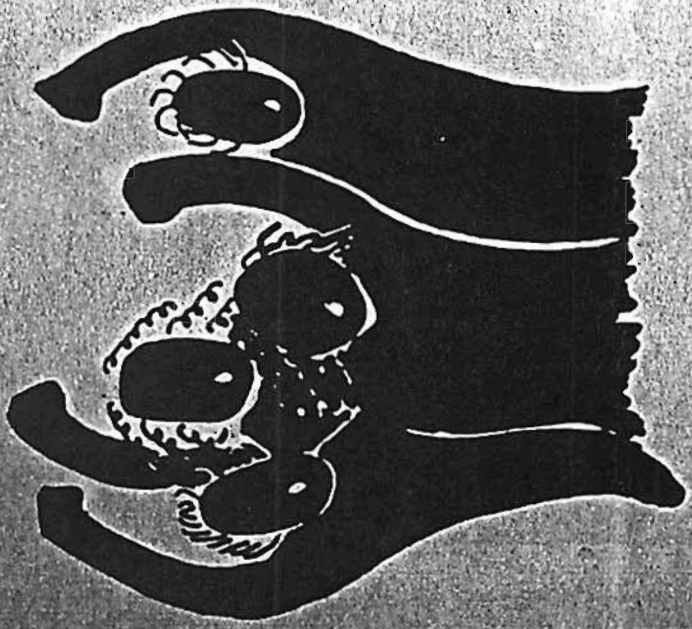


# Conspiracy of Voices

Poetry, Writings and Art  
By the Women of the  
Resistance Conspiracy Case



Suggested Price:  
\$5.00



# Conspiracy of Voices

**Poetry, Writings and Art  
by the Women of the  
Resistance Conspiracy Case**

Marilyn Buck  
Linda Evans  
Susan Rosenberg  
Laura Whitehorn

**CONSPIRACY OF VOICES: Poetry, Writings  
and Art by the Women of the Resistance  
Conspiracy Case**

• 1990 Emergency Committee to Defend the  
Human and Legal Rights of Political Prisoners

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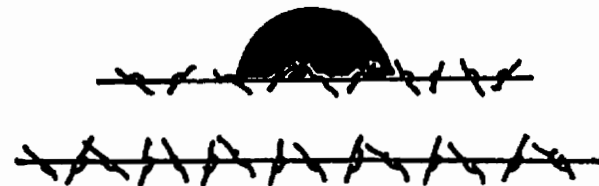
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Proceeds from the sale of this book  
go to support the work of the  
Emergency Committee and the defense  
of the Resistance Conspiracy Case.

This book is dedicated to Barbara Brasseur and all those  
who have committed so much time, energy, and love to  
supporting political prisoners and prisoners of war.



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## CONSPIRACY OF VOICES: An Introduction

The poetry and other writings in this small volume represent a tiny fragment of the vast creative energy which exists behind prison walls throughout the world. The four women of the Resistance Conspiracy case whose works appear here are extraordinary women in many ways. Yet, in many other ways, they are not much different from women everywhere. Or, to put it another way, one would hope that women everywhere might understand how alike we and they are.

Marilyn Buck, Linda Evans, Susan Rosenberg, Laura Whitehorn. Political prisoners. Revolutionaries. Dreamers. Lovers of Freedom. Believers in human worth, human dignity, human potential unfettered by actual chains or by artificial lines or stereotypes. Representative of struggles for liberation and justice throughout the world. Some are lesbians. All love women, people fighting everywhere for self-determination and dignity. Singers. Artists. Teachers. Writers. Healers. Fixers. Fighters. Workers.

These four women represent four voices of resistance out of millions which have been raised in defiance against repression on every continent. It is an unfortunate truth that many people will accept the concept that political prisoners exist in other places, but deny that reality here in the United States. While there are obvious propaganda reasons for that unpleasant truth, this is not the place for a lengthy discourse about



those reasons. Suffice it to say that in presenting these writings by (and in some cases about) these four women and other women who have been or are political prisoners here and elsewhere, it is to be hoped that some of this propaganda will lose its potency. As the reality of these women and the evident worth of their ideas are available to be read, and discussed and remembered, many false premises will be dispelled. Repressive regimes depend upon their ability to silence political prisoners—through isolation, torture, disappearances, censorship, criminalization of them and their ideals with the help of the mainstream press—to silence political opposition and resistance.

There are many truths to be found in these writings which concern our visions of the world as well as our visions of ourselves and our capacities to change those things which we know to be wrong. We see things every day which are evil, which cause injury and anguish, which should be resisted and prevented. We more often limit our vision to avoid direct conflict between our knowledge that we should resist these things and our belief that we are unable (for a variety of cogently articulated reasons) to do so. These four women and other political prisoners refused to engage in selective blindness. And for their determination to act upon what they could see and what they knew could be seen, they have paid, are paying an exacting price. (Some political prisoners pay the ultimate price; but the loss of freedom in the cause of political struggle is significant indeed.)

Short biographies of Marilyn, Linda, Susan and Laura appear at the end of this volume. They provide a glimpse into their lives and their political histories as revolutionaries which led to their present circumstances. All four, together with two other long-time activists, Alan Berkman and Timothy Blunk, are presently imprisoned at the Washington, D.C. Jail awaiting trial on charges that they were part of a conspiracy to "influence, change and protest policies and practices of the United States government concerning various international and domestic matters through the use of violent and illegal means." What "international and domestic matters"? The U.S.-backed contra war against the women, children and men of Nicaragua; the bloody invasion of Grenada; U.S. support of South Africa's apartheid system despite U.N. sanctions and worldwide condemnation; the colonization of Puerto Rico; racist police attacks in U.S. cities against African-Americans and other Third World communities; continued U.S.-backed repression of Palestinian struggles for self-determination. The government's "proof" against these six is based on a theory akin to South Africa's notorious "common purpose" doctrine—in essence, evidence of common political association and belief rather than direct evidence of criminal conduct. No one was harmed in any way by the actions said to have resulted from the conspiracy.

All six of these political prisoners have already served unusually long jail terms based upon their political beliefs and actions. In some cases, they have served this time under the harshest, most extreme conditions, experiencing human rights abuses condemned by many

groups, including Amnesty International. Laura Whitehorn is presently the victim of "preventive detention"—she has been denied bail and held in jail without trial longer than any other political prisoner in the U.S. (almost three years). The other five have been sentenced to prison terms so long as to be virtually impossible to calculate by any real life measure (ranging from 12 to 70 years) for politically motivated actions. Such exaggerated sentences are typically given to political prisoners and prisoners of war who represent revolutionary resistance, who struggle for Black, Puerto Rican, Native American, and other Peoples' liberation, who agitate and act to challenge the fundamental underpinnings of a corrupt system and to prevent its further casualties. Such sentences are not given to Ku Klux Klan terrorists, abortion clinic bombers, Nazis and other right-wing hatemongers. Such sentences, like the charges they face and the prison conditions they endure, are made possible because their voices are not heard.

Linda and Laura have been in jail for nearly five years. Susan and Marilyn have been in jail for more than five years. They have been the object of an unrelenting government campaign to criminalize them as "terrorists" and to deny them the most basic of human rights because of that government-created status. Susan Rosenberg spent 20 months in the underground federal prison known as Lexington, Kentucky "High Security Unit"—an isolation and control unit which Amnesty International called "deliberately and gratuitously cruel." Despite international protests, and a ruling by a federal court that political prisoners were sent to this unit in

intentional violation of their constitutional rights, a federal appeals court ruled in September 1989 that judges should not interfere in the government's treatment of political prisoners. The U.S. Department of Justice has recently proposed new regulations which would greatly increase censorship of prisoner communications and restrict the press from access to political and all prisoners.

The writings contained in this volume are by no means complete. They are, however, lyrical and dramatic testimony to the power of survival and to the unswerving rejuvenating forces of the collected voices of justice and liberation. These words portray many different themes and realities—the unique experience of women in prison; the search for love and dignity behind prison walls; commitment to an inevitable new and better world; freedom dreams; the random cruelty of captors; fears that one's inner core cannot be protected enough and certainty that it is impenetrable. There is humor here. And wisdom. And courage.

I have known some of these women only since they went to jail. Others, like Linda Evans, I have known for many years. Susan Rosenberg is my client. I knew her in New York, long before she was forced into hiding by a repressive F.B.I. unit bent on rounding up and incapacitating members and supporters of Black and Puerto Rican liberation movements. (This unit, known as the "Joint Terrorist Task Force," was the Reagan era's successor to the F.B.I.'s COINTELPRO program, which was exposed and condemned during the 1970s.) I met Susan when she was a student of acupuncture, treating



drug addicts in the South Bronx; when we marched to demand freedom for Assata Shakur (s/n Joanne Chesimard), then a political prisoner and target of F.B.I. repression as a Black woman fighting for the liberation of her people, now living free in Cuba with a grant of political asylum. I have visited all of these women in prisons around the country, talked with them, exchanged ideas, shared laughter, listened to their beliefs and dreams. I have grown more determined that their reality must be conveyed by having their voices heard as loudly and widely as possible.

These writings are as diverse as their authors, yet with many common threads. Susan Rosenberg's journal entries are a dramatic account of the power of dreams. Susan has kept a journal since she was first sent to Lexington's basement. Chronicling unthinkable, mindless cruelties, and beautiful moments of deliverance, Susan's journal excerpts, like her poems, shed unexpected light on the darkness of prison midnights. She writes of the struggles engaged in by political prisoners across the world to achieve recognition and basic associational rights. "Spring/April/Hungerstrike Day 61" reminds us that RAF political prisoners in West Germany were prepared to die for these rights. The FDR government, like the British government, was willing to allow these needless deaths. In "On Walter Sisulu's Release" we find a powerful statement of the African liberation struggle and the ennobling power of its certain victorious future. "Compañera" is a gentle poem about love during war; "Visit" is a moving description of an encounter which opens passageways to another universe.

Marilyn's poetry is likewise diverse. She gives us many tastes of love—its hurts, its humble beginnings, its everchanging landscapes. Such short verses ("I am astonished", "Clandestine Kisses") vie for our attention with critical, analytical exposes of oppression ("Democratic Musings"; "Prayer from the Americas"; "Remembering a 15-Year-Old Palestinian Woman"). And, there are fragile glimpses into the raw nerve endings of prison survival ("Realities In Blue"; "There Is No Grass"), and the undeniable joy and hope inspired by the release of Nelson Mandela after 27 years in South African jails ("February 11, 1990").

Laura is an artist of exceptional talent. Her flowers and colors and patterns of paint and pen are, it develops, matched by an equally perceptive precise and poetic eye, enveloping us as surely as her drawings. She writes of, about, and from a spirit of giving. A poem for Puerto Rican POW Carmen Valentin, serving 98 years for membership in the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), with whom Laura spent time in the federal women's prison in Pleasanton, California. A poem to celebrate Linda Evans' brief moment of freedom when granted bail on New York charges in 1985—only to be rearrested when she voluntarily appeared in a New Orleans court to face charges there ("To Linda, Baltimore City Jail, August 24, 1985"). Eloquent statements of hope in the center of despair ("Sisterhood Is Powerful"; "Christmas in D.C. Jail 1989"), inner strengths ("The Quality of Light"; "Fourteen Days, Loss of Privileges"), including the unerring recognition of the need to resist ("The Enemy").

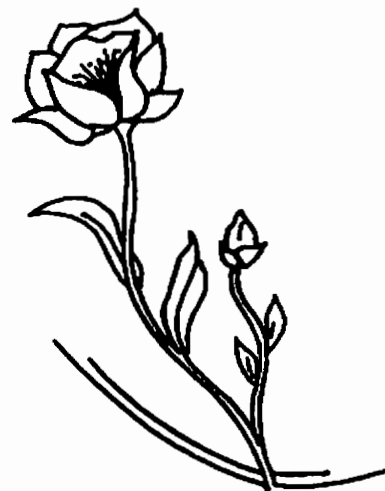
Linda's life has been one of poetry. She writes movingly of the struggle to write, to create behind prison walls. Her essay of her 1969 trip to Vietnam is a stunning tale—the profound impact of the Vietnamese peoples' determination to resist, to win, to turn the scars of war into the furrows of future plantings of liberation. Linda's long years of organizing by her own examples are evident in her essays, and they enable us to see larger patterns and visions in much the same way as the brilliant quilts and weavings she created before becoming a political prisoner.

In these writings, then, one finds many voices. Those of Marilyn, Linda, Susan, and Laura, of course. And the voices resist their present conditions and the governmental policies which put them there. Likewise, in knowing that their own voices are heard, that people know that they exist and begin to understand who and why they are, their causes can only grow and even determine the future. These are the voices of fighters for the liberation of Palestine, South Africa, El Salvador, the South Bronx, Southeast Washington, D.C. These are the voices of mothers, sisters, lovers, daughters, companeras, friends, seekers of dreams, dreamers, of freedom.

This is the conspiracy of voices that we can hear if we listen. That we must hear if survival is to be a meaningful concept. That we should speak to, and with, and for. All over the world.

Mary K. O'Melveny

A list of suggested readings by and about women political prisoners appears at the end of this volume. These works have been recommended especially by Marilyn, Linda, Susan, and Laura, who have been inspired by those voices and the many others which they represent.



## Marilyn Buck

**FEBRUARY 11, 1990**

Walking  
inside walls  
3 pairs of feet  
whisper softly against harsh pavement  
stifling all growing things  
A cold crisp morning  
the sun promising to touch us  
if only we can stay a while longer.  
Time's up  
one hour done  
We must leave  
9:16 A.M.

Across the vast expanse of sea  
a continent away  
it is 4:16 P.M.  
on a brilliant sun-swept afternoon  
Nelson Mandela's last footsteps  
echo on yards ringed by walls  
as he crosses through the steel gates  
into the radiance of African eyes and voices  
raising in syncopated jubilation  
"Nelson Mandela is free"  
"Free South Africa"  
resounding around the world  
reaching inside these walls  
where we too  
stand in sweet company.

## CLANDESTINE KISSES

— for Linda —

Kisses  
blooming on lips  
which have already spoken  
and now await  
stolen  
clandestine kisses

A prisoner kisses  
she is defiant  
she breaks the rules  
she traffics in contraband  
womens kisses

**A crime wave of kisses  
Bitter sweet sensuality  
flouting women-hating satraps  
in their prison fiefdoms  
furious  
that love  
can not be arrested.**

January 1990



## THERE IS NO GRASS

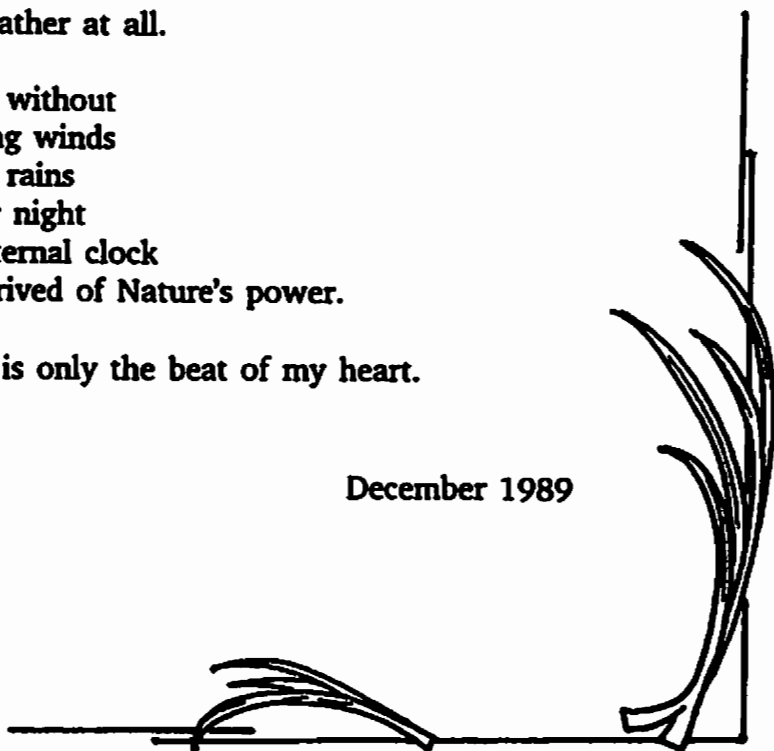
There is no grass  
no trees  
no children throwing stones  
into puddles  
no laughter  
no tears.

There is no peace  
no silence  
no world of dazzling colors  
no sun  
no moon  
no weather at all.

Living without  
blowing winds  
gentle rains  
day or night  
my internal clock  
is deprived of Nature's power.

There is only the beat of my heart.

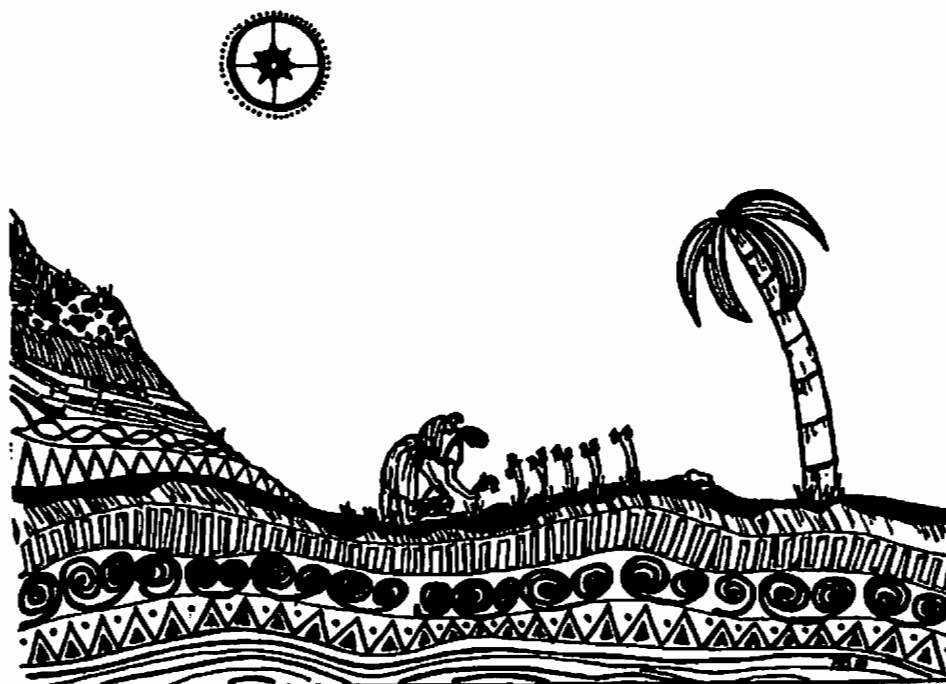
December 1989



## I AM ASTONISHED

I am astonished  
that I love you still  
my interior landscape  
is forever altered.  
The groundwater of my being  
still runs with the taste of your smile  
warm  
though now so distant  
in a past that burned  
only as long as a candle.

Summer 1989



## PRAYER FROM THE AMERICAS

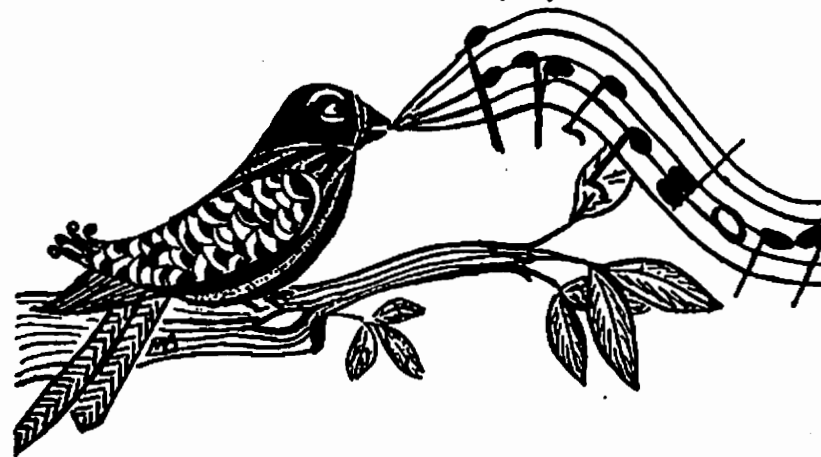
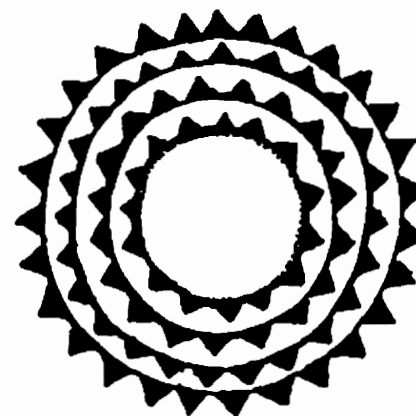
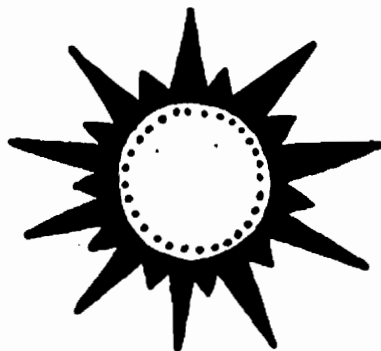
After reading La Memoria del Fuego  
by Eduardo Galeano

Oh my God  
so gold and pure  
my golden God  
in whose name  
I offer blood  
washing the new world red.

My God of gold  
more brilliant than the sun  
(of, but the one God is not  
the Sun God  
of the Aztecs or the Mayas)

I say to you  
the son of one God  
died to save our sins  
not their sins  
and they must pay.

My God  
Praise him with gold  
Cultures must fall  
Destruction must rain  
on all who would stop  
my holy mission  
I, man of the Inquisitions.



November 1988

**REMEMBERING A 15-YEAR-OLD PALESTINIAN  
WOMAN IN PRISON, CHAINED TO THE BED  
SPRINGS. SHE HAD REFUSED TO STOP SINGING.**

Singing songs  
Chained  
for singing  
clear melodic minor notes  
welling from sweet young throats  
and mouths which have tasted the tightness  
of screaming silences

And still songs soar

Songs sung sweetly  
soaring skyward  
Reeling remembering revealing  
souls and spirits

Women singing songs  
    lullabies lovesongs  
    and blues songs  
    chanting cantillating songs  
    of living life  
    and dying death

Searching out sounds not yet noted  
on bars  
not yet ordered on scales  
Exploring the breadth of hell  
Seeking the expanses of the universe  
and freedom

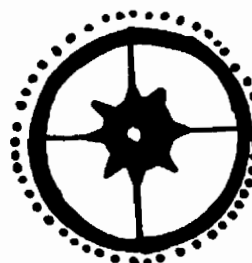
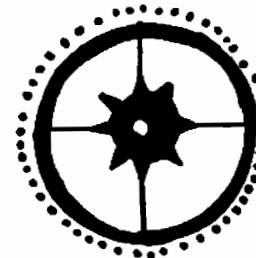
Summer 1988

**FOR THE SHARPEVILLE SIX**

Theresa Ramashanona  
Oupa Moses Diniso  
Reid Mailbo Mokoena  
Duma Joshua Khumalo  
Majalefa Reginald Sefatsa  
Francis Manentsu Mokhes

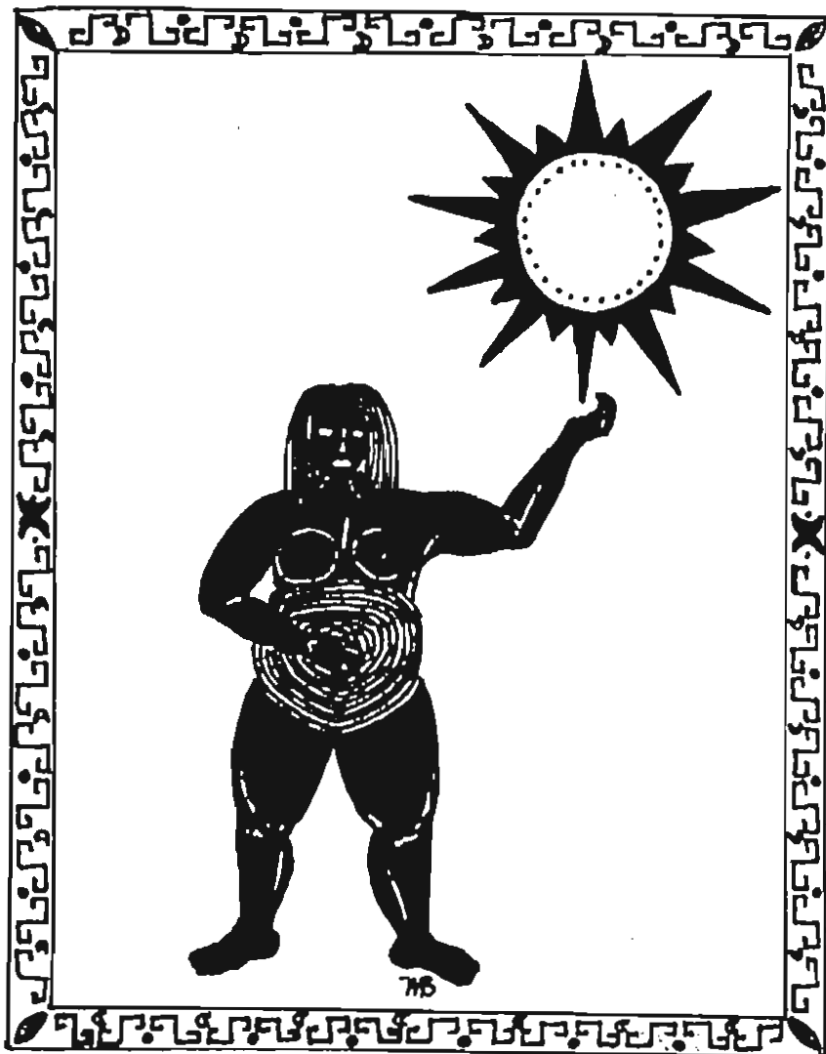
Condemned  
to death  
to hang  
till dead  
for being

There  
among your people  
Outraged  
that he  
who looked  
like your brother  
would betray you  
would betray your black rich land  
to the Afrikaner  
for one gold rand.



August 1988





## TO WOMEN WHO WORK

In the winds of whirling dust  
whipping new york streets  
a world of women  
tossed by the tangible  
which determines our lives  
young old

old  
women sitting on stoops  
stooped by lives of labor  
bearing children in tenuous tenements  
bent over assembly lines  
cleaning washing cooking  
for old women  
who whirl through Bloomingdales  
spending shopping searching for  
chalices of youth and beauty  
an obsessive desperation over depreciation  
and obsolescence  
oblivious to value

old young women sitting on stoops  
too young  
babies in arms  
singing strident sonatas of dreams  
burdened by blues  
burning in eyes mirroring expectations  
lived only by miss amerikass  
dancing dreams of Vogue  
and princes

while old women  
and young women sit on stoops  
needing  
slaving in sweatshops  
in Savannah San Juan and Seoul  
spinning out the desires of  
old women and young women  
of class  
who need nothing and want everything.

February 1988



## DEMOCRATIC MUSINGS

August 1988

Reading in the New York Times recently, my eye was caught by an opinion in the editorial section. A U.S. official stated that the U.S. is responsible for the democratic advances in Latin America. He opined that democracy can be measured by the distribution of the wealth. The democratic export of capital has been an astounding success, particularly in the area of natural population control. We should not forget to applaud the economists and finance capital, along with the military which have poured their best efforts into this noble exercise.

It is heartwarming to know that the U.S. is so interested in the well-being of other nations. Can a good Amerikan do less than praise and congratulate the Reagan Government which has done so much? Since Reagan and his cohorts arrived from California country clubs and Central American cabals, democracy has taken great strides forward.

This is not to say that the U.S. has shirked its duties to fight for democracy prior to Mr. Reagan. The U.S. is soundly steeped in the tradition of defending and promoting democracy anywhere it can get its hand in.

First, we should note its fine Foreign Student Program. Countless numbers of young, aspiring military men have passed through the halls of higher learning—initiated into the finest traditions and techniques of promoting democracy among the population. Only the most

advanced in electrical enlightenment, psychological subordination and dissection techniques are taught to the hope of Latin America; thus ensuring that the masses there are experiencing the most modern, though horrifying, results of not supporting democracy and its guardians.

The advances of democracy indeed have been astounding successful. Latin America has made great strides in democratic disappearances, democratic military elections of civilian presidents, democratic poverty, and, in general, the democratic devastation of the economy by yanquiphiles, both military and civilian.

Grenada was democratically dispossessed of its socialist system which had enticed the Grenadian masses by providing education, Medical care, jobs, and by deceiving them with the great anti-democratic propaganda trick --self-determination. Little wonder that the Grenadian people were overwhelmed when democracy returned, allowing them to sink easily, once again, into poverty and social despair.

Facing an uphill battle, the U.S. has persevered in its dream for Nicaragua. It created the contra freedom fighters, a band of democratic enforcers committed to the ballot of the M-16, Remington, and Claymore--aimed at anti-democratic institutions such as the schools and hospitals erected by the Sandinista-led government, which had been so undemocratically elected by more than 80 percent of the entire population of voting age. The contras, aided by their US mentors, have measured

their own popularity by bodies -- those of murdered men, women, and children.

Historically, the advances of democracy can be measured by decreases in population. In 1932, in El Salvador, the US first officially bestowed its full attention on the great theosophist and democratic military dictator, General Martinez, who achieved an overwhelming victory. He won by 32,000 bodies--tortured, executed, and imprisoned. Chile also can be applauded for the similar victory of General Pinochet. He, too, successfully murdered more than 300,000 subversive and anti-democratic elements who had supported the popularly-elected government of Salvador Allende, the Socialist. The CIA can be thanked for its tireless efforts on behalf of Pinochet and his pals all over Latin America. These events have been truly outstanding in the democratic process. Surely they will receive proper historical note.

Nevertheless, we should not slight other students of democracy who have accomplished much in the area of democratic diminution of the population, albeit in a more protracted fashion. The Somoza family did well in Nicaragua before the Sandinistas subverted Somoza-style democracy, and the General's well-being. Guatemala was returned to US-blessed democracy in 1954 after the overthrow of the Arbenz government by the CIA. There the very democratic military has dedicated itself to wiping out rural poverty and illiteracy by exterminating the indigenous population who are, of course, responsible for it. Argentina was a shining example. However, it suffered a brief setback when the most democratic military, which had raised the right to

disappear to a fine art, was displaced by the civilian pretender, Alfonsin. (Fortunately, he has not turned out to be truly anti-democratic. He has pardoned the military for its democratic excesses.)

Finally, we must mention El Salvador again. Even after the great democratic successes of the '30s, '40s, and '50s, the communists and subversives have carried on a tradition of attacking this most democratic of nations. But the El Salvadoran military and its "D" squads have consistently striven to make the country free from those elements, most often found to be workers, peasants, and students.

Yes, Latin America has much to thank Uncle Sam for. Democracy has made Latin America a special place, which will not fall into that nightmarish Malthusian pit of hopeless overpopulation. For a while, at least, it may remain a paradise for parasites and patricians. After all, who can deny that democracy is best enjoyed by the few. Too many people, bedazzled by insidious communist concepts of freedom, equality, and justice, ruin democracy.



## AMERICAN GOTHIC

Farmers gaunt-eyed  
Finally consumed  
by the Amerikan dream  
a buyer and seller's dream  
for men with merciless eyes  
A wracking silence  
Earth turned over  
by hands  
waving  
a piece of paper.

1988



## REALITIES IN BLUE

I often wonder if this reality which hangs  
from my shoulders  
in a multitude of blues  
confessing and congregating a rainbow of  
their own  
has swept me unknowing, or protesting,  
to a planet to which I do not belong  
where red sun runs from its embarrassment  
where the people whirl back-to-back chasing  
their faces  
fearing to see or be seen  
chanting alphabets in kaleidoscopes of sounds  
that echo stillborn  
in the silence of days masked in stars giddy-glittery  
from their own perceived self importance.  
And I shrink in this light  
my blues protest at the invasion of such a  
stale yellowness  
too bedazzled with itself to be reflective.  
Yes, my blues protest hanging from my shoulders  
enveloping my heart  
as it beats a path not always seen  
to the edge of a different existence  
where blue meets yellow in a profusion of green.

November 1989



Linda Evans



### 3 A.M.: SEWING IN RED AND BLACK

It's finally quiet. Sitting hunched over on my bunk, I hear the guard's keys. I pause to see if she'll approach, ready to hide my illegal needle and thread, contraband in this prison cell. Dangerous weapons, this needleful of red embroidery thread!

Stitching: F-S-L-N and Sandino's hat on a bookmark to be sold for the Sandinista election campaign. "Friends of Frente": grassroots fund-raising and support from folks in the U.S. for the Nicaraguan revolution. The goal: \$250,000 to help the FSLN knock on every door in Nicaragua. Money for gasoline and car repairs, precious pencils and paper. A stark contrast to the \$23,000,000 spent by the U.S. government to buy the elections for UNO and the contras.

I prick my finger—again—and try to avoid dripping blood on the white cloth. The irony of my efforts suddenly hits me hard. For years I've supported Nicaragua Libre, struggling in every conceivable way for an end to U.S. intervention. One of the reasons my comrades and I are in prison is because of our strong solidarity with liberation movements in Central America. We've been accused of armed actions to stop military aid and training for the contras; we've been accused of building a clandestine resistance movement to oppose U.S. policy and fight for social revolution inside the U.S.... And now here I am—sewing!

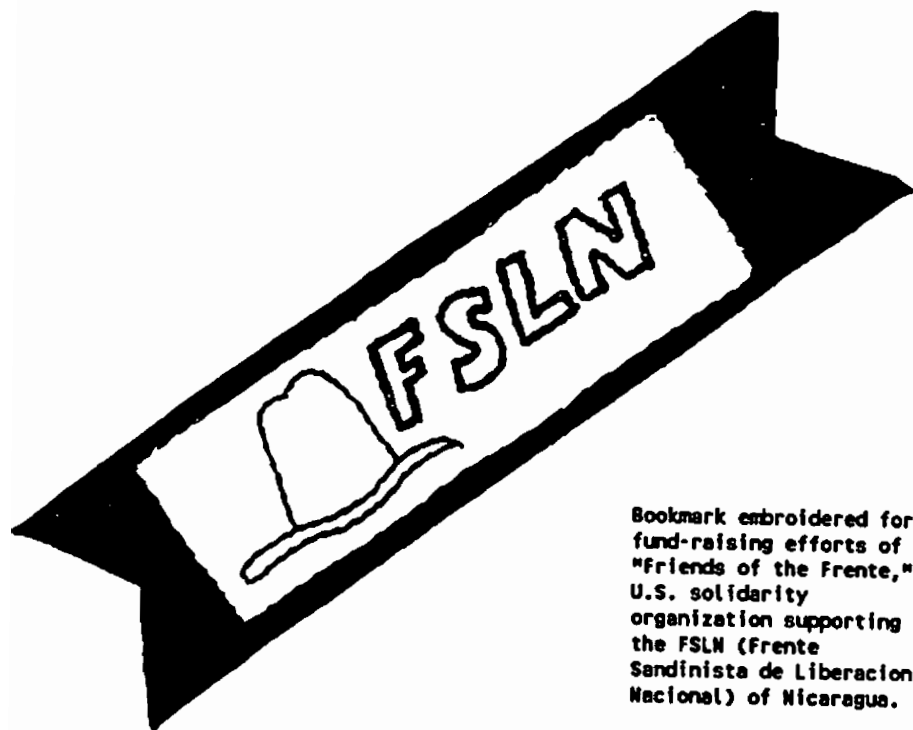
I stare down at my bookmark and lay it aside, starting to pace my tiny cell, stretching my hunched back. I want to scream and yell, pound the cell door, break through the bars. But I know that iron and concrete and the guards' guns in the tower separate me from freedom to act as I wish I could. I do jumping jacks to let off steam, and silently scream as waves of frustration and anger wash over me. I'm an organizer, I'm a revolutionary—not a seamstress! There's so much more that I want to do! I feel the urgency of people around the world suffering because of this government; I feel inspired by their will to win liberation, and I want to add all my energies to theirs, so victory will come sooner.

I sit back down on my bunk and start sewing again. Such a small gesture, these bookmarks. At most, they may raise a very few dollars for the Sandinistas. I think of the drawings of the women in Ilopango prison in El Salvador, the postcards of the political prisoners in Spain and Germany, the ivory pendants carved by the New People's Army combatants in the Philippines, the arpilleras/tapestries made by women political prisoners and their families in Chile. I am not alone, and the enemy hasn't won as long as I can keep fighting. Our art is one small part of our determination to keep our resistance alive.

I smile to myself, ironically. This is what I can do—here, tonight, this contraband art, this bookmark. And tomorrow, join my efforts with hundreds of others in building a revolutionary movement. All over the world political prisoners are part of the freedom



struggle; we contribute however we can. The enemy's prison bars can't stop us, their rules and restrictions can't stop us, losing our physical freedom won't stop us, in so many countries even torture or death has not stopped us. Our resistance slowly grows stronger and, someday, the people of the world will win. Venceremos!



Bookmark embroidered for fund-raising efforts of "Friends of the Frente," U.S. solidarity organization supporting the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional) of Nicaragua.

## FROM VIETNAM TO D.C. JAIL: ON REVOLUTIONARY CULTURE

When I went to North Vietnam in 1969, I entered a country at war on a mission of peace. I represented Students for a Democratic Society in a delegation of antiwar activists who had been asked to receive Prisoners-of-War released by the Vietnamese as a gesture of friendship to the American people. In Vietnam, I felt that I experienced a truly popular culture for the first time—a culture born of peoples' lives, that strengthened them in struggling for revolution. I learned how integrated into everyday life peoples' creativity could be, and I was profoundly affected by their example. We travelled extensively throughout North Vietnam—from Hanoi, in the far north of the country, all the way to the Banh Hai River, then the border between South and North Vietnam.

During these 21 days, we travelled through areas that had been devastated by more tonnage of bombs than was dropped during the entirety of World War II—and the countryside showed it. The land itself was little more than a series of deep craters in most places. At the time of this trip, Vietnamese farmers had taken advantage of a temporary lull in the bombing of the North to fill in some of the craters with soil for rice fields, or with water for fish ponds or rice field reservoirs. In other craters they had planted banana trees, or other types of fruits and vegetables that had been developed to grow in soil permanently transformed

by the chemical fallout of the bombs. We passed through village after village where every single building had been destroyed, including schools, hospitals, museums, and temples that were thousands of years old. I remember walking through the streets of what had once been a larger town. Not even one wall remained that was higher than my waist—except a single pillar of a hospital, painted with a red cross. The remnants of walls were pockmarked from the anti-personnel cluster bombs that exploded and chipped away hunks of buildings—and hunks of bodies. The people I met showed me their wounds, lifting their clothes so I could witness the deformities and pain caused by U.S. bombardment. In every village's Hall of Bitterness were displayed photographs of dead children, survivors with gaping wounds, the rubble of bones that no longer existed.

I spent my days weeping.

Uncontrollably angry, unbelievably sad. Unable to express the depth of what I was feeling—I wept.

But beside the Halls of Bitterness in these villages were Halls of Hope, Halls of Victory. In these huts were displayed the photos and fragments of U.S. bombers that had been proudly shot down by the people of the town, tributes to those who had died, medals won defending the village. Those medals had been won by children as young as seven, and by grandparents in their seventies. As our Vietnamese friends told us story after courageous story, I realized that every person in the

village played an important role in its defense. The U.S. had targeted the population as a whole, their schools, temples, and the country's infrastructure. It was waging a war designed to totally destroy the people, culture, and national identity of Vietnam—a war of genocide. The mass mobilization of the whole people—a Peoples' War—was the successful Vietnamese response. Just as every person played a part in defending their nation, everyone took part in building a culture that helped them stay strong enough to fight and, eventually, to win. Beside the medals in the Halls of Hope, beautiful Vietnamese art was displayed—watercolors and sketches, drawings created with a simplicity of line and figure that is uniquely Vietnamese. The images were of life in a village at war: people cultivating rice with rifles slung over their shoulders, behind anti-aircraft guns, relaxing after battle, tending the wounded. Side by side with these drawings were beautiful flowerpots made from bomb casings, hospital equipment of every description made out of airplane wings, and sandals made from tires of fighter-bombers. Practicality, simplicity, and beauty were inseparable in all these ingenious creations. They were products of a culture of resistance that is part of the daily life of Vietnam.

As we travelled, we stopped at factories built inside mountains, at schools and day care centers that were underground. Our hosts showed us the intricate tunnel and bomb shelter systems that every village created, enabling the people to survive these 24-hour-a-day bombing raids for days, even months, at a time. During

these raids, with cluster bombs exploding, phosphorus and napalm falling from the sky like rain, some of the bravest people in each village volunteered to work on cultural brigades. Teams of two or three people would dodge through open ditches and over fields from shelter to shelter. During their visits, they would read newspapers or perform poetry aloud, tell stories of the bravery of the combatants, retell ancient Vietnamese fables. And they would sing.

Everywhere we went in Vietnam, people would sing. On ferries, in rice fields, town meetings, schools. This was a collective, popular pastime. When we visited a factory, each person would show us their work. At the end of the tour, the factory's machines would be turned off, and all the workers would go with us to the dining hall, where we should share green tea and perhaps some fruit. And the whole factory would sing. This would be a special occasion, in honor of their new American friends. But it was also a common occurrence, repeated often when the workers couldn't return to their homes because of bombing raids. And every evening, no matter what size village we stayed in, the people gathered to perform skits or choral sings—and once even a formal theatrical play, complete with precious electricity and a song composed in our honor.

Creating a revolutionary culture was part of everyone's daily life. It wasn't a commodity to be bought and sold or controlled by those who could pay for advertising. In Vietnam, many forms of art were recognized and valued—from painting, acting, and singing to the art of making bombshells into flowerpots or delicate combs for

women's hair. This was a culture born of people's resistance, woven inseparably into the fabric of daily life—and this culture of resistance gave the Vietnamese people the strength, hope, and endurance to survive and go on to drive the U.S. out of their country.

In the 20 years that have passed since my trip to Vietnam, I've witnessed and participated in many efforts to build revolutionary culture in this country. Performers like Bernice Reagon and the musicians in Sweet Honey in the Rock, Serious Bizness, and other groups have contributed culturally to the struggle for Black liberation. Folkloric dances and conjunto music are part of every Chicano/Mejicano political event; Native American traditional culture is absolutely integral to their struggle for sovereignty. The New Song movement from Latin America, and liberation songs, dances, and plays from Palestine and Southern Africa have strengthened our solidarity and our understanding of national liberation movements in other parts of the world.

As women, we, too, waged an uphill battle to develop a women's and lesbian-identified culture as our struggle for liberation grew stronger. For the first time, we proudly celebrated our love for each other, sang and wrote about women loving women and all the issues that affected our lives. Slowly, a culture grew that could strengthen us to keep fighting, that reminded us of the quality of life and the new society we were fighting for.

But American capitalism has many mechanisms for exerting its control. Outside the context of real struggle for social change, even radical cultural work can become simply another commodity for a few people to profit from. It can become another form of entertainment, where people leave cultural events congratulating themselves on how radical they are because of the political content of the performance. This system will allow us a limited space for our cultural institutions if our culture doesn't seriously threaten the power of our oppressors. It's dangerous: a co-opted culture can lull us into satisfaction by entertaining us without challenging us to act to renew our commitment to fight for the changes we so desperately need.

We've discovered that there's even less space for building revolutionary culture inside prison. In prison, simply creating is often forbidden, and therefore it becomes an act of resistance, because it is an affirmation of our humanity. To create is to rebel against the prison system's efforts to dehumanize prisoners. Creating political art is resistance against the government's efforts to destroy our political identities.

Laura and I were in prison in California with four of the Puerto Rican women Prisoners-of-War. Together, the six of us began to construct a beautiful quilt highlighting the history and culture of Puerto Rican independence. When the prison authorities found out about our project, our cells were raided, the quilt was confiscated, and we were forbidden to work on it. But this quilt will eventually be finished.

Our political art may be declared "contraband," and confiscated or destroyed, but we are determined to continue to resist and to create. Even if we have to smuggle art or poetry out of prison on toilet paper or hidden in shoes, political prisoners will share our creativity with people outside prison, to contribute to building a culture of resistance that will strengthen our mutual determination to win liberation.



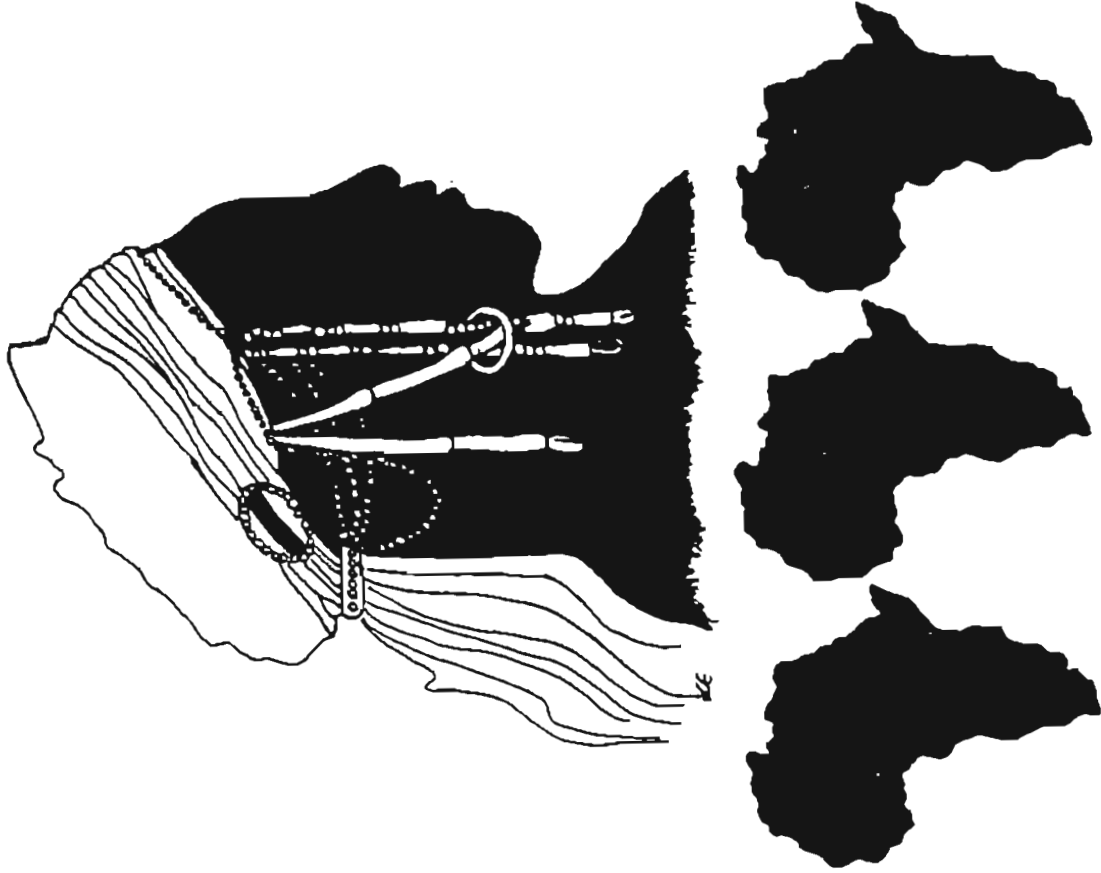
Arpillera (small tapestry) made clandestinely in D.C. Jail using applique and embroidery. Thread unravelled from jailhouse blanket; fabric pieces from jail uniforms, blankets, handkerchiefs. Map of Palestine colored with colored pens, stuffed with cotton from sanitary napkins. Most materials used, including needle and thread, are illegal to possess.

## BREAKING THROUGH

Writing. I sit down to write, and I feel panicked. I'm choking, or drowning, gasping for air, suffocating in a stifling room. There are reasons for this.

In the past, words have been my friends. In impassioned speeches at demonstrations, in heartfelt talks with close comrades, in discussions, organizing, singing—words have seldom failed me. (One of the legacies of a little white middle-class education and many years in the school of life is that I can express myself.) But conversations and speeches are of the moment, gone on the winds, different than—writing. For strangers to read, or hear, without knowing the person writing. Relying on words alone to express such complex thoughts and feelings. And written down, in a book, available for anyone to read years from now? Enough to make anyone panic, I think to myself.

But I have an analysis, too. When my sisters said to me, "You must write something for this book, your voice should be heard," I rebelled. "I'm not a writer," I muttered to myself. But then I struggled with all those easy, well-worn explanations of why I should force myself to write. How it's part of women's oppression that we think we have nothing worthwhile to say. How women are taught to be emotional, not verbal or intellectual. How hard it is to reject an abstract, arbitrary standard of what is "good writing," or "good



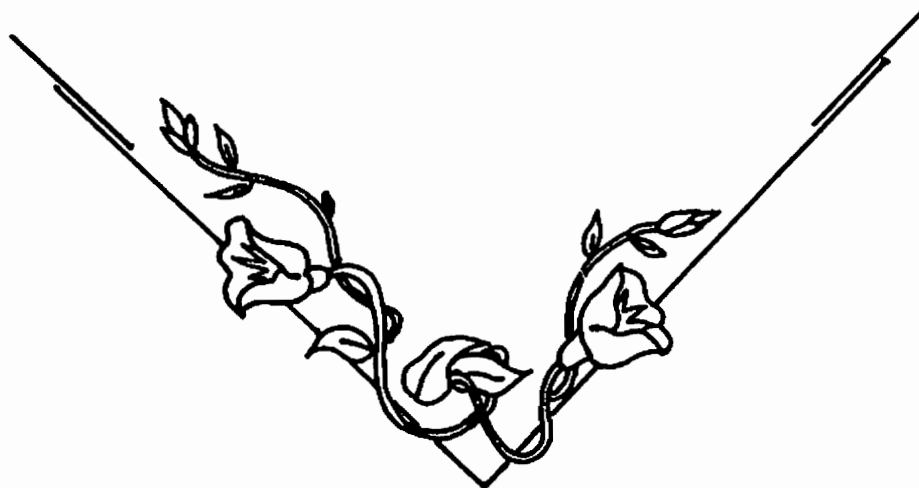
poetry," or "correct politics"—a standard that by definition ignores process, growth, and change. These things I know, and I use my understandings to force me to the writing desk.

But a deeper, more individual process is going on, born of my identity as a political prisoner. I realize I have embraced certain forms of writing, rejecting others. I write hundreds of letters, communicating my ideas and politics, my love, my laughter. I know that my correspondences are changing people's lives because they change my life, too. (This is always a mutual process.) Writing letters is like a conversation, almost like organizing. There's a response, even though it's delayed, from someone else, with different ideas and a different perspective, with new information. I've been able to embrace writing letters—frustrating though it is—because it's a way to communicate with the outside world even though I'm in prison.

But writing for an unknown audience has its own peculiarities. For me to keep a journal would be to break down years of studious avoidance of keeping notes that could reveal my feelings, plans, or other information to my enemy, the state. It feels strange to write only for myself, though I know it could be enlightening to look back on the development of particular ideas or emotional reactions to specific events. And political prisoners have kept journals as a means of survival—to exercise our minds, to record the atrocities of prison life, to maintain our political identities. I've

rebelled against writing a journal or writing articles because I've viewed them as accepting the unacceptable isolation of imprisonment. Since the readers are unknown, or maybe only myself, there isn't even a pretense of dialogue or delayed discussion. I realize that it's this imprisonment, this isolation that I am rebelling so fiercely against, not the writing itself.

Better to view written words as tools with which to organize, a way to keep fighting, a means of communicating free ideas with unknown comrades-to-be. In fact, writing can overcome our enemy's attempts to isolate us, words can be turned against our captors. So—I will write! (But I do wish I had a typewriter!)





PRISON VISIT

Sometimes and who can know when  
once twice or never again  
from the silence of smooth cold stone  
we make sense of the strange way  
we are watched by hated men.

We make sense of the unseen eyes  
and our eyes fuse and I see in them  
that place  
where energies and mysteries meet  
and the light of your eyes and mine  
throws us up  
towards the sky.

Sometimes sitting amidst  
a space that we carve  
clandestinely out of their  
criminality and restrictions  
your hand in mine  
we are drawn to the magic  
that runs through our clasp  
and the roaring cacophony of repression  
becomes a celestial symphony  
and I am in a freedom.

Winter 1989



**JOURNAL ENTRY**  
**March 5, 1989**

I dreamed of the scent of somalia roses. An oil of Africa, and of the smell of cilantro, and cumin, and of an infinite desert with a small patch of irrigated land in which a temporary camp had been set up by a group of African and Arabic women. And they were cooking in large earth pots. And a woman reminiscent of Nehanda was holding a large knife in her hand and the sweat was rolling down her face. It was glistening in the harsh sun and made her color seem almost red in the light amber color of her flesh. And she looked at me and then motioned to come forward and she said, "There will be a shelter for you, I will see to it."

And I woke up with a start because my cell door was open, and a young women was saying, "Susan, Susan, get up, give me your cup, I know you need coffee." And she smiled at me and said, "You look exhausted, you work too much." And I handed her my cup and said, "You are a sweetheart, thanks so much." And I stepped outside my cell all rumped, trying to stretch my cramped self and another women said, "Susan, where were you yesterday? Are you okay?" And I had to smile because prison, this horrendous jail, is my community of women.



**JOURNAL ENTRY**  
**May 12, 1989**



Thinking about prison/controls/power/ domination/subjugation...Genocide, colonialism, cultural and psychic death. Yesterday morning the shakedown was brutal. The goon squad beat up a women for trying to finish brushing her teeth. When they wouldn't let her—for no reason—she spit out her mouthful of toothpaste and saliva on one of the police. If they'd waited 30 seconds, there would not have been a problem. But of course—this is prison. And so, they beat her up, and she fought them back, and I saw four of them have to haul her up the stairs past my cell window and drag her out, into the hall. And they couldn't get the cuffs on. And we were yelling, incapable of doing anything. Locked down.

Thinking about the fact that the collective process of resistance to human abuse is an affirmation of human dignity (like brushing your teeth). Thinking about the fact that that's what they are trying to kill—collective, resistance, and dignity.

The jailers are empowered by fear—it seems that control by terror has become an accepted and natural way of life...or is it the lack of knowledge about our reality by those on the outside???

This isn't argentina. or bolivia, or uruguay, or istanbul, or iran, or chile.

No.  
This is Washington, D.C.

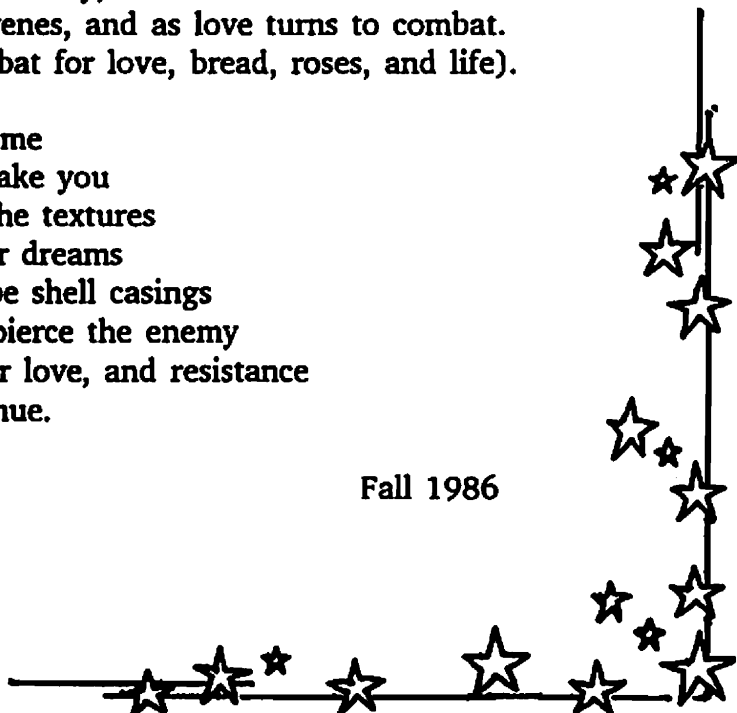
## COMPAÑERA

Take me  
as you did in clandestine  
nights of joy and discovery  
wet from intimate rain  
from years built with desire

Take me  
as you once did  
in the quiet of mornings  
with tender slow kisses  
moving from dreams to consciousness  
A new unity, as this war  
intervenes, and as love turns to combat.  
(Combat for love, bread, roses, and life).

Take me  
as I take you  
and the textures  
of our dreams  
will be shell casings  
that pierce the enemy  
as our love, and resistance  
continue.

Fall 1986



## SPRING/APRIL/HUNGERSTRIKE DAY 61

There are nights when freedom  
is as close as a lover's breath.  
When desires and imagination  
merge  
and the prisoner rides a tempest,  
a tidal wave of memories.  
A spirit in the dark  
a conspiracy of spirit.  
Sleep is happily elusive.

But it is cold, and the cold  
intrudes, invades, and brings with it  
the present.

Two marvelous friends that we  
have never met  
will soon  
die.  
They will die from hungerstrike  
and no spirit conspiracy will save them.

But in the cold  
all those that conspire in the dark  
secretive regions of cells,  
in and out  
will continue.  
How it is  
will not be in vain.  
No.

Spring 1989

## RITUALS

Clandestine rituals remembered  
from a different time  
different space  
different life.

We knew not the force of a  
constitutionally sanctioned death  
we would not be destroyed.

To reach the clandestine point  
we spent lifetimes  
disentangling influences  
shedding the do's and don't's.

We lived in freedom's future  
(everyone dances or no one dances  
spray painted secretly on a wall).  
We would not  
we will not be destroyed.

Fall 1989



## ON THE RELEASE OF WALTER SISULU

No liberation flags  
were hung on coffins this day  
They blew  
and they flew  
madly in the wind  
slicing  
with razor sharpness  
at the weakening stays  
of a vicious racist decay.

What price freedom?  
What incalculable cost?  
What sacrifice too great?

In the sprawl that is Soweto  
inside the stench  
of the white man's fear  
of the final elimination  
of his hypocritical "burden"  
Black Power  
Black Political Power  
African liberation  
triumphs  
blowing in the purest,  
sweetest smell  
of a dream no longer deferred.\*

And Nelson will follow  
Nelson will follow  
Nelson will follow  
and a firestorm has started that  
will not be stopped.

No flags on coffins this day  
and the white european in america  
by definition trembles.

Fall 1989

\* From a poem by Langston Hughes



**LETTER**  
**September 1985**

Dear Comrade,

This letter has no specific party to whom it should go. This is a letter of rage and impotence and reaction. This rage has been building for quite some time now and now it is no longer containable. A comrade said that we have to be careful and clear that our rage at what happens to each of us individually be directed towards our collective capacity to resist, and not internally focus. How does one do that? How does one explain or fight from the inside out about watching fascism, repression, dehumanization, methods of counter-insurgency aimed at the most dedicated most filled with love and humanity and respect for human decency? How does one who for so many years was outraged by the violence and waste of a system, who now lives in the very heart of its pit of experimentation—fight it? How many accounts of torture have I read, in Chile, in Iran, in Palestine, and people survived and people did not. But reading is one thing and living it another.

And here we sit calmly eating our U.S. government issued lunch of cheese sandwiches and coffee reading the lies in the newspaper about the Puerto Rican Independentistas on trial in Hartford. Calmly discussing the effects of a hurricane on New York City and as though the thought of a violent storm triggers a reaction on the newest companera who starts to talk and her eyes fill up with tears of anger, hatred, shame and fear.

She begins to talk and all the noise, the yelling, the T.V. disappears and we hear only her soft halting voice. And we hear how they beat her (without leaving marks), how they threatened her with her children right there, and how they wouldn't let her take a shower, and how they took her and drove her with a hood over her head so she wouldn't know where she was, and how they told her that no one knew where she was, and no one would be able to help her, and how they had destroyed the others, and that others were talking about her. They told her as far as the world was concerned she was disappeared. She wasn't legal to begin with. And she went on to describe the men, and the place, and her desperation for her children, always she came back to the children.

Sitting at the table as natural as could be one companera took her hand. I asked, "Did they sexually abuse you?" "No." She answered very quickly. But they violated her, and they tried to destroy her, for information. That's torture, isn't it? And then I remembered my skills and said, "I'm a doctor, let me treat you." She said, "Yes, now?" I said, "Yes, now."

When I put my hands on her back, she said, "You know, no one has touched me since August 27, other than to put chains on me." For hours I massaged her and we talked, we talked about the book The House Of Spirits which we had both read at the same time, and we talked about torture and repression and about what had happened to her. And we talked about strength and weakness, and how you never know until the moment of truth comes what you can and will do, and we talked about how you have to struggle to get to that truth.



We talked about how we don't believe our own rules about 24 hours, and holding on. Above it, below it, around it. We talked and she told me how she had a picture of Don Pedro Albizu Campos in her wallet and how for ten hours they screamed at her and wanted to know who it was and where he was. This is in a country that is "sympathetic" to the revolutionary left...but only of certain countries and only in certain instances.

And she told me how her daughter held out her hand to her and said, "I am proud of you, mama." While those days were the worst, the most extreme, it did not end there, it went on for 20 days more, in different jails in different places, in different countries. The specific "crime" this woman is charged with, the specific facts that back up the allegations of her membership in a "terrorist" organization are that she was a principal architect of an action where comrades distributed toys to poor children at christmas time—on Three Kings Day—toys bought from stolen money, where revolutionaries took seven million dollars from U.S. banks without a single shot being fired. A small beginning of the payback for the ripped off land, labor, resources, and generation of Puerto Rican people by U.S. colonialism. For this they torture.

Then the count, and we have to be finished, and we are not, it is only the beginning. This companera will heal, it will take some time, it will not be easy, but it will be done.

Living in the midst of repression can either take your soul or give it back to you. If I ever have a daughter I'll name her for this companera.

Metropolitan Correctional Center  
New York



## JOURNAL ENTRY July 10, 1988

I am in an unending scream, in a hormonal rage, my spirit is in turmoil. The range of response to reading You Can't Drown the Fire: Latin American Women Writing In Exile. The suffering and the survival. The dedication to life, freedom, and justice and the dying, the fleeing, the struggle to reconstruct. And I feel crazy in this unending solitary confinement where the repression is about aloneness. And I identify so deeply with these women's voices, testimonies. We political prisoners, prisoners are in an exile too. We are america's exiled. Exiled into a vast repressive void. And if you looked at me with all this emotion buzzing from one end of my body to the other you would see a quiet woman alone in a dark cell writing. Sometimes I can feel the explosion right under the skin. In reading this powerful book I am struck by the large differences between the experiences of these women. The different

countries, their differences—from age 12 to 80, from Argentina to Guatemala—and what emerges as so apparent is that repression does not discriminate. Life may discriminate based on time, place, condition-based on class, race, sex. But in the carrying out of repression to destroy life there is no distinction made whatsoever.

And I am struck that we are the american equivalents to these women.

We and others.

And I have to stop reading this it's too painful.\*

\* Written after 20 months of small group isolation and three months of solitary confinement.



## THE QUALITY OF LIGHT

The quality of light  
shifts and changes, blues to greys,  
telling me the time of day  
with no clock.

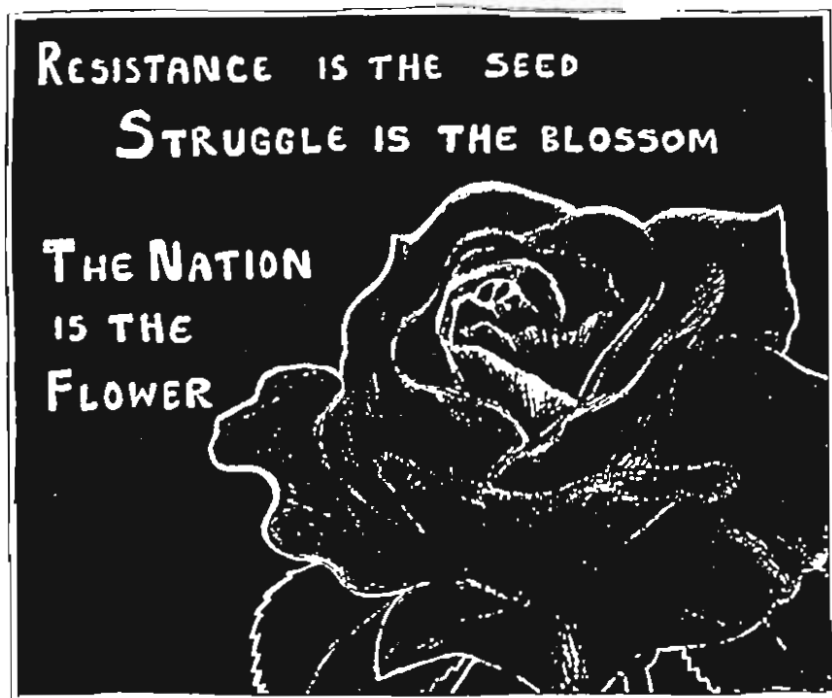
The quality of light  
filters through plexiglass slits  
in the wall,  
revealing  
the sun rising --  
amber in a blue darkness.  
Snow on the ground,  
bitter weather, cold and clear.

But  
I admit  
the quality of light illuminates  
not the outer bounds of my vision,  
nor the corners of my cell,  
but the inner recesses  
of memories that live sharp in combat  
against imprisonment  
which tries to darken and dry up  
the life forces—like wind, rain, oceans,  
mountains,  
as they relate to the prisoner.

It has never succeeded  
and won't now  
as long as the quality of light  
emanates from a source the jailers can't control.

The light filters through the windows.  
I can't see out,  
but I can see in.

November 1989



## POEM FOR CARMEN VALENTIN

This is a corny poem for my comrade,  
Carmen Valentin.

Once, when I was underground, I was given  
a magenta wildflower,  
which I put in a jar by my bed.  
At first glance, it was extremely delicate—  
a slender, yellow-green stem  
bearing several small leaves  
and one perfect, small, magenta flower.  
It wasn't showy, but, like you,  
it was both lovely and beautiful.  
It seems strange, almost embarrassing  
to say it, but it made me happy sitting  
there, modestly growing.  
And it turned out to be a lot sturdier,  
more durable, than you would have thought  
from looking at it.

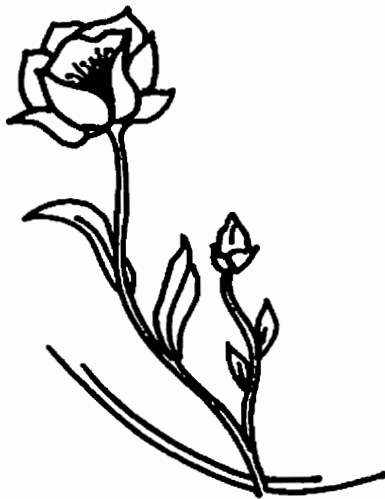
As the first flower browned and withered  
and fell, a bud—one you hadn't even  
noticed before—began to bloom and grow  
into another magenta flower.  
And in this way, it kept going  
all Spring, and Summer, and into Fall.  
We had to move before it died.  
Who knows—maybe it's growing still.

It just did what it had to do, and kept on  
doing it, undeterred, making it seem  
the most natural thing in the world.

A perpetual flower.

And it reminds me of you because of the way  
you assume that your sacrifice is the  
most natural thing in the world—  
Your life for the Independence of your nation,  
your freedom, the loss of which I know  
you feel every day now,  
for the freedom of your people  
some day.  
To you, the wonder of it all is not that  
you can face this life in prison  
without bitterness,  
but that anyone could fail to understand  
why you're so tough  
and full of hope.

1989



## SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL D.C. Jail

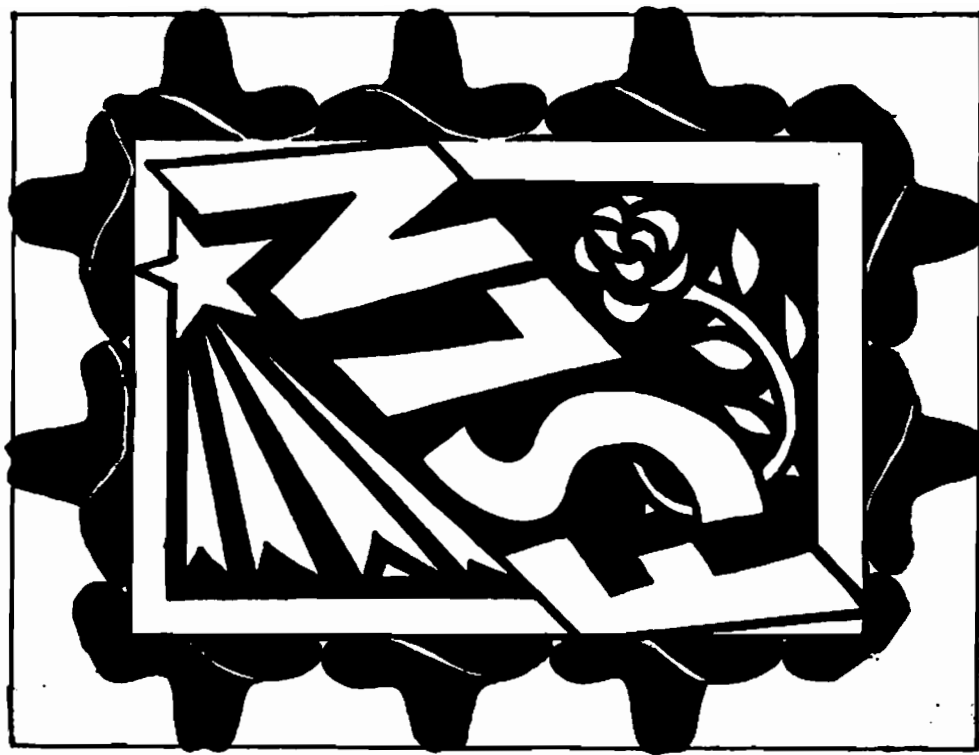
Brenda has one cigarette, and shares it  
with a woman she's never seen before,  
who sits on her bedroll,  
abscesses freshly bandaged  
thin  
and shaken.  
Sisterhood is powerful.

Lurinda brags she's hard, won't give  
a thing without a trade. But she's  
the first to slide  
into the cell next door,  
to see that the new arrival, withdrawing,  
has what she needs  
to get her through the sickness.  
Sisterhood is powerful.

And I, the communist, have learned  
to give not just the easy things  
but the hard,  
to give what I didn't think  
I had enough of,  
to give of myself,  
the only commodity left to me.

You'd have to see it to believe  
how sisterhood is powerful.

July 1988



## CHRISTMAS IN D.C. JAIL

Should we live  
parsimonious lives  
in bare cells  
measuring out  
pleasures  
grain by grain  
hoarding love  
counting hours  
saving tears—  
or open up,  
let loose,  
refuse to become the ultimate commodity  
and risk squandering  
some resources we may need  
for all those long days  
and years  
to come?

Oh risk it, I say,  
give it up,  
because hope is not quantifiable  
and only grows through generosity,  
and prison life—all life—  
is labor-intensive:  
you have to struggle  
for what you get.

1989

## FOURTEEN DAYS, LOSS OF PRIVILEGES D.C. Jail

I don't do well with the prison authorities.  
Told to move,  
I stand stock still.  
"Stand still," they say—  
I move.

Ornery  
Bad  
Disobedient  
Unrepentant.  
I like me that way.

1989

## EATING POETRY D.C. Jail

After months of tasteless, tepid food,  
A fresh radish slice burns my mouth.

1989

## CLAUSTROPHOBIA

D.C. Jail

Do not think of air—  
air clean of smoke, and dirt, and years  
of sour meals lingering  
of too many people in pain  
and in frenzy.

And don't think of sunshine in fresh air,  
because as soon as you do,  
your body stiffens,  
                    stretches,  
                    reaches,  
                    yearns to become  
                    the explosion you are accused of,  
yearning to explode  
so much inhumanity, the walls and bars,  
leaving ruins  
                    which would be  
                    tender shoots of growth,  
people freed from these structures  
  of chains,

People smiling with life  
and without irony.

June 1988



## TO A COMRADE AFTER AN ARGUMENT

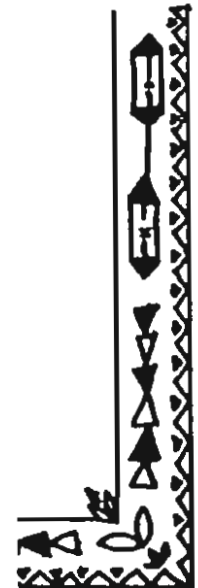
D.C. Jail

Complexity is hard enough  
without the added complications  
of trying to fight the state  
while being held in the prisons of the state  
and being chained  
and choked  
and suffocated  
in the prisons  
and the courtrooms  
of the state.

So if, at times,  
unresolved contradictions  
combine with unresolved heartaches  
  longings  
                    and even breathtaking  
  exciting  
  impossible  
                    glimmers of joy,  
collide and combust,  
lacking the map  
to a smoother resolution,  
please forgive me.

Sometimes it seems  
that apologies are in order  
because nothing else is.

1989



## THE ENEMY

"An Army spokesman, meanwhile, said soldiers acted improperly when they tied a 50-year-old Palestinian demonstrator to the front of a jeep in Jericho, in the West Bank, before driving off last week. But he said no disciplinary action would be taken."

—Washington Post, 9/5/88

Can someone explain to me  
what the inside of an "Israeli's" heart  
looks like?  
Is there any light left in it at all,  
or is it so dark that human feeling itself  
is obscured—  
along with history, and the lessons  
I thought millions of people  
had died  
so that we could learn?

Can someone explain to me  
what the inside of an "Israeli's" mind  
looks like?  
Has it forgotten, in less than  
half a lifetime,  
the cattle-cars, camps, and ovens,  
the deportations,  
"collective responsibility and punishment,"  
brutality so rancid  
the human mind can't bear  
to comprehend it?

Or has the mind, remembering, decided  
(cold as any marble mausoleum walls)  
to win by domination,  
to vanquish,  
using those self-same cruelties,  
stripping life  
of all its essence, hope, and meaning,  
leaving only greed,  
an army of occupation,  
and hollow, colonial supremacy?

Having grown up  
in white Amerikka,  
I'm afraid  
I know the answer.

September 5, 1988



# PALESTINE LIVES



## TO LINDA Baltimore City Jail

A breeze sneaks in my prison window,  
carrying a late-Summer aroma  
of green things basking and baking in hot sun,  
of wildflowers, long since become  
familiar, everyday sights,  
of asphalt radiating heat  
that will be remembered fondly  
in colder weeks to come.

But the longings stirred in me  
by the breeze with its gift of odors  
reach far beyond the freedom I can see  
outside my window, in the weeds and grass.

They reach to feet marching  
stamping  
running  
through hot dust  
to masses arming, fighting,  
in Azania,  
to revolution  
in Azania.

They reach to El Salvador  
to celebrate successful actions  
carried out by the guerrilla forces  
of the people of El Salvador  
against marines,  
advisors,  
imperialists  
drunk with power  
in El Salvador.

They reach to the streets of Harlem  
and Detroit

to chanting  
clapping  
celebrating

New Afrikan Freedom Fighters' Day  
to growing revolution  
in Harlem  
and Detroit.

These longings are not for freedom  
from the walls and bars alone,  
but for the freedom  
that comes from fighting  
for real freedom.

Your spirit, sister, never will be chained.

August 1985





## MARILYN BUCK



Marilyn Buck was born in Texas, a segregated state, in 1947. She is the daughter of a nurse and an Episcopal priest, who was active in the civil rights struggle in the 1960s. Her political and social awareness was heightened by her frustration at the limitations placed on her as a woman. It was this sense of inequality which enabled her to understand that racism and domination were an integral part of U.S. society that could not be changed through voting. She became active in protests against the war and racism. In 1967, she left Texas to attend a Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) teacher-organizer training course in Chicago. She remained to act as co-editor of *New Left Notes*, the SDS national newspaper. She also participated with other women in SDS in insuring that

the issue of women's liberation became part of the SDS national program.

The Vietnamese struggle against U.S. aggression to regain their national sovereignty, the Cuban Revolution and the example of Che Guevara, and the demands for power and liberation by the colonized and oppressed peoples inside the U.S. shaped the political and social consciousness and reality of the late 1960s. SDS became an anti-imperialist organization and supported all just struggles for national liberation, women's liberation, and social/economic justice. Marilyn was a part of this process.

To her, information about people struggling for their liberation and justice is vital to educating and awakening the people of the U.S. After leaving the National Office of SDS she joined San Francisco Newsreel, a radical film-making and propaganda collective. Although she did some film work, she was mainly involved in using films as an organizing aid at community meetings, high school student groups, worker's committees and even in the streets. Seeing the reality of people struggling for their homelands, to educate their people, and to gain control of their own labor and human dignity gave the viewers a sense of the power of collective organization and the will of a people who are not afraid to fight for freedom and justice. Marilyn also found courage and inspiration from watching people, particularly women, who took a step toward their own liberation as they fought to liberate and build their nations.

She also participated in international solidarity groups in support of the Vietnamese, the Palestinians, and the Iranian struggle against the Shah, and became increasingly involved in supporting the Native American, Mexicano, and Black liberation struggles. As an anti-imperialist activist and an advocate of socialism, she, along with many thousands, was identified in the FBI Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) files. Because of her continual support for Black liberation and an end to racism, she became a target of COINTELPRO. The FBI accused her of being a member of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) and, in 1973, she was arrested and convicted of buying two boxes of handgun ammunition. She was sentenced to ten years, the longest sentence ever given for such an offense.

As a political prisoner, she was designated as a "high security prisoner" by the U.S. government and was subjected to extraordinary measures in the name of security. After nearly two years in which she was kept in county jails, which are notorious for their inhumane conditions, she was sent to the control unit and behavior modification program at the Federal Women's Prison at Alderson, West Virginia, where she remained for more than a year. Once she was released into the general prison population she met Lolita Lebron, one of the five Puerto Rican Nationalist prisoners, from whom she learned a great deal about struggle and the sacrifices necessary. She also became a licensed medical technician. In 1977, after more than four years in prison, and repeated parole denials, she was granted a furlough from which she did not return.

## LINDA EVANS



Born May 11, 1947, in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Revolutionary and anti-imperialist since 1967. SDS regional organizer against the U.S. war in Vietnam and to support the Black liberation movement. Participated in 1969 anti-war delegation to North Vietnam to receive POWs released by the Vietnamese.

Political/cultural worker in guerrilla street theatre troupe, all-women's band, and women's printing and graphics collective in Texas. A lesbian, active in the women's liberation movement and in the lesbian community.

Organized grassroots organizations against the Ku Klux Klan, forced sterilization, and killer cops. Fought racism, white supremacy, and zionism as a member of the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee. Worked with Southern Africa, Palestinian, and Central American solidarity organizations to raise material aid for national liberation movements to oppose apartheid and U.S. intervention. Built support for Black/New Afrikan, Puerto Rican, and Native American POWs and political prisoners, and the right of these nations to independence and self-determination. Began working to develop clandestine resistance movement capable of struggle on every front. Arrested May 11, 1985: convicted of harboring a fugitive and using a false name to buy four guns; serving a total sentence of 45 years.

## SUSAN ROSENBERG

Susan was one of the three women political prisoners imprisoned in the Lexington Small Group Isolation Unit, the first explicitly political prison in the U.S. She was born on October 5, 1955, in New York City. She has been an activist all her adult life. While in high school, she worked with and was greatly influenced by the Young Lords Party and Black Panther Party. She was active in the anti-Vietnam war and women's movements. In 1976, she traveled to Cuba to build a day care center, as part of the Venceremos Brigade in solidarity with the Cuban revolution. She worked throughout the 1970s in solidarity with national liberation struggles—the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, the Black Liberation Struggle, and other worldwide movements for liberation.

Susan is a Doctor of Acupuncture who studied with Black acupuncturists at the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America (BAAANA), a community health center in Harlem, New York, dedicated to fighting the drug plague and providing health care through acupuncture and Chinese medicine.

Stemming from the 1979 prison liberation of Black Liberation leader Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard), a massive FBI Joint Terrorist Task Force investigation culminated in 1982 with the targeting of 37 activists in the Black liberation struggle and their supporters. Susan was targeted and later indicted on federal conspiracy charges. She went underground. These charges were later dropped by the government.

On November 29, 1984, she was arrested with Tim Blunk, charged and convicted of possessing explosives, weapons, and false identification. They were sentenced to 58 years in prison. The government's political motivation for this unjust sentence is Susan and Tim's association with the clandestine anti-imperialist resistance movement. They received sentences of unprecedented length despite the fact that they were convicted only of possession of materials and not use of them.

Susan's refusal to collaborate and change her political associations, beliefs, and commitments were a stated reason for the court's refusal to lower the sentence on appeal. This refusal and her associations were the government's reasons for placing her in the Lexington isolation/control unit.



## LAURA WHITEHORN



I grew up during the era of the rise and victory of national liberation struggles, so my own hatred of oppression, injustice, racism, and sexism could be channeled into a productive direction: revolutionary anti-imperialism.

I've been involved in struggles for human rights for a little more than 20 years—from the Civil Rights Movement to supporting the Black Panther Party, the Black Power movement, and the New Afrikan Independence Movement, to fighting the KKK and organized white supremacy, supporting the struggle for independence of Puerto Rico. I am a lesbian, and I have struggled for the liberation of women, lesbians, and gay people. In Boston, I helped Black families to defend their homes against racist attack during the "anti-busing" offensive, and I helped to found the Boston/Cambridge women's school. In New York, I worked to expose illegal FBI counterintelligence (COINTELPRO) and was a member of the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee and the Madame Binh Graphics Collective.

A visit to Vietnam in 1975 in an anti-imperialist women's delegation confirmed my belief that socialist revolution lays the basis to fulfill human needs and creativity—including achieving peace and justice.

Over the past 20 years, the intransigence, corruption, and aggression of the u.s. government has made sustained militant resistance necessary. I've struggled to be a part of that, because justice is worth fighting for and the real terrorism of u.s. imperialism needs to be defeated. I've been involved in clandestine resistance

because the government uses the full force of repression to destroy developing opposition.

Since my arrest in 1985, I've experienced this first-hand as a political prisoner: held in "preventive detention" without bail, kept in solitary confinement for much of the time, classified as a "special handling" prisoner, because of my political ideals and because I'm determined to live by them and fight for them.





## SUGGESTED READINGS

Assata Shakur, ASSATA, AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
Nawal Sadawi, PRISON MEMOIRS  
Nawal Sadawi, WOMAN AT POINT ZERO  
Mila Aguilar, A COMRADE IS A PRECIOUS AS A  
RICE SEEDLING  
Ashraf Dehgani, EPIC OF RESISTANCE  
Alicia Partnoy, THE LITTLE SCHOOL  
Leila Khaled, THE STRUGGLE IS MY LIFE  
Angela Davis, IF THEY COME FOR ME IN THE  
WHIRLWIND  
Panther 21, LOOK FOR ME IN THE WHIRLWIND  
Winnie Mandela, PART OF MY SOUL WENT WITH HIM  
Caesarina Kone Makhoere, NO CHILD'S PLAY  
Ruth First, 117 DAYS  
Helen Josephs, SIDE BY SIDE  
Puerto Rican Women Prisoners of War, FLORES Y  
BALAS  
Puerto Rican Women Prisoners, HAVE YOU SEEN THE  
NEW WOMAN?  
Ana Maria Guadalupe Martinez, CLANDESTINE  
PRISONS IN EL SALVADOR  
Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, MY LIFE AS A POLITICAL  
PRISONER  
Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, DEATH HOUSE LETTERS  
Sedition Committee, WOMEN OF THE OHIO SEVEN  
Emma Goldman, LIVING MY LIFE Vol. 1  
Nell McCafferty, ARMAGH WOMEN  
Donitila Barrios de Chungara, LET ME SPEAK  
WALL TAPPINGS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF WRITINGS BY  
WOMEN PRISONERS

### COMING SOON

HAULING UP THE MORNING: Writings and Art by U.S.  
Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT THE WOMEN OF THE RESISTANCE CONSPIRACY CASE

You can prevent the silencing of the voices of the men & women of the Resistance Conspiracy Case by writing to Marilyn, Linda, Susan, and Laura and/or by putting them on your group's mailing list, sending them books or other writings or creative expressions, as well as by sharing this book with others. Their addresses are as follows:

Marilyn Buck	#233-396	Alan Berkman
Linda Evans	#233-411	#233-315
Susan Rosenberg	#233-412	Tim Blunk
Laura Whitehorn	#220-858	#233-410

D.C. Detention Facility  
1901 D Street, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20003

For further information, write to  
Emergency Committee to Defend the Human  
and Legal Rights of Political Prisoners  
P.O. Box 28191  
Washington, D.C. 20038

or call  
Washington Area Committee for  
Political Prisoners  
(202) 328-7818.

Tax-deductible contributions may be made to

John Brown Education Fund  
(earmarked RCC Education)  
c/o Emergency Committee  
P.O. Box 28191  
Washington, D.C. 20038.

Write to Amnesty International.

Ask for an investigation of the treatment of these women and other U.S. political prisoners.

Ask for an investigation of continued pretrial detention of Laura Whitehorn.

Amnesty International, USA Research Team  
1 Easton Street  
London, England WC1X8DJ

Write to U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh.

Demand that the indictment against the resistance conspiracy case defendants be dismissed.

Attorney General Richard Thornburgh  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Constitution Ave. and 10th St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

**Resistance is not a crime!**

