

THE TIDE

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A FEMINIST LESBIAN PUBLICATION, WRITTEN BY AND FOR THE RISING TIDE OF WOMEN TODAY



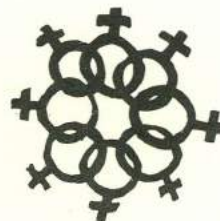
"GENTE" Northern California's Independent Third World Lesbian Softball Team

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AN INTERVIEW WITH "GENTE" THIRD-WORLD LESBIAN SOFTBALL TEAM



Photo by JULIE S.

"It's gonna come time to hook up with each other."

"Gente" is an all Third World Lesbian softball team, the first of its kind that we know of. They play out of Oakland, California, as part of the 10-team Bay Area Women's Softball League. This includes 9 Gay bar teams and "Gente", an independent team of united soul sisters.

"Gente" means "People" in Spanish, or just "folks", as one team-sister put it. Guess that means Third World Womenfolk here.

The team solidarity reflects their name. They are a spirited, united group of twenty-five Third World sisters who have come together from many different places. Nearly every nationality that is a part of the growing Liberation movement of Third World people is playing on the team - Raza (Chicana and Puerta Rican), Black (including a sister from the West Indies), Native American and Asian American. They are a mixture of folks from factory teams and folks with degrees. Bread to start and sustain the team was raised from a woman's corporation and from a fund-raising dance they threw themselves. They have no sponsor, they provide their own spark.

The entire team was involved in this interview, which happened at practice the day before their first game of the season. Watching them play together and treat each other as equals was a real up. They preferred that we not single out any sisters by name. They work and think as a team. This is their collective statement.

One of the team sisters - a pitcher - recently gave me her feelings about that game:

"We played a fantastic game. Our objective was to get ourselves together and hold it together . . . and we're doing that. We lost in points but we don't care about that. No way that team could've done anything to us that day. We won spiritually."

Digging into this intervew was the most pleasure i've ever had putting something together. Political play, i think of it as - in a way like the Third World sisters who play out their politics on the field, just by being WOMEN TOGETHER. Any solid womanfront is likely to have a "subversive" purpose in (her) mind! With a Third World Lesbian Women's Front, we can count on that being triply "subversive".

It is Woman strength, Woman pride.

It is Lesbian strength, Lesbian pride.

It is the pride and power of the whole Third World.

It is Third World and Female and Lesbian combined consciousness.

It is greater control.

It is a measure of freedom.

sudi mae

(thanx to the poet-sister for her idea for this intervew and to the entire team of womenfolk for their encouragement and the openness and love i felt just being around them.)

"HOW WE FIRST GOT HIP"

. . . Over LESBIAN AIR, that's how I first got hip to it. People were talking about the bar teams. We were interested in playing ball because we like sports. But we had some complaints and we weren't interested in playing with a bar team anymore or being in the bar league.

. . . What happened was, we all played on a winter basketball league, and all on different teams. We talked about some of the issues raised during the basketball season, like the competitiveness we found in the bar teams. There was a little bit of name-calling. Tempers were really hot. People got pissed. There were so few people on the teams, and we always had to play the same teams.

AN INDEPENDENT GAY WOMEN'S SOFTBALL LEAGUE CAN HAPPEN

. . . There's different leagues. There's not just the bar leagues, where some of us come from. There's also the industrial leagues, sponsored by companies, like Goodyear Tires and companies in the electronics industries, where some women played as part of their job. Then there's the university teams, some of us come from there.

. . . We all got the idea, we might want to have a team of our own. We weren't sure who we wanted to sponsor it. We weren't even sure it was going to happen. Then it just kinda happened.

. . . More women, not only Third World, but women in general, need to start realizing that you can just throw a team together . . . and get your act together. I hope to someday see a lot of women's teams, have a gay women's league outside the bar. I think that can someday happen, especially when you have a team like us. A lot of us go to different bars. A lot of us are from both sides of the bay. We really don't identify with any one bar right now.

COMPETITION VERSUS

"WE WANTED TO GET HOLD OF EACH OTHER"

. . . I played softball last year for a gay bar. That was my first time playing softball. I decided to join, but I had no idea about all the different trips the bar teams put you through (solidarity laughter). Like you have all kinds of grudges against each other, not only the people on my team, but the people who sponsored my team and the people on the other team. It really interfered with our ability to play.

. . . To play on a bar team, you don't have to all be friends. You don't have to work together. We have arguments and we have differences, but we're all friends.

... We talked about wanting to play on the same team in softball, instead of on opposing teams, like we did in basketball. We felt like a lot of the competitiveness wouldn't happen if we were all together, as third-world women, on the same team. We wanted to get hold of each other. We wanted to be with each other, instead of against each other.

... STARTING TO COME TOGETHER

... So three of us got together one night, started talking about it, wrote a proposal up (laughter) ... well, anyway, that's part of it. We started circulating some information, saying where people could find us if they were interested. We wanted to get together a whole bunch of third-world women, outside of the bars, and be able to relate to each other outside of the softball field, too. This wasn't happening, you know. You see third-world women in bars in passing. You don't get to know anybody.

... I didn't know a lot of people here before we got this team together. That's the biggest reason I felt compelled to do what we are doing. It's amazing how many third-world women now come up to me and say, "Have you got your schedule yet, because we'd really like to come out to watch. We're not going to play, but we'd like to watch you."

... This issue of third-world women getting to know each other is important. We're always so scattered. So we thought it'd be a nice way to incorporate a whole bunch of third-world people.

... Now we're starting to meet more third-world women. Eventually, there'll be a lot more people coming out for a women's softball team. We will have established ourselves. That's basically where a lot of people came together on this.

BUILDING A HOME BASE FOR THE THIRD WORLD

... moving toward a women's center

... The way we started this was as a softball team. But we want to continue it, maybe get a place, a nice place where people can come, that's not a bar scene. They can bring booze if they want it, there'd be good music. It could be a comfortable place where people won't get hassled, like in that whole bar trip.

... That's one of the real issues, just trying to get a place. You go into some of these places and the jukebox is kinda weird.

... This doesn't necessarily have to lend itself only to sports. It's a starting place, something to get people together first. Sports are pretty universal. We were talking about getting together a center that would be an outlet. This is just like a spit in the bucket. It's one little thing we're doing. It takes a lot of our energy and a lot of our time.

"WE HAVE TO BE OUR OWN SPARK"

... You gotta start someplace. I guess the hardest thing for us is that we have to be our own spark. We don't have a lot of people sparking us up, like you do when you're in a bar. Someone'll say, "Oh, you're gonna have a game ... right on ... blah ... blah ... blah ..." We call each other. We talk to each other, saying (while she solidarity-pats a sister on the shoulder), "yaaaaaay Yaaaay." We rely on the people we know. Perhaps a center will be coming ...

"IT'S GONNA COME TIME TO HOOK UP WITH EACH OTHER"

... We're identifying ourselves in some way. It's not the third world being just two people that happen to show up to talk on some talk show. All of a sudden, we really are in fact trying to get something together. There's a lot of third-world sisters out there that don't have anything to do with sports. But it's gonna come time when we're gonna hook up with each other. The only way we can do that is get together when we can on some common ground. Right now the common ground is softball. But we're not going to be limited to that. Some of us could leave here and go to other cities and say, "Hey, this worked when we all happened to be in San Francisco" and it all might happen again someplace else.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE BARS? — KINSHIP & BREAD

... Sponsoring a team costs a little bit of bread. A lot of women in the bar wanted to have their own league. Several of us were playing in the city leagues, the industrial leagues. There were a lot of straight women there, and we had trouble with a lot of them. Some of them got really intimidated by us being gay. So we started talking to different bars and they started sponsoring teams. That's how it came down. A lot of the bar owners realized it would in fact bring them in quite a bit of money and bring in a lot of people. It's not just the team that goes to a bar. It's us and our lovers and our friends and

people who just want to do something on Sunday afternoon after the games, so they follow everybody. It's a nice way for the bars to attract people. Basically they wanted to give something to gay women, so we would patronize the bars and feel a little kinship with them. That does happen in bars. You spend a lot of time there and you start having a kinship with the bars.

"THE POLITICS OF A BAR LEAGUE": \$s, DRINKS & RACISM

... There's some tacky things about belonging to the league, like you have to buy drinks for the team. They can't come to our bar, because we don't have one. We have to go to their bar, instead. We have to buy them and ourselves a round of drinks.

... Mostly, the trip is money. Being trained and winning and money. We were trained and winning, but we couldn't afford to pay money.

... Yeah, we're trying to get away from that. But we're kinda stuck with it, too, since the people we're playing are on bar teams. That's the politics of a bar league. That's one of the main drains on our money. It comes to quite a bit. The bar thing is still ripping off our money. Win or lose, we gotta buy drinks.



Photo by JULIE S.

"When we come in the bars separately ... we're cool.

When the whole team comes in, it's like we're gonna start a riot. We're not supposed to be together."

IT'S NOT ALL IN THE GAME — IT'S ALL IN THE WIN OR LOSE

... There's not any consideration for the players. It's more of a lose-or-win type thing. If you don't win, blah blah blah, you're not this, you're not that.

"WHEN WE WERE DOWN ... SHE PUT US FURTHER DOWN."

... The owner of one of the bar teams was in it for the bread, strictly. That was it, from the git-go. When we were down, she put us further down. It was always a cut, "Shut your mouth ... Do this ... Do that ... You're drunk." When we were up, she'd say, "All right, all right. Looks good." I don't need that!

... Yeah, and you can walk all over the city before you find a bar owned by a third-world woman ... and walk back too (much laughter) ... walk all the way back.

... There is one.

... She ain't Third World.

... Yeah, she is,

... Well, you know, same difference.

WHITE WOMEN GOTTA DEAL

... Another thing that sparked the talk about this team was us feeling alienated from other third-world women. Not only do I not want to be alienated from other third-world women, but I want white women to deal with their responsibility about racism. As much as I have to deal with racism as the victim, they have to deal with racism

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Who are the dangerous people . . . the people who speak of love, freedom and a decent life for the children; or the military and police system which trains men to become incompassionate cold killers? A member of the SWAT squad who had just helped to totally destroy the house saw two victims lying in the smoldering rubble with the munitions on their belts still exploding in the heat. To what extent was his mind tampered with so as not to be moved by such a sight?

Who are the dangerous people . . . the freedom fighters who recognize wrong and oppression and fight against it; or a power structure with its criminal presidents and vice-presidents and an attorney general who calls for the execution of suspects before they are brought to trial? This is a criminal power structure which is imprisoning and killing progressive movements and people all over the world.

With all of their guns and money and pawn soldiers these people in power are losing. National liberation fighters like the Vietnamese are winning and progressive movements within this country are growing and gaining strength. Because they are losing and are desperate, the people in power were forced to use the war tactics of search and destroy on 54th Street.

When we remember the scenes of the shootout and the fire of that Friday night on 54th Street, let us never forget the capacity for violence of a desperate and losing people.

It was in this atmosphere that Nancy Ling, Angela, Camilla and Mizmoon fought and died. And it is in this same atmosphere that we all must continue our fight in our own ways until we can all be together in free, creative, fulfilling lives. ▲



as the oppressor. I don't know if any white women will in any way deal with that as a team. I'm not so concerned with that. I'm mostly concerned about them dealing with their racism on an individual basis. If they do that and I ever see any of them in a bar, we'll have something to talk about. They'll be looked at a little differently.

ANSWER TO RACISM:

"ALL ON THE SAME FIELD, STANDING SIDE BY SIDE"
(better blatant than latent)

. . . I think of what a blatant statement it is for us all to be on the same field, standing side by side. It's a little hard for them to not look at that. It's a consciousness-raising thing.

JUST BEING TOGETHER: "RACISM IN REVERSE?"

. . . We get a lot of flack behind just being together, not doing a damn thing. I've had people say, "that's racism in reverse, isn't it?" People come up to me, people I haven't even ever seen before, and say, "You on that?" I say, "Yeah, why? Does it worry you?" They say, "Haven't we been treating you nice?"

"WE COME IN SEPARATELY . . . WE'RE COOL. WE COME IN TOGETHER . . . WE'RE GONNA START A RIOT!"

. . . When there's one or two of us who walk into a bar - we usually come in separately, not with each other-then we're cool. Nothing's gonna happen. Nobody's gonna be violent and all this shit. When the whole team walks into a bar, everybody's immediately on needles. It's so up-tight. Like an automatic, "There's gonna be a riot here." It's like (another sister: "you people"), yeh, "you people are just too violent. I don't know why you wanna be so violent. I don't know why you wanna be together. Why don't you be with us?"

"WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE TOGETHER"

. . . I feel that third-world gay women just don't need to be in the bars. There's just white women. If we're together collectively, it feels a hell of a lot better. People are a lot less apt to say anything to you. You walk into some place together, and they think you're crazy anyway. People really think we're crazy. We're not supposed to be together.

INVISIBLE IF WE'RE ALONE VIOLENT IF WE'RE TOGETHER

. . . You know that poem that Pat (Parker, "Have You Ever Tried to Hide?" in PIT STOP) wrote? That says a lot. You're sitting in a room and you're not there. Nobody sees you. If we walk into the bar, one at a time and sit in our corners, then we're not there. But if we walk in as a group of people who know each other, somehow, we cause a threat. Other people are uptight about it. If you're uptight about it, that means there was something there before that you were uptight about, long before I slid in. Even when we're together, it doesn't make any difference, because we're still outnumbered. But there are more of us now.

. . . It's not like we're given a chance and have to fit a pattern. Where I grew up as a Chicana, was predominantly Latin, Mexican, and Indian and there'd be some white kids too. They'd put us down, call us either white or Indian. The state was approximately 70 percent Mexican-American and yet we were supposed to fill in the column as either white or Indian. We weren't neither. Seventy percent of the state as neither. Weird. We were invisible to those people.

ASIAN SISTERS HAVE BEEN WHITEWASHED

. . . I feel alone a lot of times. I go to bars and look around to see if there are other Asian sisters. But there's not too many. If there are any, they're sort of whitewashed. They don't acknowledge me. I feel a coldness from other Asian Lesbians.

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With straight Asians, I never had that problem. Maybe it's because straight Asian women are in the Asian movement, where there's more of a feeling of sisterly and brotherly love. I don't know why I feel this distance from Asian Lesbians. I've tried to understand that kind of vibration. It's like they don't want to be Asian and they wish they weren't.

There's so few of us. Maybe that's related. There's less than a million Chinese in the whole U.S. And less than 3 million of all Asians combined.

So I thought I'd look for black women, for other third-world women, in the bars. I have more to say to black Lesbians. I feel closer to them. But, sometimes there wasn't anyone else in the bars and I'd feel alienated. I thought, "If I try and merge in, then I'll lose my identity." I didn't want to lose that.

I'm still trying to find other Asian Lesbians. So we can rap about how our culture makes a big difference in the movement. Rap about the things I feel, find out if it's a common thing among Asian Lesbians or just a hangup of mine.

... It's really hard. There's not all that many places to go to find other third-world women. If you have a straight job or you go to school, if you're lucky, you'll find some women on campus or some friends where you work or walking the streets sometimes, you'll run into somebody. But other than that, there's just not that many places to go. So you go to the bar, and there ain't nothing happening there.

... I never played on a team before and when I walked into a bar, I felt like, "Damn, where are all the third-world sisters?" We're just a few people in the bars. "Who's that and that? There's so-and-so. I don't know her." I say hello to her.

... "So nice to see you." (laughter)

... "Yes, so nice to see you."

... "Who's that Chinese woman over there?" (boo...booo...laughter...)

**"IF YOU DEAL WITH WHITE PEOPLE,
IF YOU'RE NICE AND POLITE - YOU'RE TOGETHER."**

... Most of my life, I've spent around mostly third-world people, mostly black. Outside of that community, just going to school, or going out to the city, or whatever ... if you live in the ghetto, you ain't worth shit. But if you don't live in the ghetto, you're supposed to be by yourself, making it on your own, have fine clothes, and a fine car and you're all-right-nigger then.

"TRICKS OF THE TRADE: ALWAYS TRYING TO GET OVER"

... You go through all sorts of trips. You talk completely differently when you go into a group that you feel impressed by. You want to have a conversation so you might not talk as loud, as you do when you're talking to people who understand what you're saying and who are used to you talking. You want to get over, you know. You're always trying to get over.

... Tricks of the trade.

... Talk soft, and by all means, don't be violent. That's the worst thing in the world. Let me fuck with your head, mentally violently, but don't use any physical violence. They don't change you. They just rearrange you.

"I NEEDED TO FIND OUT IF I WAS THAT PARANOID MEXICAN"

... Most of the racism is subtle. We find it in the gay bars or on any baseball field or basketball court. I've just gotten to the place where people are really irritating me. It's minor things. I felt like I really needed to talk with someone else about it. I needed to find out if I was "that paranoid Mexican." Just 'cause they call you Rosita and your name's Sandy. That's paranoid, you know.

... "Hey, Pancho, what's happening?" (laughter)

FEEDBACK FROM THIRD WORLD SISTERS IS A "REALITY KICK"

... You're not sure if you should be getting angry or not anymore. You feel like you're angry a lot. "Maybe I've lost my balance or something." You need someone else to talk to, to get some feedback.

... A reality kick.

IT'S NOW TIME TO PUT ENERGY INTO EACH OTHER

... I know I was really excited about this team because I have been around predominantly Latin people and white people. It's a real up when you start looking around ... we're around each other and we're giving to each other and we're not always in a fighting paranoid stance. We've all put a lot of energy in that place, it's now time to put energy into each other.

"I WAS RAISED EITHER PUERTO RICAN OR WHITE"

... I've always been raised either Puerto Rican or white. (laughter)

... White?

... Yeah! When I came to the Bay area, then I started meeting a lot of women. I met Peggy through a white woman. Peggy's Native American. Then I met Pat. Pat's Chicana. Then I had a personal deal happening. When I went into a bar, I was treated white. I wasn't treated third world.

... Unless you opened your mouth!

... I'd say, "Hey, wait a minute. Fuck, I'm Puerto Rican" ... and this and that. They'd say, "Oh, well, then you're all right." Then I got into a group like this, and I got to meet black women. For a long time, I felt like I was being shunned. Unless they knew I was Puerto Rican, I was treated like white. So the team for me is really nice.


"OUR GENERATION OF INDIANS IS TURNING THINGS AROUND"

... As Indians, our parents raised us to be white, raised us to fit in. It was for their own protection and for ours, they thought. That was the type of oppression they faced, having to raise us as close to white - or acceptable - as they could.

Now all of a sudden our generation is getting back. White people trace their ancestry back to the Mayflower, Plymouth Rock, and the Puritans. When third-world people try to trace our ancestry back, we're not allowed to do that. White people treat us like children. They're still waiting. Waiting for a whole generation of third-world people to be assimilated, acculturated. Then they can say, "Now, you've finally made it."

You know, for years, they used to say about Indians, "We give 'em


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clothes and we give 'em homes and we give 'em income and we give 'em education and they still don't want to fit in. What's wrong with them?"

Now we're saying, "We didn't want it to begin with." This is a third generation thing going down. Our generation is turning things around. We're letting people know, "This is where we're really at. Give us a chance to grow."

... I speak another language and that's held against me.

... I'm getting to know more third-world women and being able to play with them. I find it a real thrill to talk in Spanish, to hear commands in Spanish. That normally doesn't happen. It's a real up for me.

"WE'RE ALL STRUGGLING TOGETHER AGAINST OPPRESSION"

... My opinion is that the women's movement has always been mainly white. But we all are struggling. So I feel identified with the women's movement, the Lesbian movement, the Asian movement, the gay movement. We're all together. We're all struggling against oppression.

... That's true, but we have to also go outside of that for reinforcement, in other ways from third-world women. You can't go to them for that support. But somebody that is in the same position you are in - you get their support, even nonverbal support, sometimes.

WE HAVE TO UNCONDITION THE CONDITIONING

... We've been conditioned into one thing and we have to uncondition ourselves. We've been brought up in this type of society. We've got to get out of it.

"THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IS WHITE-IDENTIFIED"

... Change is like a process. I think it's hurt that the women's movement is white-identified, and mostly middle class. You know, that whole thing about equal rights and how they want it so they can get a Ph.D. Well, there aren't too many Ph.D.'s sitting around here. It's a little hard to identify with that. But there are a lot of things I can identify with. We're all feeling a lot of gay pride. Eventually we'll get their consciousness raised to third-world women.

ROLE OF THE PERSON WHO'S BEING RACIST

... We're trying in all kinds of ways, sometimes in very angry, belligerent ways, sometimes in very subtle ways, to force those doors open and not just let racism happen. Instead of looking at racism as just the victim, we're trying to make people aware of the role of the person who's being racist.

TO STOP STRUGGLING IS TO SIT LIKE A FAT CAT

... I don't see it as a utopian world. I see it as a really long process and a continual struggle. Anytime we stop struggling, we're gonna be sitting just like fat cats do in Washington. We just can't sit.

"I OPEN UP FROM A PLACE WHERE I FEEL COMFORTABLE"

... We're gonna have to open ourselves up. There are a lot of things that we have a lot of biases about, as third-world women. I know I have a lot of trouble thinking about bisexuality and transexuality. There are a lot of things like that that I really have to start opening up my head to. And a good way to do it is from a place where I feel comfortable. That's the kind of process I'm talking about.

... There's a lot of things I'd like to know about other cultures. It's going to take us time. The only way we can do that is to get together. It is a powerful thing.

ON AN INDEPENDENT THIRD-WORLD

WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

... At this point, I'm not even thinking about that. I'm thinking about this group of people, right here. This in itself can be considered a political move. To me, it's a way for us to get together. And hopefully, more third-world women will get together. Organizing a movement involves a whole lot more head hassles. I've been through that trip already, trying to incorporate some kind of third-world women's movement or Black movement.

"BLACK WOMEN WERE THE 'IN' THING TO BE"

... At one point, it wasn't third world women and white women in the women's movement. It was mostly white women and Black women, trying to get it together. Black women were the only women that existed at that point because that was the in thing to be. Everybody else didn't exist. I don't want this whole thing to turn into something like that.

HOW TO BE BIG-HEARTED AND POLITICALLY CORRECT . . .

... I don't want someone to come and ask me if people from this team will be on a panel because they feel big-hearted and want to look politically correct. Fuck 'em. We're gonna get our thing together and if it happens to coincide with theirs, that's cool. And if it doesn't, forget it.

"THE SHIT COMES DOWN ON WOMEN, PERIOD!"

... I'm not so sure I want to see a totally separate kind of thing. The shit comes down on women, period. There's no way we can be separate from each other. We really do have to somehow identify with each other. But instead of shying away from our differences, and being apprehensive about our differences, we're going to have to figure out some format that will be inclusive and not exclusive of those differences.

"THERE'S GOTTA BE SOME SEPARATISM SOMEPLACE"

... There's gotta be some separatism someplace, to really get our shit together. A white woman can sit down and talk to a white woman more than I can about what it feels like to be a white woman and to have racist feelings about black people or Asian people or Indian people. I don't have the time or the inclination to discuss these sorts of things with a white woman. But I can sit down and talk to somebody Black about what it feels like to feel oppressed. Some positive things can come out of that.

"IN THE END, THE BLEND"

... In the end, it's gotta come into a blend for all women.

"YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT I'M BLACK RIGHT AWAY"

... Yeah, sure. There was an incident that happened at a bar. This woman said to a Black woman standing right there, "Well, I have nothing against you, blah, blah. I don't even know that you're Black. I don't even recognize that you're Black." She said that and here I am. You know, you may not be able to figure out I'm Black right away. Maybe a little later. This woman thought she was giving me a compliment. She has to go deal. I'm not gonna go tell her, "Well, I am Black and this is what it is to be Black . . ." She should go sit down and talk to white women about that, about where those feelings come from.

WHERE DO MEN COME IN?

... We're sitting here talking about basically women - black women, white women, getting together. But there are some things that concern me that are going on in the world that men are involved in.



I don't know how to hook them both up. While I'm a Lesbian and I'm mostly with women, there are some levels on which I can dig what some men - who are trying to change this whole thing - are doing. This is the level at which I deal with men.

"THIRD WORLD OPPRESSION SETS US APART FROM WHITE WOMEN"

... Most of my time is spent with women. But there are other areas of oppression that Black men are working on, that Chicanos are working on, that everybody's working on. It's not just our oppression as women. That's one of the things that's different and sets us apart from white women. That is a very big difference.

... We're not only oppressed as women, we're oppressed as third world women.

THE THIRD WORLD PAST IS SAFER THAN THE THIRD WORLD FUTURE

... Third World People are accepted for our past, for the nobility of past cultures. This is true of Chinese, Japanese, African and Native American history, and all the others. With Africa, you think of Ethiopia, and the Ashanti and Dan cultures. It's the Great Wall and the Ming Dynasty in China. But when white people meet those same people in reality, they don't relate us to our cultures. We're the same people as the people we come from. But all they see is skin. It's as though we're extinct.

"WE'RE ALL HERE BECAUSE WE ALL NEEDED EACH OTHER"

... We're all here because we all needed each other. And although we may come from different political levels and backgrounds, we all basically know that we need each other's support. Basically we want to give that support and some kind of reinforcement of who we are. I'm not shying away from these differences. We're not all trying to be one Latin softball team or one Black softball team. We're dealing with some of our differences and I'm quite sure that a lot of us have biases about differences here.

... Yeah, sure do.

... But it's gonna take us time. We're just starting. We're a young team. We haven't been together very much. A lot of us have just met each other. We hope that from this, it'll lead to other things.

sudi: Sounds like you've formed a many-cultural kind of woman-front and that out of that can come a respect for each other's cultures, and a respect for the differences, rather than a fear of those differences, and from that a greater respect for one another.

... That's the aim. That's the total aim. Right there.



IDEOLOGY. Cont. from page 11

Where I come from, who had the luxury to examine your life? You don't have that time to examine your emotions, all of your emotions are centered on physical survival. Passion is immediate, despair is immediate. You didn't eat Saturday night? You feel terrible Saturday night. So you get out Sunday morning and you fight for food. You're not alienated, you might be isolated from the culture, you might be poor, but your life is not spent pushing papers, or insulated by a Cadillac car with windows that go up and down at the push of a button. I do not understand guilt, when middle-class women start talking about guilt, I don't know what they're talking about.

BARBARA: I created my own middle class. In my child's ghetto there was nothing to have a conflict about, I learned not to wish for toys because I knew I would never get those things. My adult reaction was I don't want to worry about those things any more. I want everything I can have to make up for the things I never had. I know today a lot of people who come from a poor background, and believe me, they are very middle-class conscious. You are not the rule.

RITA: Barbara, we cannot assume that the lower class is homogeneous. The middle class is. A low class Polish urban girl is a lot different than me. I am very much the product of the group of people I grew up with, poor white trash. You find anybody else who was poor white trash and she is going to be a lot like me, she's going to be direct, she's going to be aggressive, she's not going to have any conflicts in terms of guilt.

You talk with a Catholic girl from the country, she's going to have a different story. The lower class never assimilated.

SUDI: Are you suggesting that class is more of a determinative than sex?

RITA: No, sex is the first determinant and class is the second. The lower class has been able to keep its ethnic identity and geographic peculiarities in a way that the middle class has not because of price of middle-classness is homogeneity. All I can tell you is from my experience in class that the women and men where I come from do not have those emotional dicotomies.

LANI: A friend of mine was talking to me about Marx's theory - what comes first always is action, and then ideology or analysis comes out of that action. We in the Women's Movement have put consciousness first, put the head ahead of the soul. Then we say, we'll act out of our consciousness. That may be one of our mistakes. I am beginning to see just now, our actions will change who we are.

RITA: Can I build on that? One of the reasons the white middle-class women in our movement are so inactive is that they are so concerned with getting it all right. The middle class takes no risks in America. The middle class doesn't move unless they think there is a reward at the end.

LANI: It's all a head trip.

RITA: Sure it is.

JEANNE: It's once removed from survival. When the ethnic and class movements talk, they're talking about food.

LANI: We're not doing much action, we're doing little good acts that we like. But the few working-class women that I've known can't afford to pay babysitters like middle class women so they don't get together.

My friend kept telling me such and such theories were not functional, and I thought, isn't that male logic! Maybe when it becomes dysfunctional for a housewife to make dinner every night, she will rebel. Marx, I guess, would say our theory will come out of our action, and from that we can go into an action-reflection dialectic.

JEANNE: It's the whole thing of objective conditions starting action, people don't decide, "Let's have a Women's Movement! It would be tremendous for the following 17 reasons!"

THEORY OF SUBVERTING OUR WAY INTO THE REVOLUTION

JEANNE: I'm particularly interested in the theory of subverting our way into the revolution; the tiny cells, do our own thing, poof, it will happen or separatist withdrawal orientations. That's a perspective I don't share, but I know a lot of people believe somehow this sort of thing will occur. For instance, in the field of health care, the rationale is feminist health-care centers will seep the bottom out of establishment health care, and eventually will in fact tumble the existing health care structure . . . ad infinitum.

LANI: I like that fantasy, but I don't think it's true.

SUE: It seems like it's so easy for those future four or five hundred congresswomen to say, okay, here we are, let's go, without thinking of all those billions of *MS.* magazine readers. Something has to be done with them, we can't abandon them, we can't leave them there and say read *MS.* magazine for the rest of your life, while we go off and take control. I think alternative organizations are incredibly valuable because these people have taken a step, enabling them to say "fuck the world." It may not be doing something constructive for the great mass of people, but for themselves they're daring to be individuals and people in groups.

JEANNE: I don't know if that's a step toward revolution or reform.

LANI: It's on its way to revolution, it's good reform, it's saying "I like myself, let's work on this health center together."

JEANNE: There are certain feminist institutions that have been created, that say "We don't have any politics, we're just doing this." For example, a record company created *solely* because they say "We love music." Then there are others who see themselves as withdrawing from the power structure, which I think is an illusion. We on *The Tide* know that we're on the bottom of a power structure but we are in it. If you're trying to sell anything, or buy anything, or produce anything, or have anything, you're in it.