



# Dionne Brand

## Biography

Born in Guayaguayare, Trinidad in 1953, Dionne Brand moved to Toronto, Canada after graduating from Naparima Girls' High School in 1970. She earned her B.A. in English and Philosophy from the University of Toronto and M.A. in the Philosophy of Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She has taught English Literature and Creative Writing at Guelph, York, and Toronto Universities and poetry writing at West Coast Women and Words Summer School in Vancouver, as well as at the Humber School of Writing in Toronto. She was a Writer in Residence both at the University of Toronto and at the Halifax City Regional Library.

In addition to being a writer, Brand is a social activist who contributes greatly to black and feminist communities. As Carmen Lassotta explains, Brand has been a member of the Communist Party of Canada, and remains committed to Marxist ideas, particularly to the principles of equal distribution of the world's wealth and ending the exploitation of the labor of the majority of the world's peoples.

In addition to teaching, Brand has worked as an editor, writer, and researcher for a number of alternative journals and papers, including *Spear*, *Fuse Magazine*, *Network*, the *Harriet Tubman Review*, *Poetry Canada Review*, and *Canadian Women's Studies and Resources for Feminist Research*. She was the founding member and editor of *Our Lives*, Canada's first black women's newspaper.



### Quick Facts

- \* Born in 1953
- \* Lived in both Trinidad and Canada
- \* Writer, scholar, and social activist

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## Biography continued

Her political and social work includes chairing the Women's Issues Committee of the Ontario Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, helping to organize the Black and Native Women's Caucus of the International Women's Day Coalition, working for Toronto's Black Education Project, and serving on the board of the Shirley Samaroo House, a Toronto shelter for battered immigrant women. She has also been a counselor at the Immigrant Women's Center and an Information Officer for the Caribbean Peoples' Development Agencies.

Brand conveys her politics in her poetry, essays, and films, as well as through her community activism. *Primitive Offensive* and *Winter Epigrams and Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia* are her first two books of poetry that deal explicitly with political issues. They especially address colonial oppression and imperialism. Her subsequently published book, *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun*, is a reaction to the U.S. invasion of Grenada. In her writing, Brand also shares her theories about what it means to identify oneself as "multicultural" and her own experiences as a Canadian immigrant and as a lesbian.

Brand situates her writing internationally, in the context of literature by other racial minority authors. In commenting on her influences, she has said, "What some white reviewers lack is the sense of what literature that is made by Black people and other people of colour is about. If you read my work, you have to read Toni Morrison . . . Derek Walcott, Rosa Guy, Jean Rhys, Edie Brathwaite, and African writers and poets . . . I'm sitting right in the middle of Black Literature, because that's who I read, that's who I respond to" (*Books in Canada*, October 1990: 14).



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## Selected Bibliography

### Works by the author

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*A Map to the Door of No Return* (Vintage Canada, 2001)  
*At the Full and Change of the Moon* (Grove Press, 1999)  
*Land To Light On* (McClelland & Stewart, 1997)  
*In Another Place, Not Here* (Grove Press, 1997)  
*Bread out of Stone: Recollections, Sex, Recognitions, Race, Dreaming, Politics* (Coach House Press, 1994)  
*Long Time Comin'* (Documentary, National Film Board of Canada, 1993)  
*No Burden to Carry* (Women's Press, 1991)  
*Sisters in Struggle* (Documentary, National Film Board of Canada, 1991)  
*No Language is Neutral* (Coach House Press, 1990)  
*Sans Souci, and Other Stories* (Williams-Wallace, 1989)  
*Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots: Speaking of Racism* (Cross Cultural Communications Centre, 1986)  
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