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Editor's Introduction

Meridians' flag is planted squarely on that piece of discursive ground where both race and gender reside. As feminist scholars/activists know, that space, with its fluid borders, can be one of liberation or possess the doubly weighted discord of constraint.

The essay, "Double Jeopardy," written by the activist Francis Beal and published in 1970, was a foundational essay that illustrated the intersectional paradigm and included a call for reproductive rights, anti-imperialism, a critique of capitalism, and a mobilizing vision of a world free of all categories of oppression. At the time, Beal, who had lived in Paris during the early sixties, had recently returned to the U.S. where she became the director of the Black Women's Alliance, a feminist group associated with SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee). In this issue, we feature an interview with the activist, conducted by Loretta Ross, in "From the Archives." This interview, along with Beal's papers, is from the collection, "Voices of Feminism Oral History Project" at Smith College. Also included in the archival section is Beal's groundbreaking "Double Jeopardy," which, according to Beverly Guy-Sheftall, was the most anthologized essay of the early years of the women's liberation movement.

That movement paved the way for race and gender studies in the academy, and in many ways, it was black women scholars who were first charged to

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protect and preserve that discursive intersectional ground. Two essays in this volume, "Salvation is the Issue," by Myisha Priest and "'The Future of Our Worlds': Black Feminism and the Politics of Knowledge in the University Under Globalization," by Grace Kyungwon Hong, examine, respectively, the fate of those pioneering ground-keepers and the impact of the transnational marketplace on the production of black feminist knowledge. Priest poignantly recounts and bears witness to not only the emotional but physical price paid by those involved with that struggle and reminds us that our own salvation lies in preserving their voices and their work.

One of the black woman scholars mentioned in Priest's essay was Barbara Christian, who died in 2000 at the age of fifty-six. A professor of African American Literature at the University of California at Berkeley, Christian was also an activist who was instrumental in the development of the "open admissions" policy in the City College system of New York and the author of the pioneering classic, *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition.* Christian's concern about the future of black feminism in the American academy, where it can be both a significant category of analysis and a trope that marginalizes, sometimes in brutal ways, is the point of departure for Hong's essay. The author traces this double-voiced process through a framework that views the contemporary university as an agent of global capital that utilizes knowledge production as an organizing factor to assess access and exclusion.

Re-imagining the possibilities and limitations for representations of subjectivity within the context of neoliberal capitalism and globalization is a leitmotif for the essay, "Manolos, Marriage, and Mantras: Chick-Lit Criticism and Transnational Feminism." Its authors, Jigna Desai and Pamela Butler, provide an alternative to the paradigm that accompanies the readings of U.S. chick-lit—readings that usually include a post-feminist, apolitical thesis. Desai and Butler reveal the possibility of an alternate framework through their analysis of South Asian American chick-lit novels that foregrounds questions of race, nation, empire, and political economy.

Such questions burned, sometimes literally, when *Fire*, a film by Deepa Mehta, was released in India in November of 1998. Reacting to its depiction of same-sex desire between two Hindu sisters-in-law who lived in the same household in New Delhi, Hindu fundamentalists stormed sites where the picture was shown, burned posters, and threatened theatergoers across India. In "*Fire*'s Queer Anti-Communalism," Alexandra Lynn

Barron posits that although critics have written about the meaning of the fundamentalist response in terms of its use of women as symbols for the nation, no one has analyzed the critique of fundamentalism inscribed in the film itself. Barron does so, and, in the process, reveals the allegorical images—and music—that defy the fundamentalist agenda and symbolizes an inclusive, secular India.

In her award-winning memoir *Fault Lines* (1993), Meena Alexander, who was born in Allahabad, India, educated in England, and subsequently resided in the U.S., described her emotional search to feel at home in the world. A decade later, Alexander revisited her memoir to add a new section: formerly repressed memories of sexual abuse by her grandfather. In an interview with Lavina D. Shankar, Associate Professor of English at Bates College, the two women discuss both editions of her memoir, family relationships, literature, and reflections on the process of writing. This conversation is complemented by the inclusion of several of Ms. Alexander's previously published poems that particularly resonate with the themes of the interview.

Meridians is fortunate to have a rich bounty of poems by Sapphire, Glenis Redmond, and Aisha Durham for our cultural section in this issue. Read them and feel the spirit.