

It is a particularly powerful time to be talking about radical, intersectional Queer politics. In the midst of the deepening economic crisis and in the wake of Proposition 8, there is a need for Queer Left voices that will help all of us think, both broadly and deeply, about the period of transition, struggle, and transformation that lies ahead of us.

WE NEED VOICES THAT WILL HELP US UNDERSTAND THE CONNECTIONS between the economy and gender, between anti-immigrant and anti-Queer violence. We also need voices that inspire us with models of community and celebration that can sustain us through and beyond this moment.

This section was born of the need for these voices. It was born of the need for visions that can transcend both gay rights strategies that insist on narrow, single-issue politics and Left strategies that, despite a rhetorical embrace of intersectionality, continue to leave Queer struggles and libratory visions out of the core of revolutionary movement-building. It was born of a yearning for radical Queer communities and Left movements that address multiple issues and invite our whole, complex selves into the work of social justice and revolutionary change.

We take our title, “Igniting the Kindred”, from the motto of Southerners On New Ground (SONG), who define kindred as those who share a vision of liberation across all lines of race, class, culture, gender and sexuality. The pieces contained here—rooted in people of color, transgender, and working-class Queer communities—articulate this kind of vision. By drawing connections between movements, issues, and identities each article pushes back against the idea that Queer organizing can be reduced to narrowly defined “gay issues”.

We begin with “What We Know for Sure”, a report-back from SONG’s 15th Anniversary. In this article, authors Manju Rajendran and Alba Onofrio give us a taste of the radical

and inclusive Queer base-building work SONG is doing in the South. Next, in “Trans Health Issues for Leftists”, A.V. Venegas-Steele explores the politics of health for trans people, connecting the dots between health care, documentation, exploitation, and radical social change. We end the section with a statement issued by the Audre Lorde Project on the eve of Obama’s inauguration, which speaks to the current moment of economic crisis and political opportunity.

ROOTS OF OUR RADICALISM

The visions of Queer radicalism put forward in *Igniting the Kindred* have their roots in a tradition of movement and community building that is rich and deep. The roots of our radicalism reach back and tap into the strength of cultural and spiritual traditions that existed before the rise of heteropatriarchy, colonialism, and slavery, as well as newer Queer communities that have arisen in spite of and against these systems.

Our radicalism is rooted in the Two-Spirit traditions of the First Nations that have resisted 517 years of colonial genocide, as well as the Queer communities of the Harlem Renaissance, who helped birth drag balls, as well as the work of artists like Claude McKay and Ma Rainey. Our traditions take root in the bar culture of the 50’s as well as the earth-centered spiritual systems of Europe that affirmed diverse genders and sexualities, and were among the first targets of (and rebels against) early States, religious fundamentalists, and capitalist exploitation.

Our radicalism is rooted in social movements that fought to dismantle the social structures of heterosexual privilege and gender oppression, and connected this fight to the overall struggle for liberation. We draw strength from the Mattachine Society, who argued back in the 1950's that Queer people were not sick individuals in need of fixing, but an oppressed people in need of political organizing, and we look to the Combahee River Collective, a group of Black lesbian socialist feminists who were among the first to articulate the politics of intersectionality. We take inspiration from the direct action and consciousness raising work of the Radicalesbians as well as the powerful art and demonstrations of ACT-UP.

Old and new, these Queer cultural traditions, social movements and alternative gender communities have celebrated and sustained our lives, making survival possible in a world that challenges our very right to exist. They remind us that the systems under which we live are neither ancient nor absolute, and that there are other, deeper ways of knowing and living sexuality and gender than those that we have been taught by capitalism, sexism, and white supremacy. They remind us that when we come together, across our differences and around a vision of liberation for all, we can make radical change.

VISIONS OF LIBERATION

The articles included here are part of this tradition of radical Queer movement- and community-building. While

they are neither comprehensive nor fully representative of the work being done by queer radicals, they are a spark and an opening to further conversation. They build on a powerful history of Queer radicalism and apply its insights to our struggles today. Our hope is that they ignite and inspire those who share our vision of liberation across all lines of oppression.

—Sendolo Diaminah

I would like to thank my SONG fam and Left Turn comrades for making this section possible. I also want to acknowledge the Queer radicals who attended the Revolutionary Work in Our Times Summer School, SONG 15th, and Creating Change gatherings and whose inspiration gave me the courage to take on this project. A special thanks to Vasudha Desikan, a fierce ally who coordinated the images for this section. Finally, to my ancestors Joseph Beam and Essex Hemphill whose spirits guided the entire process: Ashe.

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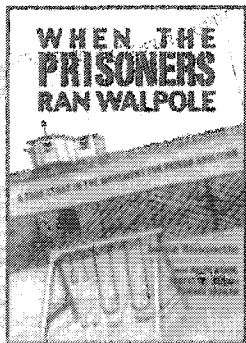
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when the prisoners ran walpole

a true story in the prison abolition movement

Jamie Bissonette with Ralph Hamm, Robert Dallelo & Edward Rodman



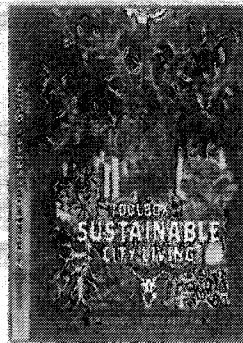
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In 1971, Attica's prison riot shocked the public, prisoners, and political leaders across the US. Massachusetts residents pledged to prevent such slaughter from ever happening there, and the governor agreed. Thus began a move for reform that eventually led to the prisoners at Walpole's Massachusetts Correctional Institute winning control of its day-to-day operations.

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