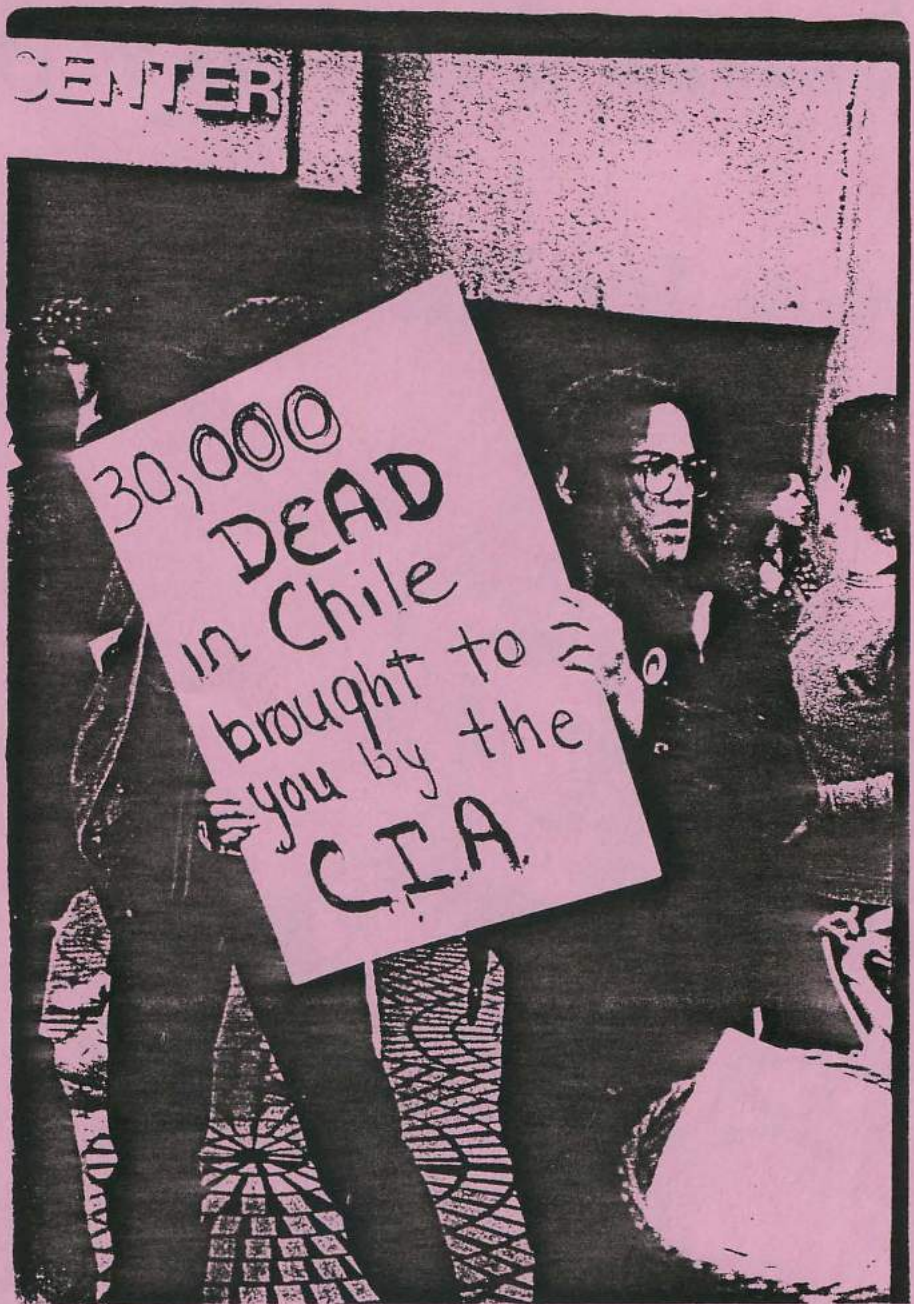


Chant For My Sisters

Poems For The New Year — 1987



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A CHANT FOR MY SISTERS
POEMS FOR THE NEW YEAR - 1987

WOMEN AGAINST IMPERIALISM
3543 18th Street, # 14
San Francisco, California 94110

A CHANT FOR MY SISTERS

it's all right to be woman
dishwasher, big belly, sore back
swollen ankles

it's all right to be woman
the listener the waiter/sailor's wife
patient
by the seashore/looking out

it's all right to be woman
coquette

seductress

conniving bitch

it's all right to be woman
a chant for my sisters
strong before me
harriet sojourner emma and rosa
harriet sojourner emma and rosa

a chant for my sisters
rifke sorel rochel & mary
yema ya yemaya yemaya yemaya
yemaya yemaya yemaya yemaya
oshun.....
oshun.....

a chant for my sisters
strong in battle
la bandita killing generals with zapata
maria in mexico and mississippi

haydee with the rest at moncada
a chant for my sisters
dead before i could meet them
victorious
in havana
and dien bien phu

Marilyn Lowen Fletcher

The men of some Native American Tribes had shields which hung outside their lodgings. The shields depicted the movements of their lives - past, present, and future dreams. The women of the tribes rarely made shields, they wore belts which were the equivalent of the shields.

Month of May: Moon when the ponies shed

A WOMAN'S TRIBAL BELT

In the Moon
when the ponies had shed
when the flowers of summer
tore down the stones of winter
and turned them under my feet;
when the knuckles
of my clenched fist
rose like five white suns
into a cloudless sky.

In the Moon
of the shedding ponies
the winds from the north
dive down
dive under
from the hot breath
of my sisters.
Shoulders are locked
against shoulders.

In the Moon
when the ponies will shed
when the pale of my skin
matches the colors
of the crushed earth
I will raise up my ear
against your breast
and listen for the nation
that lives within you.

Willyce Kim





MY LIBERTY

My liberty - my liberty - my liberty,
a sound I repeat
with angry lips
under the exchange of fire
and flames
I run after it
despite my chains
and follow its tracks
despite the night
and struggle ardently
for my liberty
My liberty
My liberty

And the Holy River
and Bridge repeat:
my liberty
and the two banks reiterate:
my liberty
and the raging wind and thunder,
tornadoes and rain
echo the sound:
my liberty

I shall carve its name
while I resist
on the land
by the walls
and the doors
in the Temple of the Virgin
in the altar
and the fields,
on every hill
and every valley
and every curve
and road
in prison
in the torture rooms
and on the gallows
Despite the chains
and the house demolition.
I shall carve its name
until I see it again
extending to my Homeland
and flourish
and flourish
until every inch of the land is covered
until every door is opened
by red liberty
and the night vanishes
and the day breaks
My liberty - my liberty - my liberty

Fadwa Touqan - Palestinian woman living in the
occupied West Bank territory



Luz Bueno

Poem about My Rights

Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear
my head about this poem about why I can't
go out without changing my clothes my shoes
my body posture my gender identity my age
my status as a woman alone in the evening/
alone on the streets/alone not being the point/
the point being that I can't do what I want
to do with my own body because I am the wrong
sex the wrong age the wrong skin and
suppose it was not here in the city but down on the beach/
or far into the woods and I wanted to go
there by myself thinking about God/or thinking
about children or thinking about the world/all of it
disclosed by the stars and the silence:

I could not go and I could not think and I could not
 stay there
 alone
 as I need to be
 alone because I can't do what I want to do with my own
 body and
 who in the hell set things up
 like this
 and in France they say if the guy penetrates
 but does not ejaculate then he did not rape me
 and if after stabbing him if after screams if
 after begging the bastard and if even after smashing
 a hammer to his head if even after that if he
 and his buddies fuck me after that
 then I consented and there was
 no rape because finally you understand finally
 they fucked me over because I was wrong I was
 wrong again to be me being me where I was/wrong
 to be who I am
 which is exactly like South Africa
 penetrating into Namibia penetrating into
 Angola and does that mean I mean how do you know if
 Pretoria ejaculates what will the evidence look like the
 proof of the monster jackboot ejaculation on Blackland
 and if
 after Namibia and if after Angola and if after Zimbabwe
 and if after all of my kinsmen and women resist even to
 self-immolation of the villages and if after that
 we lose nevertheless what will the big boys say will they
 claim my consent:
 Do You Follow Me: We are the wrong people of
 the wrong skin on the wrong continent and what
 in hell is everybody being reasonable about
 and according to the *Times* this week
 back in 1966 the C.I.A. decided that they had this problem
 and the problem was a man named Nkrumah so they
 killed him and before that it was Patrice Lumumba
 and before that it was my father on the campus
 of my Ivy League school and my father afraid
 to walk into the cafeteria because he said he
 was wrong the wrong age the wrong skin the wrong
 gender identity and he was paying my tuition and
 before that
 it was my father saying I was wrong saying that
 I should have been a boy because he wanted one/a
 boy and that I should have been lighter skinned and
 that I should have had straighter hair and that
 I should not be so boy crazy but instead I should
 just be one/a boy and before that
 it was my mother pleading plastic surgery for

my nose and braces for my teeth and telling me
 to let the books loose to let them loose in other
 words

I am very familiar with the problems of the C.I.A.
 and the problems of South Africa and the problems
 of Exxon Corporation and the problems of white
 America in general and the problems of the teachers
 and the preachers and the F.B.I. and the social
 workers and my particular Mom and Dad/I am very
 familiar with the problems because the problems
 turn out to be
 me

I am the history of rape

I am the history of the rejection of who I am

I am the history of the terrorized incarceration of
 my self

I am the history of battery assault and limitless
 armies against whatever I want to do with my mind
 and my body and my soul and

whether it is about walking out at night

or whether it's about the love that I feel or

whether it's about the sanctity of my vagina or

the sanctity of my national boundaries

or the sanctity of my leaders or the sanctity

of each and every desire

that I know from my personal and idiosyncratic

and indisputably single and singular heart

I have been raped

be-

cause I have been wrong the wrong sex the wrong age

the wrong skin the wrong nose the wrong hair the

wrong need the wrong dream the wrong geographic

the wrong sartorial I

I have been the meaning of rape

I have been the problem everyone seeks to

eliminate by forced

penetration with or without the evidence of slime and/

but let this be unmistakable this poem

is not consent I do not consent

to my mother to my father to the teachers to

the F.B.I. to South Africa to Bedford-Stuy

to Park Avenue to American Airlines to the hardon

idlers on the corners to the sneaky creeps in

cars

I am not wrong: Wrong is not my name

My name is my own my own my own

and I can't tell you who the hell set things up like this

but I can tell you that from now on my resistance

my simple and daily and nightly self-determination

my very well cost you your life

— June Jordan

From THE COMMON WOMAN POEMS

4. Carol, in the park, chewing on straws

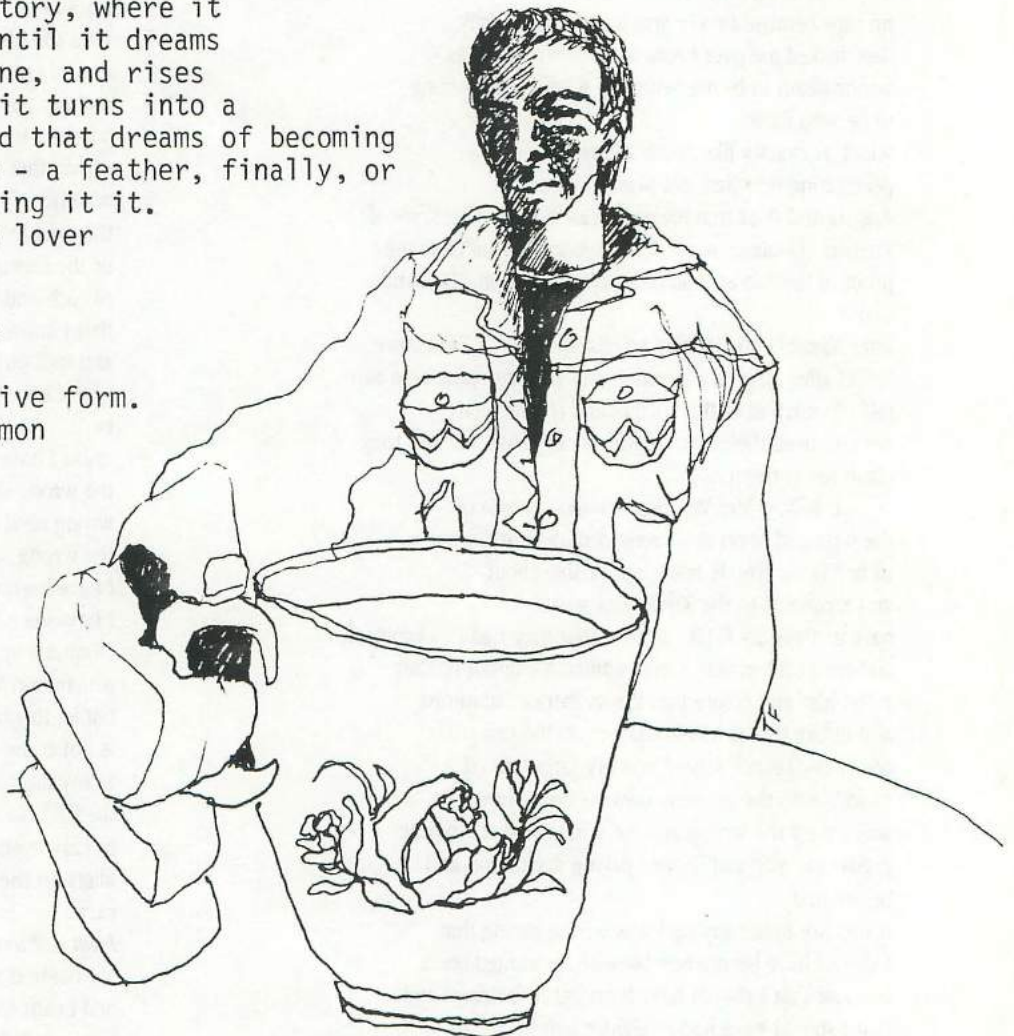
She has taken a woman lover
whatever shall we do
she has taken a woman lover
how lucky it wasnt you

And all the day through she smiles and lies
and grits her teeth and pretends to be shy,
or weak, or busy. Then she goes home
and pounds her own nails, makes her own
bets, and fixes her own car, with her friend.
She goes as far
as women can go without protection
from men.

On weekends she dreams of becoming a tree;
a tree that dreams it is ground up
and sent to the paper factory, where it
lies helpless in sheets, until it dreams
of becoming a paper airplane, and rises
on its own current; where it turns into a
bird, a great coasting bird that dreams of becoming
more free, even, than that - a feather, finally, or
a piece of air with lightning it it.

she has taken a woman lover
whatever can we say
She walks around all day
quietly, but underneath it
she's electric;
angry energy inside a passive form.
The common woman is as common
as a thunderstorm.

Judy Grahn/1969



FM 104.5

WIDEST VARIETY of NEW and OLD ROCK

GANNETT OUTDOOR

Coming soon. Bikinis.

TAKE YOUR ADS
OFF OUR BODIES!

IMPERIALISM IS
RESPONSIBLE
FOR THIS

EYES

My body is braille.
Come touch me.
Read the parts
where I am raised
with the sequence
of form.
Move across
lightly
without bearing down
without sound:
there lies
the sense.

I am the text
of your fingers
and our search
and the hills
of my own
internal reason.

Touch
and we may find
secrets
that move beyond
sight.
Opening to each
begin soon
to see.

Marcie Hershman



MY COUNTRY AND THE POSTAL SYSTEM

Address Insufficient,
houses uninhabited
flew away like a lonely dove
Absent
Deceased
Mutilated
Refused
Unknown in circles without exit
Such a name doesn't exist
DISAPPEARED

Marjorie Agosin / Chile

WE SHALL BEGET CHILDREN

hundreds of children born at dawn
between brown legs and songs.

We shall beget children
with clenched fists
and the conspiracy, the secret in their eyes.

We shall beget children,
you will see them appear in the mountains,
the country,
the city.

Children with the look of lightning,
children stealthily carrying messages in the night,
children without father or mother
offspring of captured man and woman
clandestine children.

We shall beget children,
for every man or woman they kill,
we shall give birth to
hundreds of children
who will follow in their footsteps.

*translated by Marsha Gabriela Dreyer
and Electa Arenal*

Gioconda Belli / Nicaragua



The Woman Hanging From The Thirteenth Floor Window

She is the woman hanging from the 13th floor window. Her hands are pressed white against the concrete moulding of the tenement building. She hangs from the 13th floor window in east Chicago, with a swirl of birds over her head. They could be a halo, or a storm of glass waiting to crush her.

She thinks she will be set free.

The woman hanging from the 13th floor window on the east side of Chicago is not alone. She is a woman of children, of the baby, Carlos, and of Margaret, and of Jimmy who is the oldest. She is her mother's daughter and her father's son. She is several pieces between the two husbands she has had. She is all the women of the apartment building who stand watching her, watching themselves.

When she was young she ate wild rice on scraped down plates in warm wood rooms. It was in the farther north and she was the baby then. They rocked her.

She sees Lake Michigan lapping at the shores of herself. It is a dizzy hole of water and the rich live in tall glass houses at the edge of it. In some places Lake Michigan speaks softly, her, it just sputters and butts itself against the asphalt. She sees other buildings just like hers. She sees other women hanging from many-floored windows counting their lives in the palms of their hands and in the palms of their children's hands.

She is a woman hanging from the 13th floor window on the Indian side of town. Her belly is soft from her children's births, her worn levis swing down below her waist, and then her feet, and then her heart. She is dangling.

The woman hanging from the 13th floor hears voices. They come to her in the night when the lights have gone dim. Sometimes they are little cats mewling and scratching at the door, sometimes they are her grandmother's voice, and sometimes they are gigantic men of light whispering to her to get up, to get up, to get up. That's when she wants to have another child to hold onto in the night, to be able to fall back into dreams.

And the woman hanging from the 13th floor window hears other voices. Some of them scream out from below for her to jump, they would push her over. Others cry softly from the sidewalks, pull their children up like flowers and gather them into their arms. They would help her, like themselves.

But she is the woman hanging from the 13th floor window, and she knows she is hanging by her own fingers, her own skin, her own thread of indecision.

She thinks of Carlos, of Margaret, of Jimmy. She thinks of her father, and of her mother. She thinks of all the women she has been, of all the men. She thinks of the color of her skin, and of Chicago streets, and of waterfalls and pines. She thinks of moonlight nights, and of cool spring storms. Her mind chatters like neon and northside bars. She thinks of 4 a.m. lonelines that have folded her up like death, discordant, without logical and beautiful conclusion. Her teeth break off at the edges. She would speak.

The woman hangs from the 13th floor window crying for the lost beauty of her own life. She sees the sun falling west over the grey plane of Chicago. She thinks she remembers listening to her own life break loose, as she falls from the 13th floor window on the east side of Chicago, or as she climbs back up to claim herself again.

— Joy Haro





SOMEONE THERE IS

Someone there is
Whom you cannot forget
The way she'd slide her hand in yours
How soft her bosom
To your beginner cadre's woes.
How she listened and advised
And gently piqued
Your sense of pride
Like cool and crystal water from a spring
How you'd like to hold her
In your cupped hands,
Your lips lightly set
Sipping the memory
Drop by drop,
Without end.
But hands must hold
Gun.
Then pen.
Then gun again.
Cupping in another way
Harder goals.
You talk and
Practice revolution
More determined at each step
To hold firmly to the gun
But in your mind's eye
The shadow of a love
And the necessary parting
Because she would like to be
Only water from a spring.

Mila Aguilar / Philippines



WALLS DRIP ENERGY

We looked across the space
many bodies occupying many instances in between us.
Many women with all the vital energies that we contain.
Moving, spinning, flying, like erratic bursts
that only women's energy can produce.
Bouncing off the walls, the tables, the floor, each other.
Many bodies of women in motion, cleaning, sitting, walking, laughing, crying.
All this jammed energy waiting to explode.
We are all in prison
Waiting
Waiting to stay, to leave, get time, lose time, waste time, resist time, stop time.
Women time and energy.
The energy is deafening.
The hope, dream, need, desire, sacrifice, love, most deeply the love---
of children, husband, mother, father, lover, family, friends, and for some
another woman, only for some.

And the walls drip, drip with accumulated pain.
Pain from fear, of losing your life, of who will take the kids,
will they wait for me, will they love me, will god forgive me will I forgive me.

And the anger, the anger, the deepest of anger.
At the man, at the man who said back home in Nigeria, in Bolivia, in Brooklyn,
"it's okay baby, it's easy, 1,2,3," and you're here.
Anger at the man who said "not enough, give me more" more for rent, more for food
more for school, more for dope---more, always more, never enough.
Anger at yourself, at your life, at what you know
is a failure to meet the dreams that the man sets that are impossible to meet.
Anger at the pigs, at the pigs,
who caught you, brought you, keep you, harass you,
who never stop making you feel like shit.

And the energy is dripping
it's collectivized and individualized
and its unity is incomplete but you can feel its potential
like a heaving, breathing, catch your breath, and get enough tooooooo
scream and scream, and scream some more.

Susan Rosenberg/Tucson

Susan Rosenberg is a Revolutionary Anti Imperialist political prisoner.
She is currently locked down in Lexington Maximum Security Prison for Women.
There is an international campaign to shut this Maxi-Maxi unit down because
of its inhuman conditions for prisoners.



THE GREAT DAY -- AUGUST 9th

Your Mother, my Mother
Our mothers,
Marching...
They heard the call
They came together and shared ideas
They all had one aim in mind
To show the regime
They were not what the regime thought they were - robots.

One husband might have reprimanded the wife,
"What do you people think you are up to?"
And the wife might have answered bravely,
"We know our aims and objectives
We mean to carry them out"
Your Mother and my Mother.

The day dawned,
Staunch...
They marched,
"To the Union Buildings
They had heard the commanding tone
And indeed they went
Carrying us on their backs
Gallant heroes of the time
Courageous they were
Women from all walks of life.
Your Mother, My Mother
Our Mothers.

Jumaimah Motaung

from MALIBONGWE ANC WOMEN: POETRY IS ALSO THEIR WEAPON

(August 9th has since 1956 become South Africa WOMEN'S DAY)



THE GREAT DAY - AUGUST 8th



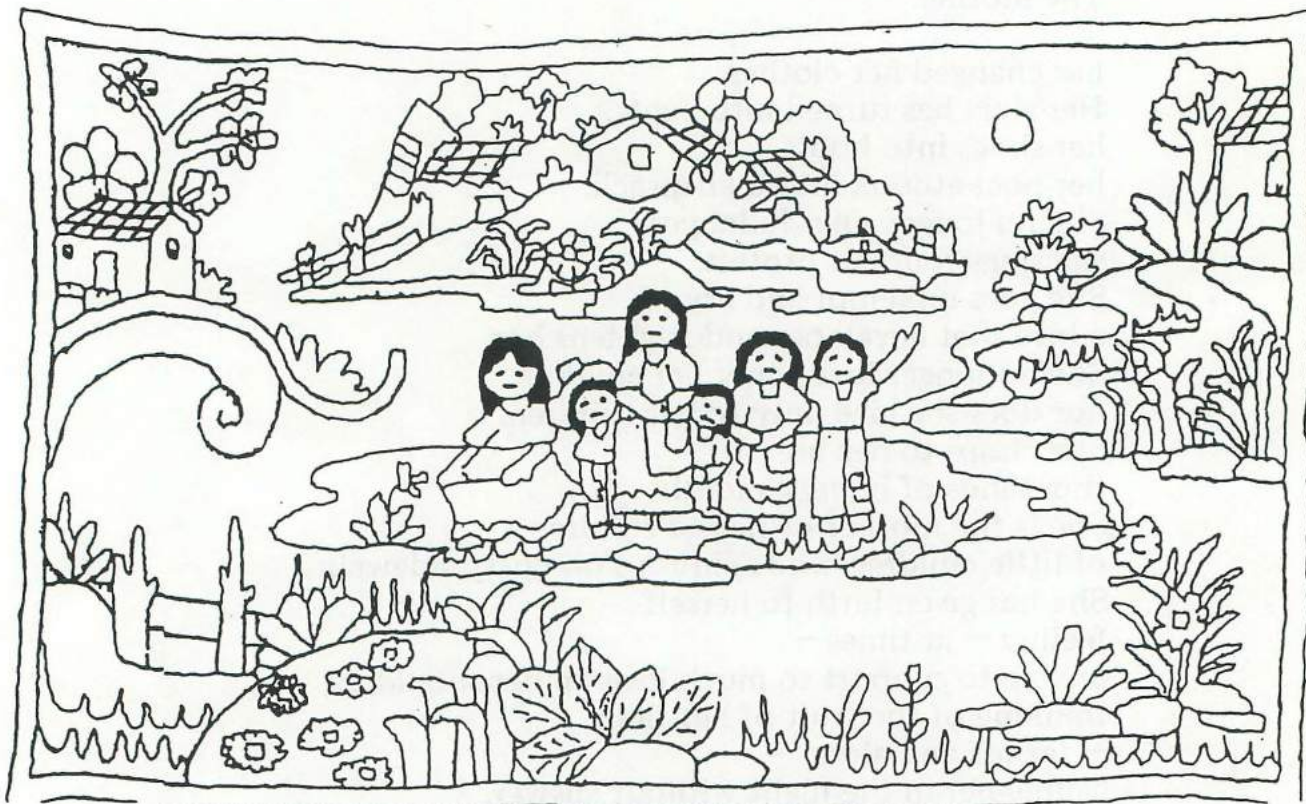
The Mother

has changed her clothes.
Her skirt has turned into pants,
her shoes into boots,
her pocketbook into a knapsack.
She no longer sings lullabies,
she sings songs of protest.
She goes unkempt and crying
a love that envelopes and frightens her.
She no longer loves only her children,
nor does she give only to her children.
She clasps to her breast
thousands of hungry mouths.
She is the mother of ragged children
of little children who spin tops on dusty sidewalks.
She has given birth to herself
feeling — at times —
unable to support so much love on her shoulders,
thinking of the fruit of her flesh
— far off and alone —
calling her in the night without answer,
while she responds to other shouts,
to many shouts,
but always thinking of the one and only shout of her flesh
one more shout in that clamour of the people who calls her
and pulls from her arms
even her own children.

Gioconda Belli / NICARAGUA

Translated by Electa Arenal and Marsha Gabriela Dreyer.

HERE COMES THE SUN!



HEAVEN ON EARTH, TRADITIONAL FOLK ART FROM LA PALMA, EL SALVADOR. A CHILD'S VISION OF THE NEW SOCIETY HERE ON EARTH

FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE IMPRISONED PARENTS AND ALL PUERTO RICAN CHILDREN

Listen Borinqueno child,
the soul of our country
In you we see the future
of our struggle for independence.
Our homeland is courage and sacrifice,
as Dr. Albizu taught us.
Walk with your heads held high,
because your parents are freedom fighters.
From these cold bars,
we are strengthened,
Knowing no empire can take away
our children's love,
the children who love liberty.
Listen Borinqueno child,
the moment for struggle has come,
with pride and determination
take a gun in one hand
and raise the other high,
To let the world know that our victory must arrive

Dylcia Paqan Morales /
Puerto Rican Prisoner of War





the woman with clipped hair
the woman with the steel gaze
the woman with the resolute mouth
staring from the paper
she is wanted
by the uruguayan police
by the argentine police
by the chilean police
by the paraguayan police
by the bolivian police
by the brazilian police
by the seattle police
by the FBI/
what is her name

i don't know
i never knew her name
i called her *companera*

she was a student
who cut class and went
to learn from the streets
from electricians
from secretaries
from drivers
from key punch operators
from machinists/
what was her name

i don't know
i never knew her name
i called her *guerillera*

a woman who knows each alley
and intersection
behind the facade of buildings
a woman whose path
is a narrow fire escape
a woman known to those
in slums
in campamentos
in poblaciones
in ghettos
in callampas
in the modern concentration camps/
what is her name

they don't know
they never knew her name
they called her *la primavera*

she walks erasing her steps
she will tell nothing
but her eyes will torment
her tormentors
who learn from her only
the courage of women
in struggle/
what was her name

they don't know
they will never know
they will call her *mujer entera*

her work is a product
of burning hate
and the burning love
she commits every day
which is her crime
which is her hope
which is her people
which is her name

primavera
companera
murer entera
guerillera

poem inspired by a police photo of Jessie Macchi,
a leader of the Tupamaros

ALL AROUND ME, COME!

I am the female white shell
Come to me
Come come come come come.
All comes spike and calyx
All around me
 Come!
My grandmother said,
I took you out of your mother
I held you against my own thighs
 to warm you.
I gave you the mother cob
You are the Katchina girl.
And all is beautiful.
The flower head the curving neck
 the meadowed breast
 the horizon belly curve of buttock
 stretch of legs the bottom of the feet
All beautiful, she said
 root earth and She Rain.
 As I lie on the earth
Be upon me
 Take me
 I am powerful!

Meridel LeSeuer

