

CYNTHIA DAVIS

I left Texas when I was 21 because of my mom-- because of my mom, and my dad and myself. It was mostly my mom. She was religious and she believed in stuff like witchcraft. She had a feeling that her relatives were trying to kill her and her immediate family with witchcraft. So she just wanted to leave town. She had a feeling that they were trying to kill her because of my grandmom's property. So, she finally decided she wanted to move.

My mom's belief in witchcraft started when she was a little girl. It's like a generation thing that people just pass down. Witchcraft was just one of them. My grandmom told all of her daughters certain things about witchcraft-- things to watch out for that people are supposed to be able to hurt you with. It's like a protective thing that parents tell their children. A lot of Black families-- Southern Black families-- believe in it. My mom told me about witchcraft when I was 12 years old-- she told me a lot about it then. It was just a thing where parents try to protect their children. She would talk to me about it-- tell me certain things that went on in her life-- things that I should watch out for.

She had seen voodoo dolls and how people use them. She had seen people get sick behind witchcraft. She had seen the stuff that different people would vomit up. It was supposed to be things that poison would do to you. She had seen people just shrivel up and waste away to skin and bones. She had seen bloody masses come from people's mouths. It really puts a control on a person. I don't very well appreciate it now because it put quite a control on my life for a long time til I was about 23 or 24. In fact, I didn't get out of it myself until I joined Peoples Temple and actually started believing that no power was a great power-- it was all just a religious, superstitious thing.

She patterned her whole life-- she patterned her immediate family behind witchcraft and strict Catholic religion which was kind of upsetting. We couldn't eat certain things, we couldn't go certain places. For instance, seafood, fish, and stuff-- she would never let us eat seafood from different people because folks think seafood was the easiest way to poison a person through witchcraft. She would always look out for people when she had guests come to the house. If the first place they would want to go was the bathroom, this was supposed to be a way they could hurt you. She would always watch out for people that picked up our clothes, people that handled our hair. When we combed our hair, we couldn't throw our hair in certain places, she would always make us make us put our hair in the toilet and flush it. She would always watch our nails-- clip our nails at home because she figured people could hurt you with that.

When my brother was 16 and started going out with girls, she always told him about his underwear. What could happen if somebody who wanted to do witchcraft got a hold of that. Everything was just so tight. She had us really scared; it was like children watching late, late movies. It was really weird-- it was horrible. This was a daily thing with her. It was a practice, a ritual. It was just a brainwashing for years and years and years and years. She believed that the only way to get rid of this witchcraft was to do a heavy religious trip. If anything wrong happens, the only way to get rid of it was to go straight to church and pray.

Of course, there was a lot of rebellion because young people are not as religious-- they're just not going to fall for it. My dad couldn't stand church either. He wouldn't go. They'd get in arguments all the time about it. It caused a lot of hell. So when this thing came up of my grandmother dying, of course her sisters and brothers they fight over money. She just figured that her sisters and brothers-- about five or six of them-- are trying to kill her and trying to kill me and my dad and my brother. So we just took off-- we moved. My brother was already in the service. He was in California and he had asked that we come out there and join him anyway 'cause he liked it there. So we just decided to go ahead on and move to California.

When we moved there, we moved with a cousin of mine. My dad was still working. He was a merchant seaman for years so he would send us money to keep us together. Living with our cousins didn't work out of course so we got an apartment. Nobody had any money. It was

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just me and my mom and we were living off what my dad was sending us and it was kind of hard. Then my brother was shipped to Alaska and that was a worry on her mind too.

She just carried that religious trip and that witchcraft trip all through her life, all through all our lives. She didn't stop it in fact I don't think she's stopped it now but she's getting a lot better. But everytime it comes up in conversations, she's eager to talk about it. But I don't believe in it, I really don't.

I'm quite sure my grandmother used probably the same method of brainwashing of all of her children that my mom did on me. I'm sure my greatgrandmom was the same way. It's a generation thing. Southern Black families, you find generation after generation pass the stuff down. It goes way back, way, way back. It's something just like putting your socks on, your shoes on, having a cup of coffee in the morning--it's something you do. You tell a child-- a young girl fifteen or sixteen the facts of life-- in the same way you tell them about witchcraft. It's the same thing. You know, like you tell your son the young lady he's going to meet-- you tell him about the young lady he's going to meet and how he's going to get married. It's the same thing with witchcraft. That's the way she got it; she got it from her mom. It's a protective type thing. You tell her about things to watch out for, things that could hurt her; my mom did the same to me. I'm not exactly sure detail by detail but I'm sure of that; she did mention that.

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My becoming a lesbian was a very predictable thing. It came about as a result of the natural thing, the natural hurt thing that takes place when females interact with males. Women are brought up most of the time religious with customary male-female relationships. When you're eighteen, you get married and you live happily ever after. You raise a family and the whole trip. I'm not going to say I wasn't brought up like that. In fact, that's the same ideas and hopes and dreams I had. But when you get into relationships of course you get hurt and most times I felt that relationships I got in, that's what happened-- I got hurt. I got hurt so many different times and so often... different strokes for different folks. People react to hurt from hurt from relationships differently. People react by going into dope scenes or they go into suicide or they go into prostitution. Some people are strong enough-- they learn and they drop relationships altogether.

Some women for instance, they go into a line of gays. They turn over for women. They develop a hate like me for example. I just developed a hate after so many hurts. In my relationships, I'm the type of person I'm loyal, I have a one-track mind. I can't believe in being with four males at one time. I guess I put all my eggs in one basket too many times. And this one particular time, it must have been the last hurt for me and I just decided skip it-- skip relationships period. I had thought about it. All girls wonder, all guys wonder about the life of gay and homosexuality and what it's all about. What is it all about? I guess I had the same thoughts about it.

It was funny the way I even started out in a lesbian life. It was strange. I had dropped relationships altogether. It was unexpected. But there was this one young lady who was younger than myself who was very persistent. She even told me after we got together how she planned the whole thing. I was going with this guy and she liked me and she played up to me like a little sister. I was dumb. I didn't know-- I didn't realize what she was doing. She'd come up to me and she'd pat me or we'd wrestle-- things like that. I hadn't any thoughts of it. This particular guy after we had gone together for about two years; what happened, he got interested in her and she got interested in me. And I decided to go ahead and try it. It really hurt that she was a friend of mine--she was a young friend of mine-- and that he would make any advances to her. I guess it was a hostile trip of my own-- a revenge thing and I said why not? I sure was angry about it so I just tried something new.

I hadn't expected I would do that. I just tried it you know. I enjoyed it. It was a new thing for me. ~~She was more experienced~~

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at that thing cause she had been a lesbian since she was about 14 years old. After getting into it, I liked it much better. I got a clear look at males and the games they play-- the trips they put women through. I guess it was like going through a certain stage for myself. I became more hostile; I became a female chauvinist, a male-hater completely. I wouldn't have one. I wouldn't have a man for five years. I didn't want to even look at a male for five years and I was real snappy when it came to men. They couldn't tell me anything and they couldn't talk to me and they couldn't whistle at me. And they couldn't ask me any questions and everything they tried to rap to me about I could tell them about it before they opened their mouths. (laugh) You know, it was a horrible scene with men. I must have went through that for about five years. I still say I prefer women to men.

To me it is quite obvious that you know yourself much better than you know someone else-- meaning women know what women like. Women know what makes women unhappy and they know what makes them happy. You know what I'm saying? So, it's like looking in the mirror. You treat a woman gentle because that's the way you would rather a man to treat you. But you don't get that of course because men usually exploit women. Men use women like toys, like meat. They destroy their lives, they destroy their hopes and dreams. I mean they just... to me, men are... I don't know. Sometimes I think I don't understand them and sometimes I think I understand too much about them.

With women, they are obviously more sensitive, they're obviously brighter. Sexually they're more enjoyable of course because men are forceful all the time. They're harsh. They don't give a damn, right? Of course women think about that. Women want to make the other person feel good but men don't think like that. Men think just the opposite. So everything a man thinks and does, a woman does just the opposite and it's always in the woman's favor so you enjoy women more than men.

There are issues in this male-female thing that do not break down easily. Why, for instance, if women are brighter and more sensitive etc aren't they more aggressive and acknowledged as leaders? To me, there is a reason for it. It's not the fact that women are as a whole scared or afraid to be in those positions or afraid to think those positions or afraid to take that stand in life. But I think that it's like... I've spoken of the generation thing. Something goes from generation to generation like witchcraft. It's the same thing with women and religion. It's a customary thing you do. Like women go way back as far as I'm concerned in oppression. It's always been said, 'It's a man's world.' It started out that way from Eve and it's gotten better. But women haven't had the backing. They have the intelligence, right? But the man has always had the stronghold on it. It's like having to eventually in the future be released from chains. It's a holdback: the men have got the world and you just have to face it. They control the money, they control the goods, they control everything that exists. It's up to women to beat the oppressor or to overcome the oppressor in whatever move it takes. That's the way it is. It's just something you have to accept. What you don't have to accept is keeping the chains-- you don't have to accept that. You can work yourself out of it, women can work themselves out of it if they pull together and bring themselves from under oppression. But that is just the way it is, it doesn't have to stay that way. That's the question. But it is that way. It started out like that, that's what it is-- men control things. There are some women that think they enjoy it. They're the kind of women that don't give a damn. They'd just rather let the man run the country or have the politics or have the businesses or be the doctors or be the lawyers or what have you. Then there are some

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women like today-- they're trying. They're saying "Damn this, we can be a better politician, a better driver, a better doctor, a better lawyer, a better teacher." And eventually women will have those positions. They will run things-- that's the way I feel about it. But it takes time.

To me, it's just the way the world was set up from the beginning. But women of course have to change it. We don't have to stay that way, damn. They can change it if they will. If I know women, they're smart and they will.

Communism is the only way you can get equality. Communism-- everything belongs to the working class and the working class have no segregation of women and men; it's just people. And under communism heck yeah, you can do it. That would be the only way I'd try it and believe in it that it would come about. Through communism is the only way anything like that would come about. The release of oppression of any people would come about through communism.

For years I watched the women's movement in the states. I never believed in it; I always thought it was a bourgeois trip. I always thought it was a bunch of middle class women that got together in these little five meetings to discuss bullshit-- taking off bras and beating up men. I always thought it was something they had to do besides having tea and cookies. They were bored so they got together and started talking about liberation, right? But I've never seen anything happen from it-- all these unnecessary picket lines and these marches, newspaper interviews and television interviews and I've never seen it change anything. The only time I've ever seen any woman liberated was in this movement and the idea Jim Jones brought about. That's the only liberation I've seen in women period. That's the only time I've ever seen any oppression of women lifted.

I've only been a lesbian for about four or five years and I've been into a lot about myself and women. Women in the states-- lesbians, for instance-- outside of this movement are supposed to be liberated but I don't see anything they have done for themselves. They all seem to be working for the same thing so to speak but they haven't gotten anything accomplished. It seems like groups, homosexuals-- I'll put them in a group-- they don't get anything accomplished. I don't think bourgeois ladies like the ones that portray the Women's League-- I don't think they get anything accomplished. I don't think male homosexuals or religious groups get anything accomplished. I think they work separately.

Actually when you look at it in the states, the states are so divided with all these little tiny groups, these little organizations doing a lot of talking and accomplishing nothing. What they really want to accomplish is communism if they'd think about it. When you really look at communism and what it offers, it offers everything that all these little groups are trying to accomplish.

Give the goods and give the means of production-- all that shit to the working class-- that's all they're trying to accomplish actually. That's the only thing that's really going to make them happy.

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But all these little tiny groups and all these little fusses and arguments and all the little picket lines-- I don't believe in them. This movement is the only accomplishment I've seen of any kind. The oppression of women for instance, we've got that beat; homosexuality, gays-- they do not have any trouble expressing themselves-- there is no sexual persecution of them. You don't have any persecution for any kind of a background. Drug addicts-- they're not persecuted-- not here. Ex-cons-- they're not persecuted-- not here. Gays-- they're not persecuted. They're just people. We don't persecute fascists; we don't persecute intellectuals. We don't persecute anybody. All we have here is people-- working class-- working together for the same ideas. So, if we do that, we've accomplished something because we don't have all those trips and they have all these trips in the states. It's obvious we have communism here and that's what they need. And then maybe they can accomplish something.

The working class in the states is, for one thing, unorganized. Not only is there not a movement for communism in the states, but there is a movement against communism. The working class doesn't organize because they are half-assed communists meaning they want better conveniences and living standards for the workers, but they are half brainwashed and half communist. They want these things but they don't want to go about the means to get them. You know what I'm saying? They want to get things done legally and peacefully. It's going to take...how shall I put it? It's going to take a little bit more than a prayer to bring about a change for the working class in the states.

They are half-ass doing it. They listen to the politicians and then they go home and they give it a prayer and they think everything is going to work out. To me, it's not. They're going to have to organize. They are too widespread. There, the working class is divided into so many tiny groups.

There are poor people everywhere but they are not together. For instance, the miners, they have their own situation and their own union, right? Then you have the poor people who are extremely religious. And then you have the poor ghetto people who sit at home and do nothing but wish and dream. And then you have what they call the 'revolutionaries' in the states-- they're called the 'radicals'. "I want to blow up everybody to make a change." Then you have the people that I call the "talkers". They're going to picket and they're going to rally and they're going to speak out and then they're going to go home and they're going to get drunk. They're all divided into these little groups.

Then you have maybe communist parties, so-called communist parties. They gather together in these big, fat meetings and you're still not accomplishing things. Instead of the working class as a whole getting together and realizing that the real problem is the system and they're going to have to unite to change that system, then they're beating their backs against the wall. Nothing's accomplished and everybody's starving off and dying. So what you have is an oppressed class under fascism and you have a country dying.

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I did have this ex-boyfriend I was crazy about. We did a lot of things together-- you know how you get really close. You go out together, talk a lot, sleep together, eat together. He was close to my mom and close to my dad and brother. He spent holidays together and stuff like that. Then what happens? You really think you're close to a person and all of a sudden everything's gone. You're left hanging. You get a hurt like that, you know, and it makes you change your mind really easy about men and relationships with males.

One thing I didn't understand about myself was how many times I would take a hurt like that from a male. The fact that this guy and I were

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engaged to be married and suddenly he just cooled off. All that affection; suddenly it's gone. We had picked out an apartment and everything. Maybe about two weeks before we were going to get married, we got in this argument and he took the wedding ring he had brought to my house and threw it across a two-story building. And he just walked away. It was cold, really cold. I tried to commit suicide. I knew I couldn't take that. This was about three months before I joined the movement too.

I don't even remember what the argument was about. It was over something simple. They always are simple. The smallest things bring out the biggest results. The smaller the arguments, they just bring out everything-- all your bad points, all your good points. You start confronting each other over something small like a toothpick.

All arguments turn out to be so small and they change people's lives. Like this argument, I'm sure it was over something simple, petty. Yet it changed my whole scene. It turns a person to suicide. Going through that trip, I never believed that I would end up with any relationships at all. Of course, being at that age, you get right back into a relationship-- another relationship, another hurt. Get out of that and jump into another one. Then, you get out of the last one, and jump into another one again. It just so happens that all these relationships I'm jumping on and out of and getting hurt were men.

I began to wonder. It's like religion when you finally found out the lies on the Bible-- you understand-- and you hate religion.. It's the same thing with males. When you finally found out what rats they are, you hate males. And I found out after about 50 or 60 relationships that I didn't like men.

How did I end up with a relationship with a male right now? I will tell you it has a lot to do with communism. I'm going to tell you because I hated men. If it wasn't for the way an idea like communism can change people-- communism can make you see individuals and people as people. Not color, not male-female, or drug addicts. It doesn't class people-- it doesn't put people in classes and categories and make statistics out of them. You know what I'm saying? It just says this is a person, this is the way she or he is. Try the person, get to know the person, don't stereotype. And that's what communism is all about, right? And this is what I've learned to do, the way I've learned to think through communism. So I think now this guy I'm going with is a person. He's an individual. He has his own principles-- he's not just a man which is something society produces. They separate people by classes, by categories like rats. There are insects and canines etc according to someone's classification mania. Here people are just people and that is one reason I can see this guy as just a person and I can see good things in him as a male just like I can see good things in a woman.

I think young people in Jonestown actually have the greatest future they could ever have under a communist ideal. In this movement, everything-- all the pain that they suffered in the United States, for instance is totally subtracted. The states offered nothing for the youth. It offered no decent entertainment, no structure whatsoever, no protection from gangs. In fact, that's what the youth were in the states: gangs, hoodlums-- they led renegade lives

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Here is just the opposite of all the pain that they suffered there-- racism and what have you. They weren't allowed to make good grades there because they would be disturbed by gangs. The youth there were doing nothing but ripping off and getting into dope scenes-- that's the regular thing. But here, they have the opportunity of education, they have a future, they can get into trades. They have a friend in Jim; they have good friends here that they can get involved with. They have good medical care; they have the chance really get close to seniors for instance, and get close to babies and children which is something that you don't see in the states. You always see a generation gap-- there is a generation gap in the states-- it does exist. But here, they're able to blend with all ages, they're able to be just what they are-- young adults. There is no gap here in Jonestown; there is no dope scene in Jonestown; there is no unprotected education. Youth can go into trades, they can learn something without being discriminated against. They don't have to worry about race or none of that stuff. Actually they have more of an opportunity in Jonestown than they will ever have when they are alive in the states.

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