

Afrocentric feminist REFLECTIONS

by Jodie Warner

Being a feminist of African descent is challenging! There are difficulties that arise with your presence both in the mainstream feminist movement and the African - Canadian community.

First and foremost is the reality that the mainstream feminist movement is for and about white middle class women only. This has its roots in the history of Canada where whites and blacks have from the beginning lived separate lives.

pus and you'll be hard pressed to find any courses that focus on women of African descent. Here at Dal, I am taking a course entitled Cross Cultural Gender Roles. I have become totally frustrated as once again we have spent the vast majority of our time studying white middle class women of North America and the only time we do venture into other cultures is when we use our textbook which is written from a Eurocentric/ racist point of view.

The African - Canadian community also sometimes excludes

and wives are free they will not be free....

Basically the conflict between gender/ race solidarity traps women of African descent because we are never accepted for our whole selves - that is black and woman. Bell Hooks in her book *Ain't I a Woman* focuses much of her attention on this exclusion encountered by women of African descent, "When black peoples are talked about the focus is on black men; and when women are talked about the focus is on white women."

Things are not totally bleak because I find support within a feminist movement of African descent that has been around since my people were brought to this soil. I can look back to Sojourner Truth and look forward to Bell Hooks, I go to black feminist meetings and feel the power of being with my sisters. White feminist meetings tend to be very solemn/ tense in nature and while we black women do tackle serious issues we also find time to laugh and tell stories, to celebrate our womanhood... Feminists of African descent move forward - Word to the Mother!



So even today while I might attend a mainstream feminist event, my meeting with white women feels unnatural because in the rest of my life I have no contact with them; I go to different bars, dance clubs, belong to different organizations on campus, listen to different music, sit at a different table in the caf and speak a different lingo!

The priorities of women of African descent are often different from those of white middle class women. For example, while white women are fighting to change gender exclusive language, black women are dealing with fundamental bread and butter issues like a rise in the minimum wage. Until the feminist movement takes a deep, hard look at racism, women of colour are unlikely to feel good about making links with them.

Unfortunately the feminist movement continues to actively exclude women of colour from their agenda. A perfect university example: check out the Women's Studies programs on most cam-

me - this time not because I'm black, but because I'm female and talking back! A major problem is that it is difficult to point out sexism because this may be interpreted as diss'n the brothers and so not being down with the cause. Feminist Toni Cade says, "Invariably I hear from some dude that Black Women must be supportive and patient so that black men can regain their manhood".

In effect, to have any gender solidarity with white women is seen as cohorting with white race that oppresses us as people of African descent. But I feel that there are some basic/ common oppressions that I share with all women regardless of their race or social status. And to keep me apart from my sisters is a divide and rule mentality. The African - Canadian community's dedication should be to liberate both men and women from any form of oppression they face. This must include gender liberation because until men of African descent's mothers, sisters,

Toward Global Consciousness

by Zenovia Sadoway

ON MARCH 9TH and 10th, students of the Dalhousie Theatre Department are putting on the DAL-Outreach Performance Festival, two evenings of drama and music. The purpose is to promote International Development. More specifically, the festival is promoting the people, art and music of the Southern Hemisphere.

The main feature of the festival is a series of one-act plays, student directed and student performed.

"One For The Road" is one of Herald Pinter's less known plays. Directed by Andrew Dick, the play takes place in the present, set in an unnamed, totalitarian state. It is a political piece portraying the psychological tortures of interrogation.

"Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number" is a script created from excerpts of the autobiography of the Argentinian journalist, Jacobo Timerman. Timerman, publisher of *La Opinion*, in Buenos Aires, was imprisoned in 1977 for attempting, with the aid of his paper, to stop unlawful imprisonment, torture and

murder. Remarkably enough, he did not become one of Argentina's estimated 8,960 "Disappeared", rather, he survived to write his autobiography. Deborah Preeper edited Timerman's book for dramatic purposes, and is the director of the play.

"Hunger" is both written and directed by Eliana Bitter. It is the outcome of improvisation work with theatre, acting and English students; exploring physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of hunger. The purpose of the piece is to confront the audience with the phenomena of "starving" as an existential condition, and she hopes to shake-up some of the ready-made life philosophies.

As well, "On the Seventh Day", is an entirely student created piece. Written and directed by Steven Manuel, this play is symbolic in its use of three mediums of interpretation: audio and visual interpretation, combined with live performance. It is an optimistic interpretation of persons in the Southern Hemisphere.

The characters are generic, trying to stress the uniformity of human nature around the world.

On both festival evenings, following the drama, there will be live, ethnic music performances. The music varies from the African beats of a band called Sedessa to Indian love songs and flutes.

Although the four plays will be performed on both Saturday and Sunday, the music will be different both festival nights.

To add to the atmosphere, a bar will be supplied with, besides the basic beer brands, different Chilean wines.

The DAL-Outreach Performance Festival takes place on Saturday, March 9 and Sunday, March 10. Performance start at 8pm in the Sculpture Court (lower level) of the Dalhousie Arts Centre. There is also a final dress rehearsal, open to the public, starting at 8pm on Thursday, March 7. Admission is free and everyone is welcome to attend.

Pill Preview

by Kathryn Morris

The Metro area Family Planning Association is testing a new birth control pill that may have significant advantages for women.

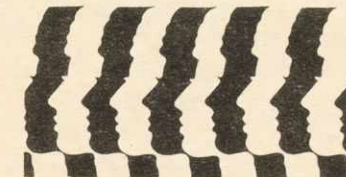
The pill, tri-minulet, contains a new progesterone known as gestadine. Its primary advantage is better cycle control, which will result in less spotting and breakthrough bleeding for users.

"Poor cycle control is one of the main reasons that women will stop using the pill," said Jean Kurran, Clinic Coordinator at Metro Area Family Planning.

Tri-minulet, which is already available in the United States and some European countries, is in the final phase of its testing here. It is projected to appear on the Canadian market later this year.

"By this stage of testing, the pill has already been proven safe and effective," said Kurran.

Women participating in the tests will be involved for six months. They will be expected to attend an

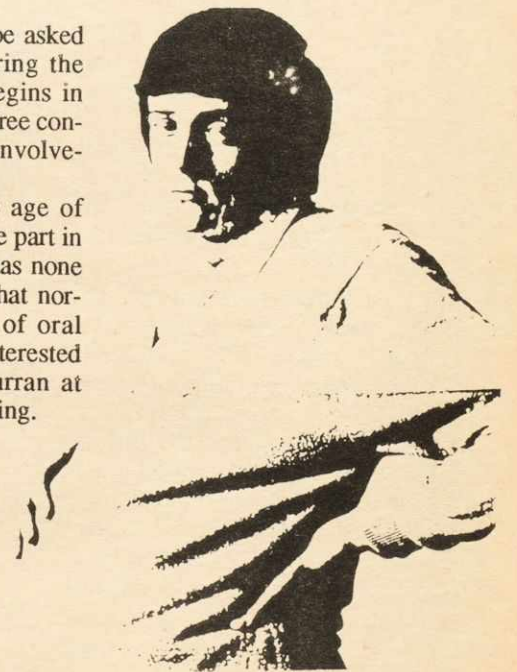


initial visit at the Clinic, as well as check-ups at three and six months.

"It's not really any more than we normally ask women going on the pill to do," said Kurran.

Participants will also be asked to keep diary cards during the testing period, which begins in April. They will receive free contraception during their involvement.

Any woman over the age of eighteen is eligible to take part in the tests, providing she has none of the health problems that normally prohibit the use of oral contraceptives. Those interested should contact Jean Kurran at Metro Area Family Planning.



Would you be more careful if it was you who got pregnant?