

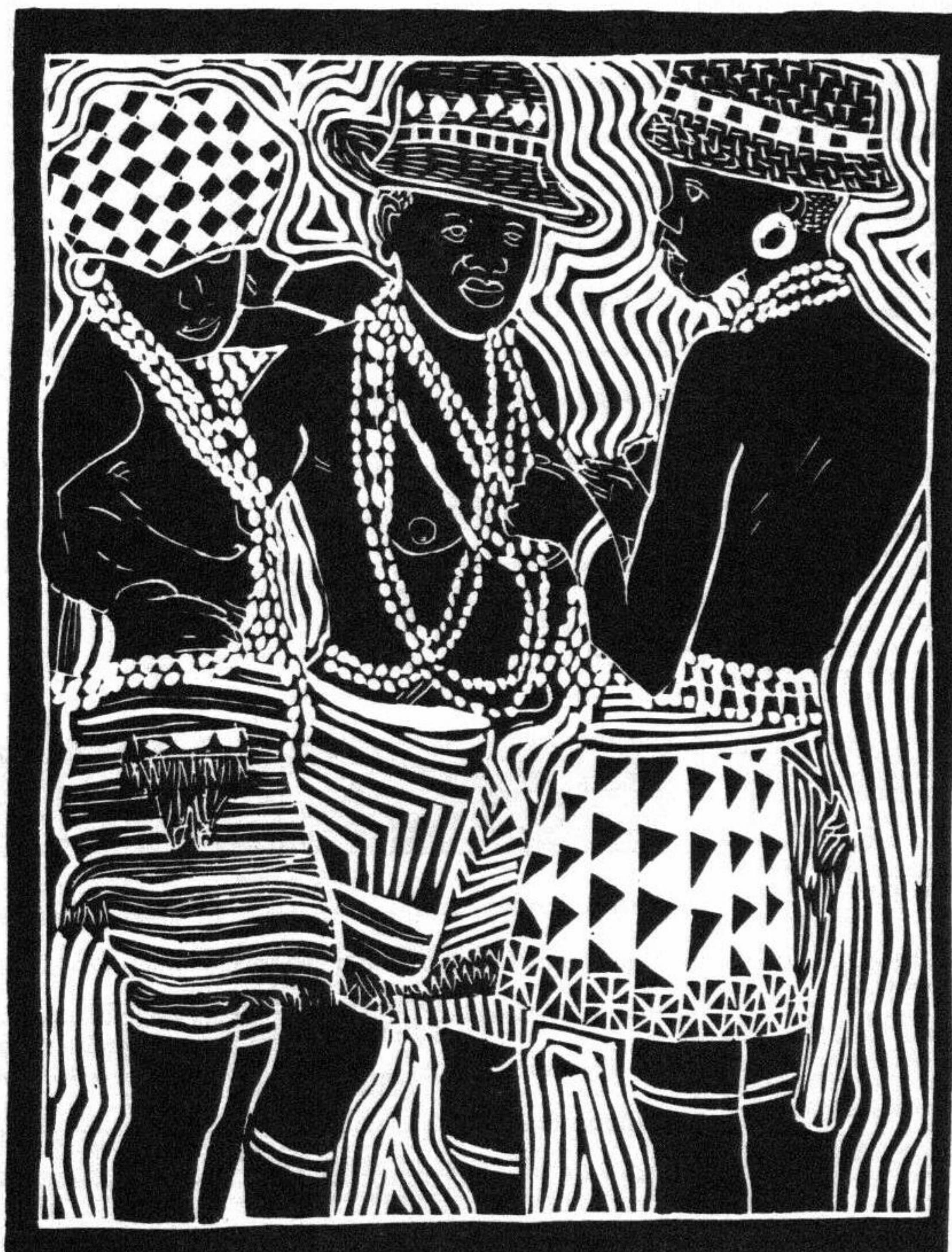
# AKHÉ

NOVEMBER, 1989

VOL. 1, No. 10

\$2

THE BAY AREA'S JOURNAL FOR BLACK LESBIANS



"Sistah/Friend" by Laura Irene Wayne.



# Aché

The Bay Area's Journal For Black Lesbians

NOVEMBER, 1989 VOL. 1, NO. 10

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Aché (pronounced a-chay) is a monthly publication by black lesbians for the benefit of all black women. Aché is available the 1st week (or close) of each month and the deadline for submissions is the 25th of each month. Handwritten, typed materials and 3.5" diskettes using MacWrite or Microsoft Word are accepted. Include name, address, & phone # on all submissions. Don't submit originals, as we are not able to return them. Please specify if you would not like your full name reproduced in Aché.

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Aché is dedicated to  
the memory of Pat Parker.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Audre Lorde Hurricane Relief</i> .....	Andrea Canaan	4
<i>Black Choreographers</i> .....	Debra Floyd	4
<i>Dynamics of Color Conference</i> .....	Happy/L.A. Hyder	5
<i>Skyeview on LOC Caucus</i> .....	Skye Ward	7
<i>Friends/Lovers</i> .....	Winn Gilmore	9
<i>Interview Between 2 Friends</i> .....	Reatha Fowler	10
<i>If You Want A Friend, Be One</i> .....	Janet Wallace	12
<i>Profile: Avotcja</i> .....	Margarita Benitez	14
<i>Artwork</i> .....	Sarita Johnson-Calvo	26
<i>Sistah/Friend</i> .....	Laura Irene Wayne	27
<i>A Friend of Mine</i> .....	Earthlyn Manuel	27
<i>What Is A Friend?</i> .....	Aisha Rahim	28
<i>Tribal Connexion</i> .....	Storme Webber	28
<i>"Isms," Family Alcoholism &amp; Emotional Health</i> ....	Synthia Green	31

## DEPARTMENTS

<i>Letters to Aché</i> .....	2
<i>This Month In ...</i> (calendar descriptions).....	16
<i>November Calendar</i> .....	18
<i>On The Table</i> .....	22
<i>Bulletin Board</i> .....	36
<i>The Back Page</i> .....	36





## FROM THE EDITOR



A special, special thanks to all the sisters who have sent letters and cards to Aché. To know that there's so many of you out there who are being touched by Aché makes the hours move right on by. It's also really exciting to know that Aché is getting around the country, in fact, most of the correspondence comes from either out-of-state or out-of-the-country. To all of you readers who are not in California, I'd especially love to hear from you. Let us know what's going on around you - let's start to hook up some national-international network so we can keep track of each other. There is so much work being done all over, believe it sisters....

### Letters to Aché

Dear Lisbet,

It's 3:45am. I'm at the office working my fingers to the bone at my isolating computer. I remembered putting my Aché in my backpack, so I pulled it out to center myself-to restore-to feel. In the wee hours of the morning, your note from the editor, Oct. 89 issue, stirred me. Your words and Aché is so real and alive to me that when I read the words, I hear the voices and see the images of my sisters... So feel the coziness of my appreciation of you and your work, next time when it's 1am. Blessings on you.

Femi  
Portland, Oregon.

Sisters!

Yes, your beautiful journal reaches quite far and you've got many of us very excited. Thank

you for your life-saving work, your love and caring fills me. I wish you all the best.

Forgive the late submission - Easterners are slow moving. I hope you can find room for "Mother." I will certainly be sure to send more poetry your way.

With power,

L.S.,  
Northampton, Mass.

### **Mother**

*Last week you came  
unadorned.  
Entered my doorway and  
made yourself right  
at home.  
Lazily depositing  
yourself in my  
heart.  
Falling as you always had  
to see my evolution -*

## Aché Party/Benefit !!

**Come celebrate 10 months of Aché in an eclectic evening which promises something for everyone!!**

**FEATURING UPSTAIRS IN THE CABARET ROOM:**

**Anna Maria Flechero & friends**

**or dance the evening away downstairs to the sounds from L.A. hottest new DJ!! DON'T MISS IT!!!**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25**

**9pm-2am at Colors II  
59 Grand Ave. in Oakland**

**\$6-10**

*the spreading of once restrained  
wings.*

*Unrelentingly positioning  
yourself around  
my memories - remembering that  
Freedom requires of me  
the distance  
of a pay check  
and a plane ride.*

*Having no need for your  
parental confusion or  
your last minute juvenile confessions,  
I begin  
to dust off  
the mirror and  
turning from you  
look myself  
in the face.*

LISA S.  
NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

\* \* \* \* \*

**BLESS YOU ALL...**

**LISBET**



## Audre Lorde Hurricane Relief

ANDREA CANAAN

Hurricane Hugo hit St. Croix on September 18, 1989. There remains no electricity, gas or telephone service. Life has returned to the basics of chopping wood, hauling water, standing in unending lines and cooking outside, even when it rains.

Audre Lorde and the People of Color community of St. Croix are finally in a steady recovery mode - the time of rebuilding is still to come.

Audre reports the Federal Disaster Aid, with the exception of Grenada-like troops in the streets and some utility cleaning, is more talk than real help. Audre also relates since hurricanes are a part of the bountiful life on her island home; to enjoy it she must also be prepared to survive times of adjustments.

Nearly twenty people from the bay area, including members of NIA, Aché and GLTF, answered a call for relief supplies for Audre by sending a tent, food, batteries, water-purification aids, first aid supplies, tarps and nylon rope.

Audre remains needing our help and support. Please send nylon rope, blank journals, local gay & lesbian community news, local news, magazines, cards, letters and keep those "D" batteries coming!!! Send directly to:

Audre Lorde  
A-2 Judith's Fancy  
Christiansted, St. Croix  
U.S. Virgin Islands 00820

## BLACK CHOREOGRAPHERS MOVING TOWARDS THE 21ST CENTURY

DEBRA FLOYD

Ten Innovative Black Choreographers from four regions of the United States will be highlighted in the spirited presentation of **BLACK CHOREOGRAPHERS MOVING TOWARDS THE 21ST CENTURY**. The Executive Producer of this contemporary dance experience is **Halifu Osumare** of the Bay Area. This two week-end performance series will take place on November 3-5th (Program I) and November 10-12th (Program II) at Theater Artaud, 450 Florida St. between 17th St. and Mariposa in San Francisco. (All shows are at 8:00pm.)

Program I will present works by; **DIMENSIONS DANCE THEATER**, **ZACCHO DANCE THEATRE**, **LINES DANCE COMPANY** with **CHRISTOPHER BOATWRIGHT**, **THE SPOTTED LEOPARD DANCE COMPANY**, and **THE L.A. CONTEMPORARY DANCE THEATER**. Program II will present; **DONALD BYRD / THE GROUP**, **CLEO PARKER ROBINSON DANCE ENSEMBLE** and the **URBAN BUSH WOMEN**.

The intriguing historical legacy and future insights to Blacks and their role in contemporary dance will be explored through panel discussions and presentations by notable dance critics, scholars and choreographers such as; **Brenda Dixon-Stowell**, Asst. Prof of Dance at Temple University, **Dr. Linda Goodrich**, Dancer/

Choreographer and Artistic Director of Oakland's Citicentre Dance Theatre; **Julinda Lewis**, Associate critic for Dance Magazine; **Joe Nash**, recognized as the foremost archivist of Black dance in the country; **Halifu Osumare**, Faculty member, Stanford University Dance Dept., and **Dr. Albirda Rose**, Professor of Dance at San Francisco State University.

Call 621-7797 to charge tickets by phone or go to STBS Ticket Booth at Union Square and BASS/TICKETMASTER. Group discounts are available by contacting Linda Graham at 346-7805.

This is definitely the dance event you will not want to miss.

### TAKE BACK THE NIGHT!!

The annual Take Back the Night candlelight march will be held on November 18th. This event brings together all women to reclaim our right to move with ease through the streets of our communities, through the hallways of our institutions and in our own homes.

A rally at Civic Center in San Francisco will begin assembling at 5pm, followed at 6pm with a march, closing at Union Square. Join us to help

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT,  
TAKE BACK OUR LIVES!!



# **BUILDING A STRONGER LESBIAN COMMUNITY, COMBATting RACISM, HONORING DIVERSITY**



**HAPPY/L.A. HYDER**

The Dynamics of Color conference has been organized to address racism within the lesbian community. Our belief is until racism is recognized and named within the lesbian community and until cultural difference is celebrated, we will remain divided at a very basic level. We also believe without multiracial/multicultural alliances and strategies for the future, there is no future.

With this vision in mind, our keynote address on Alliance Building will be given by Barbara Smith who has worked long and hard to find strategies which work in a world where institutionalized racism has a strong hold.

Throughout the conference planning, lesbians of color have accounted for at least 50% of all leadership positions and our panels consist of 95% lesbians of color. A lesbian of color caucus met monthly to discuss issues of importance to the conference planning and gave their input to all phases of this conference. The LOC caucus included interested women from the community as well as women working on the conference organizing. We have planned workshops and plenaries to be of interest to women who have been working to challenge racism. Our wish is to build a

strong base for discussions and dialogue which will lead us into truly multiracial/multicultural alliances.

We believe this base will come from deepening our common understanding of how racism and cultural differences are used to divide us. Once we can recognize, acknowledge and accept difference we will gain power. Once we name the system which uses difference to separate, we will be able to use the power gained.

We are aware that women with Special Needs have been excluded from many community events and are making every effort to accomodate you, including valet parking and large print programs (please call ahead;) ASL (CSC) interpretation; rest areas and time to move between sessions; wheelchair accessibility; as well as making women attending the conference aware of the needs for your safety, including E.I. guidelines.

We are including a Children's/Youth Cultural Program as part of the conference to make it possible for lesbian mothers and co-parents to attend the conference and give their children a chance to learn about cultural diversity at the same time. There will be infant care

(graphic by Laura Irene Wayne)

(continued on page 6)



## Dynamics of Color conference...

(continued from page 5)

as well as age-appropriate activities exploring culture and race through music, art, storytelling, etc. The program will end in a presentation on Sunday afternoon to the women participating in the conference.

The Dynamics of Color conference will take place November 11-12 at Mission High School in San Francisco. (Please note: this school has been earthquake proofed and came through the "big one" unscathed.) Registration begins at 8am on the 11th, and Barbara Smith will deliver her keynote address at 9am. Workshops and plenaries are scheduled for both days. Registration will begin at 9am on Sunday. We will hold a Unity Party and Cultural event beginning at 8:30pm, Saturday evening at Club Rapture, 1484 Market St., SF. (A reception is being planned for Ms. Smith on Friday evening. Please call for time and place: 415-552-5677 (voice); 415-530-7803 (TDD).)

Accessibility in its many forms is a key to this conference. We have ranged our registration fees on a sliding scale of \$20 to \$40. There are "instant" scholarships (full to partial) available, meaning you have the ability to waive or lessen the fee. We also encourage women who can afford to pay at the top to do so, and if possible, to make a contribution above that amount.

We hope you will be joining us. We are learning from and teaching each other. We are building stronger selves in order to build a stronger community.

## Aché Shirts !!

For those of you who have not yet bought an Aché T-shirt or sweatshirt, now is the time. Sizes are selling out fast, so order yours now. T-shirts are white, 100% cotton in sizes S, M, L, XL (\$12) & 3XL (\$15). Sweatshirts are available in gray, red, white and gold in sizes M, L & XL. (\$20). Special hooded and larger-sized sweatshirts are available in gray, red and white in sizes 3XL & 4XL. (\$25). Not all colors and sizes are still available so call today to reserve yours.

To order, specify which shirt, size & color and send a check/money order with your name & mailing address to:

Aché  
P.O. Box 6071  
Albany, CA. 94706  
(415) 824-0703

(To double-check availability, call first)



by Storme Webber



"5 Women Watching"  
by Barbara Sandidge



## **LESBIAN OF COLOR CAUCUS**

**DYNAMICS OF COLOR CONFERENCE**

**NOVEMBER 11-12, 1989**

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA.**

**"Let the 1990's be the decade when white wimmins organizations become obsolete."**

**Angela Davis, University of Iowa, April 1989**

**"We all walk around carrying various discourses in our bodies that get triggered by someone else's discourse. It's important that we identify the power structures that emerge [while engaged in racial discourse.]"**

**Tucker Farley, Lesbian Activist,  
Brooklyn, NY, Oct. 1989**

■ In her plenary speech at the Parallels and Intersection Conference (April, 1989 Iowa City) Angela Davis spoke eloquently and passionately of envisioning a wimmins movement of the 1990's. A movement that would be based on among other things racial parity and multicultural diversity. A movement where wimmin of color would no longer be "invited" to join existing white wimmins organizations, but where our contributions are valued from the inception of new organizations that will serve a more inclusive wimmins community.

I, too, am hopeful that the coming decade will usher in a new phase of our movement that gives voice to those issues that are primary to lesbians of color. (i.e. racism, classism, imperialist aggression etc.)

Yet, in all my optimism I also recognize the necessity for structural changes in how white wimmin and wimmin of color operate in alliance and coalition work. More significantly wimmin of color will be hard pressed to meet the demands of coping with crosscultural hostilities, pooling limited resources, and creating

new models and paradigms for examining the various oppressions that plague us. In short we have a lot of hard work ahead of us!

The upcoming Dynamics of Color Conference will be an opportunity for community activists, cultural workers, friends, lovers and other concerned individuals to address the issue of racism and crosscultural hostility within the lesbian community. Undoubtedly the discussions will be expanded to examine how racism impacts our entire society and not just in the lesbian community. The lesbian of color caucus that emerged from the initial organizing of the conference is an excellent example of the commitment and innovation lesbians of color offer future organizing efforts in our respective communities. The following article is an excerpt from an interview with Maria Barron, a latina lesbian, conference tri-chair, and LOC caucus liaison.

**Skye:** What is your position in organizing the conference?

**Maria:** I am one of three tri-chairs heading up the conference

and I act as a liaison between the program committee and the LOC caucus. From the very beginning of the conference planning we have insisted that there be racial parity in the policy decisions and structure of the conference. We insisted that at all times there had to be wimmin of color on the steering committee - representatives from the working committees.

**S:** How was the LOC caucus established?

**M:** I didn't feel comfortable with being one of two latinas on the steering committee because I felt there was no way I could represent the entire latina lesbian community. I wanted the representation of as many wimmin of color as possible in the planning of the conference. But some of our sisters did not want to work directly with white wimmin due to previous racist encounters and burnout. So the caucus was established in December 1988 with two main focuses:

1) To get input from the wimmin of color communities so that the conference agenda would reflect what WOC wanted, not just what the white wimmin wanted.

(continued on page 8)



## LESBIAN OF COLOR CAUCUS

(continued from pg. 7)

2) We needed space to address crosscultural hostilities between wimmin of color - we didn't want to "air our dirty laundry" in front of white wimmin. Also the caucus provided a support space for WOC who were working directly with white wimmin.

**S:** Please describe the open structure of the caucus.

**M:** It was a brand new thing to all of us. When we had started outreach to the lesbian of color communities we didn't get much feedback. Many wimmin could not commit themselves on a full-time basis, we decided to make the caucus an open one so that a sister could contribute as her time would permit. What was important to us was getting feedback from as many wimmin of color as possible....In terms of programming it was established that the LOC caucus would carry a lot of weight in deciding what was included or deleted from the program....There was a white wommin on the program committee who said, "This feels like a LOC conference on racism that I have been "invited" to!" I said, "If you're lucky..."

**S:** The Racial Dynamic Facilitator component of the conference is rather innovative. Can you recall any other conference on racism in the bay area that has used this approach to dealing with racial dynamics that occur within the conference sessions?

**M:** As far as I know this is something (RDF) we have learned to use through working multiracially on the conference planning. Initially we realized we needed to recognize

racism happening in meetings and we needed to interrupt it right then and there. At first we had a racial dynamic time at the end of meetings 10 minutes to address issues that came up. Well 10 minutes was ridiculous! There are racial dynamics that happens and it keeps us from listening to what's going on in the workshop or meeting. We tried taking agenda breaks to deal with stuff as it came up but we were getting stuck in the process mode. You know: "You said this, and I feel this..." It wasn't taking us anywhere or helping us grow, and we weren't understanding how personal dynamics were reflective of institutional racism.

Meibeck Chung [conf. tri-chair] is credited with the actual writeup of the RDF component into the conference structure. Something had happened in a committee meeting where she became totally frustrated with white wimmin giving all their rationales for being racist. She felt burned out in trying to deal with them...

**S:** In terms of how the racial dynamic component was conceptualized and implemented in organizing the conference; what procedures were actually used?

**M:** Meibeck noted that often times when we (WOC) experience an act of racism we tend to think that perhaps we are being too sensitive or it was just a bad day at work. You know all that stuff that makes us think it's not as important as it really is.

The first step in the RD process is for anyone to call it as it occurs. A WOC that may have been impacted is allowed to speak first, then other WOC, and finally white

wimmin are allowed to address the issue. We kept working with the process so that wimmin of color can be listened to without white wimmin bringing in their defenses.

Secondly, we as wimmin of color have different experiences with different dynamics and we can bring different perspectives on the same dynamic. Ultimately we want to move ahead with it, we want something to be done with the process. By calling it and by having our sisters speak to it other wimmin validate that it did indeed happen.

**S:** How is the RD process to be implemented in the conference sessions?

**M:** We have compiled a list of the most common racial dynamics that occurred while working on the conference. We will provide training for wimmin of color to act as RD Facilitators and for white wimmin to be ally facilitators. If a white wommin has a question or problem around what's going on at the conference she would go to an ally facilitator to address the issue. That kind of conversation would be done outside the workshop session.

**S:** Is that so that it doesn't take up all our (WOC) time in the session?

**M:** Right, exactly.

**S:** Will there be a process for dealing with crosscultural hostilities between wimmin of color?

**M:** Yes there will be. We have a structure for dealing with it that is similar to the RD process with white wimmin. There will be slight differences.

(continued on page 33)



# Friends/Lovers: What's the Difference?

WINN GILMORE

So, now you negro gay ladies are considering which is less ephemeral: the fabulous friend or the previously pristine lover. Now, I don't want you to think that what I'm about to say is from first hand experience, so I'll admit that my sources are some of my best gay lady friends: Dana and Dina. And, yes, the names have been changed to protect the guilty.

Dana, a young metropolitan miss, used to theorize that her friends would always outlast her lovers. Now, Dana wasn't a futon-hopping wench who fell asleep nightly with the taste of a different woman on her tongue and hopes of remembering the woman's name (the next morning) on her brain. No, Dana was a determined-to-be-faithful type who'd change Tammy Wynette's lyrics to "Stand by your woman" as she showered her lissome body each day.

Born of devoutly Catholic parents who hailed from Long Island, she believed that, though a gay lady, she could be redeemed in her parents' eyes by clinging to obsequious monogamy, the last vestige of heterosexuality. (This is the way Dana, herself, put it after eschewing this relic. But, I'm jumping the proverbial gun here.)

Like her mother, you see, Dana put her "girlfriends" on the side platter while heating up the flames for her mate. She could have made

plans with a friend months before - even before she and her latest partner had tied the choking knot - and she'd break the date to tend to her honey's ingrown toenail. "They'll understand," she mused to herself, "that my woman comes first. Even before myself."

Soon, Dana found herself with

reached her oldest friend, it was almost too late: Dana was newly released from the Nirvana Rest Home and taking 30 milligrams of Valium a day.

So now, Dana hangs up when her mother insists that she, Dana, was right for having put her partner first because that's what she'd

taught her. These days, Dana's more likely to be found sitting around her living room table with a bunch of friends, collectively writing one of those Lover Wanted Ads for the local gay lady paper.

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**"They'll understand," she mused to herself, "that my woman comes first. Even before myself..."**

---

hardly anyone willing to come over and console her during her PMS traumas, and even less when she and her beloved were quarelling. It turns out that they **hadn't** understood that they were expendable, while her lover was not. They expected Dana to balance all of her relationships (imagine that!) and make the whole familial unit that she'd created work harmoniously. One of them, Dana finally told me, even expected her - Dana - to consider herself first, instead of her lover! Mercy!

When her lover left Dana, she was hard-pressed to find the telephone numbers of the former friends who'd called her religiously at first, then haphazardly, and finally not at all. She'd erased their telephone messages with reiterated numbers "in case she'd lost her phone book." By the time she

Then, there's my friend Dina, a lanky lass of indubitably Southern stock. She used to swear, up one side of the street and down the other, that friends will **always** be with you. "They don't have any of those vested interests like lovers do," Dina would say to me, "so they have no reason to turn wicked on you."

Dina had roped herself a mighty, muscular mare, but she never (pardon the expression) rode her. She kept that filly locked in the back pen while she went off with the girls, high-footing it in all manor of nightclubs and juke joints. Their neighbors would be heartbroken by that woman's lonesome midnight whinnies.

"My friends are the most important people to me," Dina would laugh, poking me in the ribs. "Got here long before my girlfriend, and

(continued on page 30)



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The following is a response to the "On the Table" topic question on friendship. It is in the form of an interview with Reatha Fowler interviewing her friend, Lynn.

## BETWEEN TWO FRIENDS...

**Reatha:** What does the word friend or friendship bring to mind for you? What do you do with expectations that you may have in a friend or a friendship?

**Lynn:** I think that frequently I use the phrase "she's a friend of mine", meaning exactly that or interpreting for myself that this is somebody that I like. Sometimes there is a fascination with the person for one reason or another. Things that they say or the way that they live, the way they dress, things that they are interested in. But also sometimes there's an affinity that doesn't have words to describe it. You just feel attracted to that person for some reason or another, this is somebody that you want to get to know better. I think that comes into play in what I call a friend.

But a real friend is somebody that you interact with over time. I realize that frequently I could be using that phrase very loosely. When I define a friend on a deeper level I begin to judge people as my friend based on are they there for me, am I there for them? How much have we shared other than just pleasurable times? Have I called them to talk about one thing and found that I got into a much deeper conversation, where both she and I were revealing deeper feelings and then at the end of that conversation felt a lot of release in

the process and also a lot of closeness. That's a kind of spontaneous thing that happens that says for me at least for the time being that person was my friend.

I think also that in this space and time that we live in right now there are some people who come into our lives and we have those kind of experiences and then they go out of our lives. For me that's OK. It's just the way it is because of the way we live. It's like a gift you may receive. When it is new, it is used and looked at and all of that and then you just store it away but you still can remember how good it felt when you opened the gift and everything was brand new.

**Reatha:** So you don't feel any sadness?

**Lynn:** Sometimes a little, but not a great sense of loss not like being ripped off or anything like that. There's been some instances of people who were in my life and then they just weren't. And I have felt kind of angered about it because it didn't seem to happen naturally. I seemed to have been a conscious decision, "I've chosen not to be your friend now." That happens to be around relationships. When the relationship ended and friends that we had in common that I thought even though were originally friends of my partner's, I felt

such a closeness to them that they were my friends also. I felt very disappointed to have them chose not to be my friend. So in those instances I have made a judgement on it. I'm going to have my feelings. I think it's OK to have them.

**Reatha:** Should we judge our friends?

**Lynn:** I know that frequently judgement has come up in me around what I see my friends doing with their lives. But, I usually let it sit for a while and see, because I use the old phrase "when you point your finger at somebody, there's three fingers pointing back at you."

A lot of times what I may be seeing in them or what I may be reacting to in them may be some part of me or some of my experience that I haven't accepted in myself. I try to search within and see "why are you getting so upset?" Frequently I can find that my experience is somewhere in theirs.

**Reatha:** You see yourself.

**Lynn:** Yeah, I do see myself, parts of me that I've been disappointed in. I also see that I went through particular phases and ways of behaving and come out of them just fine and I also see that it would not have made much difference for anybody to have called me on my shit or jammed me up or any

(continued on page 11)



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## BETWEEN TWO FRIENDS...

of those kind of things.

I don't think it would have given me the enlightenment that I received from just finding my own answers through a natural process. So, I try hard to let people have a natural process with their things and I think in the long run it does work out.

When there are times when I've been doing things that have not been creative and more destructive, I would like to feel - cause I'm already feeling bad - I would like to feel support rather than censure. That is what judgement comes off as. It's like a wedge. It's a fine line and you have to take a lot of deep breaths. And then just miraculously there may come an opportunity for me to say what I'm feeling just when they want it, not when I want to give it. But, when they want to know and when they are ready.

**Reatha:** You have to really learn to be patient.

**Lynn:** Yes, I think so. It's a way for you to learn to be patient with yourself. There's a gift in the giving.

**Reatha:** Do you have any issues around reliability and dependability?

**Lynn:** I know that some people just can't do it. Sometimes, I just don't put people in a situation where they can't handle it. They are just living up to their abilities. I just think that life is crazy these

days. It really is. All the things that we need to do. All the things that I need to do are not things that others need to do. Our priorities are all so different. So it's really hard for people to have an understanding of what might be important to me. I think we all need to work on compassion. I think that compassion comes from self acceptance first. When we understand that we are confused then we can understand someone else being confused. Compassion and self acceptance are probably really at the foundation of forming friendships and intimacy.

Reciprocity, I need to talk about that a little bit. It's real important. The thing that I believe about reciprocity is that it doesn't have to be the same kind, I paint your house and you paint mine. It's not like that. It's what the other person needs. Keeping a score card, I don't know if that's the way at all. I think reciprocity plants itself in the heart, and we really know that it has been returned or that it is flowing.

**Reatha:** What do you do if you don't feel that it is returning or it is not flowing?

**Lynn:** There may be a time that it will. Again, I think that patience comes in. It may not happen in a years time. But, I like to feel that I'm out in the world enough that if I'm not getting it from one person then I'm getting it from another. That's just the way of living in the world. I think that, going back to

intimacy, there are some people who are willing to have only so much intimacy. Take person A who meets person B and says this is the person I want to be my friend. Well person B can only take so much intimacy and if person A keeps expecting all of their friendship needs to come from person B they are going to be disappointed and person B is going to be frantic and defensive. I don't think we can expect one friend to meet all of our needs. Because we are not in the village and just dealing with how to plant the garden and how to keep the fields producing. The things we talk about and the ways in which we need each other are just vast compared to what they once were. And also compared to the way that we still think about friendship. I think we still think about friendship as the one, two or three people that we are walking down the garden path with and that's just not the way it fits in these times. Not here in the Bay Area, not in urban life.

**Reatha:** Do you feel that there is support from what you call community?

**Lynn:** I think the community is sometimes is very confused and does not know what to do. I remember describing to some people that I think the lesbian community here in the Bay Area is an adolescent. It still is pretty self-centered as a community. That is not to label the members of the community. But as a functioning institution, it

(continued on page 34)



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# If You Want a Friend, Be One

JANET WALLACE

What is it about friendships that is so important to me? It's more than a past of being alone and lonely. After all, that's not my reality now. I revisit the old life occasionally, but more often than not, I will call upon a friend to interrupt that reunion.

I remember what it's like not to have friends. I remember crying out of loneliness. I remember one of my affirmations: *I enjoy lots of beautiful Black women in my life.* I can vouch for the fact that affirmations work!

For me the big must is for a friend to be aware of herself and her actions. She must be dependable and trustworthy. It's more than simply telling the truth, but that's part of it. "Dependable" to me means she keeps her word most of the time. "Trustworthy" means that when she doesn't keep her word she owns up to it. There are all sorts of definitions, but for me this is what's true. Too many times I tried to be friends with women who were completely undependable or untrustworthy. These women would say they were going to meet me, for instance, then never show up. Or back out at the last minute, so I'd have to go to the event alone, or not go. I could have stood it if the woman was aware enough to say "I'm a flake today, I just can't get it together, so don't count on me." But

no self-awareness and no dependability or responsibility for your word means no friendship with me.

I am working on having friends that are naturally compatible with me. I'm willing to work at a friendship, but I'm not willing to strain and sweat to get to know someone new. The healing work I'm doing now can be enough of a strain sometimes. My friends at this time are all easy going with me. They are tolerant of my emotional ups and downs. And I am deeply appreciative of my friends.

## Deciding who is a friend and who is not

Some friendships are not really friendships, they are habits. There are women that I've known for years who have not been able to go with me to the next stage of my development. They are from a time when I tolerated all kinds of behavior. I could rationalize anything from "a friend." She is shy, that's why I'm always the one calling or making the dates. She's really busy, that's why she makes dates with me and often breaks them. She is really an interesting person, that's why she can't be interested in talking about anything except herself.

I never gave myself credit for being the type of person who

didn't deserve such treatment. After all these women were my friends, weren't they? After all, hadn't I known them for a while? As time passed, I started asking these friends to honor their commitments to me, instead of standing me up or being several hours late. I stopped calling the friend who could never invite me anywhere, and would only go with me when I asked her. I stopped telling important things to the one that always talked about herself and had no time to listen to me. I mourn the loss of these women's presence in my life, but I understand that it's the way it must be. We are no longer close. And know what? The loss I feel is not so great at all.

## Being a friend to myself

I began to honor my way of being. The fact that I am an intense person is not readily apparent until you start to talk to me. After talking to me awhile you find that I am not as aloof and detached or self-contained as you may think. Many a person mistook my calm exterior as a lack of interest. Their mistake! Those that can handle it get to experience me, those that can't, don't. The ones that can handle it are worth more to me than anything in the world.

For me, then, friendship began

(continued on page 13)



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## If you want a friend...

with being friends with myself. I began to give myself the respect I wanted from other people. As I grew, the quality of my friendships grew. My self esteem has grown because they are able to tell me the truth—their truth for the moment—and are able to accept me as I am. And because I was able to say what I will allow and will not allow, my friendships have grown in quality. Fewer and fewer friends let me down. My expectations are more realistic, and I can tell more quickly if someone will pan out to be a friend.

### What other women have to say about friendship

I began to talk to other Black lesbians about friends. Part of the reason was an attempt to understand why friendships of my own had dissolved. There was a reason and I was partly responsible, even if it was a simple case of not being tolerant of a particular friend's behavior when I was tolerant before.

Being tolerant of friends versus tolerating lovers is an issue for many lesbians. As one woman put it: "I'm much more tolerant of my friends. With lovers I want to know 'What did you mean when you said what you did last night?' and 'Why did your mouth look that way when you talked about the beans?'"

Another said: "It's very different for me fighting with a friend and fighting with a lover. With my friends, because we are not sexually intimate, there's another dimen-

sion. There seems to be a certain understanding and acceptance with friends that isn't present in lover relationships during the time people are angry. With friends you don't have to change. You don't have to be the one who opens the door, cooks, pleases."

These next four women speak on topics such as what bugs them in their friendship relationships, falling in love with a friend, the place of truth in a friendship. From these interviews readers can get an idea of what other women are thinking, and thus make some decisions in their own lives about friendship.

### Imani

I was sitting in a health food restaurant in Nevada City talking with Imani. She was surprised when I told her that some people have a hard time making friends. "It's not hard for me to have friends," she said. I have wonderful deep relationships. Having friends is easy. I love my friends and they love me."

She and her friends do a lot for each other. "We give to and take support from each other, we borrow, laugh, touch, process. I argue and fight with my friends but we come back together."

"You don't lie to them," she continued. "You do things together that will encourage your growth."

Imani's friendships are now be-

cause "we're not so interdependent, so enmeshed, so woven together. I'm developing what I think are honest, realistic relationships with my peers that are reciprocal."

### Jennifer

I spoke with Jennifer in her back yard while Spike Richard, a black floppy-eared rabbit, hopped around spying on us out of his big eye on the side of his big head.

"Processing. That's what I think of when I think of friends—work and processing."

"I probably would think of friendship in terms of what I can do, not what other people do. If I wanted to see someone more often, I have to do something about it, not just expect friends to call me. Friends need to respond to friends' wants, each and every one. It's so hard because we're not clear about our wants."

Jennifer feels an important element of friendship is trust. "When I feel emotionally open then I can trust someone," she said. When I can explore what I'm feeling and the person is not being judgmental."

### "Antoinette"

Antoinette (not her real name) had another view of friendship.

"Sometimes I feel like our rela-

(continued on page 29)



## PROFILE:

### An Interview with Avotcja

We offer this interview as part of our ongoing series profiling black women who are active in our communities. The following is an interview with Avotcja, a poet/musician/radio personality & activist in the bay area.

She is being interviewed by Margarita Benitez.

**Avotcja:** I'm Afro-Boricua, born & raised in N.Y. I come from a family full of performing artists (four generations worth,) which makes you "weird." Growing up in ghettos anywhere, the one thing you're not supposed to be is weird, or different, or smart. I got beat up alot, because I was considered real weird, and my way of dealing with it was to hide. My music gave me an excellent shield to hide behind. I was always a little music-junkie & I've been writing for as long as I can remember, and all of the above was a good way to stay off the streets & keep from getting beat up. I blew it in the 2nd or 3rd grade & announced the name of the girl I wanted to marry when I grew up. Her brother heard me & I got my butt whipped everyday til I was forced to fight someone back. I was so scared that I hurt that kid something terrible, and the word got out that I was nuts, so nobody messed with me anymore.

By 14 I was a professional musician, surrounded by all kinds of musicians, actors & dancers, so it



was easy for me to get "in." Contrary to popular mythology, all artists/entertainers are NOT dope-fiends & drunks. My parents weren't dope-fiends & drunks, and they didn't raise me to be one, but the mythology said that to be a good artist/a great musician, you're supposed to be a dope-fiend & a drunk. Everybody knows "the public is always right," so I became both! It took 15 years for me to clean up my act & get into a drug program.

My Mother's side of the family was heavy into a color trip & I was the darkest of the kids. I took after Papi (my father,) so I was the "bad" one, the "ugly" one, the "stupid" one. When I left home (at 15,) and learned I was neither bad, ugly, or stupid, I became a little "thugette." The only time any love or gentleness showed was through the music & writing. I am Daddy's girl, and in those days when someone was as dark as Papi (blue-

black,) they were never called handsome. People called Papi, "pimp pretty," and that was supposed to be a compliment. Papi just decided gringos were nuts & went back to the Caribbean & I grew up trying to be "pimp pretty," like the only person I loved.

**M:** What kind of music were you listening to then?

**A:** Jazz, Bomba, Blues, Doo Wop, Mambo, Be-Bop. The only thing I had in common with my Mother was music & she always had all kinds of music around. I also loved Calypso & Steel-Drum music. I have some relatives from St. Kitts & Grenada on my mother's side.

**M:** How did you get into music?

**A:** My Mother & Father were Dancers. Papi encouraged me but nobody influenced my decision to get into music...it was just something that I had to do!!! I wanted a guitar, my Mother got me a piano & lessons. To uplift me out of my

(continued on page 15)



savagery & Blackness, I was beat over the head with Beethoven & Bach, but I was more interested in Arsenio, Leadbelly & Billy Holiday.

M: You always talk about being a music junkie, what does that mean?

A: When I say music junkie, I mean, when other people would hear music they'd be patting their feet, or rocking, or dancing & then it would be all over. When I heard music it possessed me, I'd be crying or laughing inside. It made me crazy, it made me happy, it made me shake & sweat & tremble inside, it changed me constantly. It still does! Music, to me, is the most powerful force on the planet. It's a healer, and at the risk of being gross, it's even better than sex.

M: You do two radio programs, how did that begin?

A: I began at KALX for Raza Media & started slipping in Calypso. When I began at KPOO, 17 years ago, I went Pan-Africanist all the way (Salsa/Calypso/Jazz/African/Blues/Reggae), and continued the process at KPFA.

M: What do you mean by Pan-Africanism?

A: It means that if we're born in Mississippi, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, New York City, Brazil, or Trinidad, we're still Africa's children.

Our history does not begin with slavery!!! Listen! The music has been trying to tell us. Where ever we are, Africa & our Ancestors are still talking through us! Too many people have died so that I can live, and it would be an insult for me not to acknowledge my Ancestors by wearing Africa as the badge of honor it is!!

M: You have several books out, tell us about them.

A: La Voz Boricua, and Oh Yeah

are out of print. I'm also in several anthologies like; Third World Women, Compañeras, The Pan-Africanist, and Black Artists On Black Art. My new book is called Pura Candela/Pure Fire. It's in English, Spanish & Spanglish, and includes my poetry, short stories & photography. To quote one of my poems, "I'm a lover, liar, angel, and fighter." I write about everything from evolution to nature & romance, and Senior Citizens.....

M: What about children?

A: Yeah, our children have it rough & I write about them, but the Seniors...whew...We live in a country that's based on a perpetual war economy, so children may have it bad, but they're an exploitable commodity in the making. The Seniors "are useless," and that's the way the powers-that-be think about them. Every other country considers age a badge of honor & Senior Citizens are national treasures. Here they're just thrown away, so I write a lot about them.

M: You have a new cassette out, and I wanted to hear from you about that.

A: I'm really proud of that tape. It's made up from the best live performances I've done in the last couple of years. It's called "Has Anybody Heard My Song?", and includes some of the greatest artists I know. Mala Maña (now deceased), Susan "Quasi" King (who as far as I'm concerned is one of the greatest living violinists), & many other greats, like John Handy, Luis & Bobi Céspedes, Terry Garthwaite, Famoudou Don Moye, etc., etc., etc. I have many messages & they're all on that tape, but if I had to choose one I guess it would be I'm fighting for our survival! Our kids are

in trouble, we've got drug/alcohol problems, kids who are parents, AIDS & color problems, self esteem problems, homophobia, fatphobia, the desertion of Elders, the destruction of natural resources, and that's what the message in my tape is all about!

M: You had been working a lot with Pat Parker, where will you be performing next?

A: Pat Parker was a very important artist, bigger & braver than most of us will ever be. What an honor to have worked with her! When Pat died it knocked all the wind out of me. Pat wasn't just a friend, we'd been working together (double billing) for well over two years & without her I felt naked! I'll do my part to keep her alive by always including some of her work in my concerts.

M: What are your plans for the future?

A: I'll be doing workshop on Racism & Afro-Latin music, as well as performing at the Dynamics Of Color Conference this month, but outside of that I'm taking it slow this month. I just had surgery & I'm still healing, but look for future listings in Aché & Coming Up. I'd like to see a lot of women of color at my Gigs, it sometimes gets lonely without you! I plan to keep on doing what I'm doing & becoming a swinging Senior Citizen.

M: Is there anything you'd like to say to the black lesbians who read Aché?

A: [In response to an Aché topic] I guess I'd like to say that I believe that we've always had role models!! All those Lesbian/Gay Senior Citizens out there are our role models. If we keep limiting our view of role models to the movie screen, or TV we're in big trouble... What

(continued on page 30)



# This Month In...

## ■ CLASSES

**TUESDAY, Nov. 7,14,21,28** - Orisa Song Workshop with Bobi Céspedes and live drummers is held every Tuesday from 7:30-10pm at Concepts Cultural Gallery, 480 - 3rd St. (nr. Broadway) in Oakland. \$5. Bring your tape recorders!!

**SATURDAY, Nov. 11 & 25** - Kalimba Classes - play and learn this traditional African instrument with Karolyn Van Putten. Sessions include playing techniques, theory and practice segments, and performance/demonstrations. No musical background necessary, and instruments are available for use. 1:30-3:30pm, \$8 per session. For information and reservations call 568-3969.

## ■ DANCE

**FRI.-SUN., Nov.3-5, 10-12** - "Black Choreographers Moving Toward the 21st Century" is a national dance festival showcasing 10 Black choreographers from across the U.S. The festival will take place for 2 weeks at Theater Artaud in SF and then move to Wadsworth Theatre at UCLA. The festival will include lecture-demonstrations, master classes, panel discussions and dance performances by N.Y.'s Urban Bush Women, Joanna Haigood, Alonzo King's LINES Dance Co., Dimensions Dance Theatre, Lula Washington's L.A. Contemporary Dance Theater, Cleo Parker Robinson, Donald Byrd/The Group and The Spotted Leopard Dance Company. Tickets are \$16-25. Evening programs will be held at 8pm at Theatre Artaud in SF. Also, lecture/demonstrations, master classes, and panel discussions exploring the historical legacy, present contributions, and future possibilities of Black dance will be held throughout SF during the festival. Topics include: "Black Choreographers in the 'New Dance' Trend," "Black Choreographers in Concert Dance: A Bay Area History," "Talking Dance - Many Black Voices," "The Black Aesthetic & Gender in Dance & Theatre," "The Future: Will the Black Choreographer Always Be Black?" For full program details call 621-7797.

**FRI.-SATURDAY, Nov. 10-11, 17-18** - The African Dance Series is a month of African dance, music, & drama at the Oakland Ensemble Theatre, sponsored by the Mandaleo Institute featuring the Institutes four resident dance companies. On the 10th, Fua Dia Congo; on the 11th Ceedo Senagalese Dance Company; on the 17th The Ladzepko Brothers' African Music & Dance Ensemble; on the 18th Diamano Coura West African Dance Co. All shows will start at 8pm at 1428 Alice St. in Oakland. \$10. For information call 763-3962.

**SATURDAY, Nov. 11** - "New Beginnings" Dance Theatre Showcase featuring choreography by Debra Floyd will be held at 8pm at Finn Hall, 1819 - 10th St. in Berkeley. Tickets \$5. Call 548-2143 for more information.

## ■ EVENTS

**FRI.-SUN., Nov. 3-5** - The Black Arts Expo, rescheduled from last month, featuring 100 Black exhibitors will be held at the Henry J. Kaiser convention center, 10th & Fallon St. in Oakland. For more information call 763-0141.

**MONDAY., Nov. 6** - "A Talk on Harriet Powers: Respecting Her Allusiveness - the African-ness of Harriet Powers" is a talk by author Michelle Cliff. Created around 1889, Harriet Powers monumental quilt, called the Second Bible Quilt, has been analyzed for its African form, but not the African content of its imagery, the moral & political vision presented by its artist. Cliff discusses how Powers' work proves the survival of African-ness in the "New World." 8pm. \$4. 766 Valencia St., SF. Call 626-ARTS for more information.

**TUESDAY, Nov. 7** - UJAMAA, the Women's Building Project of the East Bay, is having a general meeting from 7-9pm at the Asian Resource Center, 310 - 8th St. nr. Harrison in Oakland, CA. The next meeting is Dec. 5, 7-9pm. UJAMAA is a new group of women of color dedicated to the concept of cooperative economics & survival. For more information call 255-2155 or 436-6145.

(continued on page 17)



## This Month In...

**FRIDAY, Nov. 10** - Donyelle Carter will be singing and reading some of her original work, with special guest **Monica Grant**. 8pm at Mama Bears, 6536 Telegraph Ave. in Oakland. \$5-7, reservations suggested. Women only. For information call 428-9684.

**FRI.-SATURDAY, Nov. 10-11** - The San Francisco World Drum Festival '89 featuring the Ghanaian **Ladzepko Bros.** percussion ensemble, **Conjunto Céspedes**, Afro-Venezuelan **Bahia y Tambor**, A Brazilian Collaboration, with special guests **Zakir Hussain** (Fri.), & **O.J. Ekemode & the Nigerian All-Stars** (Sat.). 2 shows at 8 & 10pm at New Cowell Theatre, Fort Mason Center, Pier 2. Tickets are \$10. 474-3914.

**SAT.-SUNDAY, Nov. 11-12** - **DYNAMICS OF COLOR CONFERENCE!!** Focusing on building a stronger lesbian community, combatting racism, and honoring diversity. Saturday's program: 9am-6pm: opening address by **Barbara Smith**, activist, writer & co-founder of Kitchen Table Press, speaks on alliance building. History & Overview of Racism is a panel discussion with **Melinda Paras**, **Andrea Canaan**, **Carmen de Monteflores**, **Trinity Ordone** & **Lakota Harden** exploring racism in U.S. history and its impact on lesbians of color. Also 12-15 workshops offered focusing on information & strategies on areas specific to lesbian organizing, the experience of racism & developing tools to combat it. Conference registration begins at 8am, and the rest of the day's activities are held at Mission High School, 3750 - 18th St. in SF, between Dolores & Guerrero streets. An evening cultural program & dance dedicated to Pat Parker begins at 8:30pm on Saturday at the Women's Building, 3543 - 18th St. in SF. Wheelchair accessible. Conference planners request that no one chew gum or candy near women with E.I. & that women wear clothes which have been washed since last exposure to pet hair. For more information call 821-4743 or 826-5191 (voice), 530-7803 (TDD.)

**WEDNESDAY, Nov. 15** - **Grupo Folkloric Kindembo**, a percussion and choral group under the direction of bay area musicologist John Santos, that explores and preserves the African based music of Cuba, Puerto Rico and other Latin American locales will be performing at the Freight and Salvage, 1111 Addison St. in Berkeley. \$6. For more information call 548-1761.

**THURSDAY, Nov. 16** - A 50th birthday celebration for **Pat Norman** featuring **Linda Tillery**, emcee **Karen Williams** and others will be held from 7-9pm at The Langtry, 637 Steiner St. in SF. \$50 sliding scale. Black tie optional. Call 282-2418 for more information.

**THURSDAY, Nov. 16** - "Daughters of Yam in Performance" - **Opal Palmer Adisa** and **Devorah Major** read from their work, *Traveling Women*, about which author David Henderson has written "Through the unique double vision of Adisa and Major we experience a past, present and future of a new black consciousness." 7:30pm at Modern Times Bookstore, 968 Valencia St. in SF. 282-9246.

**FRI.-SUNDAY, Nov. 17-19** - "Loving Ourselves" a retreat sponsored by the **NIA Collective** will be held at the Headlands Institute, Sausalito, CA. The retreat will feature workshops including "Healing with Humor" with comedian **Karen Williams**. Late registration for the conference until Nov. 3. For more information call 532-2758 or 531-2682.

**FRIDAY, Nov. 17** - **April Sinclair** will read romantic selection from her novel in progress "**Coffee Will Make You Black**" at 8pm at Mama Bears Bookstore, 6536 Telegraph Ave. in Oakland. Women only, reservations suggested. 428-9684. \$5.

**SATURDAY, Nov. 18** - **Women Take Back the Night**; is an annual march/rally where women march to protest all oppression against women. Gather at 5pm at Civic Center in SF for the rally; march at 6pm to Union Square. For women only.

(continued on page 18)

The calendar listings may change without notice so double-check with the source for any last minute changes. To list something in next month's calendar, mail notice by the 25th to:

Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA. 94706 or phone (415) 824-0703.



# Calendar - November 1989

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>C - class, D - dance, E - events, F - film, M - music, N - nightlife, R - radio, T - theater, TV - television</p> <p>For details on calendar listings, see pages 16, 17, 20 and 21. Calendar listings may change without notice, so double-check with the source for any last minute changes. To list something in next month's calendar, send description to:</p> <p><b>Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, Ca. 94706 or phone (415) 824-0703.</b> Deadline is the 25th of each month.</p>			<p><b>1</b></p> <p>R - "Spectrum - In Musical Form" TV - "South Africa Now" T - "Fraternity"</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>T - "Fraternity"</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>D - Black Choreographers E - The Black Arts Expo F - "Gay Lives '89" T - "Fraternity"</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>D - Black Choreographers E - The Black Arts Expo T - "Fraternity"</p>
<p><b>5</b></p> <p>D - Black Choreographers E - The Black Arts Expo M - The Evolution of World Beat R - "Amandla" T - "Fraternity"</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>E - "A Talk on Harriet Powers"</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>C - Orisa song workshop E - UJAMAA general meeting</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>TV - "South Africa Now"</p>	<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>D - Black Choreographers D - Fua Dia Congo. E - Donyelle Carter E - World Drum Festival '89</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>C - Kalimba Classes D - Black Choreographers D - Ceedo Senagalese Dance Co. D - "New Beginnings" Dance E - World Drum Festival '89 E - Dynamics of Color conference N - Conference Unity Party</p>
<p><b>12</b></p> <p>D - Black Choreographers E - Dynamics of Color conference M - The Evolution of World Beat N - Grupo Sinigual at El Rio R - "Amandla" TV - "Jazz Tap Ensemble"</p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>C - Orisa song workshop</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>E - Grupo Folklorico Kindembo TV - "South Africa Now"</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>E - Party for Pat Norman E - Opal Palmer Adisa/D. Major</p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>D - Ladzepko Bros. E - NIA Retreat E - April Sinclair M - Festival of Voices</p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>D - Diamano Coura Dance Co. E - NIA Retreat E - Women Take Back the Night M - Festival of Voices</p>
<p><b>19</b></p> <p>E - NIA Retreat E - Tribute to Nicolas Guillen E - Sparky Rucker R - "Amandla"</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>C - Orisa song workshop E - Karen Williams</p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p>N - Marga Gomez TV - "South Africa Now"</p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>C - Kalimba Classes E - Aché party!!!</p>
<p><b>26</b></p> <p>N - Grupo Sinigual at El Rio R - "Amandla"</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>C - Orisa song workshop TV - Adam Clayton Powell</p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p>TV - "South Africa Now" TV - "Before Stonewall!"</p>	<p><b>30</b></p> <p>M - Anna Maria Flechero TV - Adam Clayton Powell</p>	<p><b>31</b></p>	



# This Month In...

**SUNDAY, Nov. 19 - A Tribute to Nicolas Guillén** is a music/poetry event in celebration of the life and works of the great Cuban poet featuring **Conjuncto Céspedes, Altazor, Claudia Gomez, José Luis Gomez, Rafael Manriquez, Rebecca Mauleon, Felix Reynoso, John Santos & Michael Spiro**. 3pm at the James Moore Theater (Oakland Museum.) Tix \$10 available at La Peña and Concepts cultural gallery. For information call 763-0682.

**FRIDAY, Nov. 21 - Comedian Karen Williams** will be performing at 8pm at Mama Bears, 6536 Telegraph Ave. in Oakland. \$5-7, reservations suggested. Women only. For information call 428-9684.

**SATURDAY, Nov. 25 - An Aché Party/Celebration/Benefit** at Colors II featuring L.A.'s hottest new DJ **Lori Jenkins** working it downstairs, while upstairs in the cabaret room will be **Anna Maria Flechero** along with **Charlene Mason, Matu Feliciano**, and **Fran Van Atta** who will bring you upbeat high-spirited jazz from the heart in support of Aché. This should be a special evening which promises to offer something for everyone, please join us!! 9pm-2am at Rex's, Colors II, 59 Grand Ave. in Oakland. \$6-10.

## ■ FILM

**FRIDAY, Nov. 3 - "Gay Lives '89"**, part of the 5th Annual Film Arts Festival presents several short films/videos including **"Tongues Untied"**, (a 45 min. video by Marlon Riggs,) an affirmation of the black gay experience in America. The work interweaves poem, song, rap, chant, dance and personal testimony to showcase the voices and visions of a national community struggling within a sexually and racially divided world, to define a less conflicted sense of racial and sexual identity. World premiere. Also showing is **"Dreams of Passion"**, (5 min.) by Aarin Burch, an exploration of desire between two black women, expressed through movement and dance. \$5. The program will begin at 9:30pm at the Roxie Theatre, 3117 - 16th St. in SF. To order tickets in advance call 552-8760.

## ■ MUSIC

**SUNDAY, Nov. 5 - "The Evolution of World Beat"**: a series of performances sponsored by Life on the Water, tracing the roots & development of the fusion of traditional musics & modern technology known as "world beat." Tonight's program is **Jazz Beat-Latin & African Music in Transition** featuring jazz pianist **Rudi Mwongozi** & vocalist **Yusefa Mateen** in a night of jazz standards and scorching original compositions. Also performing is the **Latin Jazz Ensemble**. 8pm. \$8 adv./\$15 door. Come dance!! Life on the Water, Fort Mason, SF. For info/tix: 885-2790.

**SUNDAY, Nov. 12 - "The Evolution of World Beat"** series continues with **"Funk Beat -The Fuse is Smoking"** featuring **The Smoking Section**, a 5-member band blending early James Brown/Sly Stone funk with go-go & hip hop to create their own brand of "subcutaneous funk." Life on the Water, Fort Mason, SF. For info/tix: 885-2790.

**FRI.-SATURDAY, Nov. 17-18 - A Festival of Voices** honoring the strength, beauty & diverse expressions of the human voice featuring South African vocals with **Zulu Spear**; Latin-American New Song with **Rafael Manriquez**; Eastern European Women's Chorus **Kitka**, & the **Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir** at 7:30pm at the 1st Presbyterian Church, 27th & Broadway in Oakland. \$11 adv./\$13 door. For more information call 549-3313.

**SUNDAY, Nov. 19 - Sparky Rucker**, is a folk-blues musician from Knoxville, Tenn. who traces the Black American heritage through folk ballads. His story-songs tell of the unsung Black heroes/heroines of American history. A polished performer and instrumentality (guitar, banjo, tambourine & spoons), his performances are both entertaining and educational. 8pm. \$7. La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley.

**THURSDAY, Nov. 30 - Anna Maria Flechero**, singer/pianist renders high-spirited jazz with **Charlene Mason** on vocals and acoustic guitar. Special guests to be announced. 8pm. \$6. La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley. For information call 849-2568.

(continued on page 21)



# This Month In...

## ■ DAY/NIGHTLIFE

**SATURDAY, Nov. 11** - A Unity Party presented by Dynamics of Color Conference & Club Rapture featuring live multicultural entertainment, Pat Parker's "Movement in Black," poetry, music & dance from over a dozen women performers at 8:30pm. Dancing with **Rumba Mexclao** at 10pm. Dance with DJ Alba & others at 10:30pm until.... Doors open at 7pm. \$3-10 for conference participants, \$7-10 at door. SIGN. WA. Information 552-5677 (voice,) 530-7803 (TDD.)

**SUNDAY, Nov. 12, 26** - Grupo Sinigual will perform from 4-8pm at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in San Francisco. For information call 282-3325.

**WEDNESDAY, Nov. 22** - An evening of comedy with Marga Gomez, plus Culture Clash's Herbert Siguenza & Richard Montoya at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in San Francisco. 9pm. \$5. For information call 282-3325.

**SATURDAY, Nov. 25** - Aché Party!!! Come celebrate 10 months of Aché in an eclectic evening featuring Anna Maria Flechero & special guests upstairs, and L.A.'s hottest new DJ downstairs. Plus more!!! Don't miss it!! Colors II, 59 Grand Ave. in Oakland. 9pm-2am. \$6-10.

## ■ RADIO

**WEDNESDAY, Nov. 1** - "Spectrum - In Musical Form" is broadcast the first Wednesday every month with Tamu Duewa & Sadiki Nia from 1:30am to 5am on KPFA, 94.1FM

**SUNDAY, Nov. 5,12,19,26** - "Amandla" a weekly multi-cultural news/information show on KALX, 90.7 FM from 5:30-6:30pm.

## ■ TELEVISION

**WEDNESDAY, Nov. 8,15,22,29** - "South Africa Now" is a weekly newsmagazine independently produced by South African and American journalists which presents news from South Africa emphasizing stories not being covered elsewhere. 11pm on KQED, channel 9.

**SUNDAY, Nov. 12** - "The Jazz Tap Ensemble in Review" featuring Honi Coles. Each member of this acclaimed dance group creates original compositions inspired by the traditions of jazz music and tap dancing. Taped at Skyline College Theatre. Midnight on KQED, channel 9.

**TUES. & THURSDAY, Nov. 28,30** - Adam Clayton Powell - The story of the rise and fall of the charismatic preacher from Harlem who became one of the most powerful and controversial politicians in America. On Tuesday, 9pm / on Thursday, midnight on KQED, channel 9

**WEDNESDAY, Nov. 29** - "Before Stonewall" is a film which traces the social, political and cultural development of the lesbian and gay communities before and including Stonewall, the 1969 Greenwich Village riots marking the start of the modern gay movement. Featured are Audre Lorde, Native American activist Smilie Hillaire, and others. 11:30pm on KQED, channel 9.

## ■ THEATER

**TUES.-SATURDAY, Thru Nov. 5** - "Fraternity" is a drama about Black politicians set in an all-male social & political club. Oakland Ensemble Theatre, 1428 Alice St. in Oakland. Tues.-Sat. 8pm, & Sat./Sun. matinees at 2:30pm. Tickets \$12-19. For information call 763-7774.

The calendar listings may change without notice so double-check with the source for any last minute changes. To list something in next month's calendar, mail notice by the 25th to:

Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA. 94706 or phone (415) 824-0703.



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## **ON THE TABLE...**

# **How do we build and sustain satisfying relationships? What do we need from our friends?**

### **REATHA M. FOWLER**

Understanding and developing my friendships has been a process of growth. At times it has been learning from my mistakes. But, mostly it has been through work that I do on myself that I have obtained clarity about my relationships with my friends. As I began to feel better about myself, the quality of my interactions and love that I shared with my friends improved dramatically. My friends are very dear to me and I hold them close to my heart.

I receive different gifts from different friends. Each person is different in personality, attitude and perspective, making each friendship different in character, but the quality is the same. Being clear that one friend, just as a partner, cannot answer all my needs and desires allows each gift that a friend brings to our relationship special.

I have also found that being clear about limitations in my friends takes away much of the pressure we feel with friends. Accepting those limitations and working with them allows me the capacity not to judge. Placing expectations on my friend as a yardstick to how much of a friend they are to me is unfair and unrealistic. I try not to ask for more than honesty and respect.

The greatest struggle at this point in my life around friendship is how to respond when the friendship changes. You no longer see that friend as regularly as you did in the past, when you talk with the friend the two of you are not sharing your souls as you had in the past, the friend seems to pull away. It makes me very uncomfortable and resentful when I find that a relationship I shared with a friend was once a close emotional connection for me and it no longer has that feeling. It hurts when instead of growing when it changes, it become distant. That happens, I imagine, because people make new friends or have new interests. I don't know but it hurts and I would like to feel more comfortable with it to understand why it hurts.

I am also concerned about the Black lesbian community as an institution. It often times seems like we don't really take care of each other. I think there are people who are really trying to do a lot of work around coming together as a community and I think there is a lot of growth happening in our community. But, it just doesn't feel like we really support each other in a real way. Because there are so many of us whose lives are in disarray, so many of us that need support, that need help. I don't see that happening. I see a lot of women who are alone and don't feel like they have

friends. I think that is because of a lack of trust and self-hatred. We're afraid of each other. I don't feel discouraged, I think we can come together around this.



### **CHERYL SPEAR**

It is very seldom that I lose my friends or my ex-lovers as friends. Instead, we go through the changes. We share those special moments of intimacy; we miss each other's presence; we cry on one another's shoulders, scream and swear we'll never get over it; we come and we go, come and go and yet we always manage to return to that "comfortable place" where other changes can and do happen, changes which unite us, rather than divide us.

Before I learned that these changes were necessary in order to establish and maintain a friendship, I had to learn many painful lessons. Most significantly, I had to learn the concepts of respect, consideration and honesty. Furthermore, through making peace with the Black women I am in love with today, I finally learned these things and it is now that I realize I have benefited from her knowledge, her patience, her pain and her wisdom.

(continued on page 23)



# ON THE TABLE...

Among the lessons she taught me, there are some which stick in my mind constantly.

## SHE TAUGHT ME:

⇒ How to identify my allies, my comrades & those who understand a sistah's privilege

⇒ How to "grace" HER, the Black women, on the street, in the supermarket, or at church with a simple nod of my head and a smile acknowledging HER existence.

⇒ How to celebrate our many similarities while acknowledging our differences, both of us knowing the hard battles won and sometimes lost.

Moving closer to HER, touching her, SHE TAUGHT ME!!

⇒ How to appreciate those few moments of tears, enragement and expressed insecurities.

⇒ How for confront, firmly and gently, the inadequacies and conflicts within us which often lead to understandable contradictions in our behaviours, thoughts and expressions.

Remembering HER while keeping in my vision, SHE TAUGHT ME THIS:

⇒ That I can never move/rise "above" another sistah without damaging my own sense of integrity.



## AMANA JOHNSON

When you are down and troubled  
and you need a helping hand,  
nothing, nothing is going right

Close your eyes and think of me  
and soon I will be there  
to brighten up even your darkest night

Ain't it good to know  
that you got a friend  
when people can be so cold  
they hurt you  
and desert you  
they take your soul if you let them  
but don't you let them

You just call out my name  
and you know wherever I am  
I'll coming running running running  
running running running  
to see you again

Winter, spring, summer or fall  
all you got to do is call  
and I'll be there  
You've got a friend \*\*

When I think of friendship, the very first thing that comes to my mind are those utopian friendship cards and songs that say how gloriously wonderful and essential friends are with a string of virtues chained one after the other in an endless row into infinity.

Admittedly, I have been one to embrace those nebulous, concepts of friendship, albeit much to my disappointment. Friendship is one of those concepts like "freedom." It is a noble, highly evolved ideal

worthy of striving to achieve, yet in the world it is unreal.

Naivete around the concept of friendship can create repeated disappointments that can slip down into disillusionment, despair and intense fear of trusting.

There are many concepts and ideals created by the utopian mind for which it is desirable to strive for, but we must define for ourselves, individually and realistically, what friendship is and what it means in terms of family and community.

Because of the type of and oppression I am under as a black woman in this homicidal society, my survival is the bottom line. A friend, for me, is a person who helps me to continue to survive. Sometimes when it is hard, when I feel myself sinking fast into insanity, disillusionment, despair, homelessness, hunger...that is the time when I reach for and depend on my friends to support me in whatever ways that they can.

There are many different types of support that can facilitate survival. A friend is someone who finds their methods of support important at those crucial times in our lives.

If we cannot facilitate each others survival, then what is the point?

To have fun, to laugh, to have someone to party with? There is an essential need to feel connected to people, places and things. I believe that need is fulfilled by the ability and opportunity to look into the eyes of a loved one (friend) and to shed the secrets that hang, drip-

(continued on page 24)



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## ON THE TABLE...

ping in ones closet. If I cannot really deal with the things that I have been taught to despise about myself as a black person, a woman, a lesbian, if I cannot touch the things that plague me and create grief or sorrow within me in the safe presence of my loved ones then once again, what is the point?

The party and the laughter is only a washable cosmetic placed upon the lacerations and scars to temporarily make my mirror image bearable to myself and to others.

The ideal of a friend for me is a person with whom there is no need to withhold any secret history from, a person who will allow me the freedom to openly explore the who it is that I am and give me the space to grow to be the person that I conceive myself to be in my highest form. A friend is someone who allows me the freedom to be and act out my contradictions and to lovingly and honestly share with me what is stirred within them by those acts. A friend is someone who allows me to grow out of those contradictions, who will not abandon me forever when I do not meet their expectations.

Why is the revelation of secrets and the breaking of silence so foremost within a friendship to me? Because the necessity of having secrets is an oppression. We have secrets because we are fearful that we will not survive their revelation in some form or another. A secret

is a lie, not only to someone outside of yourself but foremost, a violation to the self. There is something intrinsically connecting in being able to verbalize to someone a secret and being able to confront that secret within the self.

Friendship starts with trust -- trust that a person will not use the

my own survival. It is my responsibility to listen without being judgmental, to honestly give my opinion in a loving and gentle way and it is my responsibility to know when to stand back, to know when there is nothing I can do to help, and to move aside when there is a need for growth in another direction other than the one that I am headed in.

So, here we go again with the utopian friendship lovesong. Is it unreal or can I make it a reality? I must admit that according to my standards of friendship, I am not a very good friend. When I feel disappointed, particularly

around issues of survival, usually I just go away. I do not really allow those contradictions in my friends. I become so horribly disappointed and feel so terribly betrayed that I no longer ask for or share anything. I become fearful that I have revealed too much already and that my only means of survival now is to protect myself from them. This is the time when I begin to fold in on myself, to try to create a protective shield for my solitary battle with the world. At that point the feeling of loneliness, of being the isolated warrior is bitter and biting. I find it hard to take the step toward forgiving what I feel to be a contribution to my destruction.

Clearly my ideal of friendship is much higher than my personal evolution. Today, not even I can live up to my expectation, for I do not

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### The greatest struggle at this point in my life around friendship is how to respond when the friendship changes...

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vulnerability of your revelations to facilitate your demise, or rather, contribute to your destruction.

This relationship of friend to friend is very complex. How do we know when our needs to grow and to be supported are not infringements on the lives and survival of those we call our friends. There is so much give and take and forgive that many times the boundaries become indistinguishable.

As for my responsibility as a friend, I must be as independent as I possibly can, for that is the way I can be fundamentally supportive to my friends. If they have to constantly hold me up, when will they have the time to hold themselves up.

It is my responsibility to know my boundaries in giving that I do not give more than is healthy for

(continued on page 25)



## ON THE TABLE...

know how to accept the shortcomings that exist in my world of acquaintances. I do not know enough about forgiving, about acceptance and about honesty and the allowance for growth.

I have tended to live my life as though there were no tomorrows, as though everything had to be resolved today. As I grow older I realize that today is exactly what it is, and tomorrow has the potential to be something else, usually something that I did not plan for. Those "friends" that today have disappointed me will surely, tomorrow, have grown in their own ways to come closer to the persons they said they were yesterday, just as I surely will.

I am learning to know that the nature of growth is disequilibrium and contradiction, that there is nothing smooth and predictable about change, and that I should be the strongest, most independent warrior I can, each minute that I can, in order to free my friends from the burden of my own survival.



### VIVIENNE LOUISE

I believe that I am blessed with a certain magic in regards to friends. My friends are precious. They are women who have varying tastes, interests, beliefs, etc. but who are similar in terms of personal integrity.

One thing I have noticed about my most comfortable friendships is that time slips by. When we are together, either on the phone or in person, time becomes a limitless dimension. This expansion of time is not only in the present tense but also flows around our entire relationship. I find myself trying to remember when I met so and so, feeling as though she has always been there. And even when I can remember when we met I can't seem to recall who initiated the relationship; so natural was the flow. This stepping outside of the boundaries of time has become a sign to me that other relationships in my life are or aren't moving along naturally.



### MARY TURNER

Friendship, like people, develops in stages. It must be nurtured or it may wither and die. Each participant in the relationship must be willing to work and grow. The participants in a friendship must also realize that each may not be at the same stage of development and they must come to terms with what they are and are not willing to accept in the relationship.



"On the Table" is a monthly forum where you respond to various topics. If you have any comments about anything that you read here, please write to Aché; we need your feedback if the dialogue is to continue.

Next month's topic:

**It's often been stated that "the personal is political," - what of the spiritual? How do you define spirituality & what role does it have in your life?**

The deadline for submissions is the 25th of each month. Submissions can be in the form of letters, essays, poetry/prose, short statements, or artwork. Please specify if you would not like your name included.

Mail responses to:  
Aché, P.O. Box 6071,  
Albany, CA. 94706.  
(415) 824-0703





Artwork by Sarita Johnson-Calvo





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**SISTAH / FRIEND  
(for Johanna)**

by Laura Irene Wayne

How can I tell you this  
sistah/friend  
what words can I choose?  
my head on your shoulders  
your strong arms to soothe  
sistah/friend  
it all seems so familiar  
a scene from yester-year  
the magnitude of your strength  
erasing all my fear  
you tell me it will work out this time  
everything will be all right  
that I can confide in you  
that you will comfort me tonight  
sistah/friend  
your out stretched arms have always been there  
through the good and the bad  
you have become a part of me  
yes, the best friend I ever had  
THANK YOU  
SISTAH/FRIEND

**A Friend of Mine**

by Earthlyn Manuel

We lock hands and souls together,  
Feeling a harmony created  
for our own sanity.

And my tears are on your face,  
As my heart aches.  
And you smile  
for my happiness.

You are inside the dark cracks  
Of my world  
Where I dare to let  
Anyone in.

We melt boundaries  
Making me sound and look like  
You at times,  
Knowing very well I am me.

And we do laugh in rhythm,  
At something we both only thought of.

You turn me toward the truth  
When I can't bear to see it.  
And you make me mad.

But I can measure my depth,  
by your faith in me.  
And things seem so ordinary  
without sharing them with you.

We lock arms and feelings together,  
Holding our friendship as a gift.  
And in all of its glory, it may someday  
Never be.

Laura Irene Wayne is a commercial artist, printer, writer and poet. She was born and raised in Detroit, Michican; attended and received a B.A. from Michigan State University. She and her lover reside in San Diego, Ca. where they operate a graphic arts company.



## What is a Friend?

by Aisha Rahim

What is a friend?

Why do people say,

I don't take a friend lightly!

Is it to say, to be a friend is a heavy load!

Or - is it because to be a friend -

Is to allow safety

Taking care that the friend can still express

his or her deepest sense

of thought --

or what!

What happens to me

When I say I Love you

does it mean I lose my self! --

In our emergence

Tell me

what about me,

the me inside --

the need to express

my reality, to know

not to say, I heard

But to know

the I am in me

Exists

What about you,

the you that was and is attractive to me!

The spirit of commonality

that's so true for both of us -

The pain, anger, frustration, disappointment, hope!

Etc. and so forth!

But forth we must go

Sharing -- thoughts

and feelings,

not always agreeing

To never look back

doubting --

Knowing that we

both have dealt with the moments of yesterday

Of the moments of anger -- disgust

Disappointments, aggravations -- of that moment in the past  
Behind us!

and never allowing to build up

Knowing that it was only

for the moment!

Together in our eagerness

to know!

To share the precious moments

In our separate realities

that it's alright to Be

Who we are

and that we both

Long to be free beings.

now present for each other

for the moment

Realizing that the next moment is not promised!

## Tribal Connexion

by Storme Webber

same tribe / when i talk to you & look into yr

eyes i know / i know you know

you remind me how much i need & want mystery

in my life / even the testing feels good

pushing, moving, making it not easy

we may talk lightly but we don't talk of

superficial things / instead i feel us

knowing each other / tho we just met

& reaching / past what is easy

to get at the meat of the matter

the core of the lives we were tossed into

& survived / to be able to tell the tale

to each other our words resonant in each other's

cells / i know you know / i know

tribal connexion / a few different bloodlines

convergent

though i worry abt thinking everything to death

i think - then have to fight my way

past thoughts to pure feeling

i know i don't want to devour you

voracious compulsive desire / overfilling myself

till i'm overwhelmed or sick / & we wrench

apart as suddenly as we came together

there must be more / something else besides these

crazy cycles / is it possible? i want so much

to believe that / touch without hurting - holding without

suffocation - shared identification without cancellation

of difference / there is much we could share

my feelings tell me so / the sameness reaffirming

the difference enlightening

the silences & touch telling us more

than words ever

© 1987 Storme Webber



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## If you want a friend...

(continued from page 13)

tionships are tenuous anyway. It's only been recently that it was okay to be Black." She thinks that it's still not okay, "unless you have done some gut wrenching work and intellectual work."

"We have to transcend all that we were taught...that Black people can't trust each other. I'm sure you've heard this saying: 'We're just like crabs in a barrel, as soon as one of us gets to the top the other drags them down.'"

"You got to find this right combination, you got to have the right class, the right speech, the right education, the right hair, in a couple or not, it's almost like it's working against you to make a friend."

"We've got a color bias. We have a hair bias. We have a class bias. And all of those superficial things affect the making of friendships. It's all pretty inhumane."

"When we get older, where is our community going given that we have all of this stuff on our backs? How will it affect our ability to create friendships in the future, or our ability to relate to one another in the future?"

Antoinette thinks that how much truth a friend can give and take affects the friendship.

"It goes by degrees, depending on how intimate the relationship is."

Some people are pretty precise with their conversation, and some people have to embellish and embroider. When you find yourself questioning this person's need to embellish and embroider you have to ask yourself how much truth can this person handle. What will they

do with the information when they are given the truth. "

"Try telling the truth," she challenged, "something unpopular, and see where it gets you. You get ostracized." As an example, Antoinette looked back on friends she lost because she questioned some of their behavior.

"[These were] women I considered my friends, we had a good relationship—until I mentioned their drinking. The phone calls lessened, and it's gotten to the point that I'm not even dealing with them anymore."



### "Lillian"

Although one woman I talked to said she thinks "it's really backwards that we're expected to love strangers, move in with them, build a life with them," Lillian's story is not uncommon.

"I fell in love with my best friend," said Lillian (not her real name). I had a good friend and we were really close. We said things like, 'You're cute,' and 'If I were single.' We were both with other people. She was with someone, I was with someone else.

When asked if she would do it again, Lillian's answer was a quick and emphatic NO. "What I would do differently is to not have any more friendships like that, where we do everything together except make love. If I'm going to have a lover I'm going to have a lover, but I'm going to put my friendships

into perspective."

What does she mean about "perspective?" "Having a friendship with someone that is open, honest, we share commonalities, she explained." My platonic friendships don't have to be so intimate. I don't have to get so caught up with their lives. I need to not depend on my friends as much as I depend on a lover."

"Some people say that lovers come and go but your friends always remain, but that's not true."

"What was good about that [friendship] is that it was as natural as breathing. There was no doubt that we loved each other. What was bad is that I lost my best friend."

### Are you a friend?

Someone once said, "If you want a friend, be one." It is my hope that these diverging views cause you to think about what you're doing with and about your relationships with friends.

Antoinette had this to say on starting and keeping a friendship: "Everybody has got their things they're working on, they're busy. It takes time to develop a real friendship. I wonder if people think in terms that the friendship is a relationship that needs time to develop. There is going to be emotional investment, there's going to be love...friends have to be nurtured too. If you are going to nurture something, you have to spend time with it."



## An interview with Avotcja

(cont. from page 15)

about all those girls that started growing mustaches & beards at 12, and all those boys who grew hips & looked prettier in dresses? What about all those trail blazers who lived through hell & more so that I could have the right to even say this & live? Aren't they our role models?

I can remember once playing for a Gospel scene & laying my eyes on a 15 year old Gospel virtuoso named Sylvester. He was the most beautiful Black man-child I've ever laid eyes on. That kid went on to change the music industry...can you imagine the horror they put that child through while he was growing up? And what about the Gwen Avery's & the hell she went through when she started growing her mustache as a little girl? What about the real Stonewall, those were flaming Black & Puerto Rican Queens, and all those heavy Butches who got whipped half to death just for being alive & those Femmes whose lives were destroyed just because they were strong enough to stand by the woman they loved? Aren't they our role models?

They, all of those Elders/Ancestors who couldn't "pass" no matter what they did or wore, paid the price for all of us! They may not be on the movie screen, or on TV, but they paid the cost, and the least we can do is give them the credit they're due!!! Now we can all brag about how we're not into roles, but does that negate the reality of our Elders who paved the way? The truth is that some "stomping Butch", (I can see her right now, complete with suit & tie & processed hair & a mustache on her face), made me free enough to say everything that I'm saying!

And I just want to thank her & the Drag Queens that made it all possible!!! Like Big Mama Thornton, when she got up on that stage in Carnegie Hall wearing a tuxedo long before it was fashionable... Were you there??? I don't want to hear all this shit about how many role models we don't have, I'd much rather hear about what we could do to make life worthwhile for all those Black Lesbian & Gay Senior Citizens that we've left to die of loneliness! Those are our role models & they're everywhere!!! They're not perfect, but then neither are we. I want them to know that any Senior Citizen &/or child under 12 can get into any of the gigs that I have any control over, for free. They've already paid enough, more than their share! We do have role models! All we have to do is open our eyes & hearts. If we take a good hard look at our past, we're gonna find that we are a powerful people, guaranteed a powerful future! And I'm proud to be part of it all!!!

Avotcja's cassette "Has Anybody Heard My Song?" is being sold at Old Wives Tales, and Modern Times in SF, and Mama Bears in Oakland as well as Marcus Books in SF & Oakland. Look for her new book "Pura Candela/Pure Fire" around January or February!

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**Margarita Benitez was born in Puerto Rico, presently working in the Bay Area as an AIDS Health Educator as well as working on an Internship at KPFA radio.**

## Friends/Lovers

(cont. from page 9)

will be here long after she's gone."

Well, I guess I don't need to tell you what happened. Talk about a self-fulfilling prophecy, or half of one, anyway. Her lover did leave her: she broke down the lonely fence she'd been corralled in and galloped off into the sunset...and with Dina's best girlfriend, one of those who'd never, supposedly, turn her back on Dina!

Now Dina's back on her Daddy's farm, picking peas and roping cows. "Once you got your brand on one of them," she wrote me in her last letter, "you know which ones are yours for keeps!"

After Dana and Dina's travails, I was most inclined to gratuitous self-praise. You see, I've always held that oneself is the sole person to be trusted, and, having been enlightened by my friends' plights, I was most proud of myself. Friends? Who needs them? Lovers? No one can love me like I do! Then, I met Donna, who threw a severe kink in my justification-philosophization.

Donna vows that neither the friend nor the lover is more or less long-lasting. "In my 58 years," she told me on our first date, "every one of my 'good, good girlfriends' has become my lover, and I'm very close to every woman who was once my lover. What's the difference between a friend and a lover, anyway? Is it simply that you don't make love with a friend and don't have meaningful verbal intercourse with a lover?"

I certainly don't know, and I admitted it to her. But, already I'm wondering: will I be her lover first, or will we have one of those friends-who-become-lovers metamorphoses? I'll keep you posted.



# "ISMS", FAMILY ALCOHOLISM AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

by Synthia Green, M.D.

The consciousness of the impact of racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, capitalism and fatphobia--the consciousness of how these "isms" affect my living grows. Still, other things bother my fat black lesbian life, bothered my development as a person. I suppose, if one is analytical and imaginative enough, every evil can ultimately be related to one "ism" or the other. But, I don't want to go into how the racist, sexist, homophobic social/cultural maelstrom has had multitudinous opportunities to teach me self-hatred. That's a given. What I want to discuss is emotional health and how those closest to me had their opportunities to affect my inner life.

Mom worked for a time in Jewish peoples' homes. She complained that the money wasn't good enough. I think, she was somewhat mollified that she was often given food or clothing that we children could eat or wear. What Mom was going through involved classism, racism and sexism working themselves out as economic oppression. Yet, when she came home, she had to fight not to be a servant to my father!

**"Myth no. 1: The Black woman is already liberated. This myth confuses liberation with the fact that Black women have had to take on responsibilities that our oppression gives us no choice but to handle...Underlying this myth is the assumption that Black women are towers**

**of strength who neither feel nor need what other human beings do, either emotionally or materially."**<sup>1</sup>

Mom often told us children that Daddy was drinking up so much money that she couldn't make ends meet. She totally blamed him for the poverty we had. I don't think she ever saw our situation as part of larger socio-economic problems having to do with racism and capitalism. Anyway, besides the incomprehensible money drain, none of us could figure out why Daddy drank himself into a coma every day. We didn't think he was an alcoholic because that was some derelict bum wobbling down alleys reeking and vomiting and out of work most of the time. Daddy went to work every day and sometimes moonlit as a cabbie. He was never out in the street falling down, filthy, shaking, talking to himself, getting hauled in for vagrancy. Instead, he was buying a home, putting food on the table, and raising five children. He never came home drunk. He just got that way every day after arriving there. He was oppressing himself chemically and the rest of the family emotionally.

Weekdays around 3:15pm tension began to rise in me. Daddy would soon be home from work. There would be loud talking, fussing, arguing, yelling. Somebody might get hit or beaten. His coming would take me away from my book, bring me back to the reality I was escaping. Daddy might power-trip forcing me to do some arbi-

trary task in the exact way that pleased him. We would get involved in arguments which I might win with logic but lose for not having the louder voice or his authority. These passionate debates, these episodes of anxiety, anger and being put down, happened almost every day for years. I often walked with my head down feeling miserable inside. I thought I was a bad, evil, ugly girl who had caused my father to get drunk because I talked back to him. I thought I had done something to deserve being as miserable as I was.

**"A Black feminist analysis has enabled us to understand that we are not hated and abused because there is something wrong with us, but because our status and treatment is absolutely prescribed by the racist, misogynistic system under which we live... Until Black feminism, very few peoples besides Black women actually cared about or took seriously the demoralization of being female and poor and colored and hated... How was I to know that racism and sexism had formed a blueprint for my mistreatment long before I ever arrived here? As with most Black women, others' hatred of me became self-hatred, which has diminished over the years, but has by no means disappeared. Black feminism has...given us tools to finally comprehend**

(continued on page 32)



## "ISMS", FAMILY ALCOHOLISM AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

(cont. from page 31)

that it is not something we have done that heaped this psychic violence and material abuse upon us, but the very fact that, because of who we are, we are multiply oppressed."<sup>2</sup>

The political became personal at the hands of my father. Family alcoholism became the final common pathway for racism, sexism, colorism and economic oppression to impact my life in the most personal, deep and lasting ways. Like homophobia, the trauma of family alcoholism came from the hands that were supposed to support and protect and love.

Daddy's self-oppression with heavy drinking was rooted in emotional pain (a complete analysis of which it is too late for me to make.)

But he always had a lot of anger that white men could cheat, provoke, humiliate, even physically harm him or us with near-impunity. They had the power to force him to do tasks they did not want to do, deny him promotions, lord their money, possessions and white-skin privileges over him in myriad humiliating ways. The memories of white men cheating my grandfather out of his labor in the sharecropping system, lynching black men for sport, raping my foremothers--these memories Daddy shared with me in those tense afternoons in the kitchen after he had had a few slugs of whiskey.

Grandpa had been a heavy drinker. Daddy had some characteristics common to adult children of alcoholics (ACA): he so badly feared losing control of his one safe space that essentially no one was allowed to visit the house. He rarely relaxed, let go, or had fun

unless under the influence. He was hard on himself. His fear of painful feelings fueled his compulsive drinking. He was addicted to the excitement of conflicts he could win. He was always reacting; the ordinary ups and downs caused him to react violently and drink. He hated authority figures. Policemen and white men in business suits were his least favorite people.

(Why did I shrivel inside at one's approach? Could it have anything to do with the hatred of authority I learned in the kitchen of my father's house?)

Daddy's arguing and yelling created emotional distance. I believe he wanted distance as well as

lashing me up from sleep, out of the bed in the middle of the night. The vulnerability, powerlessness and feeling of being totally out-of-control when the earth exhibited its authority over our lives, were similar to the feelings I had when the power in our house went mad in the night. Nobody could stop the earthquake or Daddy.

When Daddy got mad, everybody got upset. Alcoholism is a family disease--all members are affected even though only one or two may be drinking. To survive the chronic stress of verbal, emotional and physical abuse; to try harder to take care of Daddy so he would be better to us; and just to make the

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### The political became personal at the hands of my father.

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my anger, to create his own internal emotional condition which justified the need for a drink. I was co-opted into his biochemical/psychopathological trip. If someone came to the door asking for him when he was "asleep," I made excuses and never said why he was really unavailable.

My alcoholic father was the power in our house. Sometimes he went crazy. Last Tuesday when the earth seized, I stood underground on the platform of the 16th St.-Mission BART station. I felt terror of four stories of concrete falling crushing me to death. The lights went out. The rumbling, shaking darkness created terror in and of itself. But in the emotional aftershocks, that fear became mixed with, and magnified by, and old terror: Daddy's leather belt

best of a miserable situation, each member took a role. We all became co-dependents. Mom took more responsibility for money, food, and us children. My older brother vindicated the family's dignity and honor by often winning judo, gymnastics and swimming competitions. My other brother kept us laughing. My younger sisters became shy little co-dependents who seemed to feel unimportant and bashful. I carried a lot of guilt, became a compulsive over-eater and escaped into books.

In the dysfunctional family in which I grew up, to express fear, hurt, guilt, sadness, confusion or pain - or to express needs for emotional support or physical affection was to invite ridicule, dismissal or even hostility. Under the chronic stress, my feelings became frozen.

(continued on page 33)



## "ISMS", FAMILY ALCOHOLISM AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

I became a lonely, guilt-ridden teenager in a lot of pain which I covered up with frequent temper tantrums. Mom frequently said, "You're just like your Daddy." So, I felt I was just as bad a problem as Daddy.

With food, force of will, sleep, taking care of others, and escaping into books, I learned to keep my feelings pushed down deep within myself. There they stayed until, as an adult, situations arose that stimulated them. Then I would overreact. I would overreact because a new situation might stimulate feelings which would tap into old feelings and all, old and new, would come up in an expression that seemed disproportionate to the situation. Friends would say, "Girl, you crazy." Family members would say, "Well, she always was just like her Daddy." Supervisors wanted to send me to therapy. Being told something was wrong with me sent my already fragile self-esteem tumbling ever downward. Interpersonal relationships tended to be brittle. Difficulties with authority figures, already exacerbated by racism, sexism and homophobia, generally worsened. Therapy didn't really help. I went back into a survival mode of withdrawal, emotional suppression and minimal communication. Being in the survival mode was designed to keep me from reacting, to keep old pain buried, to stay in denial, to stay "sane."

"I am an adult who grew up in an alcoholic family. I take myself very seriously. I overreact to changes over which I have no control. I guess at what normal is. I have difficulty having fun. I

have difficulty following projects through to the end. I fear failure but sabotage my success. I have difficulty with intimate relationships. I am extremely loyal even in the face of evidence that the loyalty is undeserved. I take criticism as a personal threat. I judge myself without mercy."<sup>3</sup>

Going to ACA was hard. Sitting down to talk about what I didn't want to talk about was hard. Hearing other people talk about what they went through made it easier. Welcoming up old and painful memories required courage. Talking out the buried guilt, anger, fear and pain began to clear the emotional rubble, leaving me with more "space" and energy to pursue current goals and happiness. Having support from others who grew up in emotional deprivation, or in chaotic situations where verbal, emotional, physical and sexual abuse was done to them by adults who were supposed to support, love and protect--sharing the stories with others who had dysfunctional families ends the loneliness, reduced the suffering, and encourages sane, happy living.

If you have an interest in finding an African-American ACA group open to persons of both sexes and all sexual orientations, please call 921-8906 or 661-6342.

<sup>1</sup>Smith, Barbara. *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983, p. xxvi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. xxxiv.

<sup>3</sup>Perrin, Thomas. Pamphlet. 15 Park Ave., Rutherford, NJ 07070, 1982.

## SKYVIEW: Lesbian of Color Caucus

(continued from page 8)

S: What is the future direction of the LOC caucus after the conference?

M: Discussion within the caucus is to continue... I would like to see us helping each other with issues then open the caucus up to work in alliance with white wimmin....What I got from the Iowa conference was that in true alliance building, working from the bottom up on various issues is necessary for building a foundation of trust....We bring in all these different leadership styles that add another dimension. I don't want white wimmin working on these issues out of guilt or out of altruism. I want them to get that it's to their advantage as well. And if done in a typically white way it doesn't have much vision.

S: The LOC caucus has worked very hard in the last year, and the overall integrity of the caucus is to be commended. You personally have put in a lot of energy and resources.. are there any lessons have you learned that you would like to share with Aché readers?

M: I realized that with planning, as wimmin of color in our separate groups, we tend to generalize each other. One thing I have learned in terms of my Black sisters is that there are so many cultures within Black culture - it's fascinating to me...[it's] exciting to be able to have that shared with me. I don't generalize my sisters anymore....I treasure the knowledge I have learned.

S: Maria, thank you.



## BETWEEN TWO FRIENDS...

(continued from page 11)

is still very young.

WE started out around 1976 or so, identifying ourselves and coming together in a consciousness raising group. There were friendships that developed out of there. But, there were also a lot of sexual relationships that developed and fell apart and hurt peoples feelings.

A lot of trust was lost. There were some other organizations that some similar kinds of things happened and trust was lost. I think that community, if you are going to put it together as an entity, is growing up too. It started at infancy and it is not going to immediately go to adulthood without passing through some stages. I think it is probably at the adolescent stage now in terms of being able to respond as a large stable unit to particular needs.

But it is also doing a fine job. The work that Aché, Nia and other groups are doing individually and collectively I can't praise enough. Looking at the book I Dream a World, there are probably one-hundred women in the Black lesbian community that could be found right here in the Bay Area who are just as astounding.

**Reatha:** Do you think that because we are lesbians and part of our being lesbian is having sexual attractions to other women, that it is a problem in friendship? Or, is it a natural phenomenon in friendships between lesbians? What do you do with those feelings and how do you make the separation?

**Lynn:** I think it may be a natural

thing even with women. That may be true with straight women. Feelings may come up. I think also that it could be coming from a place where you have a friend, you've found someone you trust. So may of us want to have that safe place, really looking for someone to feel safe with. I think maybe sometimes it is just wanting to finally stop looking that could confuse us and make us feel that, maybe, I will take this friend and make her everything to me. I think it comes up, but for me it is something that I can say "maybe I feel that right now, but the words I use are 'why ruin a good friendship?'" (laughter)

It seems like my friendships are fairly uncomplicated, though they are deep. But I feel I get real different if I get romantic about it. I feel like I would like to keep the friend and they may not be my friend after we finish up with the complication...we have to be true to our feelings in life.

### **MAMMY** A Lesbian Feminist Publication for Moms

**Publisher/Editor:**  
Karen Williams

This monthly publication is designed to assist in breaking the isolation of lesbian parents, in addition to creating networks of communication, support and friendship. First issue: Jan. 1990.

Come to our 2nd planning meeting on Sunday, Nov. 4 at 1pm at Mama Bears Bookstore, 6536 Telegraph Ave. in Berkeley. For more information call 7221.

### **CALL FOR PAPERS ON:**

- Gay parents in recovery
- Nomenclature: What do we call ourselves, our children...
- Lesbians choosing parent-hood groups
- Community rearing/Extended family
- Success stories: Lesbian parent court cases
- Raising males in a sexist society
- Cultural identity: Meeting the challenge as lesbian moms of color

### **OPEN CALL FOR:**

Mothers/Co-Parents, Child Care Specialists, Financial Supporters, Editorial Consultants, Graphic/Layout Artists, Advertising Personnel, Writers, Storytellers, Word Processors, Production Assistants, Book Reviewers, Researchers, Teachers, Illustrators, Typists, Legal Counsel, Psychologists, & Photographers.



# Bulletin Board

## Kalimba Classes

Play and learn sessions with **KAROLYN VAN PUTTEN** on this traditional African instrument (some call it a "thumb piano.") No musical background necessary. Sessions include playing techniques, theory and practice segments, performance/demonstrations and much more! Learn to play in duos, trios & quartets, with lots of personalized attention. Instruments available for use during Saturday sessions in Berkeley, Nov. 11 & 25, 1:30-3:30pm, \$8 per session. Call 568-3969 for info. and to reserve your space.

## Black Lace

The first and only erotic magazine by and for African American lesbians will be published by the BLK publishing company. **Black Lace** will feature erotic photography, short stories, fantasy letters, poetry, feature articles and other items of interest to the African American lesbian community.

"This is the sleazy, raunchy magazine [we've] been horny for!", declared editor, A. Lane. "I believe that **Black Lace** will satisfy the community's desires."

Women interested in submitting their work to **Black Lace** should write the editor:

Alycee J. Lane,  
P.O. Box 83912, Los Angeles,  
CA. 90083-0912  
(213) 410-0808

## Sources

a magazine that reviews books and publishes writing by Black women, is looking for writers. We need:

- ☐ Book reviews.
  - ☐ Interviews with authors.
  - ☐ Historical features highlighting Black women whose main body of writing occurred thirty or more years ago.
  - ☐ Autobiographical pieces by soon-to-be published or recently published writers emphasizing their relationship with their work, and how they go about being a Black woman writer in today's society. A piece of the author's finished work will also be printed in the same issue as her autobiographical piece.
- Send for writer's guidelines, send submissions to Janet Wallace, P.O. Box 20390, Oakland, CA. 94611 or call 531-2682.

**BLACK FEMINIST WRITER** seeking women with **DREADLOCKS** for anthology. Wants photographs and women's own words on the experience of locking their hair. If you are a Dread-Woman or know of any, please contact Terri Jewell, 211 W. Saginaw #2, Lansing MI. 48933. Will give full information upon request.

Women interested in participating in making a panel or panels for the Africans who have died of AIDS to be included in the **Names Project Quilt**. Please contact Reatha at (415) 835-1552.

## UJAMAA

The Women's Building Project of the East Bay. A new group of women of color, dedicated to the concept of cooperative economics and survival. Our initial goal is to secure funds to purchase a multicultural center. Task committees now forming. General meetings are held the 1st Tuesday of each month through 1989 at the Asian Resource Center, 310 - 8th St./nr. Harrison in Oakland from 7-9pm. For more information call (415) 255-2155 or 436-6145. UJAMAA's mailing address is: 2500 - 25th Ave., Oakland, CA. 94601.

## Black Lesbians!

I need your help for the completion and success of my masters thesis on Black Lesbian Identity formation. Come make herstory with me!! Subjects needed for November. Those interested, please call Darlene Angela, at (415) 821-9207. Thank you!!



# THE BACK PAGE

Make Aché work for you!! List your service (send us a business card), find a roommate, organize a group whatever!! FREE to all black women!!...The deadline is the 25th of each month.

## ✓ Groups

Support group for Black Lesbians in multicultural relationships meet the 1st Sunday of each month in Oakland. For info: 839-3302 or 653-5732.



Black Lesbians exploring the issue of fear in our lives, and how it separates us. Group meets weekly on Friday eves. 3-month commitment required. For info call Joyce at 839-3302 or Takai at 346-5872.



A Lesbian of Color support group sponsored by the Women's Building will start Oct. 24th and run 8 weeks. 7-9pm, facilitated by Sandra Lebby, MSW, black lesbian psychotherapist at Operation Concern. 3543 - 18th St., SF. 431-1180.



Lesbians of Color Support Group, every Thursday evening from 6:30-8pm at the Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Ave., Berk.



Mujerio, the bay area Latina Lesbian organization, holds monthly

meetings on the 3rd Saturday of each month. 5pm. All Latina Lesbians welcome. For information call 587-7384.

## ✓ Housing

### EAST BAY

Quiet but busy artist seeks roommate to share household and studio. Small, private room. \$200/mo. (negotiable) plus utilities. For information call 654-6592.



## ✓ Services

Black woman mathematician available for tutoring children and adults. \$12/hr. 654-5432.



"A SAFE AND CARING MASSAGE" by Debra Floyd for yourself or a thoughtful gift to a friend. An hour treatment (\$35) consists of a full body massage, grounding, relaxation breathing and ends with a warm wrap. Call 548-2143 for appt. or gift certificate. (A \$5 discount to Aché readers for the month of November.)



Counseling people on easing emotional barriers that separate disabled people from able-bodied people by Aisha Rahim. \$40 sliding scale. 547-7690.



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