



Sonia Sanchez addresses the 1983 NBUF Convention here last week. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Poet speaks of women, the 1960s and liberation

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — The Fourth Annual Convention of the National Black United Front brought together two of our most prominent cultural activists, Brother Maulana Karenga and Sister Sonia Sanchez.

Sister Sanchez is a mother, poet, professor, playwright and author of ten books. She has the talents of the motherland along with the strength of Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer and my grandmother who did not sell the souls of Black people down the river of racism to confirm the vulgarities that America wanted to hear about Black people. I was so awed by Sanchez's presence that I forgot to plug in my microphone. And according to delegates interviewed, her poem at the convention was among the most memorable.

In an interview I asked her how meaningful the traditional women's movement was to the Afro-American sister. "It does not have the significance that it should have. There are things women have to do that will not be done by major organizations. There are ideas that we as women can perpetrate and push. But as a separate kind of motion or movement, no." She says that Black women were always into organizing and supporting the struggles of their sisters and brothers.

Sonia Sanchez is a survivor of the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960s. Many of her counterparts from that period of time are suggesting that we as Afro-Americans forget about that part of our history, Sanchez disagrees. "Like any other period we have got to deal with the 1960s as a continuation of the 1930s, '40s and '50s. When we deal with the 1960s you can't deal with it alone. What we did in the 1960s came about because there were people who walked before us. The 1980s must also be a continuation of the 1960s. What this country is trying to do in a very wicked manner is to say that the 1960s were very unimportant. Many people who now say that the 1960s were unimportant times became educated because other people pushed this country to a certain point which opened up the universities."

Sanchez says that America declared war on the ideas and movements of the 1960s. "They bought off some people and killed others. They tried to discredit people in all kinds of ways with rumors and infiltration. It was a complete war that went on in this country. Therefore, it seemed as if things died down when in fact they literally wiped people out along the way. This country prevented people from being seen and heard."

With more than half of the Black children in America being raised in one-parent households, Sanchez says we are dealing with a whole new kind of motherhood. "Working hard and raising children by yourself didn't mean the same kind

of thing as it does now. Women are looking up and seeing the world move at a much faster pace. You see them in housing projects with dope, criminals and rapists, and you wonder why they have given up. Young black girls who are having babies are into drugs. We are dealing with a different type of motherhood. It is a whole different kind of slavery."

She also says she believes that the crisis in Black male/female relationships is not new. "It has become intensified a lot by the mass media. We must look at this problem from a historical point of view. During slavery Black women used to look at Black men secondarily. They began to look at Black men through the eyes of the master. We have got to understand how that has stayed in our residual memory. We didn't come out of slavery forgetting everything. We haven't talked about a Black woman knowing she had a husband and that the white master could have her anytime."

Why don't we see the cultural and political activism in artists of the 1980s that was evident in the artists of the 1960s? "I think there is still activism by some people who are still active. Those writers spanned the '50s into the '60s. But then you have other bourgeois writers in this bourgeois society who write what America wants to hear. They will take the folklore of Black folks and the things Black people say and put it out there. It becomes exotic. They say, 'Let me read this book about you Black folks and see how you live so I can again look at you and you can reaffirm my whole idea about Black folks being exotic people.'"

Sonia Sanchez could have made a lot of money writing about Black people the way America wanted her to write about her people. "We were not out to make lots of money. We were out to put our words in the libraries of America. What happened along the way is that Black folks looked up and said 'I like this.' And that is how we made those motions and movements in this country. What we want from this country is the dignity and humanity that Black folks are supposed to have all over the world. My whole life is involved in bringing Black folks into that whole human arena."

Her advice to the aspiring young Afro-American writer: "Persevere, write and write and write. See if you can take some courses or have people around you who review your work. Send your work out regularly. Study and read everybody possible because it's important to see how other people write. Understand that you come from a long tradition of great Black writers and if it seems like you are all alone, you are not. There were people before you and there will be people who will come after you. You have got to keep our traditions alive."

Next week: Maulana Karenga.

Beat the heat pump.

With a modern natural gas furnace and central air conditioning system.

Some people think of Northwest Natural Gas Company mainly as a source of highly efficient home heating. But we want you to know that when it comes to air conditioning, we also have our ducts in a row! Because a central air conditioning system—using the same ducting as a gas furnace—is even more efficient than a heat pump. (You've probably heard about the electric heat pump: A single unit of complex engineering that tries to handle both the cooling and heating of a home.) So why not cool it for a minute, and read the following facts on just why a modern natural gas furnace combined with a central air conditioning system, may be a better alternative!

First of all, your total operating costs over the life of our combination system should be significantly less than with a heat pump. And incidentally, heat pumps lose efficiency as temperatures decline. Which means they must be supplemented, usually by expensive electric resistance heat, under outside temperatures of 35° F!

And, consider that the life expectancy of a natural gas furnace is at least 20 years. Often without a single repair and with no service charge for inspection. (Central air conditioning, used only when you need it, also lasts a very long time.) On the other hand, a heat pump compressor wears out in an average of just 7 to 10 years. Not surprising when you consider it often runs non-stop for many days in winter. And then must work hard in summer, too! Plus heat pumps often require maintenance and expensive repair.

And finally, heat pumps are notoriously noisy. Just ask a friend whose neighbor has one.

When heating, a natural gas furnace delivers air at a temperature that feels toasty warm. A heat pump blows air that's well below body temperature, which feels cool and drafty.

There you have it. The chilling truth about heat pumps vs. our efficient, more cost effective and much more comfortable natural gas furnace and central air conditioning system. So call us, today. Ask about our 10-year financing. We promise to deliver sweet coolness now. But later, the savings are bound to make you warm all over!

The savings will make you warm all over.™
NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS
 Portland 226-4211 Lincoln City 994-2111
 Albany 926-4253 Salem 585-6611
 Astoria 325-1632 The Dalles 296-2229
 Eugene 342-3661 Vancouver 693-2511



★ **NOW OPEN** ★
NEW-BEAUTIFUL
 Rent Subsidized
 Hi Rise Living
 Downtown

- ★ Designed for Seniors and handicapped
- ★ Qualified Applicants pay only 30% of their income
- ★ 162 units completely refurbished
- ★ Most modern fire & security systems

For information call . . .

PARK TOWER
 731 SW SALMON
 227-3367

