

Crow's Caws: Surrender

FLYNNSPACE
AT THE FLYNN CENTER



U.S.
Premiere
Direct from
Beijing!

Wen Hui & Wu Wenguang Living Dance Studio "Report on Body"

Friday, April 11 & Saturday, April 12 at 8 pm

"Wen Hui is breaking new artistic ground with her living sculptures." (Beijing Scene)

Co-founded by "the mother of modern Chinese dance" Wen Hui and her partner, acclaimed filmmaker Wu Wenguang, Living Dance Studio brings its latest dance-theater performance, *Report on Body*. Exploring the contradictory messages women face in contemporary Chinese culture, this eclectic and pioneering work blends vivid choreography and documentary film to create visually stunning images that resonate with women's experiences the world over.

Presented in association with the University of Vermont's "President's Initiatives for Diversity" and the Vermont International Film Foundation

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FLYNNARTS "Women & the Body in China, Past and Present" Lecture:
Friday, April 11 at 6:30 pm; Amy E. Tarrant Gallery at the Flynn Center; FREE
Community Arts Discussion, Chinese Video Screenings, Meet-the-Artists Reception & Pot-Luck Dinner: Sunday, April 6 from 4-8 pm; FlynnSpace; FREE

153 Main St, Burlington 86-FLYNN (802-863-5966)
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Have you ever been lucky enough to witness a performance of live theatre which moves you so profoundly you can't clap? All you do is sit in your seat, limp, breathless, weepy because the universe has revealed to you an emotional truth you've known all along but keep hidden most of the time just so you can make it through the day?

That was my reaction to Sekou Sundiata's "Blessing the Boats" which I experienced one night last February at the Flynn Space. Sundiata is an African-American ex-dope fiend, poet, musician, revolutionary artist with a kidney transplant. In his time-suspending solo performance about the saga of his kidneys, he reminded me that surrender is, ironically, a necessary component of authentic freedom fighters.

My guess is Sundiata adhered to the notion that eradicating racism would change the world. I can picture him in the sixties in a roomful of Black Panthers with a gigantic afro, dressed in red, black and green pounding his fist apoplectically on the table shouting for the demise of the "white devil." As for me, I confess to believing that eradicating sexism would change the world. In the seventies, I did my share of fist-pounding while screaming for a plague of widespread male impotence which would give us women enough time to dismantle the patriarchy.

Those of us who are convinced that aggressive, self-righteous anger will move mountains have never had to stretch out on a hard cold table and submit to a surgeon whose knife would cut open our bellies in the name of saving our lives. Sundiata surrendered. He allowed his lover and his close friends to volunteer their kidneys. He faced the refusal of his family members to do the same.

He listened to a three-year-old child in the next hospital room cry helplessly all night until she died. He spent months, maybe years, enduring a fluttering heart and scrambled brains, which exhausted and debilitated him. In other words, he explored every nook and cranny of powerlessness over his body's malfunctioning, his fear of death, and his humble dependence on those he calls "earth angels" — other human beings who showed him compassion and courage in the face of his terror.

His conclusion? Life is just a bowl of jelly. Any one of us can be struck down from any unexpected direction any day. His solution?

Well, I'm not sure he offered any antidotes to fate. He did confess that his drug addic-

**crow
cohen**

tion damaged his kidneys in the first place; but then again, what about that innocent child who died in the next room? He certainly didn't call for the demise of the white man. He probably doesn't give a shit about the color of the skin that surrounds a healthy kidney you might be willing to donate. Make no mistake. Sekou is not hell-bent on assimilating. He is a strongly-identified African-American from Harlem who can switch into Black English to make a point. But on the brink of impending war and environmental tragedy, Sundiata the revolutionary, figuratively


Get used to it!"). Rallies and marches have their place. They're a start. They make us feel better. They give us instant connection. They are necessary for raising our energy and giving us hope that we can make a difference against the forces of evil. But if they are not followed by attempts to communicate compassionately with folks who hold opposite views in our smaller circles, then we become wedded to our theories and can lapse into disdain, sarcasm and shoot-from-the-hip rhetoric.

That style of communication does not promote peace. I know. I was (and still am when I don't catch myself) notorious for it. We need to build the kind of communities that are based on revealing imperfections and owning the way our personal pain can drive us to act out.

Just picture an anti-war march where occasionally you see signs such as "My stomach hurts" or "I just lost my job," or "My girlfriend's breaking up with

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P.O. Box 875
90 Main Street

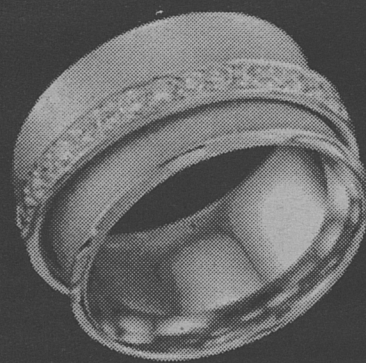

**BLACKWOOD
ASSOCIATES, PC**
attorneys

Burlington, VT 05402
802-863-2517

blackwood.law@verizon.net

fax: 802-863-0262

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me as we speak," among a sea of placards saying "No blood for oil" or "Wars suck!" I, for one, would feel safer even if that sea of placards expressed my sentiments. It would remind me that in our vulnerability is our power. ▼

Crow Cohen is a lesbian feminist writer who lives in Burlington. Her column appears in these pages on alternate months.

pulled down his pants and showed us his scars.

After a poetry circle he facilitated the next day, I asked Sekou if he still identifies as a revolutionary. He said he definitely considers himself radical, but he feels the Left in this country is "stuck in the 20th century." That head-on collision style of communication rarely builds deep, nuanced connection. Back in our more militant days, there was little room for admitting feelings of helplessness. We regarded as weakness concepts such as surrendering to the notion that we have no control over outcomes; and as frightened as we are, we must eventually rely on faith and kindness to keep us going.

It's easy to bond with others shouting the same slogans (e.g., "We're here. We're queer.