

The Power of Naming and Change: Reflections on Rain and Thunder's 10th Year

By Kim Rivers

Marking the tenth anniversary of *Rain and Thunder* is indeed a momentous occasion. In these years that I have read and more recently contributed to this forum, I realize *Rain and Thunder* represents far more than the collective ideas, discussion, and actions in words that it first may appear. It holds within its pages the power of naming and the power of change. In these times of continued world strife in which womyn and girls always face the worst of it, yet are consistently ignored in mainstream media's nonstop, but inexorable, skewed coverage of "news,"

Rain and Thunder continues to provide a voice for all of us where we are the norm and not some afterthought. Further, the vision held by the collective is one that ripples outward whenever an issue is published. It is that we can and do change our world. We do this every time we are willing to write of our experiences, our struggles, and our hopes. We keep hope alive for social and political change when we read the powerful words of our sisters. In this respect every issue adds to the creation of a woman loving world and continues to chip away at the foundation of patriarchy.

There have been those who have said they won't read *Rain and Thunder*. They find that the news and articles are "too painful." That they don't wish to be reminded of just how bad it is. True to read the accounts of atrocities that occur relentlessly to womyn and girls worldwide can be overwhelming, giving rise to feelings of doom and gloom. What's the point of trying to change anything if we are reminded that men and their machines of war, disease, and chaos are ready, willing and oh so able to roll over us with no concern?

This is where I come back to the power of naming. In the film *Left Lane*, a documentary of life on the road with feminist poet Alix Olsen, Alix relates a particular relevant and poignant observation in the telling of a story. In this story Alix tells of her tour manager Samantha Farinella's confronting a man on the highway who is beating on his girlfriend. While her sisters distressed over what and how to deal with it, Farinella knew there was just one thing to do. She insisted her friends stop their own car and as it slowed down, she leapt out, running to where this man was. Although he was apparently much larger in size without hesitation she yelled, "I see you!" sending him running in fear at having been called out in such a way. Alix surmises that so many are used to acting upon the world and



are thrown when it acts back.

This is what I mean when I say *Rain and Thunder* adds to the power of naming and change, just as Sam Farinella did when she saw a grave injustice happening. Know that by being willing to not just witness such injustices, but to name them boldly can do more than just stop them in the moment, it can create space that no longer sets up the imbalances for it to happen.. Heteropatriarchy has a free run as long as we choose to turn away from and remain silent towards the brutality and wastefulness it perpetuates. In fact they are counting on

this very thing to keep it up. This is why a forum such as *Rain and Thunder* is so important. By giving space to the reality of womyn's lives they say, "We see you!" Further not only do we see you, but we are letting others know we see you. These are the seeds of change and revolution.

Change does not come easily and in this world it is easy to tune out and not allow ourselves to truly "see" what is happening around us. I know there are times when I would rather not know myself. I get tired, as we all do sometimes, but then a phone call or email from one of the collective members comes through. We talk, lament, strategize, laugh, and offer support to each other, then I know. I know I do not want to go to sleep to what is going on in this world. I don't want to turn away from the strife of every woman and girl living in heteropatriarchy. I want to remain awake with eyes wide open to what still needs to be done. I want to be part of the bold and unrelenting naming and the change I know is possible and is confirmed with the arrival of every issue of *Rain and Thunder*. Indeed it is momentous to consider that ten years ago some young and courageous radical feminist sisters decided they could call upon the power of naming and create a wave of change in words and images, an act that carried an uncertainty to be sure. Would others respond and believe that they could be a part of something different; something revolutionary; something that gave womyn and girls a voice when so many others would not speak for them? Ten years later we know the answer to that is a resounding yes. Enjoy the celebration of this accomplishment, knowing that by being willing to read these words and perhaps submitting your own you in more than a small way become part of the greater whole that ripples out from the center of the Rain and Thunder Collective. Together we hold the power of naming and change.