

"Women, Race & Class" defines dilemma

by Penny L. Hill

Angela Davis' *Women, Race & Class* is a fascinating history tracing the plight of women from the 19th century to the present in their attempt to bring about political, economic and sexual reform. Drawing its strength from historical information and her own ideas, Davis' book enthralled the reader page after page.

Davis, like many others, believes that the women's movement is in trouble. She supports her idea with the reason that "today's feminists are repeating the failures of the women's movement a hundred years ago."

Davis states that "Once

again it [the movement] has been defeated by the same issues of race and class that split and dissipated it in the nineteenth century." During the 19th century the middle-class women were fighting for the vote while lower-class women wanted unions. Today, women are still divided by race and class, and they are still fighting for different rights. Middle-class white women agitate for legalized abortion while lower-class minority women are fighting against forced sterilization.

Some things in life may change but one thing is for certain: society will always be divided by race and class.

Throughout her book, Davis reflects on the relationship

of women to racism and class. Her brilliant work begins with a look at the female slave. Unlike her white sister, the black woman has had to fight for an extra right, freedom. Disregarding her worth, a shady picture has been painted of the female slave, and therefore of the black woman. According to Davis, the female slave has been characterized as "a house-servant—either a cook, maid or mammy for the children in the big house."

However, she worked the fields and performed many other laborious jobs which the stereotyped role does not account for. Davis reports that "Those of us who have anxiously awaited a serious

study of the black woman during slavery remain, so far, disappointed."

Davis carries the reader through the struggles of women and the extra struggles of the black woman because of racism and class. A case in point is the Woman's Suffrage Movement which strived for emancipation. Elizabeth Cady Stanton publicly showed her racist ideas in a letter to the *New York Standard*. Davis states, "She was determined, it seems, to prevent further progress for black people, if it meant that white women might not enjoy the immediate benefits of that progress."

This makes one stop and think about what kind of

society she is living in when a person refuses to move ahead if it means that someone else will also move ahead or even beyond.

Davis explores other concepts as well. She makes her points clear to the reader by quoting such famous people as the Grimke sisters, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass.

She captures the reader's attention from the beginning and holds it to the very end. Davis' enjoyable, magnificent and, most of all, rewarding work has something that every woman, especially the black woman, can relate to. Therefore, it will be very much worth your while to read and grasp its meaning.

"When and Where I Enter . . ." has heart

by Christiana Tumaku

Paula Giddings' *When and Where I Enter . . .* is a vivid and splendid history of the impact of black women on race and sex in America. The book gives "heart-throbbing" descriptions about the continued struggles and conflicts of the black woman from the days of slavery to the present.

This history contains accurate research about the significant roles various black women played, and are still playing, toward the continued functioning of American society. The active works of renowned black women including Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells, Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Mary McLeod Be-

thune, are featured. These women "labored" for the advancement of the black race.

This book is divided into three parts. The first part concerns black women "inventing themselves." The second part describes the discovering of the "new Negro" woman. The third part details the continuing of the unfinished revolution by black women.

In an attempt to invent themselves, black women had to "confront and redefine morality and assess its relationship to 'true womanhood.'" For the prevailing views of the society had not only debased their image, but had also excluded them from the mainstream of the labor force

and continued to make them vulnerable to sexual exploitation," Giddings argues.

The picture that the black women were trying to portray was that color, class or the experience of slavery did not annul the moral strength of true womanhood.

The discovery of the "new Negro" woman during and after World War I saw the emergence of Mary McLeod Bethune, the black brain-truster. She was not for once willing to give up the idea of equality for blacks, unlike some other black leaders. Mary Bethune believed that there were advantages to voluntary separation, a philosophy that helped her reach her goals for providing opportu-

nities for blacks.

Of great importance is the continuing of the unfinished revolution of the black woman. The young black activists of the '60s not only had role models but also strong beliefs, poise and self-assurance about what they were doing.

Today, the role of the black woman needs to be reappraised because of the continued crises in black families described in *The Moynihan Report*: "At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of the Negro society is the deterioration of Negro family. It is the fundamental cause of weakness in the Negro community. Unless the damage is repaired all the effort to end discrimination, pover-

ty and injustice will come to little."

The two major ideas that evolve from this excellent piece of writing are that the black woman was able through experience to understand the relationship between sexism and racism and that the black woman rose above the perils of double discrimination.

The strength of this book lies in the good bibliography and resource directory used by the author. This is a useful book for every black woman to read. It helps one understand the approaches various women used in an attempt to clear up the misconceptions and stereotyped beliefs about the "Black Woman."

"Jubilee": gritty heroine finds freedom

by Karen Fisher

Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* is a picturesque, emotion-provoking novel recounting the triumphant struggle of an enslaved black woman in gaining her freedom.

The book, published in 1966, retells the actual experiences of the author's great-grandmother. It also offers a new perspective on the Civil War period.

The protagonist Vyry is the illegitimate daughter of a slave, Hetta, and Master John

Morris Dutton. Vyry is despised and abused by Dutton's wife, Big Missy Salina, because of Vyry's resemblance to Dutton's daughter Lillian. Working as a house slave, Vyry receives a terrible punishment from Salina: She is hung by her thumbs in a closet.

Vyry is a strong-willed woman who, although defeated many times, never quits until she obtains her freedom. She marries an equally strong man, Randall Ware, a free black who owns a blacksmith business and collaborates with abolitionists

to free many slaves. Ware inspires her to seek her freedom.

Characterization is one of Walker's great strengths. The author never indulges in stereotypes. Master Dutton is compassionate, a quality considered weak by his wife and overseer. Salina Dutton is the embodiment of hypocrisy. Considered "a first-class lady" and a perfect Christian, she is a cold-hearted woman who treats her slaves as if they are senseless animals.

Mrs. Walker's novel is also successful because of its

straightforward plot and clear, crisp style. The author's words flow smoothly and rhythmically.

Walker describes the whipping of Vyry after she tries to escape from the plantation in this way: "It [the whip] cut the air and her flesh and cried 'zing' and Vyry saw stars that were red and black and silver, and there were a thousand of those stars in the midnight sky and her head felt as if it would split open and the whip cut her like a red-hot poke iron or a knife that was razor sharp and cut both ways."

The novel contains many suspenseful events which accelerate the reader's heartbeat as if she is actually experiencing the situations. In addition, the plot involves the reader because it forces her to confront and question herself about the rightness and wrongness of the characters' actions. Then, too, the narrative brings the reader face-to-face with the cruelties that can exist in life.

I enjoyed reading *Jubilee* immensely. This novel grasped my interest and never let it go. I strongly recommend it to everyone.

★ Poll Belles want more from Fritz

by Pamela Gary

If the election was held today, Walter Mondale would get the Belles' votes, but not because of their feelings of overwhelming confidence in the Democratic candidate.

Support for Mondale is prevalent not because of his personality but because of his party affiliation. Although Mondale's political experience as vice president qualifies him to seek the presidency, most students do not think that he has the momentum or strength of character to win.

Junior Stacye Whyte, doesn't think Mondale is strong enough to defeat Ronald Reagan. "His campaign is based on trying to put Reagan on the defensive and he fails. He ends up looking very insecure in his own

abilities," she says.

One of Mondale's major obstacles is his lukewarm personality. Senior Valarie Reid feels that he lacks charisma: "I think Mondale is too passive. He needs to be much more outspoken." Whyte feels that his personality has gotten lost: "His personality could be a definite aid if brought out. I think he has too many aides telling him how to react to things totally out of his character."

Senior Yvonne Ashley says Mondale needs to be more forceful: "He always strikes me as being on a tightrope emotionally. It is almost as if he's afraid of letting the public see who he really is."

Just as students have very clear impressions of what they actually see in Mondale, they also know what they

would like to change. Junior Toni Tyra would like to see Mondale develop a stronger alliance with minorities. "He seems to be taking the minority support that the Democrats have traditionally received for granted. He hasn't taken any tough stands on minority issues yet in his campaign," she says.

Sophomore Aida Bennett agrees. "I would like to see him placed more in the minority eye than he is right now. I would like to see him directly address more major concerns of minorities," she states.

Reid feels that Mondale's choice of a runningmate was too radical a move to make. "I would have chosen Jesse Jackson instead of Geraldine Ferraro because he has more experience on foreign policy.

His campaign presented new ideas and he would not have been as controversial a figure as Ferraro has become," she explains.

Even though Mondale has not addressed minority issues to everyone's satisfaction, he is not viewed as a racist. Whyte believes he has always supported minorities.

Junior Constance Blackwell feels Mondale would not be as devastating to blacks as Reagan has been. "Look at what Reagan has done in the past four years. Blacks have not benefited from him unless they were previously wealthy or in the Army," she claims.

Bennett views Mondale as a more positive force for minorities than the current administration. "Mondale would be a help to blacks because he emphasizes . . ." she says.

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