



Issue 1 - April 2007

Critical Moments: A Dialogue Toward Survival and Transformation

Amira Jarmakani and Donna Troka

*Keynote panel address on March 29, 2003 at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia
Panelists: Chela Sandoval, Susan Glisson, Layli Phillips and
Patricia Mohammed*

Introduction

Our greatest disappointments and painful experiences – if we can make meaning out of them – can lead us toward becoming more of who we are. Or they can remain meaningless. The coatlique state can be a way station or it can be a way of life.

-Gloria Anzaldúa

In January of 2002, in the midst of the overwhelming public focus on the events of September 11, five students of the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia—Amira Jarmakani, Molly McGehee, Leigh Miller, Katherine Skinner and Donna Jean Troka—came together to plan a weekend called *Critical Moments*.

A critical moment, as we define it, is a moment of change – whether it is rupture or reassembly. It can be experienced as a time of birth and renewal, when people come together, or as a time of death and loss, when they seem to become even more alienated from one another. Most importantly, it is a time of flux and movement, when things like war, segregation, genocide, disease, slavery, poverty, immigration and globalization impact on individuals and communities. Because such moments require strategies for coping, grieving, adjusting, remembering and reconciliation, we were interested in creating events that would bring people together to dialogue about finding a way to survive these moments of extreme flux and change.