

Only Amazing Women in My Life



by Phyllis Chesler

I just finished reading Hilary Holladay's compelling and complex biography of Adrienne Rich: the poet, essayist, daughter, wife, mother, and lesbian feminist political icon. I either knew, personally, most of the women in Adrienne's circles or I knew their work. What a rich time (pun intended)

that was, back in the day. But more about this book elsewhere.

My very good friend, London-based human rights activist and philanthropist, Mandy Sanghera, is staying with me for five days. Mandy is the one who pulled me into the Afghan rescue mission which continues to this very day. She has also saved my "honor" many times after I was disinvited from a conference to discuss honor killing. Last night, my dear friend, the poet, editor, and writer, Marion Dreyfus, and Mandy's friend, the rather impressive Antonia Felix, came to dinner. Antonia is an opera singer, an opera librettist, a novelist, a ghostwriter—and a woman who is also savvy about honor-based violence. We first met when we were on a panel that Mandy organized at the United Nations. And so we four ate, drank, and talked—about the Writing Life: No money in it, absent an inheritance or a wealthy partner, it's life on an economic knife's edge, but if writing is how you breathe, what choice do you have?

And now for a small miracle, the kind of routine connections that we all used to have back in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. I am currently reviewing an upcoming art exhibit by my also amazing friend, the great sculptor, Nancy Azara. Instinctively, I handed the page proofs of a beautiful book about her work that Nancy herself has prepared. Marion, the editor, could not stop reading it and with great excitement exclaimed: "I think my publishing house will want this." Even as I write, a copy of Nancy's self-published page proofs are on their way to Marion.

As I said, the women I know are amazing.