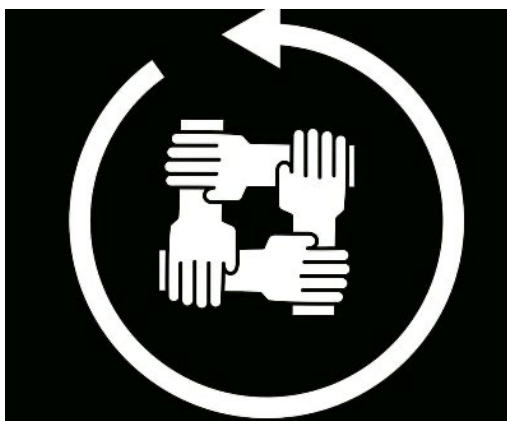


**“OUR MOVEMENT NEEDS
MORE ARCHIVISTS”**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH
DARTRICIA ROLLINS**



**A ZINE FROM THE
SOLIDARITY HISTORY INITIATIVE**

this zine is based on a conversation between
Sophie Ziegler and Dartricia Rollins
recorded July 18, 2023

the full conversation is available on
“What is Solidarity History?” podcast
by the Solidarity History Initiative

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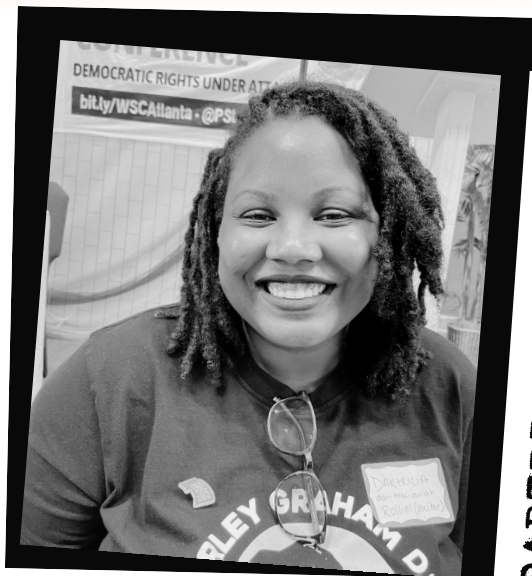
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Dartricia Rollins (she/her)
is a Queer, Black, Southern
organizer and cultural
worker. She is co-founder,
alongside Ashby Combahee, of
Georgia Dusk:

**A Southern
Liberation
Oral History
Project.**

Dartricia
also works in
the field of
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justice,
serving
as a board
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Reproductive
Care-Southeast.**



DARTRICIA ROLLINS

She is also a member of the Atlanta
Chapter of the Black Alliance for Peace a
people(s)-centered Human Rights project
against war, repression, and imperialism

DARTRICIA:

Georgia Dusk came about from my work at Charis Books and More, and my connection to Ashby [Combahee]. Ashby asked me if I would be interested in collaborating on an oral history project because Charis's history is so long—almost 50 years—that many of the people who have contributed are elders. When Ashby asked me, my response was, "I don't know what oral history is, but sure, I'm down for a new project, a new idea." Because as you can see, I like to stay busy, and I already had some interest in archival preservation work. So oral history just felt very natural.

From the beginning, the project was always in service to liberatory and organizing work. We started out with a research question:

**HOW CAN ORAL HISTORY BE USED
AS AN INTERGENERATIONAL
ORGANIZING TOOL?**

This was 2021, so we were also looking at the landscape of reproductive justice and the attack on reproductive rights, it was also where I was very firmly rooted. And so, we decided to focus on reproductive justice work because we thought it was the most urgent, and where we had the most connection. From there, we really dug deep into thinking about what reproductive justice is.

Understanding the four tenets of reproductive justice:

- 1.the right to have a child,
- 2.the right to not have a child,
- 3.the right to parent a child in in safe sustainable community, and
- 4.the right to bodily autonomy.

Our approach was to take those four tenets seriously, and to think about the gaps in our community knowledge and history for ourselves.

We thought about "Who are all the organizations? Who are all the organizers in service to abortion access and abortion care work? Then digging deeper into ourselves and our own knowledge into, "Okay, so what is other intersecting work?" Family separation work is reproductive justice work. We started thinking about midwifery as liberatory work. Doulas as people who contribute to this whole ecosystem of reproductive justice.



DARTRICIA ROLLINGS

ASHBY COMBAHEE

ESHE SHUKURA

We started doing our research and trying to piece together what we were really trying to accomplish, to help us shape the questions and things that we wanted to ask people. We began recording oral histories in September of 2022, and we've recorded 11 oral histories since.

SOPHIE:

I love your focus on the role of liberation in the project, and how your oral history practice fits within that structure. At the Solidarity History Initiative we're thinking about those of us who do memory work (archivists, oral historians, community historians, academic historians, et cetera) and how we can use our work for the causes that we care about. It sounds like you are doing that very intentionally. And I wonder, how did you come to this approach?

DARTRICIA:

I think there's a few different entry points. And I think the most honest, truthful answer that feels right for me, and this might be controversial, is: In 2016, **Fidel Castro** died. And I remember being on social media and seeing these conflicting messages about his death. That was really confusing to me because I didn't know a ton about Cuba, I didn't know a ton about Fidel Castro.

But the thing that stuck with me the most was I saw two pictures on the internet. I saw a picture of Fidel Castro with **Malcolm X**, and I saw a picture of Fidel Castro with **Alice Walker**. And everything that I had known about him until that moment, from school, was that he was not a nice person, he was not a good person, and that the people in Cuba were suffering.

"IF MALCOM X AND ALICE WALKER
FUCKED WITH FIDEL CASTRO,
WHY WOULD I NOT?"



FIDEL CASTRO AND ALICE WALKER

If Malcolm X and Alice Walker fucked with Fidel Castro, why would I not? And so I went from there. Thinking about the history that is taught to us and the history that is hidden from us, and what that does in service of US hegemony, those two photos led me to then visit Cuba, the next year.



Also, in the same year this librarian conference was happening in Atlanta, and these radical feminists and queer librarians and archivists wanted to host a fundraiser for Charis Circle, and they needed a representative. So I went to this fundraiser, and I was just really blown away by these queer, feminist, radical people who were doing this work in their fullness of themselves. And they were talking to me about how libraries and archives can be in service to liberation work.

I remember getting a little button from one of them that said "Feminist Librarian." I remember posting it on my Facebook and I was like, "I'm going to be a librarian." And then that changed to "I'm going to be an archivist." I had no fucking idea what an archivist did or was, but I was putting it out there that's what I wanted to do. Over time I started to learn more about what the role of librarians and archivists are in the community and in the world.

And then my political development also started happening. I think it would have been maybe like 2020 or 2021. We [at Charis Books] were hosting a virtual program for **Celebrate People's History** by **Josh McPhee**.

Charlene Carruthers was also on the panel, and said something to the effect of, "Our movement needs more archivists."



**"OUR MOVEMENT NEEDS MORE
ARCHIVISTS"**

And I was like, "It does. Why don't I just do that? How about I become an archivist in service to our movement?" All these threads culminating into that one statement and pushed me into the direction that I am in now.

SOPHIE:

Our movements do need more archivists! I haven't heard you use the word solidarity, and I don't know if that was intentional or not. Do you ever think about solidarity in your work, specifically that word? Or do you find that *liberation* works better? I wonder if you could just reflect on that for a moment?

WHAT ARCHIVES TAUGHT ME IS THAT
THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOLIDARITY
ACROSS MOVEMENTS

DARTRICIA:

Absolutely. I think about solidarity a lot, actually. This is highly specific, but I think about the attack on Asian people with the COVID 19 virus. And there became this rhetoric of pitting different racialized groups against one another.

What archives and history taught me — when we're actually finding and learning the history that we need and want — is that there has always been solidarity across our movements and that we do ourselves a disservice, or our country does a disservice to us, when they don't teach us this history.

I use the example of learning, even recently, that **Yuri Kochiyama** is the person who held Malcolm X as he died. Yuri Kochiyama is an Asian woman who organized with Black people. That is solidarity, right? And I think about the ways that history, actual radical revolutionary history, shows us that we have more in common than not.



YURI KOCHIYAMA

So, I do think about solidarity. I think that we need more solidarity, and I think it is hard for people to really conceptualize, or think about it, or actualize it, when they don't know that there has been a long history of solidarity. Throughout time across continents, across the world working class people have been in solidarity with each other. I think that we could all benefit from understanding what commonalities we have and understanding that we have one common enemy, and that we have to fight together to achieve liberation.

SOPHIE:

You've mentioned this several times throughout, including just now, but I'd love to hear it explicitly, if you don't mind. Can you reflect on the role of history in solidarity? Both the history that we're not being taught, but also the history that we could create by having more archivists in our movements.

DARTRICIA:

When I first decided I was going to be a movement archivist the first thought was "we have to be preserving the history of our organizations." Now, I'm thinking—specifically with the ways that our work has been intersecting in the reproductive justice movement — it wasn't just reproductive justice organizations that came out into the streets when Roe v. Wade was overturned.

So many different sectors of organizers came out because they understood what this meant. And there's been more intersections of reproductive justice and other areas of work like: abolitionist work, and economic work with abortion funds. We understand that people have to actually be able to pay for the abortion. But why can't people pay? What are the barriers to access? That's the question.

I'm also thinking about the film **Crip Camp**. In that film, the Black Panther Party came and showed solidarity. I think those kinds of histories have to be illuminated to us constantly.

By preserving our histories and then reflecting on the histories that have been preserved, we can learn from the past, to shore up our present for the future.



WE NEED ARCHIVISTS SO THAT FUTURE
GENERATIONS OF ORGANIZERS DON'T
HAVE TO WORK SO HARD TO RELEARN
THESE THINGS OVER AND OVER AGAIN

Archivists have a unique role in our movements and that is supporting us in finding the materials, but also supporting and preserving the materials so that future generations of organizers don't have to work so hard to learn these things, so that this history is already readily available. So that we don't feel like that we're always starting from zero, and that we're having to recreate everything. We know that we have this long history of struggle in solidarity with one another.

IT IS GOING TO TAKE ALL OF US.
WE ARE UP AGAINST A VERY BIG MACHINE.

Further Reading

GEORGIA DUSK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

GeorgiaDusk.com

CHARIS BOOKS AND MORE

CharisBooksAndMore.com

BLACK ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

BlackAllianceForPeace.com

SOLIDARITY HISTORY INITIATIVE

SolidarityHistory.org

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