

Arlene Richards was a psychoanalytic pioneer long before she became a psychoanalyst. She was a teacher, then an educational researcher studying the benefits of students talking about their school experience as a way to harness the political and social unrest of the 60's that was causing riots at academic institutions across the country. She describes this as using basic psychoanalytic theory, talking prevents acting out. If you are saying to yourself "how is that pioneering?" it means you were trained after the time that applied psychoanalysis was considered an oxymoron. She has since then become a prolific writer, and an active participant in the psychoanalytic community. She is a founding member of the IPA's Committee on Women and Psychoanalysis.

Her interest in becoming a proper psychoanalyst follows the typical pattern for most of us, she needed her own analysis, and it saved her life. This is the point where Dr. Richards was able to tolerate the broken mirror her analyst offered and yet still develop the life-saving understanding of her desires for babies, for using her mind, for being a whole deserving woman. When I say broken mirror, I'm referring to the fact that throughout Arlene's analysis, her analyst thought that it was neurotic to pursue professional interests, she should move to the suburbs, raise her children and be content with being the wife of a physician. This is not what she wanted, and it was not what the women in her family did. Her great grandmother was a very successful entrepreneur who bartered pig skins for milled flour in Poland, and sold the pig skins to Parisian glove makers. She had a beloved Aunt who introduced herself as a lesbian to everyone she met whose identity was not anchored through marriage. Arlene recalls that when her study (mentioned above) was reported in the New York Times, her analyst began to shift his position. If you are saying to yourself "Why didn't she change analysts, he sounds terrible?" it means you were trained after Arlene started to write about primary femininity. Dr. Jacob Arlow, Dr. Richards' analyst was a wonderful brilliant human being who was typical of his generation.

The next step in Dr. Richards' career was to get analytic training. At that time the doors to the IPA institutes were closed to professionals who were not physicians. She gladly joined our institute, a group of Freudian Psychologists, mostly women.

Arlene Richards is a bridge builder. In her paper "The Influence of Sphincter Control and Genital Sensation on Body Image and Gender Identity in Woman" that was published in the Psychoanalytic Quarterly in 1992 she proposes an expansion of theory, rather than a revision.

*We know what we mean when we say that men are afraid of castration. And many psychoanalysts believe they know that when women are afraid of castration, they are afraid of losing a fantasied penis or they are afraid of their masochistic wishes in reaction to their wish to castrate a man. True or not, this seems to me not to be the whole story, or even the primary part of it. In this paper I am going to present some evidence for the idea that women*

*believe they have an internal (and an external) sexual organ which is a source of pleasure and which they fear losing. Anne Sexton's poem says so. Some women I have analyzed think so. Mayer (1985) and Renik (1990) think so, too.*

The concept of primary femininity, the idea that the women develop their concepts of body, self, identity not in reaction to masculinity, or reaction to likeness or difference, but in response to her individual mind and body needs is perhaps obvious to some, yet mysteriously (frustratingly?) it has not propagated as widely as would seem logical. Dr. Richards has stated that this is not, however, the only reason she writes.

*I write to push myself to go beyond the already known, to correct what i believe is inaccurate in our theories, to give my personal experience back to others. I write to get their approval, to have the thrill of being on a platform telling others what I think. I write to express my gratitude to all those who helped me learn, who cheered me on, who gave me the support to encourage me to write. Reader, I write for you.*

Arlene feels that concern about women extends beyond the psychoanalytic couch to the difficulties women face around the world. Sex trafficking, genital mutilation and economic oppression are some of the issues that require our attention and action. This concern also resulted in her being invited to Wuhan, China to speak about women's issues to clinicians in China. Arlene saw the need for the Chinese clinicians to have more training, and she created an ongoing training program that has drawn highly motivated clinicians from all over China for the last 9 years.

I feel privileged to honor Arlene Richards. She has advocated for me throughout my psychoanalytic career in small and large ways that she may have forgotten, but I will always remember. The Contemporary Freudian Society is very lucky to have her as a member, teacher, supervisor, training analyst and mentor.

Respectfully submitted by Kimberly Kleinman