

*By Marie Emee, 1962*

*Still Here: Lesbian Writers Continuing on from the 70s* is a feast for the ears and the heart. It was energizing and humbling to share a small Zoom-meeting square on the same screen with such greatness!

Thanks to host Mev, 1955, and to producers Jewelle Gomez, 1948, and Elana Dykewomon, 1949, for putting together this panel of inspiring Lesbians, which seems to be a testimony to the healing strength our community finds in diversity as we respond to the deep, joyful, sometimes heartbreaking stories we have to tell.

Dynamic readings by Irena Klepfisz, 1941; Terry Baum, 1946; Cheryl Clarke, 1947; Jewelle Gomez; Dorothy Allison, 1949; Elana Dykewomon; and Kitty Tsui, 1952, send waves of high-impact energy to us as one amazing writer after another presents her work.

Be forewarned, this video may result in a relapse if you are prone to bibliomania, and it may push some viewers into a book buying/borrowing spree. This program will leave you wanting more.

The second half of the program invites us to reminisce with panelists and to get updates about current work. They discuss the connectivity and support they gained from each other, their collectives, theatre communities, publishers, book reviewers, and women's bookstores\*, and offer advice for younger Lesbian writers. Some of the highlights:

Allison (*Bastard out of Carolina, Cavedweller*),\*\* Gomez (*The Gilda Stories*), Klepfisz (*A Few Words in the Mother Tongue*), and Clarke (*After Mecca: Women Poets and the Black Arts Movement*) discuss working on the *Conditions* collective/magazine in Brooklyn. Klepfisz speaks about a forerunner to *Conditions*, Out and Out Books, a "fake imprint" used by her, Joan Larkin, and Jan Clawson to give the illusion of a publishing house as they self-published books.

Gomez speaks of a "blossoming of presses," including Firebrand, Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, Spinsters, Inc., and Daughters, Inc., instrumental platforms for Lesbian feminist work, along with publications like *Sinister Wisdom*.

Clarke discusses the positive impact of *This Bridge Called My Back* on her career and encourages young writers to keep writing while developing opportunities to publish. Gomez encourages writers to build supportive writing communities and writing groups.

Kitty Tsui (*Breathless, Nice Chinese Girls Don't*) drew strength from her leadership role in the Asian Pacific Islander LGBT movement and as a founding member of Unbound Feet, the first Chinese–American Women's performance troupe in the San Francisco Bay area, which gave her an opportunity to write with other Asian women.

Playwright Terry Baum (*Dos Lesbos, Hick*) speaks about self-producing plays and encourages young writers to develop tenacity to match the brilliance of their visions—to get the work out into the world.

Dykwomon (*Riverfinger Women*) discusses the importance of producing work on paper. “Archivists say paper is the thing that lasts.” she says.

On the topic of preserving our legacies, Allison stated, “We have to be realistic about the fact that we are still revolutionaries—we are still dangerous—we are still committed, impassioned. And ... bottom line, we are storytellers. Our stories cannot be allowed to disappear.”

Dykwomon initiated a discussion about the importance of taking the time to listen to each other, to savor each other's “call” before we give a “response.” In describing the writers of this panel, she says, “(They) have the ability to see the world as it is ... and to envision a world we want to live in.” Thanks, amazing women, for holding space for us to envision our world!

\*On the OLOC website, you will find a current list of women's bookstores at <https://oloc.org/feminist-bookstores/>.

\*\*These women have impressive accomplishments and publications, too numerous to list here; apologies for that.