to the tax, property, medical and other benefits enjoyed by heterosexual couples.

Most excellent is the balance Martin and Lyon strike between detailing the suffering endured by lesbians with often funny stories of achievement, success and acceptance. For example, one mother, puzzled about lesbian sexuality after her daughter came out to her, decided to find out about it for herself. She went to bed with one, she told her astonished daughter some weeks later, and reported that "It was a very pleasant experience." Another mother, assuming her daughter to be "single" and not wanting to trouble her married siblings, summoned her home to help in her convalescence. She lived hundreds of miles from her daughter. Realizing that the woman who telephoned Carrie every night and finally came to visit was her lover, the mother said: "Forgive me, my dears. I didn't understand. You don't belong here, Carrie. Go home — to Sandy." A university professor who had supported DOB for years, but remained in the closet, described what it was like to march up Sixth Avenue in the first Gay Pride March a year after Stonewall, 20,000 strong: "I can't really de-
For this anniversary edition Martin and Lyon wrote a 125-page "update," digesting the enormous gains of lesbians in the years since the book was first published. Although this section has something of a catalog effect, it does provide a valuable capsule of legal, legislative, medical and political developments. There is a particularly moving description of the National Women's Conference in Houston in 1977 when thousands of delegates from all 50 states voted approvingly for a resolution calling for legislation to ban discrimination based on "sexual preference." In the wake of the lesbian-baiting that characterized the early years of the more established women's organizations, passage of this resolution was a momentous event for Martin and Lyon. Their book ends with an abbreviated description of the 1991 Lesbian Conference in Atlanta attended by almost 3,000 women. For the two who had begun a struggle for lesbian rights almost 40 years before, the fact of such a conference overshadowed all its problems of politics and organization.

Lesbian Woman is on the one hand a book about self-acceptance and love for women that is helpful to anyone struggling to come into her own. It is likewise an extraordinary historical record of lesbian life in the United States since the 1940s. The most striking feature of this book is its deep and abiding compassion. These are two women who have loved each other for some 38 years, and have used their bond as a foundation from which to radiate understanding, acceptance, and love to countless women of lesbian persuasion.

—Bettina Aptheker

Bettina Aptheker is Chair and Associate Professor of Women's Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her most recent book is Tapestries of Life (1989).

CHOICE M-TERIES

Clare Wakefield is a middle-aged English housewife, trapped in an abusive marriage to an unsuccessful and ill-tempered journalist. When her husband, one of three nouveaux captured in the Mideast, returns alone with an heroic story of torture and escape, the couple is suddenly thrust into the limelight and instant fame. But, progressively, Clare becomes conscious that something is very wrong: That her husband's story is a tissue of lies and, that to protect his newfound celebrity, he'll stop at nothing — including murder. DANGEROUS THOUGHTS (Doubleday, NY; $16.50 hardcover) is the latest of Celia Fremlin's superb novels of suspense, which, unfortunately, too rarely appear in this country. Fremlin is poetically exploring the terror lurking beneath the surface of the lives of ordinary women. With Dangerous Thoughts, she's done it again.

Liz Wareham, who made her snappy debut last year's Headbure, is back in Carol Brennan's new thriller, FULL COMMISSION (Carroll & Graf, NY; $18.95 hardcover). This time, the 40-something divorced mother of two finds herself treading extremely dangerous ground while doing damage control for her P.R. client, one of New York's top residential real estate brokerages. The woman-run company has been plagued by very nasty and mysterious "accidents" happening to its celebrity clientele and the company's president suspects sabotage by her former male partner. Liz believes the answer is closer to home: That there's a traitor in her midst, and begins an investigation of her own. When the situation escalates into murder, Liz gradually becomes aware that she herself is in danger. Brennan plays fair with the reader, but, chances are, you won't guess this one! Be prepared: Unless you have an abundance of willpower, once you start Full Commission, you won't be able to put it down.

You don't have to have animal companions to love Rita Mae Brown's WISH YOU WERE HERE (Bantam, NY; $4.99 paperback), but it helps. In other hands, having animals communicate with each other might seem precious, but Brown pulls it off. The human protagonist, Mary Minor Hariston (Harry), is 32, postmistress of the small town of...
Crozet, VA, and in the process of getting a divorce. She has a tiger cat, Mrs. Murphy, and a Welsh corgi, T.V. Tucker. She also has a penchant for reading other people's postcards. When Crozet's residents start turning up murdered, Harry recalls that each had first received a card with a different historical tombstone on the front and the written message "Wish you were here." Afraid that Harry knows too much and may be a danger to the killer, Mrs. Murphy and Tucker, with the help of their animal friends, begin to scent out clues. Unfortunately, they're unable to communicate what they know to the slower humans. The next time your cat or dog tries to tell you something, you'll think twice before you simply hand them a treat to shut them up. You may even find yourself looking over your shoulder. Wish You Were Here manages to combine respect for animal intelligence with suspense and fun. It's delightful.

Unfortunately, that can't be said for another animal-related book, GONE TO THE DOGS (Doubleday, NY; $16.50 hardcover). It's hard to discern for what audience Susan Conant was aiming. The mystery is weak, the plotting plotless, the motive is improbable and the dogs are charmless. However, Conant is good on details of dog training and breeding, as well as what constitutes show dogs. Unless one of those categories is of special interest to you, you can skip this one.

— Beverly Lowy

NORTHERN IRELAND from pg 11

...tion, calling for peace by making the demand on the oppressor that they cease to oppress. A peace movement in Ireland and such that exists within what I call the pseudo-peace movement — the new consensus movement, the Peace Women — is a movement which demands peace in the oppressed country by demanding that the oppressed accept peacefully their oppression. And that distinction has to be clearly understood. I am very much in favor of demands for peace — but the place to organize the demand for peace is not in Ireland, it is in Britain. And the demand should be addressed not to the Irish people but to the British government. So if American women do want to become involved in building a peace movement, then London is where they should be marching, demanding that the British government cease to oppress the people of Ireland.

What do American tax dollars pay for in the North of Ireland?

Taxpayers' money, through the International Fund for Ireland (see box), is a scandal on two levels. Money coming into Ireland is exclusively used for counter-revolutionary purposes — to further isolate the Republican community and to add strength to those people in the Nationalist community who are prepared to collaborate with the state. A great deal of it is funneled through the social outlets of the Catholic Church. The Catholic hierarchy have basically become the arbiters of the worthy poor. And I have a second personal objection to it, too. I have a fundamental objection to American taxpayers' money being sent out of America to a group of people who are socially and economically better off than the people in America themselves. I see comfortable, middle-class, Catholic shopkeepers, for example, getting $5,000 of American taxpayers' money to refurbish their shops. I see hotel owners in the North of Ireland getting $10,000 to put jacuzzis in the bathrooms of their hotels. These things go on while American citizens are lying out on the streets with no homes! American tax dollars are actually going out of the country to people who've never had an overdraft in the bank while American mothers are standing in line waiting to buy deteriorated food to feed their children. I think that if we were an American taxpayer, I would register my very fundamental objection. Certainly women should be vitally concerned about this injustice. At a time when there is wide scale women's poverty, a high percentage of homelessness among women, and many women just struggling to keep their families fed, I think women have a right to know why
American money is going into the pockets of healthy, while makes in another country! It's time to ask where millions of their tax money is going!

What do you think the ramifications of the April 9th British general election will be for Northern Ireland?

I think the British might try to use the loss of Gerry Adams' seat to argue that there's been a drop in political support for Sinn Fein. Gerry Adams, former MP from West Belfast and leader of Sinn Fein, lost his seat in the British General Election on April 9, 1982. And they might use Adams' loss as indication that they could begin even further repression against the Republican community. It would be very unfair for them to consider it. But there has been speculation that they might try to reintroduce internment. Internment has been a common feature of the Northern Ireland state. We've had internment without trial before and the authority remains on the statute books to reintroduce it at any time. You see, the Special Powers Act from 1922-1972 — and, when it was abolished, the Emergency Powers Act — gives the government statutory authority simply to issue internment orders and hold people for an indefinite period of time without charge — never mind trial. They are held without any stated reason for their imprisonment. They are allegedly held in the interest of "national security."

The last time that internment was used was 1971 and it was in place essentially from 1971-1975. Then the political court system — the diplock court — was introduced. This is a system of courts without jury with the burden of proof being on the accused. I think the British authorities are awaiting their opportunity to intern the leaders of the Republican movement and many community activists. Their policy would basically be to take people like Adams, leaders of the political movement of Sinn Fein, than certain other leaders. The British thinking is that such a move would simply remove their political opposition. Their intention would be to intern people for about five years and during that time to set more firmly in place their own policies. But the reality would be quite different from what they expect. Internment would just add another spiral to the existing situation. And the Nationalist community would organize dramatically against it.

What do you foresee for the future? I do think the British authorities will make one last try at wiping out the Nationalist community in the Republican rural area where I live, for example, we've had about 18 months of a dual policy of harassment and open murder of political opponents by the British. This includes murder of active political representatives who are in Sinn Fein, and of young men who are suspected of being involved in the military struggle. I think that this killing will continue. And, if they can, the British will introduce internment in an attempt to totally terrorize and demoralize us. But the reality is that we have produced a new generation of young people in the North of Ireland. And you have never seen a generation of young people so determined and so courageous. If British repression continues, it will create in these young people such a great wave of anger that we will very likely see the rise of an Irish intifada.

An American feminist group, Committee on Women and Ireland, distributes action alerts and information on women and civil rights issues in Northern Ireland. They are linked to the British Women and Ireland Network. For more and continuing information, write them at P.O. Box 53255, Washington, DC 20009.

The International Fund for Ireland
Set up in the wake of the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, a number of countries, including the U.S., contribute to it. According to the Irish Echo newspaper, it is politically neutral. Out of the U.S., funds are distributed via the U.S. Aid Office in Washington. So far, $150-$170 million has been contributed by the U.S. government. The money goes to fund community investments and grants, and small business grants on boarder areas.

BLOOD OF TIMOR from pg 41
people died from bombardment and illness."

"The waters of the river were filled with blood and bodies."

"...after plundering the population of all their belongings, [the soldiers] firmly
Indonesian soldiers took hold of the legs of small children and threw them around in the air a number of times and smashed their heads against a rock... And then this soldier... said a sentence which was considered to be part of the wisdom of Java. He said: 'When you clean your field, don't you kill all the snakes, the small and large alike?'

In their zeal to destroy the Timorese people, Indonesian troops utterly humiliate and dehumanize their victims. There is neither honor nor dignity — nor even military discipline — in their actions.

Three women who refused to dress in shorts and play volleyball with the soldiers were accused of being agents of Fretilin. They were taken away... [and] subjected to electrical torture and lighted cigarettes were used to burn their faces and sexual organs.

"[After] heavy Indonesian casualties... the Indonesian officers were angry... They punished the female population by forcing them to do heavy work in the rice fields, completely naked, in the role of buffaloes."

Beatings and "disappearances" are common; there are said to be hundreds of jails and torture chambers scattered throughout the country. Imprisonment is described as "arbitrary," "indeterminate," and often without trial.

"They held me on the ground, face down, and trampled so hard on my head that my two front teeth fell out... I refused to tell them anything, so on the third night they used electric shocks and threats."

The Indonesians have established a system of "resettlement camps" in Timor. Timorese are rounded up, particularly in areas where Fretilin is suspected of being active, and moved into refugee camps where they are completely at the mercy of the Indonesians. The Timorese are not allowed to venture from the camps to tend their fields, so little or no food is produced. What small plots of land these displaced persons may receive is insufficient to feed their families, and the soil is quickly depleted. Malnutrition is at an all-time high; in some places, up to 80 percent of the children are said to suffer from it.

The Indonesian military, meanwhile, mandates the raising of cash crops like coffee for export. Humanitarian aid packages from outside the country are usually intercepted by the Indonesian occupiers. What they choose not to take for themselves is sold at high prices in the market. Medicines, in particular, demand a very high price; healthcare is in decline and infant mortality has skyrocketed.

Indonesia has also instituted a strict population control program, denying women the right to control their own bodies. Many Timorese women have been sterilized without their knowledge, usually during other operations like caesarian sections. Women who are forced to be involved in this "Family Planning Programme" receive injections of contraceptive drugs. In the words of one Indonesian feminist writer: "The status of women has been so degraded that they are treated like cattle who can be told when to produce children and 'castrated' when they are no longer required to do so."

In the meantime, Indonesia has established an aggressive program of immigration. Indonesian families are moved into areas "abandoned" by the Timorese and given land to farm. By this means, despite the drop in the indigenous Timorese population from almost 700,000 to barely half a million since 1976, Indonesia hopes to increase East Timor's population to one million by the end of the century.

"All the worst things that have happened would have been impossible without American support," says Benedict Anderson, Director of the Modern Indonesia Project at Cornell University. Even during the period "when the U.S. was 'deeply shocked and weapons deliveries were suspended,'" he adds, "weapons deliveries continued month by month."

According to Anderson, a young employee of the State Department tried to alert then-Secretary of State Kissinger to the violation of the Foreign Assistance Act. But Kissinger allegedly shredded the memorandum. "No paper trail," he reputedly said.

How could the United States, bastion of democracy, have given a nod to
Indonesia's action in 1975? How can it continue that support — including the $2.3 million International Military Education Training (IMET) program, which the State Department claims "help[s] to promote democratic values and respect for human rights" among Indonesian military personnel — well into the 1990s, even proposing an increase in military aid for fiscal year 1993?

Principles aside, explains Anderson, the United States had three reasons to support the oppressive Suharto regime. First, Suharto's supporters killed almost half a million communists in the mid-1960s; this all but destroyed the Indonesian communist party, the third largest in the world at that time. "All this without the Americans having to sacrifice a single soldier."

The second reason that the United States found for ignoring Indonesian atrocities was that nation's membership in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). From the American point of view at that time, Indonesia was a moderate (in OPEC). They opposed certain extraordinary price increases suggested by Iran and Iraq in the mid-1970s.

The third and most crucial reason for America's continued low-owing in the oppressive Suharto regime is that of "security interests." During the Cold War, Indonesia allowed American nuclear submarines to pass through its territorial waters without surfacing. This violation of international law made American subs invisible to Soviet satellites. The deepest, most easily-negotiable channel for traverse is within Timorese waters.

"All this is history now," adds Anderson. "The reason to support the Suharto regime... have been fading away. No one really remembers or cares how many communists he killed. OPEC is no longer the organization it was in the 1960s; and the Soviet Union is simply no longer."

Further, Suharto is 72 years old now, and the economic success of his 26-year reign has created a small Indonesian middle class which is fed up with the regime's brutality. In the wake of last spring's uprising in Thailand — partly the result of a disgruntled middle class — there may be more opportunity than ever for an overthrow of his regime. When he goes, however, "he will be toppled by the army," says Anderson. And that could mean anything, altough "they will likely be much weaker and will have to make deals" with the moderates and the middle class.

Perhaps this is all history now. A bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in May which could effect a reversal of current U.S. policy. H.R. 5176 would suspend bilateral aid to Indonesia, deny certain trader prof-

Many Timorese women have been sterilized without their knowledge

ences given to Indonesians by the United States, and obligate the American representatives in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to oppose loans and grants to Indonesia. Introduced by Representative Tony Hall (D-OH) and four co-sponsors, H.R. 5176 is the strongest such legislation to be considered since the invasion.

The bill has been assigned to three different subcommittees, and may be a long time in coming to the house floor, says a member of Hall's staff. As a fairly unknown issue, and politically unimportant in this election year, the pro-Timor legislation may get lost in the shuffle of bureaucracy and power politics. Even if it passes, there is no indication that President Bush or his successor will have any more compassion for the Timorese than did Gerald Ford.

Meanwhile, the Timorese continue to ask: "When will we have our freedom?"

When indeed.

John W. Hartlett, a junior at Brown University, has an abiding interest in oppressed nationalities. As co-founder of the Brown/RISD Baltic Student Association (BALTICA), in the spring of 1991, he brought national college attention to the plight of the then-Soviet-occupied Baltic states and was invited to meet with a member of President Bush's staff to discuss the Soviet crackdown which claimed 20 Lithuanian lives in January of 1991.
CENSORSHIP from pg 4

disappointed and "hurt." When the piece was published, I received word that the writer was not only hurt but that she no longer considered me an ally. The fact that the piece was not "trashing" did not matter. When I insisted that criticizing one work did not mean that I did not admire and appreciate much of the writer's work, I was simply told that it was seen as a betrayal. Suddenly, I lost contact with folks that were once close to me. I began to hear through gossip that I could not be counted on to keep confidence. More recently, at a major conference focusing on the work of another Black woman writer, where I gave a lecture she did not agree with, I was labeled "an obstructionist" by her.

As a polemical writer, I am accustomed to folks disagreeing with my opinion and welcome debate and discussion. It is the attempt to censor that I find dangerous. And even though these are my true life stories, I hear similar stories all the time — enough of them to note that this is a dangerous trend. When repression via censorship becomes the norm in progressive political circles we not only undermine our collective struggles to end domination, we act in complicity with that brand of contemporary chic fascism that evokes romantic images of unity and solidarity, a return to traditional values, while working to deny free speech and suppress all forms of rebellious thought and action. In the last few years, feminist thinkers have fought long and hard to make feminist thinking, theorizing and practice a radical space of openness where critical dialogue can take place. Much of that struggle has been waged by women of color, beginning with the conflict over whether or not to see issues of race and racism as feminist agenda. To maintain space for constructive contestation and confrontation, we must oppose censorship. We must remember the pain of silence and work to sustain our power to speak freely, openly, provocatively.

bell hooks is a cultural critic and feminist theorist. Her latest book is Black Looks: Race and Representation (South End Press, Boston).
IN MY VIEW

PHYLLIS CHESLER

In only 25 years, a visionary feminism has managed to seriously challenge, if not transform, world consciousness. Nevertheless, I am saddened and sobered by the realization that no more than a handful of feminists has been liberated from the grinding poverty, illness, overwork, and endless worry that continue to afflict the lives of most women and men in America.

I have seen the best minds of my feminist generation go "mad" with battle fatigue, give up, disappear, kill themselves, die — often alone, and in terrible isolation — as if we were already invisible. To each other, and to ourselves, our role as pioneers and immigrants, diminished, forgotten.

Immigrants always form infrastructure or self-help groups and tithe themselves accordingly. We are the immigrants who, in the late 1960s and early '70s, left the Old Patriarchal Country to clear a path in history for the generations to come. It's too late for us to turn back, and we've still got "miles to go before we sleep" in our own feminist country.

There are few feminist networks in place with a mandate to assist feminists (or female adults) when they lose their jobs, become ill, stay ill, face death, and are without patriarchal family resources, supportive mates or other safety nets.

Surrounded by epidemics, I ask: Where are our feminist credit unions and emergency funds (remember those failed attempts in the mid-'70s)? Our feminist soup kitchens, Meals on Wheels, land trusts and old-age homes (remember those fiascos)? Our breast cancer fundraising campaigns, our hospices, our burial societies? (Feminists are just starting to get serious about breast cancer, and about women with AIDS.)

These support systems do not yet exist. One survivor of breast cancer told me that in the mid-'80s, her newly-formed cancer support group disbanded when its first member died!

Some feminists blame those whose immune systems cannot absorb any more environmental toxins — or toxic amounts of hostility. Some of us still say: "It's her own fault she has no health insurance, no nursing care, no job, no mate. She should have planned better or compromised harder." Or we say: "But isn't she really a little (or a lot) crazy?"

In 1982, Elizabeth Fisher, founder of Aphra magazine and author of Women's Creation: Sexual Evolution and the Shaping of Society and, in 1987, my dear friend Ellen Frankfurt, author of Vaginal Politics, killed themselves. Not just because they were depressed, on drugs, or without hope that things would get better (although some of this was so), but also because they were tired of fighting so hard for so long for a place in the sun, tired of never having enough emotional support or sufficient money. They despaired of both man's and woman's inhumanity to woman.

So many of us have died, mainly of breast cancer. To name only a few: June Arnold, Parke Bowman, Jane Chambers, Barbara Deming, Mary-Helen Mautner, Barbara Meyerhoff, Lil Meed, Pat Parker, Barbara Rosenblum, Isacca Siegel, Sunny Wainwright. And, so many of us are struggling with long-lasting disabilities, such as Lyme disease and Chronic Fatigue Disfunction Syndrome (CFIDS), myself included.

We have no quilt, and no memorial.

Some of us have been blessed by feminist caretaking. I think of how magnificently Sandra Butler cared for — her cancer-stricken lover/partner Barbara Rosenblum (an account is in their book Cancer in Two Voices); I think of how tenderly, how enduringly, Jesse Lemisch has cared for his CFIDS-racked wife, my beloved comrade, Naomi Weisstein; I think of how many lesbian-feminists cared for and sent "white light" to Barbara Deming and Jane Chambers.

But these are splendid exceptions, lucky, individual solutions, even trends — not yet sturdy.

I recently attended a rent party for Ti-Grace Atkinson, author of Amazon Odyssey. Ti-Grace's health was seriously impaired by exposure to low-dose radiation. (Her father was the head of the Atomic Energy Commission's Plutonium By-Products Division at Washington State's Hanford Reservation.) She says: "First, I had a hysterectomy. Now, I have no thyroid left. I take tons of thyroid medication, some of which has made me sick and unable to work."

The rent party was a determined, even inspired, grassroots effort that yielded more good will than cash; however, such events are too labor-intensive, too hard to repeat on a monthly basis for every pioneer feminist who's in an illness-related economic crisis.

Ti-Grace at least has an apartment. Other feminist pioneers are — or are about to become — homeless.

For example, a legendary antipornography activist has been forced to warehouse her files and move in with a friend. The co-author of a lesbian-feminist classic, a well-known feminist comedienne, an abortion rights activist and countless other pioneers, all swayed unsteadily on the brink of joblessness and homelessness. The co-author of a much-loved book on feminist spirituality became homeless last year; she left New York for a warmer climate to be homeless in. Shulamith Firestone, author of The Dialectics of Sex and a welfare-recipient, had to battle hard to hang onto her rent-controlled apartment in between "visits" to Bellevue in the late 1980s. The fact that none of these women has written second books impoverishes us all.

I am not blaming any of us for not having done more; we did the best we could, and we did a lot. But in all our imaginings, we failed to imagine that we ourselves would grow weary or fall ill and have no real, specific "family" to take us in and tide us over until we could get back on our feet.

Some of us acted as if we didn't think we'd need families again. Perhaps our collective experience of transcendence blinded us to our ordinary needs. But most of us were longing for "communias." We talked about sisterhood and community, tribes and alternate families — but only in the abstract, as we rushed from one dazzling spectacle to another.

The republic ought to provide employment, health insurance and medical care for all its citizens, but it doesn't; and we have fallen on hard times, along with everyone else. All we have is each other: Our sisters, ourselves.
INFAMOUS EXPLOITATION
As one who lives two miles from Salem, I was particularly interested in Fred Pekel's article, "Bitch Witches & Hysterical Girls" (Summer 1992). The article gives an excellent view of how the entire sordid history of the witch trials has become an enormous tourist attraction and commercial enterprise. The profile of a witch on a broomstick is not only the logo of the Salem Police Department but of the Salem chamber of commerce, and the entire town is marked with historical markers with this logo.

It is true that ghastly events in the past often become tourist attractions: Wax museums are filled with figures of ghoulish murderers. But it is quite a different thing when a city chooses to commemorate an injustice with "an historical trail marker" of such an utterly trivializing caricature of the women and men who were victims of the injustice.

Roberta Kalechofsky
Marblehead, MA

EXCISE DISEASE — NOT UTERI
As the Director of the Endometriosis Treatment Program at St. Charles Medical Center, I read Lois Greene Stone's article "Excised" (Summer 1992) with great interest.

The patronizing attitudes and psychological dismissal that she experienced over 34 years is, unfortunately, all too common. Kate Weinstein, in her book Living with Endometriosis reported that about 75 percent of the people she encountered had been dismissed as neurotic. That matches our experience as well. Given a 75 percent psychological dismissal rate, that really means that 300 out of every 400 patients we see should have no substantial pathology. However, the number of normal pathology reports that we have at the end of any given year might amount to two or three.

The majority of women with endometriosis do very well with a simple excision of their disease. This runs contrary to the beliefs that hysterectomy is the best treatment once a woman has passed childbearing age. Many researchers have now shown that meticulous surgical excision of the disease will, in fact, give long-lasting relief of pain to a significant majority of patients.

Nancy Petersen, RN
National Association of Women's Health Professionals
Bend, OR

IS SOME VIOLENCE GOOD?
I've about had it with all of the negative naysaying concerning "Thelma and Louise."

How can one label oneself "feminist" and demand that all movies with women's rights themes be totally realistic and upright in moral tone while not even acknowledging the vast discrepancies that exist in terms of realism, morality and fairness in the vast majority of traditional Hollywood fare? Why aren't these "feminist" critics going after male violence? It is absolutist to blankety condemn violence; whatever happened to looking at the context in which something occurs before passing judgment?

We do not live in a peaceable kingdom and no amount of romanticizing nature, reality and woman's so-called ways will change that. Only a long, protracted struggle will — one that encompasses all types of resistance, not just that which is peaceful and/or respectable. Please, can we stop pushing the double standard under the guise of feminist analysis? The pedestal will only hinder women.

Robin E. Skeie
Minneapolis, MN

ON THE WRONG PLANET?
Thank you for sending me a sample copy of On the Issues to examine; however, I believe you have confused me with someone else. Although the articles by Phyllis Chesler and Laura Sydell (Summer 1992) were interesting, on the whole On the Issues seems to be aimed less at progressive women than the trailing edge.

Let me bring you up to date. Ex-VISTA workers are practicing down at the pistol range; those who were sold on "witchcraft" are now more interested in selling you the products and services of the business they founded; and the save-the-whale groups ran for public office and will get back to you on the subject of doggies, passies and redwoods as soon as they get the town sewage system back in working order.

Do call if you're ever visiting my planet.
Celia Redmore
Decatur, GA

WUORNOS IS VICTIM TOO
I have written a letter to Senator George Mitchell, Senator William Cohen and Representative Thomas Andrews regarding Phyllis Chesler's article on Aileen (Lee) Wuornos in the Summer 1992 edition of On the Issues. I am writing to urge readers to consider writing their congresspeople and representatives, asking for help in obtaining a fair trial with appropriate legal representation for Wuornos. I am also writing to urge readers to consider writing to these same people about their experiences of growing up as a female in the United States. I have used a pseudonym for my protection; however, my story is true and not at all unlike Aileen Wuornos' story.

I am a survivor of incest and the product of a violent, alcoholic, incestuous family. I have suffered neglect and physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological abuse within my family and throughout my life. At the age of 16, I was officially thrown out of the apartment where I lived with my mother. Previously, I had simply been locked out of the house when I was not wanted around. I almost wound up on the streets. I almost wound up like Aileen Wuornos. By the grace of God, I was taken in by a schoolmate's family.

I could be on death row just like Wuornos, save a simple twist of fate. I have not killed anyone, but if I had fought for my life, someone might have died; and if it wasn't me, then I would stand trial for murder like she did. Then, if the jury was not allowed to hear pleas of self-defense, they might believe the prosecution's assertions that an angry woman who hated men because she was abused as a child killed only to feel power. They would not hear that she had been fighting for her life. Wuornos has admitted to committing murder and for that she should be held accountable. However, she deserves a fair trial with the assistance of an attorney and witnesses that can perhaps help save what is left of her life. The truth deserves to be heard.

Devi Shanti (pseudonym)
Falmouth, ME

CORRECTION
The photograph on page 31 of the Fall 1992 issue was misidentified. It was from a Feminists Fighting Pornography street table display.
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