

VITA

Selma James

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Selma James, co-author with Mariarosa Dalla Costa of THE POWER OF WOMEN AND THE SUBVERSION OF THE COMMUNITY which is now going into its second edition in Britain, knew women's liberation as a consuming interest long before the movement had a name. Born in Brooklyn in 1930, she first appeared publicly on this subject in 1949 at UCLA, when she was asked to represent the housewife on a panel about women. From 1950 when her son was two years old, she did the double job of housewife and factory worker.

A WOMAN'S PLACE, her first publication, written in 1952 came out of this experience. Its title later supplied the heading of a column which Selma wrote in 1955 and 54 for the fortnightly paper Correspondence and which reported the daily struggles of women, in the home and out of it.

In January 1955 she remarried and went to live in England. Her stay there was followed by some months in Spain and four years in the West Indies. In Trinidad she worked for a newspaper devoted to the independence and federation of the West Indies, as typist, journalist, advertising manager, and assistant to the editor. Integral to this activity, she continued to write and speak about women. On her return to England in 1962 her commitment to the West Indies took an entirely different form. In 1965 she was founding organizer and secretary of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination. In 1968 she was a founding member of the Black Regional Action Movement, an organization mainly of West Indians which concentrated on defending the rights of Black people in Britain. She was the editor of Black Ram, its newsletter, until the organization disbanded in late 1969.

The founding conference of Women's Liberation as a national movement at Oxford in February, 1970 gave her another framework for organizing with other women, but this time specifically for women. Her contributions were welcomed for their obvious devotion to women, for the years of thought that had gone into them and because she is a stimulating speaker. In the same year she made a film on women for BBC's "People of Tomorrow" series, called "Our Time Is Coming Now." Also on film and added to the mixed media show is her discussion session in 1971 of Ridge McKenzie's "We, Tarzan--You, Jane." This film has been shown all over Britain and the United States. Her television appearances include an hour-long debate with Margaret Mead on women's liberation in 1972 for the Independent Television series "Something to Say." Also in 1972 Selma was the subject of a radio interview, twice aired by Station WBAI of New York City.

Her essay "The American Family: Decay and Rebirth," written in 1956, was published in 1970 by Radical America and was later anthologized in Edith H. Altbach's FROM FEMINISM TO LIBERATION, published in 1971. She is also the author of "Women, the Unions and Work," a pamphlet which has galvanized the women's movement in Britain, and which will soon be published in the United States. This essay, along with another entitled "When the Mute Speaks," has already been published in France and Italy.

THE POWER OF WOMEN AND THE SUBVERSION OF THE COMMUNITY, which has already had two editions in English and Italian, is soon to appear in French and German. Selma is a founding member of the International Feminist Collective and a member of the Notting Hill Group of the London Women's Liberation Workshop. She has earned her living for the past seven years as an audio-typist.