

~~POP~~ VERSION  
Shotgun

VOLUN

M

Seamstress

BANG! ~~S~~

R.I.P.

TONI yOUNg

A ZINE

BY AND FOR

BLACK PUNKS

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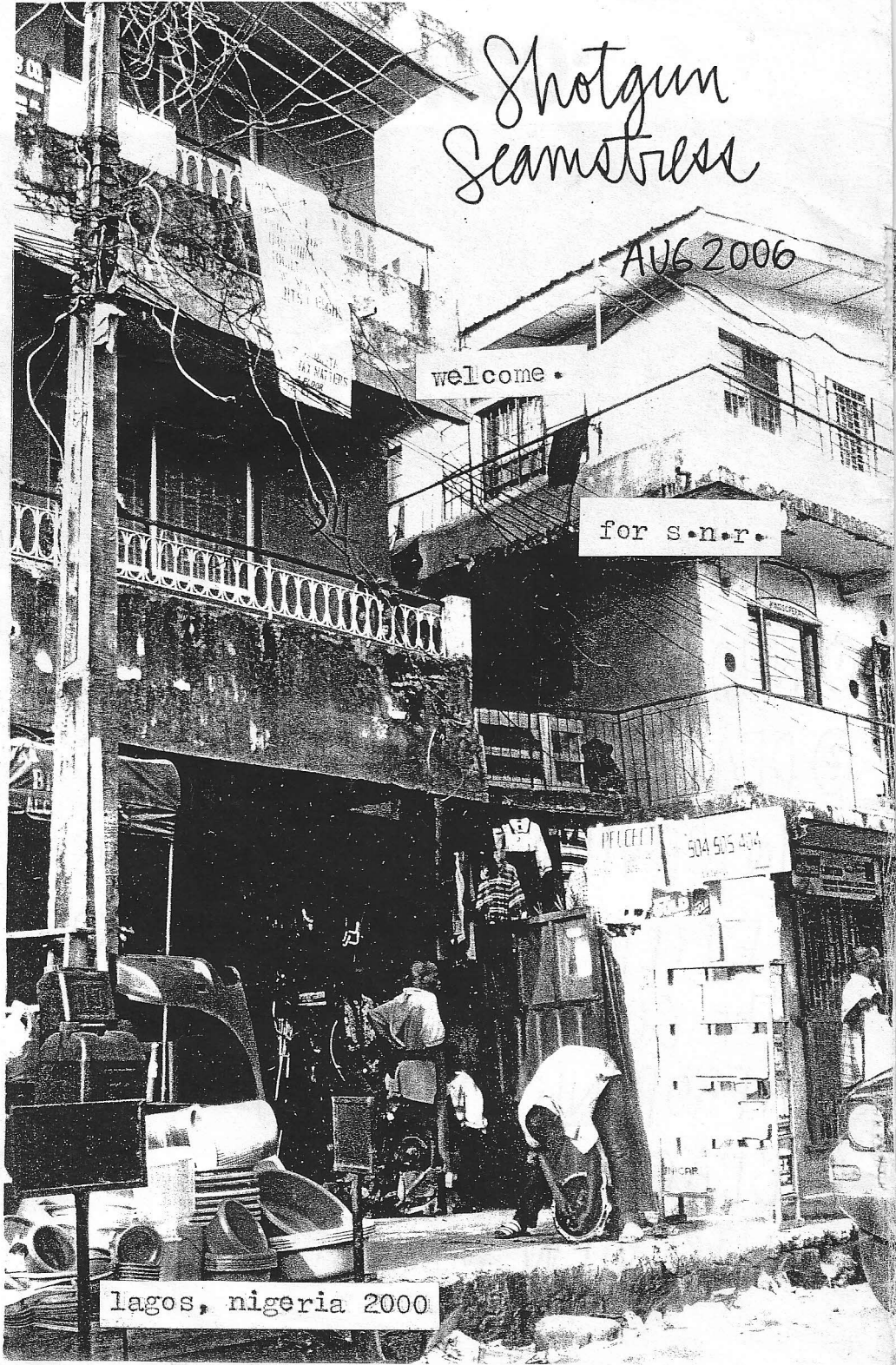
# Shotgun Seamstress

AUG 2006

welcome.

for s.n.r.

lagos, nigeria 2000





who  
is

Toni  
young?



there werent that many girls that hung out.  
toni was in a band. she's like the first  
female in a hardcore band. she did a lot for  
Double O. she set up all these shows out of  
town. she produced the single.

-vivienne green, friend  
from Banned in DC

toni young was the queen of the early 80s  
dc hardcore scene. she played bass for  
Peer Pressure, Dove, and Red C, who has a  
few songs on that Flex Your Head dischord  
comp. When i first found out about toni  
young, i was so excited to find out that  
a black girl had been so active in punk,  
playing in bands and putting out records  
so early on. well, sadly she died of  
pneumonia in 1986 because she didn't have  
health insurance. fucked up.

r.i.p. toni young  
and thanks for getting shit done.

# dear ex-best friend

i wanted to share part of a letter i wrote recently because its the best way i can use my own experience to explain (briefly) the way that racism infiltrates personal relationships. in zines by people of color, it seems like its been easier to describe how racism works & manifests itself in less personal situations. early last year i wrote a letter to MRR about being conigned with another black kid at a punk show in oakland. i spit that thing out in 10 minutes and didn't care what anyone thought about it. but this stuff is harder to talk about because its harder to see in the first place and its tougher to describe. with the way racism plays itself out these days, it sometimes takes us years to figure out that we are unwittingly participating in an oppressive dynamic with our white best friend, girlfriend, housemate, etc. and when we finally figure it out, what's there to do about it? these are people who we love and who love us, people we've grown incredibly close to. its heartbreaking situation and there's no one right way to deal with it.

in SUPPORT, a zine about supporting people who have been sexually abused, a woman wrote, "i think in movements that call themselves radical, there are a lot of judgements about women and a total lack of understanding about what real women have to go through to make it through the day." when i read that sentence, i couldn't help but re-read it, except this time including the word 'black':

i think that in predominantly white movements, including the punk scene and activist circles, there are lots of judgments and assumptions about black people and a total lack of understanding about what real black people (and specifically black women) have to do to make it through the day.

wouldn't that be even MORE true for us since we're so scarce in these spaces? its been really uncomfortable for me to acknowledge that most of the white friends i've had haven't even really known other black people. they've never had other black friends. they've never been to black folks' houses. perhaps most of their "experience" with black folks has been watching us on tv and hearing us on the radio. OF COURSE they have millions of assumptions about us that we will never know because those are the things white people never put words to, at least not while we're around. i wrote this letter in defense of my humanity.

turn....

dear ex-bestfriend,

i've been trying to have this talk with you for the past couple years, but we both know that throughout our friendship, its been so hard for me to talk to you about things you just ~~don't~~ want to talk about. you finally worked on not bursting out in tears upon confrontation, but i still feel like deep down, the same dynamic remains. out of respect for your sensitivity, i put off or avoided saying so much, but now i feel like that's resulted in a pretty hollow friendship.

before when i tried to talk to you about it, you said "i'm really starting to freak out. i feel like our friendship is strong, so i don't know what there could be to talk about." so again, i put things off because i don't ever want to make anyone freak out. but how selfish is it to assume that there can't be anything to discuss just because YOU don't think there is? i'm the one in our friendship that NEVER freaks out. that's just not what i do, i am not a very fragile person, and my eyes do not well up with tears when i am confronted by someone i care about with a difficult discussion.



as a black girl in a sea of white kids, it was easy for me to assume the role of being fiercely independent. it was easy for everyone else, including you, to assume these things about me too. now i realize that i need to make sure my relationships are emotionally reciprocal from now on. i need to make sure that i am demanding as much as i am giving and that i deserve to demand things.

i am a black girl who has built up a thick, strong armor to protect myself from the daily assaults i face. i strive to be responsible and self-reliant every single day. i try not to cop out. i try really hard not to be a burden on other people. but i am still human and i need for people to show me i am special to them. just because i do not verbally demand these things or behave like a basket case does not mean that i do not have emotions or need to be shown as much love as anyone else....

end.

# adee licious



adee, 25, is from south florida. in the past few years, she's lived in oakland, new orleans and pensacola. adee's zine, *finger on the trigger*, dealt honestly with what it means to be a black girl in the punk scene and also helped her connect with other people of color isolated in punk scenes all over the country. adee now lives in portland and plays drums in the new bloods.

## when did you make your first zine and why?

i think in 2000 or 2001. i didn't know how to play an instrument and i was reading a lot of books at the time, like langston hughes and zora neal hurston, and i'd just went traveling for the first time so i felt like i had a lot to say. when i first started writing a zine, i didn't really think about who i was writing to so much. i wrote short stories and stuff and i was just sending it to my friends. i was reading a bunch of historical fiction and a lot of my zine was reading black literature and then responding to it. i geuss that reading literature is kind of the way i get into radical politics because even though people around me were into radical shit too, they were all white.

## why haven't you done a zine in a while?

because i started making more art and playing music and... i got reviews in punk planet and mrr and people would always say "this is really good" but it was always just white people so i was like, "what's the point?" but i did gain a lot of pen pals who were people of color. i do want to do a zine again, but i just started playing more attention to art... it was a lot of little things that made me stop. i got tired of being the "race zine" person. i felt like i was one of the only people at the time, especially in florida, writing that kind of zine.

**when and why did you start doing political work outside the punk scene?**

first, i started doing work with kids. in pensacola, me and gloria started volunteering at an after school program at a housing project. when i moved to new orleans, i still worked with kids but i also helped organize the INCITE [women of color against violence] conference. honestly, i prefer doing stuff with kids because we just made art and actually had conversations about our lives instead of just stressing out about organizing something. but at least with INCITE i got the experience of what it's like to organize a conference. also, some of the connections i already had with other people of color got stronger through that. working out of the treme [historically black neighborhood in new orleans] was really cool too.

**then you worked at an abortion clinic in oakland?**

yeah, i found out about the women's choice clinic in oakland from my friends yvette and syd who worked there. yvette used to do this diy women's health tour with a bunch of other girls... i got into women's health because i don't have health insurance. also, it's practical and it's a service you can actually provide to people. i'm not a theory, college person and i don't really care about that stuff, so women's health just works for me. you can also make a lot of money doing it, gain skills, and teach other people the skills you've learned.

**what bands have you played in?**

bands no one's ever heard of. blood truck, sex jungle and the awful flakes. now i'm in the new bloods.

**how'd you start playing drums?**

i started playing drums when i was about 21 or 22. i taught myself how. i met this girl at the time who was really chill about playing music. she was like "just try stuff out!" before that, i didn't know i could just play drums in my own weird way before, without "knowing how" to play or getting lessons or something. and i've always mostly been in bands with girls cuz i like girl bands. i love music. it's just another way of making art. it sounds tight and you can make it political if you want.



from finger on the trigger #6

**is it political for you?**

for me, as far as being a black, queer, girl playing music is political for me because there's not that many girls that are black and queer who are in bands. but in the way that i've been writing songs lately, it doesn't seem like my lyrics are overtly political, except for in a personal way. i've been writing about the experience of moving to different places... just telling stories about change.

**hearing and telling stories seem so important to you.**

i love stories. i like it when my friends tell stories. i tell the same stories over & over again. i like stories because even when they're fiction, they're still true. they're real life and sometimes they're all crazy and wild and you wish you had been there.



a letter i sent to maximum rock n roll january or february 2005.

dear mrr.

the punk scene is completely useless and totally fucked up. and did i mention racist? yeah, racist too. last night i went to the show at the 40th street warehouse. as soon as i got there, i was told that a friend of mine left the show because two different white people asked her if she was brontez. my friend is black and brontez is black. that's pretty much where any similarities end, but when yr a white punk and you don't know any black people (even though you live in a black neighborhood!) i guess it's all pretty confusing...

so my friend gets back to the show and she's telling me what happened and i say, let's get on stage and make a little announcement. we go up to where the band's about to play and scream "we're not brontez! we don't all look alike! quit asking me if i'm brontez!" for about thirty seconds. at that point, it's all pretty laughable.

literally five minutes later i'm bent over my bag looking for a lighter and i feel someone humping my ass and i figure it's one of my friends. the person is also putting a little kid's firefighter hat on my head at the same time, all gay porn style. (to be clear: brontez is a black queer boy. apparently the only one in the scene...) i turn around and i'm looking at some white dude (complete with dreadlocks) who is not my friend and who looks mortified. he's like "o god, i'm soooo sorry i thought you were someone else." i say, "you thought i was brontez. you thought i was fucking brontez, didn't you." he's asking me if there's anything he can do cuz he's so sorry. (i'm wondering, sorry about what? that he only knows one black person and can't tell the rest of us apart? that he's an idiot? yeah i'm sorry too.) i hit him with the firefighter hat told him he was a fucking idiot, got my friends and left. thanks, everyone, for making me feel completely not at home in my "community." i just moved to oakland, and everywhere i go, people think

i'm brontez. the very night i met brontez about two weeks ago, some drunk white punk girl asked me if i was him. in portland, people asked me if i was jamilah. i guess she's this black punk girl in boston. i don't even want to stress the point that none of us look alike because all you white kids look exactly the same and you have no problem figuring out who's who.

i'm not trying to start a dialogue. i'm just calling you out on your hypocrisy because i'm sick of it. the same people who think i'm brontez think it's so fucked up that police always use that "you fit the description" bullshit to racially profile people of color. the same people who think i'm brontez participate and benefit from gentrification, live in formerly all-black neighborhoods but manage not to know black people, not even their neighbors. the white punk scene is so self-serving, self-involved and useless to me. you claim to be a white ally, you claim to be anti-racist. if you're operating out of an

overwhelmingly white scene, what does being a white ally mean? everything you do only benefits other white folks, particularly straight white men. every time a group of folks (typically women and queers) try to make any positive changes in the punk scene, we end up addressing a bunch of white dudes who aren't really listening anyway, and who don't really have to change because they're surrounded by other white people all the time who are exactly the same and who support their half-assed politics and fucked up behavior.

i hate putting all this energy into pointing out to white people how they're fucked up. but i also hate the idea of all of you walking around all smug, thinking you're so radical, so punk, so anti-oppressive, so different from every other dominant culture white person with their head up their ass. it's not fucking true! i've been in so many different predominantly white spaces and it's always the same. and no, i don't have any tips on how you can be a better white ally. i don't care if you never figure it out. i'm done.

# The GORiEs



the gories are from detroit, michigan and they put out records and played shows in the mid-80s.

mick collins (left) leads the band with his super rich vocals, wildass guitar playing and sometimes a little harmonica, too.

the ffront cover of my favorite gories record **HOUSEROCKIN** shows these black ladies getting **SERIOUS** on the dacefloor and the back cover shows the gories playing a show in someone's living room.

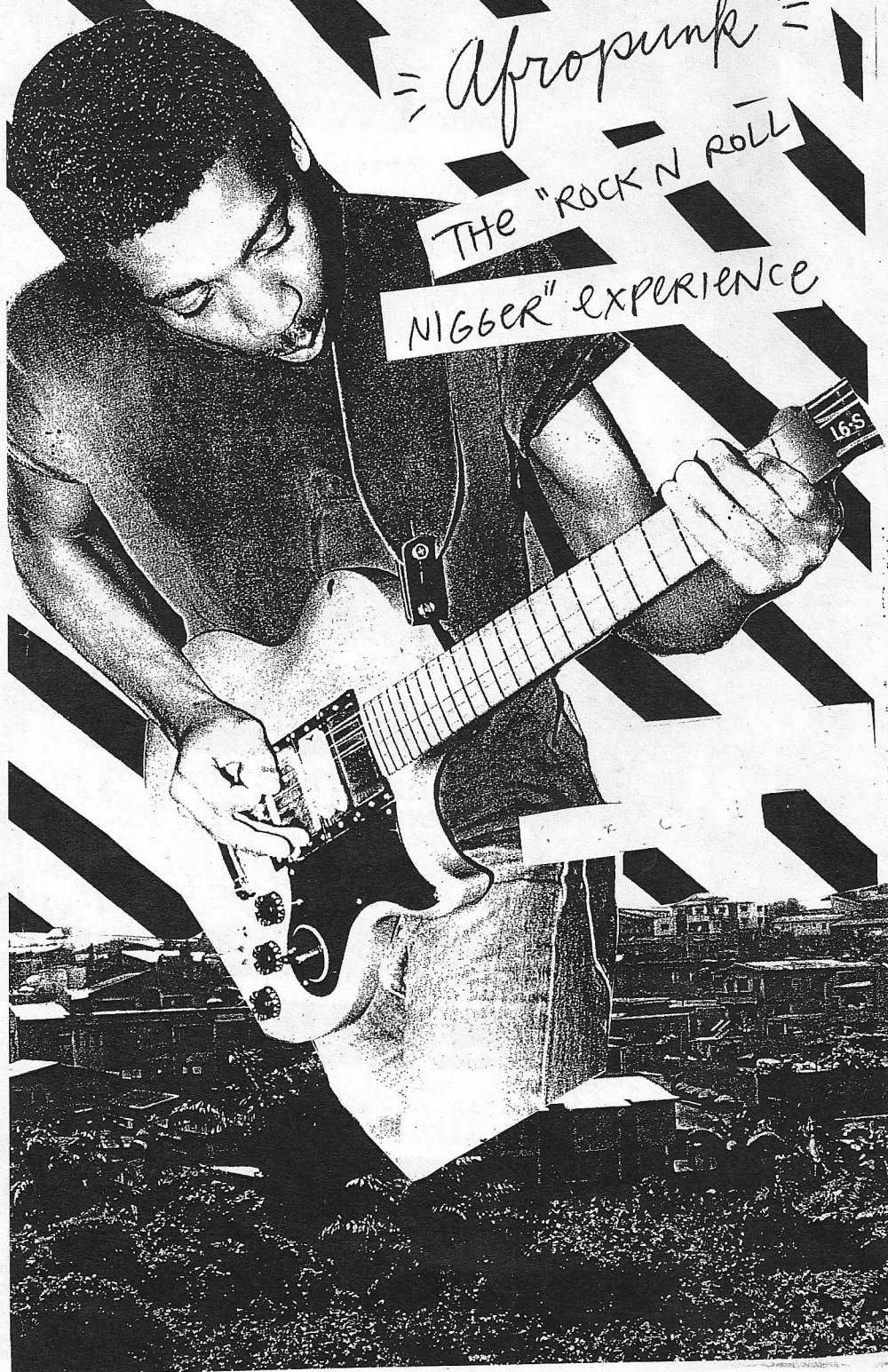
mick collins is still around, playing in punk rock bands like the dirtbombs.



= Afropunk =

THE "ROCK N ROLL

NIGGER" EXPERIENCE





## TAKING IT ALL BACK

### *Afropunk: The "Rock n Roll Nigger" Experience*

By Puck

Being white in the United States means never having to think about what that means. And most white folks don't. In fact, any frank discussion of race makes many liberal or left-leaning white people immediately nervous or defensive. The U.S. is supposed to be "colorblind," after all. And what better way to prove blindness than by intentionally ignoring something or someone?

James Spooner's documentary *Afropunk: The "Rock and Roll Nigger" Experience* rips the blinders off mercilessly, but with an obvious love for the people, the music, and for some parts of the punk scene such as the DIY ethic. The title "Rock and Roll Nigger" is a reference to a Patti Smith song by the same name in which she compares her struggle as a white feminist in the rock music scene to that of Black people fighting against white oppression. Spooner reclaimed the title in an act of cultural re-appropriation.

*Afropunk* follows the lives of four Black people involved in the punk rock scene: Tamar Kali, a woman in New York City; Moe Mitchell, singer for the band Cipher from Long Island, New York; Matt Davis, late member from the band Ten Grand from Iowa City, Iowa; and Mariko Jones, editor of the zine Social Inflight in Orange County, California. The film examines how various Black punk rockers from the ages of 15 to 50 years old, in a mostly white punk hardcore scene, deal with issues ranging from how it feels to be the only Black kid at a show, to interracial dating, to feeling unsupported by the Black community because of being punk.

In many ways, *Afropunk* gave much needed recognition and validation to Black punk rockers. One recurring theme in the documentary was challenging the idea that punk music isn't "Black music." Numerous Black punks (separately) argued that rock and roll was actually African music first and pointed to groundbreakers like Chuck Berry, Little Richard,

and Jimi Hendrix to illustrate their point. Another insists that facial piercing too is African, going back to "the bush" long before it was "punk."

Often, Spooner's questions—as well as the answers of those interviewed—hit too close to home for comfort. I cringed when I saw brown kids say things that showed how much self-hate or at least lack of self-respect they had internalized and how their white friends seemed to make it worse. I squirmed because those kids were saying things I probably said at one time while trying to grapple with my Chinese heritage and my identity as an anarchist kid. Spooner too commented, "I think a lot of Black people in the scene feel resentful about being the only one in their group of friends who has to think about race. This shows them why it's important."

It was uncanny how people interviewed hundreds of miles and many months apart, but who shared the common experience of being the only Black punk kid in their community, echoed each other's sentiments, sometimes verbatim.

One particularly painful yet funny scene explored how people reacted to seeing another Black person at a show. Several people responded that, although they were quick to seek out fellow punks of color, they had experiences where the other person snubbed them: "I want to go up to them, but I don't want to be like, 'I'm Black, you're Black; we should talk' and come across weird."

"Sometimes I'll get the dis.... Like that person might be Black, but they didn't come here to be Black."

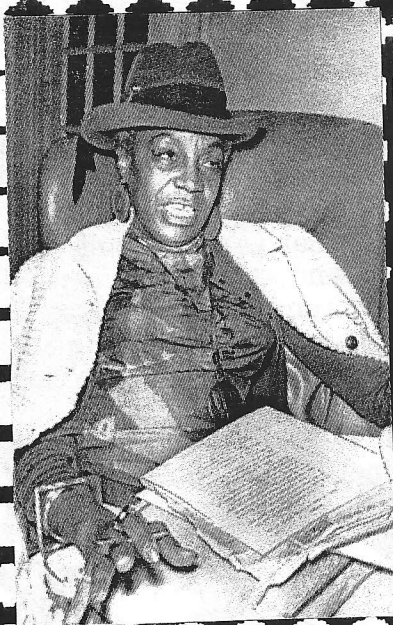
Another common experience for Black punks was being told by their white friends, "You're not really Black." This "safe Black" phenomenon—the idea that Black people who don't act within the allowable parameters of white peoples' stereotypes of them weren't really Black and were thus "safe"—was particularly insulting to Black punks and exposed how deep white supremacist thinking permeates so

many of those who have been socialized as white, even the ones who are "open-minded."

Luckily, the film is also rife with examples of Black punks (mostly in their late 20s) who show that self-love, cultural knowledge, creativity, individuality, and dedication to the Black/African struggle can transcend the isolation, alienation, and stagnation of an unsupportive white punk scene. Tamar Kali continues to live and make music on her own terms and challenges the musical sensibilities of her perplexed neighbors. Moe Mitchell, a practitioner of ancient African traditions as well as a driving force in the New York hardcore scene, continues to push boundaries of what's punk and what's Black.

Perhaps the best thing that came from the film is the message board marked "Community" on the *Afropunk* website. The message board is maintained by Spooner and he regularly participates in the discussions, but it's evident that it is the 300-plus registered users, assorted guests, and other curious web surfers who spark the lively debates and find new ways to make punk and race relevant to each other. Topics broached include cultural appropriation, Black skinheads, and biracial identity. There is a section to talk about "the scene," another to discuss politics and a place to recommend books and zines. Black punks in Chicago who met on the message board are now meeting for brunches and setting up shows. There is even talk of putting on a Black punk festival sometime in the future.

But for Spooner, who left the punk scene years before making *Afropunk*, the film was never just about punk. It is a film he made primarily for Black people. Ultimately, *Afropunk* reminds us that in punk rock or anywhere else, it will take people of color organizing to create space for themselves and challenging "whiteness" in order to move toward true equality.



# BLACK

FLORYNCE

KENNEDY

"i'm just a loud-mouth middle-aged colored lady with a fused spine and three feet of intestines missing and a lot of people think i'm crazy. maybe you do too, but i never stop to wonder why i'm not like other people. the mystery to me is why more people aren't like me."

florynce kennedy was what people call "eccentric". she had weird fashion and basically said whatever she wanted. plus, she was a feminist, which if yr black makes you automatically "eccentric". she was the first black woman to graduate from columbia law school in 1951. she had to threaten to sue the school for discrimination to even get in in the first place. she represented lots of famous black folks like billie holiday & charlie parker and she also represented black panther h. rap brown and the 21 panthers in nyc who were on trial in the late 60s. in 1983 she starred in my favorite movie ever BORN IN FLAMES as zella wiley. in the 60s she had a cable access show called "the flo kennedy show". she died in december 2000 at age 84.



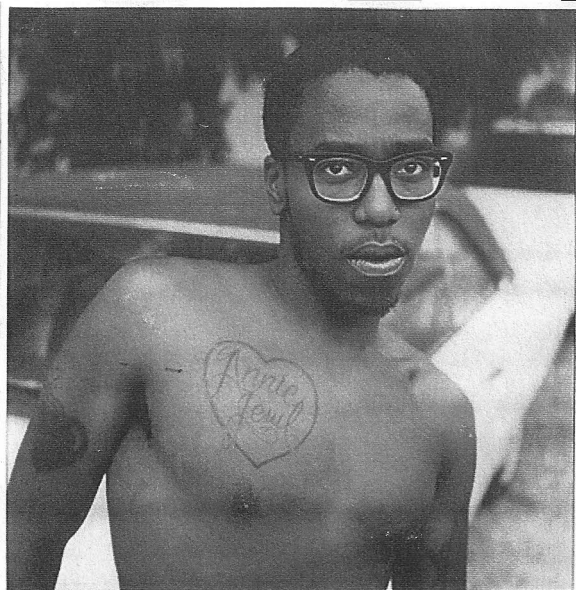
# WEIRDos

SUN RA



"the outer space beings are my brothers. they sent me here. they already know my music."

sun ra was what people just call weird. he was a jazz musician, most famous for the music he made in the 70s, specifically SPACE IS THE PLACE (sun ra was also in a black sci-fi movie of the same name), but sun ra started tying jazz to sci-fi/outer space theories as early as the 50s. he and his arkestra dressed up in pretty amazing, shiny costumes complete with headdresses obviously inspired by egyptian cosmology and outer space. in the 60s and 70s, sun ra started playing free jazz, which took himself & his arkestra to new heights of weirdness. picture twenty black folks in shiny costumes, all in a noise band together talking about outerspace, and somehow tying it all to black liberation. sun ra died in 1993.



# BrONTeZ

brontez, 24, is from alabama but he's been living in the bay area for the past few years. he dances in the band gravy train, just recorded some songs for his solo project, the younger lovers, and writes a zine called fag school.

o: the first time i ever saw you, you were dancing for veronica lip gloss & the evil eyes at a basement show in portland. do you remember that?  
b: yeah, and i remember you too.

o: that was a really intense way for me to see one of the first black punk kids i'd seen in like YEARS or something!  
b: really?

o: you were like buck naked dancing around in front of all these white people, but not just white people, white portland dykes who'd probably never seen a black man naked ever before.

b: i never used to think about that shit back in the day, but now i kinda think about it more, especially cuz people have talked to me about it.

o: well what do you think?

b: i don't give a fuck. it's punk rock, so...

o: cuz being there, i was really happy to see you and i thought everything was great, but i still had this experience of watching you getting watched by these people, and i was like "this is weird..." especially cuz it was all people i knew. for you it was a bunch of randoms...

b: i harshed a couple of their mellows, i'm sure.

o: and then recently when i saw you dancing for gravy train for the first time, i was really excited seeing how much african dance influenced your performance.

b: dancing with gravy train is what really made me want to go deeper into [african dance] cuz at first i was just dancing at shows, and then as i started dancing more & more, i realized "i want to teach this." and living in oakland at the time, there was a really good community for [african dance] that i didn't really grow up with down south.

o: i'm really excited about what you do because i don't know if its ever been done before. i mean, are there other punk dancers who mainly just dance in bands and are trained to do that, and also incorporate haitian and west african shit?

b: there isn't anyone else, at least that i know of. i like gravy train because it's a punk band, but it's like a caberet show, too... actually now i'm thinking about white people watching you in bands and what they're thinking. cuz i used to go buck, like a *lot*, and there's definitely a different way that [white people] will perceive things... it's only ever white people who come up to me, in most scenarios, after the show and sometimes they'll say things that are really uncomfortable, but then sometimes it'll be just a compliment like "oh i like the way you dance." but some times, there's always some quasi-racial shit attached to it, and it's kinda weird... but in the end, i feel like more positive things have happened than negative things.

**o: when did you start thinking about making music solo?**

**b:** i had just been in a bunch of bands, and i was really feeling myself, and i was like "what if i just did it all by myself and didn't have to ask no goddamn body" and it worked out somehow. my friend chris recorded it. it's called the younger lovers. it's delicious. my friend says it sounds like tiger trap.

**o: oh really? when you told me it was pop punk, i thought it was gonna sound like the bangs or something. you play drums really loud.**

**b:** i used to listen to the bangs a lot. they were my favorite band.

**o: i put a bangs song on your mixtape for you.**

**b: which song?**

**o: maggie the cat.**

**b:** oh my god, i love that song! okay, back in the day when i was a young kid living in alabama, i used to call up kill rock stars every day, like just call them and chat and maggie would always talk to me. she even sent me that seven inch for free. and that's before i even did drugs or anything. i don't know how i had the energy to just call up strangers and be like "hey what's up?" i was pretty bored, though.  
i was 16 or 17.

**o: can you talk about the social lies?**

**b:** the social lies were me and this girl tamika who's actually still my oldest friend from high school. we were the only two black punk kids... probably in all of alabama. i'm gonna claim it: the social lies were the first all black punk band to walk out of alabama. alive, at least.

**o: what were the shows like?**

**b:** i go back and listen to the live shows we did and we obviously played with the race thing, and we said things that i would not say today. i was kinda like "woah, i can't believe i said that. i was totally spazzing out." but it was still really funny. everyone always laughed. we had a mostly white audience though.





THANKS TO  
Vaginal Davis  
FOR PRESENTING HER  
FABULOUS VIDEOS  
THIS YEAR AT  
homo a gogo!

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**DITTOS**

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SUPPORT BLACK BUSINESS!

**o: how did you and tamika meet?**

**b:** me & tamika actually hated each other when we first met. she didn't like me so much cuz i was kinda young and goofy. she's three years old than me. she was a senior and i was a sophomore and we didn't get along. admittedly, i was probably more indie rock and she was more hardcore. she was more into filth and stuff, and i was more into sleater-kinney. but we found a drastic middle that i think really worked. it was still punk as fuck, you know what i mean?

**o: how do you feel about that band now?**

**b:** when i think about that band and that being my first experience in punk rock, i think it really set the bar for what i thought my experience should be. we pushed a lot of lines. like, i was very gay. i was an out punk queer kid. tamika also listened to lots of bikini kill and stuff like that, and it's weird just how that record could open up a dialogue for that kind of stuff. so she was the only punk kid that was really hanging out at my house. otherwise, i would've had to make horrible pop punk music with fuckin lame-ass straight boys if she hadn't been in my life... it feels really weird for me to have a scene that's *totally* white.

**o: there's probably more punk kids of color in the bay area than any other place we've lived before, but there still aren't that many. and it takes a minute before you're like, "see, this is why black folks don't want to hang out with a bunch of white people."**

**b:** yeah, it took years for that to kick in too. cuz our generation grew up with this shit about how the world is so colorblind and the older you get, you see that's bullshit. but for white people, it's easier to not think about it. in a place like san francisco, you meet a lot of white people who've never had to think about race personally, but are so opinionated about it! i grew up in an all black community in the south. i was a little black boy country bama and then i got older and became a freak, so naturally you have to hang out with a bunch of white people if you're gonna be punk or whatever. i've walked

through all these worlds and race does count for a lot. i see how different people treat you as a black person when you're the only one around. i've noticed a difference when i go into places where i might totally hear a racist joke, but when i got there with you & adee, it was a whole different scene and they were totally afraid to touch it. but whenever you're isolated, the shit people will pull with you is disgusting. i've seen it all my life. it'll be like me by myself trying to defend myself and my entire race against twenty crazy rednecks

asking me these ridiculous questions. it's like, what if i held you and your entire race responsible for everything every white person's ever done to me? like come on. i was talking to this one queen, this mexican boy, and he was trying to tell me that if you're only friends with people because they're the same race as you, you're building the friendship on a negativity, or something. i thought that was total bullshit. punk rock is cool and it's nihilistic, it's free, but it comes with

the same bullshit [as any other white scene]. i know what it's like—you know what it's like—to be isolated in a scene like this. whether it's because you're the only queer in town, the only black kid, the only feminist... i know that i've always felt stronger when there are other punk kids of color around me. i always feel stronger when i have my girls with me.