

Broadside Series

No. 74

the sunflower queen

by
Chaka Aku Shango
(Horace Coleman)

We have sung Sheba
and her modern daughters
and praised the deeds of
strong doers Sojourner and Harriet,
the unstealers of stolen men.
We have heard: Where Madame Walker
walked money grew. All this we knew.
But Fannie Lou Hamer, who sings of you?

Stout lady, Queen of Sun Flower County.
Grower of hogs given to the hungry.
Builder of houses. Destroyer of shacks.
Fannie:
who watered the will
of the people and made
it grow. Fannie Lou:
who hoes up votes and
hacks the roots of fear.
Hamer, who hammers hatred
into dust.

When the liberals had left for Ohio
and points farther north.
When the burned buses had melted
into the weeds where Chaney, Schwerner
and Goodman had rotted away. When King
had been uncrowned—you were still there.

You, who didn't write too well, started schools.
You—not pretty enough to be a fox—were smarter
than one. And the naked you clothed and the hungry
you fed. You the matriarch who made the Mississippi
tribe more manly. You, who are not pretty,
only beautiful.