



October 2025 Spotlight

No Hierarchy of Causes **Joan P. Garner in Atlanta**



This month we spotlight Rose's interview of Joan Garner, one of the founders of Southerners on New Ground (SONG).

Joan grew up in Washington, D.C., during the 1950s and 1960s, the height of the civil rights movement. She was in the eleventh grade, attending a girl's conference, when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated and a curfew was put on the city. The girls were not allowed to leave the hotel, and they were scared. "We could look out of our hotel window and see U Street starting to burn."

They went ahead with the conference and dedicated it to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. When she left that weekend, she knew her life's purpose was to work for social justice.

Joan attended Howard University and earned her master's degree in organizational communication there.

She moved to Atlanta in 1978 and came out shortly thereafter. With her background, she was able to start as development director and rise to director of the Fund for Social Justice. She volunteered with other causes such as Human Rights Campaign, but her main movement work was with SONG (Southerners on New Ground). This organization fed her need to bring her whole self to her work, not primarily African American, not primarily lesbian, but both together.

Joan left her mark on Atlanta as well, getting involved in local politics. She eventually became a County Commissioner, serving three terms. Coming full circle, she lived in Dr. King's old neighborhood. Her life is well-documented and honored. What we explore in greater detail in this interview is her philosophy and motivation behind the work she did, especially with SONG.

Spotlight on Joan Garner

Womonwriters Remembered



For many years, Womonwrites has honored the passage of sister Womonwriters in various ways: the Cherry Omega Firepit, the Nancy Valmus Smoking Porch, and, of course, Drea Firewalker's four art installations from 2017 to 2019 honoring Womonwriters who had died. Drea wrote about those for [Sinister Wisdom 124](#). Maree Ecrevan used to make wood-burned plaques with the names of Womonwriters who had died.

The Herstory Project has now started a Womonwriters Remembered page, listing

Womonwriters who have died, linked to obituaries or stories we have received about them. It is a work in progress managed by Merrill Mushroom. So far, we have links to Womonwriters we have interviewed (Barbara Esrig, Flash Silvermoon, Shewolf, and Rainbow Williams), and others whom we have written about for the website (Dorothy Allison, Terri Jewell, Wanda and Brenda Henson). A few people have sent us remembrances or obituaries in response to a call for remembrances (Cedar Heartwood on Jes Ryn, Rand Hall on Nancy Valmus), and Mendy Knott gave us permission to republish three stories about Cherry Omega from her Substack.

Visit the [Womonwriters Remembered](#) page here. Send Merrill your remembrances of women (or dates) to add at Merrilh@gmail.com.

Introducing . . . SLFAHP YouTube Interviews!

The Herstory Project has a YouTube channel where you can see video of Lenny Lassiter as well as Leaf and Drea talking about Womontown.

Check out the SLFA Herstory Project [YouTube channel](#)!

The Southern Lesbian Feminist Activist Herstory Project

We collect, archive, and celebrate oral and written stories of unsung, Southern, lesbian-feminist activists during the second half of the twentieth century. We are proud of our contributions to lesbian culture, strengthened by our collective voices.

Many of us recognized that the lesbian-feminist voices of Southern lesbians had been omitted or marginalized in mainstream literature of the LGBTQ movement as well as from feminist history. We are the antidote to this omission. We worked with Duke University to set up archives, did interviews all over the south, and eventually collaborated with Julie Enszer to publish 6 issues of Sinister Wisdom, full of all our stories. Now we maintain our website and update it monthly, as you hear about through this newsletter. We are still gathering more Southern lesbian stories, interviewing, writing, editing, tracking, and networking.

We are always ready to welcome new collaborators! If you would like to join the SLFAHP group, email us at SLFAHerstoryProject@gmail.com.

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