
Kim McNeilly

A Portrait of the Artist and her Work

Kim McNeilly is currently living in Toronto, where she attends the School of the Toronto Dance Theatre. She is a recent graduate of the Ontario College of Art.

This past summer she was involved in three exhibitions: **FREE-DOM FEST: "Affirmations — Black Ontarian Artists"** (an Ontario Black History Society Production); **CARIBANA: "Caribbean and Latin American Artists"** (a Caribana Committee Production) at the Metro Convention Centre; and **"WEAPONS OF CULTURE: West Indian Canadian Artists"** at A Space.

Currently she is involved in: **"BLACK WOMYN: When and Where We Enter,"** A Diasporic African Women Artists (DAWA) production, (a travelling show due to open in Toronto in February 1989 at A Space); Studio Residency Program, a Women's Art Resource Center (WARC) production (a community project around the issue of the marginalization of women), due to run February to June 1989; and **"SOWETO, So Where To?,"** a SIYAKHA Cultural Productions presentation (a cultural work in the genre of South African Township Theatre), also due to open in February 1989.

We present here four of her recent works, along with text she has selected or written to accompany them.

LA LUCHA ES DULCE; NICARAGUA (Literacy Crusade, 1980)

She goes off at daybreak
to sow the seeds of
learning and teaching.
In Pipante or down the Cayuco River
with the future in her eyes
she goes singing.

And when she arrived at the
home of companero Juan Manuel
who's as good as blind,
because he doesn't know how
to read, the lamp of learning
bathed his entire cabin in light
and a tear rolled down
his cocoa-coloured skin.

*From a song "Josefana Goes" by Luis
Enrique Mejia Godoy.*



Kim McNeilly, *La Lucha es Dulce; Nicaragua Literacy Crusade*, 1988

FOR YOUR CHILD MY SISTER

Sporadic diasporic discussions — deliberations
Diverse and dispersed — many are coerced
Gathering together the forgotten fragments
The scattered scraps
Patching, puzzling, piece by piece
With patience, with passion pursuing the purpose
Collect, collage, connect, recollect
Interweave, mend, healing ancient wounds
Claiming, tapping nurturing the source
We are the life line
From ancestral motherwit whisperings
To the hollering vanguards of tomorrow
We labour, we carry the seed of the future's child
We are creative, industrious, indigenous, genius
We are empowered, ignited, excited
We discover We envision We reveal.



Kim McNeilly, *For Your Child, My Sister; Adjoa*, 1988



Kim McNeilly, *Diverse Deliberations; Out Here in Diaspora*, 1988

"BUT GRANDPA — "... "DON'T BE SILLY"

"But Grandpa, how can the Zionists in Israel collaborate with the Nazis in South Africa?"

"Don't forget you're Jewish you know."

"I know, but I'm Black, too."

"Don't be silly."

This old man
He left his land
Before the Second World War began
He came to Canada looking for a better life
With his little son and his wife

This old man
Was an engineer
And he was a pioneer
But in Canada he had to change his name
Anti-semitism was immigration's game

Forty years
Later
He argues with his grand daughter
Who doesn't understand his past or his pain
Of leaving Romania and never working in
his trade

And he doesn't
Realize that she
Has a very complex identity
She is Black of mixed race Jewish and
middle class
She is Canadian and full of sass.



Kim McNeilly, "But Grandpa — "... "Don't Be Silly", 1988