

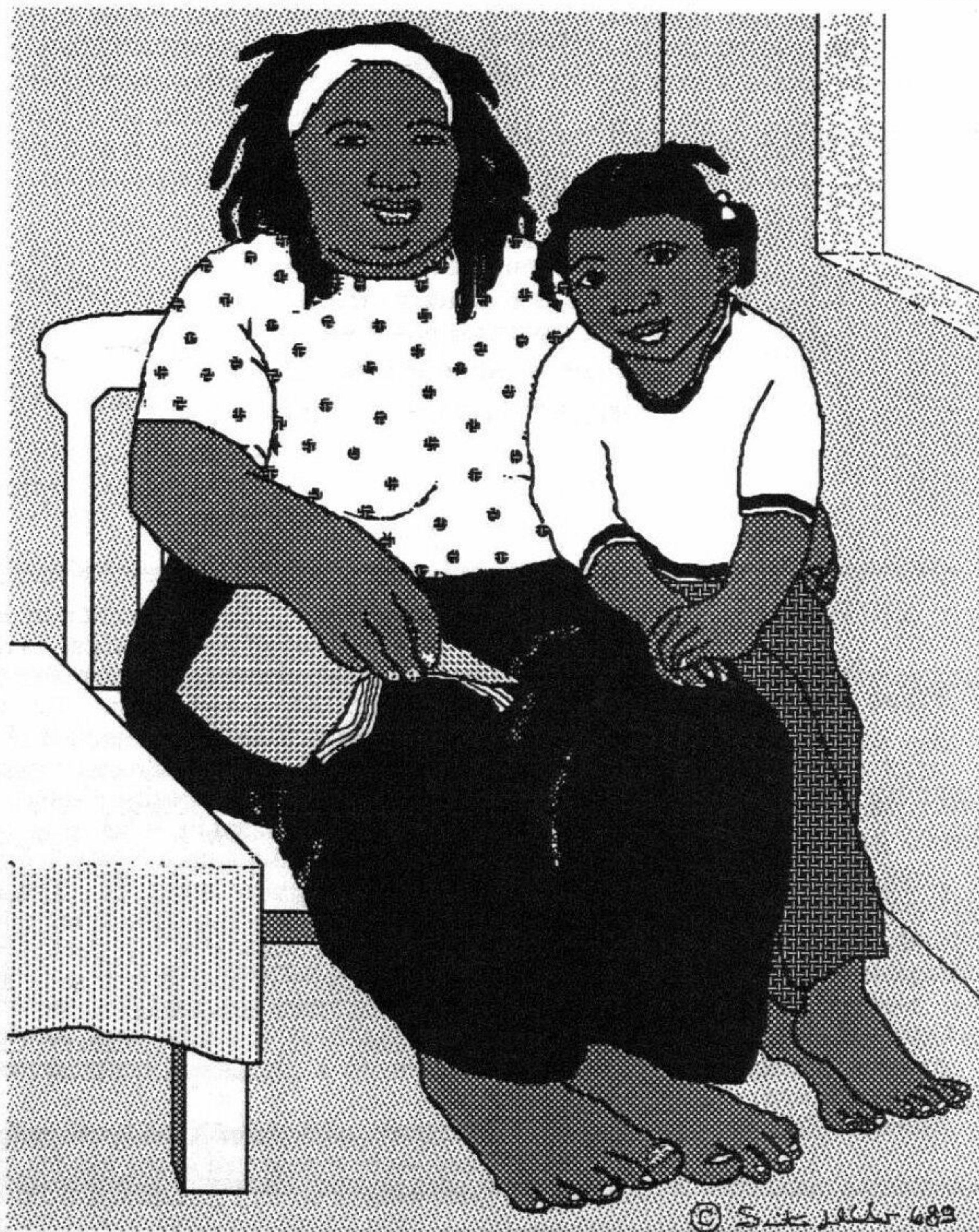
This publication is dedicated to the memory of Pat Parker.

AKHÉ

July, 1989

Vol. 1, No. 6

A Free Publication for Black Lesbians



For more artwork and a statement by the artist, Sarita Johnson-Calvo, see page 26.



attention wominn children mothers
daughters sisters lovers

a warrior has died
she has passed through
to another dimension

attention wominn children mothers
daughters sisters lovers

we must carry on
we must carry on

attention warriors calling all warriors

light your candles
say your prayers
chant your power chant
dance the dance of life...
for a warrior has died
and she needs our strength
to carry her into the next life..

8240703
new #
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Aché is a free monthly publication by Black Lesbians for the benefit of all Black women. Aché is available the 1st of each month and the deadline for all submissions is the 15th of each month. Handwritten, typed materials and 3.5" diskettes using MacWrite will be accepted. Include name, address, & phone no. on all submissions. Please specify if you would not like your name reproduced in Aché.

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Pat Parker (1/20/44 - 6/17/89), was born in Houston, Texas & migrated to California after High School to become the lesbian mother of Black poetry, but she was so much more than that. She was a mother, political activist, a softball coach, a role model, a music junkie & best of all she was my friend.

Pat was, in the true sense of the word, a Griot. A Griot is the West African title given to professional historian/storytellers, who are at the same time artists, musicians, poets, dancers, singers, or actors. In Yoruba (a West African nation & language), a person lives as long as their name is spoken. For me, Pat Parker "The Texas Tornado" will exist forever, I will never forget to mention her name &/or her writings. I would strongly suggest that you run out to the nearest store & buy everything she's ever written, you won't regret it. And if you're one of those people who already has some of her writings in your possession, turn someone else on by giving them a book, or reading them some of her work, (there'll be something there they'll like, as Pat wrote about everything that mattered, whether it be political, historical, or erotic).

Pat Parker was a very special woman! I'm grateful that she chose to pass my way, I am a better person because of her entering my life. Please let her into yours.

Peace & Love,
Avotcja
KPOO & KPFA

Books by Pat Parker:

JONESTOWN & other madness
Movement in Black
Child of Myself
Pit Stop
Womanslaughter

"If I died tomorrow and what could be said about my life was 'yes, she wrote books and she wrote poetry and people liked it' - that would not be enough. That's not why I take the risks that I do. A woman wrote a letter to me and the most touching thing she said was 'I'm doing my work so you don't have to do it for me.' What she's telling me by this is long after I'm gone, there are going to be women who will continue to do the work. It's an extension of that. If a Black woman in Nebraska picks up one of my books and she finds out that she's not alone and there's work to be done and it inspires her to do work, that's what it's all about."

Pat Parker (Aché, May 1989)

WHAT IS A POET???
(dedicated to my friend Pat Parker
Texas 1/20/1944 - California 6/17/1989)

A poet will never be allowed the luxury of blindness
A poet is
 a receiver, an antenna & a transmitter,
 all wrapped up in one
A poet see's it all,
 and hears it all.
 & is obligated to tell everything
A poet is
 at best a storyteller,
 a Griot, a historian,
 the keeper of the flame
We're walking pin cushions,
 who can even feel tomorrow breathing down our backs
 We can taste yesterdays laughter,
 and see the tears you've yet to cry
A poet goes to sleep with words dancing all around their head
 We're sound junkies,
 who don't know how to be quiet
A poet just can't stop it
 We can't turn it off
 It's like an avalanche of words
The beauty, the terror, the power of sound,
 it's all around us, it's everywhere
 in everything, all the time
We don't have to go looking for a poem,
 poetry follows us like a shadow
It just keeps on coming
 & it won't go away
We're driven people
 Call it a gift
 A healthy obsession
 Call it a poem
A poet is
 everything & nothing,
 a lover & a liar,
 a gossip & gift bringer
 and the light at the end of the tunnel
A poet is as new as the morning & older than dirt
And a good poet
 just like good poetry
 is forever
 & ever
 & ever
 & ever
 & ever
 & ever!

by Avotcja

Movement in Black / Can't Keep 'Em Back **Movement in Black - PAT PARKER**

Praises to the spirit of Pat Parker!

there has been a death in the family
i mourn / i celebrate & give thanks
for the life of Pat Parker
she of the brave fearless word-slinging
who stood in a vacuum of indifference
& hostility / & sd "I AM"
calloused hands big tender soul
and all.
i remember a ready smile
and the working class wordsmith
looked eye-to-eye at the youngbloods
with strength enuf to share.
she was so "regular"
in a way we felt she'd always
be with us -
and now she's gone too soon.
but ancestor you left us yr strong tools
a trail clearly marked
your precious words -
just like a poet
left us and headed
for the fullest ripest moon
of the season
shine on Pat
you live on
inside of we
who would not be
without you.



"Maxine's Dredspirit" © Storme Webber

© 1989 Storme Webber

While You Were Out

For me to believe in the work I am doing as a writer/poet/editor, I must find reflections of myself within the writings of Black wimmin. These reflections serve to empower me, as well as give me an opportunity to pay tribute to Black wimmin writers. This exact interaction occurred when I attended the SAGE benefit at Old Wives Tales on June 15. Four very beautiful and dynamic writers/poets, Opal Palmer Adisa, Nikkey Finney, Lois F. Lyles and Belvie Rooks, deeply expressed and exposed the trials, tribulations and joys of Black wimmin's lives. It was a deeply moving experience and I am sure I speak for most wimmin in attendance on this one.

I'm one of those lesbians who sees herself needing to make political/spiritual connections with Black gay men. On June 22, I did just that. I had the opportunity to meet Essex Hemphill and hear him share his works in an evening he dedicated to Pat Parker and Joseph Beam. The man is deep!! The event, which was sponsored by Black Gay Men United, was closed with images from "Brother To Brother" which is a multi-media piece inspired by Joseph Beam. If the

opportunity ever arises for you to witness this masterpiece, I suggest you do so. It is gratifying to know that important work is being done by a community (however small) of conscious Black gay men, and that the work of visionaries like Joseph Beam and Pat Parker continues.

Pippa Fleming

* * * * *

OPEN LETTER

✓ Sister Sign Your Name

Why is it that we, Black women, have such difficulty accepting/acknowledging/declaring ourselves to be the writers that we are? Why do we constantly hide our written voices? Why are we unable to take ourselves seriously as writers? What are the fears/inhibitions/denials going on within us?

I ask these questions because I too suffer from these same afflictions. I have been writing for almost five years yet, to call myself a writer is a horrendous feat. I stutter, stammer, and hesitate. To say "I'm a poet" is even more difficult; I can claim "writer" easier than I can claim "poet." What is it that holds us/me back? Why can't we/I loudly, proudly, and easily proclaim "I am a poet," "I am a writer?"

I have made tremendous progress since coming to San Francisco a

year and a half ago. Before coming to San Francisco, I wrote in silence, in secret. Now, I write in public. Here, for example, I tell people I write (not yet that I am a writer). I have participated in poetry readings in the safest space available to me so far - the Women's Center at San Francisco State University. I am now branching out to Modern Times to participate in an erotica poetry reading. Am I scared? Hell yes I am! Extremely so, but I know this is a fear I must conquer. I will not let this fear win.

How do I conquer this fear? The only answer I have is this: I am doing what I need to do. "doing" is the key word. doing. not hoping. doing. not wishing. doing. not waiting for the fear to go away. doing. I am doing because I know if I think about any of what I am doing for too long, I will not do it. I will wait for courage to make me a participant in a poetry reading. I will wait for fearlessness to submit a poem or piece of prose to Aché or to other calls for writings. I will wait for certainty to declare "I am a poet," "I am a writer." I will wait, and, I will never do anything.

I don't claim to have the right answer for each of us on how to best take ourselves seriously as writers.

As you can tell, I am still struggling in this process myself, but, as I go along in the direction toward visibility as a writer/poet, I am becoming stronger and more declarative in the fact that yes, I am a writer/poet. With each positive step I take, I empower myself and take my rightful place as a Black woman writer/poet.

I challenge you to do the same. Do not think. do. Submit to Aché/ No safer place exists. Aché is our vehicle for expression. Please, join me and use it.

Darlene Angela

MEDIA COUP D'ETAT

A BLACK FEMINIST TRIUMPH!!

BY SKYEDIVER

I am walking with a pep in my step and a glide in my stride these days. You know the kind of exhilaration one exhibits and feels after experiencing a Sweet Honey in the Rock performance or having attended a righteous grassroots poetry reading. The sense of satisfaction and nourishment I feel is similar to the pleasure I derive from sharing a bean pie and hibiscus tea snack with a good conversationalist in the wee hours of the morning. On June 2, 1989, five of our most outspoken Black feminist activists appeared on network television as part of a panel to discuss the relationship between black wimmin and feminism.

What amounted to a virtual media coup d'etat on the prime time Phil Donahue show, Barbara Smith (Kitchen Table Press), Byllye Avery (Director of the National Black Women's Health Project), Loretta Ross (Director of the Women of Color Program for NOW), Paula Giddings (author of "When and Where I Enter"), and Dorothy Pittman Hughes (Harlem entrepreneur), made media history as they eloquently and forthrightly expounded on the issues that confront us as Black feminists. The panelist appeared regal and oh-so-African in their stance as talk show host Donahue tried to trivialize and negate their positions. Special kudos go to Barbara Smith for pulling Donahue's coattail after he made a heterosexual remark regarding Black male/female relationships. Smith proclaimed herself as a lesbian who was more concerned with loving

wimmin, than placating Black males who may be threatened by her feminism. Avery responded to his remarks by reminding him that he wasn't a Black male therefore he was the least qualified in commenting on Black male/female relationships. (Snap!!)

Prior to the airing of the Phil Donahue show another special media event occurred on the Oprah Winfrey show. Alice Walker and Maya Angelou appeared on the program to discuss their processes and experiences as Black female writers. For one hour, network audiences heard these two distinguished writers discuss at length their concerns regarding the condition of the earth, Black peoples lives, and their work as writers. One could not help notice how humbled HARPO appeared in the presence of these two very fine writer-activists. Both the Donahue and Winfrey segments demonstrate how capable Black wimmin activists have become in seizing the opportunity to appropriate the mass media, and using it as a viable means for promoting our political and social agendas - and for making Black wimmin's lives more visible.

To obtain transcripts of either program phone 1-212-227-READ or write Transcripts/Journal Graphics, 267 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. 10007. Specify topic and date, Oprah: Maya Angelou/Alice Walker Donahue: Black Feminism Both aired in the bay area on June 2, 1989.

HUGHES' ESTATE FORCES CANCELLATION OF 'LOOKING FOR LANGSTON'

"Looking for Langston," which was to have been shown at the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, was cancelled due to the possibility of legal action from the Hughes estate. Attorneys for the Hughes estate informed the festival that the family didn't want Langston Hughes' name used in a homosexual context. This is the second time the Hughes estate has gotten court injunctions to stop the screening of the film; the first being earlier this year when the film was booked in Washington D.C.

The film, which was made by Isaac Julien for a British television series, is a poetic meditation on Langston Hughes' work and lifestyle during the jazz/blues infused Harlem Renaissance. The film includes archival footage and 3 poems of Langston Hughes'. Also featured in "Looking for Langston" is poetry read by Washington D.C. poet Essex Hemphill and a soundtrack written by bay area singer/songwriter, Blackberri.

The complete film has already been showing throughout Europe for several months, and there are plans to release it here in the U.S., however, only after the 3 poems by Hughes have been removed.

It's such a shame that even so many years after Hughes' death, with his sexuality no longer a secret, that his family's homophobia will deny the gay community such a precious part of our cultural heritage.

Weaving The Future of Black Gender Politics

by Craig G. Harris

Last weekend I took advantage of a blue moon free afternoon and headed to the Mart on 125th Street looking for some much needed household decorations. I bought three prints: a Horace Pippin, a Romare Bearden, and a Paul Goodnight. When I returned home, I noticed that I had selected graphics which were predominated by images of formidable, beautiful Black women, and eagerly welcomed them into my environment. I chose to hang the largest, which is my favorite, at the focal point of my living room. It is the 1987 Goodnight entitled "Links and Lineage."

The painting depicts a mother cornrowing her young daughter's hair. The daughter, in turn, is combing out the gray strands of her grandmother who is busy crafting an intricate quilt. The scene reminds of Alice Walker's observation:

...in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., there hangs a quilt unlike any other in the world. In fanciful, inspired, and yet simple and identifiable figures, it portrays the story of the Crucifixion. It is considered rare, beyond price. Though it follows no known pattern of quilt-making, and though it is made of bits and pieces of worthless rags, it is obviously the work of a person of powerful imagination and deep spiritual feeling. Below the quilt I saw a note that says it was made by an 'anonymous' Black woman in Alabama, a hundred years ago.¹

For too long, it has been the unfortunate plight of Black women, as a class, to be forced to create from remnants--weaving the fabrics of their lives into priceless works of art while suffering conditions which are tantamount to crucifixion at the hands of the State and her ostensibly progressive brothers.

Margaret Sloan-Hunter, a founding editor of *Ms.* magazine, articulated such oppression quite eloquently in her keynote address to the National Black Gay & Lesbian Conference in Los Angeles, California on February 14, 1988. Describing her involvement in the Black Power Movement, Sloan-Hunter recalled that when working with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the role of women was one of "making lemonade, taking care of the children, and giving up a lot of pussy."² She continued with a story about asking Stokeley Carmichael about the position of Black women in the movement. His response: "Prone."³

Consistent with the beliefs and behaviors of many Black men, Carmichael probably thought his response was rather cool. I doubt that he realized the signifi-

cance of the relationship between the oppression he encountered from the larger society as a Black man, and the subjugation of Black women by leaders of the Movement and Black men in general, nor the psychosocial stressors which propelled his flippancy.

Psychologist Richard Majors describes this phenomenon among Black men as follows:

Being cool is a unique response to adverse social, political and economic conditions. Cool provides control, inner strength, stability and confidence. Being cool, illustrated in its various poses and postures, becomes a very powerful and necessary tool in the Black man's constant fight for his soul...Cool Pose, however, is not without its price. Many Black males fail to discriminate the appropriate uses of Cool Pose and act cool much of the time, without regard to time or space... Perhaps Black men have become so conditioned to keeping up their guard against oppression from the dominant white society that this particular attitude and behavior represents for them the best safeguard against further mental or physical abuse. However, this same behavior makes it difficult for these males to let their guard down and show affection, even for people that they actually care about or for people that may really care about them (e.g., girlfriends, wives, mothers, fathers, 'good' friends, etc.).⁴

While Majors' keen insights into the psyche of Black (heterosexual) males and its manifestations of aggressive, self-destructive behaviors which threaten the stability and cohesiveness of the overall Black community, he fails to investigate the impact of the variable of sexual orientation/affectional preference on intraracial community-building.

The added dynamic of homophobia to the cruelties manifested by a racist and sexist society has relegated Black Lesbians to a status of voluntary or involuntary outsiders--either not know to, or kept apart from her brothers and heterosexual sisters.

Audre Lorde provides personal examples of this in a speech she delivered at the Women's Center of Medgar Evers College:

When I weaned my daughter in 1963 to go to Washington in August to work in the coffee tents along with Lena Horne, making coffee for the marshalls because that's what most Black women did in the 1963 March on Washington, I was a Black Lesbian... When I picketed for Welfare Mothers' Rights, and against the enforced sterilization of young Black girls, when I fought institutionalized racism in the New York City Schools, I was a Black lesbian. But you did not know it because we did not

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"Weaving the Future"

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identify ourselves, so now you can say that Black Lesbians and Gay men have nothing to do with the struggles of the Black Nation.⁶

Lorde describes the fear provoked by Black Lesbians, saying:

The terror of Black Lesbians is buried in that deep inner place where we have been taught to fear all difference--to kill it or ignore it...the one accusation that seems to render even the most vocal straight Black woman totally silent and ineffective is the suggestion that she might be a Black Lesbian...let anyone, particularly a Black man, accuse a straight Black woman of being a Black Lesbian, and right away that sister becomes immobilized, as if that is the most horrible thing she could be, and must at all costs be proven false.⁷

Within the Lesbian/Gay community, women have not been spared the affront of misogyny. According to John Nierenberg:

Gay misogyny is consistently reinforced by confused self-images that result in insecurity and self-abuse. The gay male...has a variety of motivations for his misogyny: to reassure himself and others of his "masculinity," to reassure other gay and straight misogynists of his alliance with Men...⁸

Comparing Majors' theory of Black men and the "Cool Pose" with Nierenberg's reasoning for Gay misogyny, we are not surprised to find that many Black Gay men are guilty of repeated conscious and unconscious injustices against Black women in general, and their Lesbian sisters in particular. Black Gay men's discomfort with self-identification of their sexuality and subsequent isolation have further led to their misunderstanding and fear, rather than hatred, of Black Lesbians.

It cannot go unrecognized that the Black Lesbian community is far more advanced along the process of creating institutions and building coalitions rooted in the tradition of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs founded in 1896, the Women's Suffrage Movement, and the Women's Liberation/Feminist Movement. Black Gay men, however, are only beginning the process of organizing to combat the oppression we face as Blacks and as Gays. While this autonomous organizing is an essential element of the growth process of the Black Gay male community, we

must be mindful of the need to be attuned to the issues of Black women, particularly Black Lesbians, and incorporate these issues into our agendas.

Black Gay men must also work in coalition with Black Lesbians to learn from each other and to tackle the bias we encounter from our heterosexual sisters and brothers, and the many difficult problems facing the overall Black community. In the words of Barbara Smith:

Blackness is an inestimable bond... Even as a baby I suffered the result of racial oppression and I had to learn to cope with it long before I had any inkling of what it might mean to be a woman or a Lesbian. This does not mean that racism is more important than other oppressions. But as I've often stated, it is the most pervasive and dangerous oppression in my life.

My perceptions about race are not something that I have to explain to activist Black Gay men, nor do I need to delineate the challenge of being queer in the Black community. I also don't have to explain the talk I talk, why I cannot get into white women's music, why I do not call Black persons past a certain age by their first names, or why I am so worried about our youth. It's all understood. We share language, culture, values, the African genius, family ties--in short, we share Blackness.⁹

Smith is not naive enough to believe that the bond of ethnicity will cause her associations with all Black Gay men to be characterized by mutual respect and cooperation, but rather, acknowledges the growing number of pro-feminist Black Gay men:

Of course, I am blessed to be in contact with highly progressive and aware Black Gay men who have chosen to define their situation politically and not merely as a lifestyle. I am not saying that our differences never cause problems or that sexism never enters in, but I've observed a great deal of willingness to grapple with these issues. If there's one thing that most impresses me about our interactions, it is how much kindness there is between us. Perhaps because sexual and romantic agendas are suspended, we can all just relax and treat each other like folks. I often imagine what our heterosexual sisters and brothers might think if they could see us, supposed man and woman-haters, steadily working for our liberation and having a damned good time in the process.¹⁰

More Black men need to have the sensitivity and political insights of those Smith depicts. More Black Gay men must come to the realization that their oppression is inextricably linked to the oppression of a wide range

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SKYVIEW

BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS FOR HEALTH AND JUSTICE

As part of Aché's commitment to inform our Black lesbian community about shifts and organizing efforts of Black lesbian and gay activists; the following interview with Aeisha of BLGHJ is offered as an introduction to this provocative grassroots organization. Interviewing for Aché is Skye Ward.

* * * * *

Skye: What is BLGHJ?

Aeisha: Black Lesbians and Gays for Health and Justice.

S: Who are the wimmin and men involved in BLGHJ?

A: A very exciting group of Black lesbians and gay men who formed the group this year. The group was formed to deal with issues of health and justice as it impacts us as Blacks, lesbians, and gays in our communities.

S: So the group was formed just this last year, 1989. Can you give me more insight into the background of the organization's members?

A: Yes. Grassroots people who have been active politically in our communities. And when I say community, I mean the Black community as well as the lesbian, gay and wimmin community; people who have a commitment to being activists.

S: BLGHJ'S membership seems to be distributed throughout California. How did this diverse group of people who are involved in these various communities come together?

A: We all had been doing things here and there, but we had not worked together. So something happened in the community around the [1989 National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership] conference...then there were other issues around other groups who were

working on AIDS related issues. Too many people wanting to be what Ron Grayson called divas. A lot of people in our communities were missing out on information and services because they were not considered part of the "community."

S: What individuals were not considered part of the community?

A: Everyday people. People who weren't necessarily active politically.

S: Are you speaking exclusively of gays or non-gay African-Americans as well?

A: Mostly lesbian and gays. People involved [BLGHJ] had been working on AIDS crisis health care. We said, let's get together and do some things as a group.

I think it's really important to note that BLGHJ combine two seemingly divergent issues; health care and justice. But, they aren't really divergent issues because when we look at our society they are inextricably intertwined. In our society if you don't have money and political force you won't get good health care. So when we talk about health care or PWA [people with AIDS] we are talking about rights and justice. [For example] children with AIDS have been denied the right to attend school. Divorced parents with AIDS have been denied visitation rights with their children.

S: What other non-AIDS related health issues are being focused on?

A: We are talking about the rights of wimmin to have regular and timely examinations during pregnancy. There are other health issues in our communities, not just crisis medication. That's a human right. Also reproductive rights - these are all issues. When I say reproductive rights I'm not just talking about the right to have a safe, legal and free if necessary abortion.

But also the right for a wominn to go into a hospital for a D&C and not come out with a forced sterilization. We often hear of that happening to wimmin who are poor, Black and who are Latin.

S: What specifically has been your involvement in the organization?

A: My involvement has been peripheral in the sense in that I'm up north. But I've been priest and therapist for several members of the group. I've been doing work with the Minority AIDS Project. I led a consulting group for people who counsel individuals with AIDS. We'd meet on a monthly basis and they would come back and discuss client issues and exchange and talk about things happening in the community. That's been my contribution to people who have AIDS. That's how I met other people in the organization.

S: I noticed on the lists of names for BLGHJ founding members

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"Imitation of Life"

This column is a commentary with a point of view from one Black lesbian's experience and knowledge. How I experience viewing films with images, themes, messages and stories that have to do with being Black. I know there is something to say, argue, and critique about the subject of how Blacks are portrayed in films, as well as films produced by Blacks and featuring Blacks. I also know my point of view is shared by many Black women as well as all kinds of women with a progressive outlook. When we may differ on details, the gut reaction is the same. We all say it to one another as we leave the theaters and sit through videos in each other's living rooms. How many times have you said to your friend, "what were they thinking when they made this?" or "we should get together and make it better, truer, or just make it?"

And what better way to start than with "Imitation of Life?" Remember? Well, the first time I saw this was probably when I was 8. Seeing it at 31 is a whole other experience. A little background: "Imitation of Life" was originally published by Harper in 1933, and authored by Fannie Hurst. Its original title was Sugar House. The novel was adapted for the screen for the second time in 1959 and stars Lana Turner. The original story was really about a Black woman, Delilah (stereotyped as an Aunt Jemimah) who has a killer pancake recipe and is the maid to a white woman, Bea. Bea steals Delilah's recipe and becomes rich and famous. And of course, both women have daughters who Delilah raises. But, that's the book.

"Imitation of Life", the film, is so heavily rescripted it is a different story altogether. The original film of 1934 was based on the novel. The producers of the 1959 version deliberately obliterated the subplot of the Black character by erasing the pancake recipe from the script altogether, thereby refocusing the story on the white character. Although the film is over 30 years old, I feel its important to bring out, for after all, part of the why of this column is to question the existence and non-existence of films that deal with issues we can relate to, whether it be positive or negative.

...there is nothing simple about hating who you are because of the color of your skin

"A strong healthy, settled down woman who eats like a bird and doesn't care if she gets no time off and will work real cheap" is how Annie Johnson (played by Juanita Moore) convinces Miss Meredith (Lana Turner) she should work as her maid. Annie Johnson is a dark-skinned Black woman who the is very proud mother of Sara Jane who is light-skinned and hates the fact she is Black. Never mind what the producers of the time had intended. This film demonstrates simultaneously the complexities of racism and internalized racism while creating a disturbing and dangerous myth about Blacks in relationship to skin color and individ-

ual identity in general where Blacks are concerned. Of course, simply put, one could say the film is about passing. But we know better, because there is nothing simple about hating who you are because of the color of your skin.

While the film is successful in portraying Annie Johnson as a selfless woman who gives endlessly to Miss Meredith and her daughter and Sara Jane, there is a terrible void in portraying Annie Johnson as a person. You never get how involved she is with the church and lodges she belongs to. We are manipulated into thinking that Annie Johnson's sole purpose it to be the backbone of Miss Meredith while never seeing where Annie Johnson herself gets support or finds her strength. Unfortunately, Sara Jane's character is as equally in a void as Annie Johnson. The viewer never really gets why Sara Jane is so hellbent on passing except that if you're Black and can pass, you do. Basically, the absence of these women's lives help perpetuate all those ugly truths we know of how racism works. If you make something invisible, then, to the mainstream it's much more easily acceptable (there is nothing to think about, nothing to question, it's just an absolute.) Of course Sara Jane wants to pass...

Sara Jane is portrayed not as a trouble Black girl suffering society's race hatred, but rather as a demented psychopath who walks around saying "I'm white". Susan Kohner who plays Sara Jane delivers her lines staccato-like and always with a crazed look. I actually turned to my friend and said, "doesn't she remind you of the girl in 'The Bad Seed?'" We laughed,

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This Month In...

DANCE

July 8 - An evening of traditional African music & dance with the **Ceedo Senegalese Dance Company & Fua Dia Congo** at the Oakland Ensemble Theatre, 1428 Alice St. in downtown Oakland at 8pm. \$10. For more information call 763-3962.

July 15, 16 - Experience Pan-African dance with the **Harambee Dance Ensemble** at the Oakland Ensemble Theatre, 1428 Alice St. in downtown Oakland. Saturday at 8pm, Sunday at 3pm. \$10 advance/\$12 at the door. \$6 for Seniors/Children under 6. For more info: 563-3519/532-8558. Box office: 839-5510.

EVENTS

July 7 - Opening reception & performance for artist **Michele Lee** and her exhibit of mixed media paintings and constructions entitled "**Unconscious Reality**". From 6-8:30pm at the Sargent Johnson Gallery/Western Addition Cultural Center, 762 Fulton St. in San Francisco. The performance piece will feature Mtafiti on saxophone and Fred Lonberg-Holm on electric bass cello. For more information call 921-7976.

July 11 - **Chicano Poets Feast**. In celebration of "**Chicanas y Chicanos en Dialogo**", a collection of the works of 42 Chicana/o poets from the greater SF/Bay Area and 8 Chicana/o artists, editors Lorna Dee Cervantes and Francisco X. Alarcon plus Marti-von Galindo and other contributors will read their work. 7:30-9pm. at Modern Times, 968 Valencia St. in San Francisco. For more information call 282-9246.

July 12 - Lesbians of Color unite for an Erotic Explosion during an evening of erotic poetry and prose in a benefit for the California Prostitutes Education Project, and AIDS education project for street prostitutes and ex-prostitutes. Featuring host, emcee and eroticist **Stephanie Henderson**, who introduces **Darlene Angela** (Black woman daring herself to be seen and heard as a writer/poet), **Julie C. Mau** (earth-centric local woman from Hawai'i, a.k.a. Pacific Islander, writer/activist/womens studies major), and **Karla E. Rosales** (writer/student/community activist). Come share with us. 7:30pm. \$4-\$8 sliding scale (no one

turned away for lack of funds) at Modern Times, 968 Valencia St. in San Francisco. For more information call 282-9246.

July 13 - **Paula Gunn Allen** will read from and sign her newest book "**Spider Woman's Granddaughter**." Ms. Allen, who has also written "**The Woman Who Owned the Shadows**", "**The Sacred Hoop**," and "**Wyrds**," is a Laguna Pueblo/Sioux Indian and one of the foremost critics of Native American literature. 7:30pm at Old Wives Tales, 1009 Valencia St. in San Francisco. For more information call 821-4675.

July 13 - **African American Festival**: a day of performance, film/video, discussion & lectures, dance, theatre & music showcasing African & African-American peoples. Includes multi-media exploration of cultural apartheid here & abroad. From 11am to midnight (dinner served at 6pm) at New College of California, 777 Valencia St. in SF. \$4-6. For more information call 824-3890.

July 18 - "**Electronic Enchilada: Images of Latinas in the Media**" is a talk/slideshow presentation by Yolanda Lopez, director of educational programs at Mission Cultural Center, which looks at the myths & realities of Latin American women. From noon to 1pm at the Health Sciences Bldg. Room 303, 513 Parnassus in SF. For info call 476-5836.

July 18 - **Stephanie Henderson** hosts an open gay and lesbian reading, a continuing monthly series at Modern Times, 968 Valencia St. in San Francisco. Writers of all disciplines and levels of experience are encouraged to attend. 7:30pm. For more information call 282-9246.

July 19-21 - "**Fresh Funk**", a 3-day talent show at the Western Addition Cultural Center, 762 Fulton St. in San Francisco. 7pm. each night, \$5 adults/\$3 for children under 13.

July 20 - **Aurora Levins Morales**, a Puerto Rican Jewish writer, reads from her recent work about the women of the Puerto Rican countryside. Translations. 7:30pm at Modern Times, 968 Valencia St. in San Francisco. For more information call 282-9246.

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This Month In...

July 22 - Rumba Mexcla, a women's percussion ensemble, featuring Matu Feliciano, Gale Kissin, Mercedeo Troncoso, Diana Felix, Susann Williams & Patricia Acosta with special guests Remy Arnone of The Blazing Redheads and vocalist Maria Costa, will be performing at Mama Bears Coffeehouse/Bookstore at 6536 Telegraph Ave. in Oakland. \$6-8. 8pm. For more information call 428-9684.

July 23 - Two videos about the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico and its lingering impact: "War on America" (20 min.) is about the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico to the present. "The Battle of Vieques" (35 min.) is about the ongoing struggle of Puerto Rican fishermen against the U.S. naval base on Vieques. This is a benefit for the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War. 7:30pm. \$3-5 donation. At La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley. 849-2568.

July 23 - Bay Area dance troupes **Diamano Cou-ra**, **Fua Dia Congo**, & **Harambee Dance Ensemble** perform traditional dance & music of the African continent as part of the Stern Grove Midsummer Music Festival at Sigmund Stern Grove, 19th Ave. at Sloat Blvd in S.F. 2pm. Pre-concert talk on "African Dance & Music: A Means of Transmitting Culture" by Nontsizi Cayou, chair of the SF State Dance Dept. and director of Wajumbe Cultural Institution. 11am at the Trocadero Clubhouse. For more information call 398-6551.

July 24 - Seven contributors to "Lesbian Love Stories" will read from their new book including Judy Freespirit, Sally Gearhart, Louise Rafkin, Canyon Sam, Kitty Tsui and Sandy Boucher. 7:30pm at Old Wives Tales, 1009 Valencia St. in San Francisco. For info call 821-4675.

July 27 - Dr. S. Diane Bogus reads and signs her new book "Dyke Hands & Sutras Erotic & Lyric" at Old Wives Tales, 1009 Valencia St. in San Francisco. 7:30pm. \$5-7 donation. For info call 821-4675.

FILM

July 1 - "Two in Twenty", a lesbian soap opera, ends tonight with the last two episodes (4 & 5) being shown at the Women's Building, 3543 - 18th St. in San Francisco. This 5 episode lesbian soap opera follows the complex lives to 2 lesbian households. 7:30pm. \$6.

July 3 - Two films by Black director Spike Lee, "School Daze" (7pm), a musical about students at an all-Black college and "She's Gotta Have It" (5:15 & 9:15pm), about a young Black woman and her three lovers. U.C. Theatre, 2036 University Ave. in Berkeley. For more information call 843-6267.

July 15 - 2 films by director William Klein; "Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther" (1970) an interview with the former Black Panther while he was living in Algeria (7:30pm); and "Muhammad Ali, the Greatest" (1974) which plays at 9pm. At the Pacific Film Archive, 2625 Durant in Berkeley. For more information call 642-1412.

July 20 - 2 more films by William Klein "The Little Richard Story" (7:30pm) and "Panafrican Cultural Festival" (9:15pm) a documentary of the first Panafrican music festival featuring interviews with Miriam Makeba and Eldridge Cleaver. At the Pacific Film Archive, 2625 Durant in Berkeley. For more information call 642-1412.

July 20 - An exciting series of films looking at racism and celebrating difference will be held at the York Theatre, 2789 - 24th St. in SF once a month through November. For July, "Born in Flames", a true cult classic thriller about a multi-cultural band of women who take control of a TV station to set forth their views. Also showing is "You Have Struck A Rock", when the South African apartheid regime attempted to extend the hated pass system to women in 1952, their opposition erupted thunderously across the land. Their slogan: When you have touched the women/You have struck a rock. 7:15 & 9:30pm.

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The calendar listings may change without notice; so double-check with the source for any last minute changes. To list in next month's calendar, mail notice by July 15th to: Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA. 94706 or phone (415) 532-1719.

Calendar - July 1989

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

31	Calendar abbreviations are as follows: C-class, D-dance, E-events, F-film M-music, N-nightlife, T-theater, TV-television For details on calendar listings, see pages 13, 16 and 17. Calendar listings may change without notice, so please double-check with the source for any last minute changes. To list something on next month's calendar, send notice by July 15th to: Ach�, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, Ca. 94706 or phone (415) 532-1719.				1 F - "Two in Twenty" 7:30pm	2 M - Our Boys Steel Orch. 8pm
3 F - 2 Spike Lee films from 5:15pm	4 T - S.F. Mime Troupe 2pm	5	6	7 R - "La Verdad Musical" 12-3pm E - "Unconscious Reality" 6pm T - "Langston" 8pm M - Zulu Spear 11pm	8 T - "Langston" 2 & 8pm T - S.F. Mime Troupe 2pm TV - "Youssou 'N Dour" 7pm/12am D - Ceedo & Fua Dia Congo 8pm M - Our Boys Steel Orch. 8:30pm M - Zulu Spear 11pm	9 T - S.F. Mime Troupe 2pm M - Grupo Sinigual at El Rio 4pm M-P. Escovedo/Blazing Redheads 7:30 M - Our Boys Steel Orch. 8pm
10	11 E - "Chicanas y Chicanos..." 7:30pm M - Linda Tillery/Marga Gomez 7:30	12 E - Lesbian of Color Erotica 7:30pm	13 E - African American Fest. 11am E - Paula Gunn Allen 7:30pm R - Faye Carroll / Kito Gamble 9pm	14 R - "La Verdad Musical" 12-3pm TV - "Youssou 'N Dour" 8pm/2am	15 R - Lillian Allen 12-1pm R - "...Home to Namibia" 1:30-2pm T - S.F. Mime Troupe 2pm D - Harambee Dance Ensemble 8pm F- Eldridge Cleaver & Muhammad Ali	16 T - S.F. Mime Troupe 2pm D - Harambee Dance Ensemble 3pm M - Brazil Now at El Rio 4pm M - Pete Escovedo & Sheila E. 8pm
17	18 R - "Nelson Mandela" R - "Robben Island" 11:15am E - Images/Latinas in Media 12-1pm E - Open Lesbian/Gay reading 7:30pm	19 R - "Fannie Lou Hamer" 10:15am E - "Fresh Funk" Talent Show 7pm	20 E - "Fresh Funk" Talent Show 7pm E - Aurora Levins Morales 7:30pm F - Panafican Cultural Fest. 9:15pm F - "Born in Flames" 7:15pm	21 R - "La Verdad Musical" 12-3pm R - "Sisterfire '87" 12pm E - "Fresh Funk" Talent Show 7pm	22 T - S.F. Mime Troupe 2pm R - Phavia Kujichagulia 7pm R - Andy Gonzalez 8pm E - Rumba Mexcla 8pm	23 E - "African music & dance..." 11am E - Diamano Coura/Harambee... 2pm T - S.F. Mime Troupe 2pm M - Blazing Redheads at El Rio 4pm E - 2 films about Puerto Rico 7:30pm
24 E - "Lesbian Love Stories" 7:30pm	25 F- Ach�: films on Black women 7:30	26	27 E - S. Diane Bogus 7:30pm	28 R - "La Verdad Musical" 12-3pm	29 M - Conjunto C�spedes 11pm M - O.J. Ekemode 11pm	30 M - Cool Breeze at El Rio 4pm

This Month In...

July 25 - Aché presents an evening of films about Black women featuring "Crocodile Conspiracy" (13 min.), about a teacher and her longing to visit her parent's homeland - Cuba; "Illusions" (34 min.), an imaginative drama contrasting society's views of Black women and Black women's views of themselves; and "The Work of Elizabeth Catlett" (28 min.), a portrait of the celebrated African-American artist. This Aché benefit is the second evening of an ongoing film series. \$4 donation. 7:30pm at La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley.

MUSIC

July 2, 8 & 9 - Our Boys, a 21 piece (including 15 steel drums) Steel orchestra from Trinidad and Tobago, will be performing their blend of soca, calypso and reggae on the 2nd at Ashkenaz, 1317 San Pablo Ave. in Berkeley, \$5, at 8pm (info: 525-5054); the 8th at the First Unitarian Church at 1187 Franklin St. in S.F. at 8:30pm (tix @ BASS); and the 9th at Caribee dance center, 1408 Webster St. in Oakland at 8pm (info: 835-4006.)

July 7-8 - Zulu Spear, the bay area's/South Africa's hottest band, will be playing People's So. African dance music for 2 nights at Ashkenaz, 1317 San Pablo Ave. in Berkeley. Both nights, the opening bands will start at 9:30pm., and Zulu Spear will go on at 11pm. \$7. For more information call 525-5054.

July 9 - Pete Escovedo & The Blazing Redheads in performance at Forest Meadows, Dominican College in San Rafael. 7:30pm, \$12. For more information call 457-0811.

July 11 - Linda Tillery & her Band and comedian **Marga Gomez** in performance at Forest Meadows, Dominican College in San Rafael. 7:30pm, \$10. For more information call 457-0811.

July 16 - An evening with the Pete Escovedo Latin Jazz Band featuring **Sheila E.** at the Fillmore, 1805 Geary St @ Fillmore in San Francisco. 8pm. Tickets are \$20 (available at BASS.)

July 29 - Conjunto Céspedes, the bay area's premiere Afro-Cuban group featuring Bobi Céspedes, will perform their hot dance music at La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley. 9:30pm. \$6. For information call 849-2568.

July 29 - O.J. Ekemode & the Nigerian All-Stars will be performing at at Ashkenaz, 1317 San Pablo Ave. in Berkeley. The opening band will go on at 9:30pm, O.J. Ekemode at 11pm. \$8. For more information call 525-5054.

DAY/NIGHTLIFE

July 9 - Grupo Sinigual will be performing at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in San Francisco from 4-8pm.

July 16 - Celia Malheiros & Brazil Now will be performing at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in San Francisco from 4-8pm.

July 23 - The Blazing Redheads will be performing at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in San Francisco from 4-8pm.

July 30 - Cool Breeze will be performing at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in San Francisco from 4-8pm.

RADIO

July 7, 14, 21, 28 - "La Verdad Musical/The Musical Truth" with Avotcja. She plays jazz, blues, salsa, reggae, hip hop, and the whole spectrum of musics from the Caribbean, South America, and Africa. Also has interviews and ticket give-aways. Fridays from 12-3pm on KPOO 89.5 FM. She also hosts "Rhythm Drive" on Thursdays from 4:30 to 6pm on KPFA, 94.1 FM.

July 13 - Blues/Jazz vocalist Faye Carroll and her daughter pianist **Kito Gamble** perform live from the KPFA studios at 9pm on 94.1 FM.

July 15 - Lillian Allen & The Revolutionary Tea Party Band - this program features a KPFA exclusive recording of Lillian Allen's recent concert at

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This Month In...

SF's Kennel Club along with an interview of Allen by KPFA's Asata Iman. 12-1pm on KPFA, 94.1 FM.

July 15 - "Going Home to Namibia" is a talk with 2 Namibian women members of SWAPO about the tasks and difficulties facing returning exiles. 1:30-2pm on KPFA, 94.1 FM.

July 18 - "Nelson Mandela: One of Africa's Noblest Sons" is a 4-part program which tells the story of Nelson Mandela and the history of the anti-apartheid movement. Includes interviews with Albertine Sisulu and Winnie Mandela. This program airs at 8:10am (pts. 1-4), and again at 4:30pm (pts. 1-2) & 7pm (pts. 3-4.) KPFA 94.1FM

July 18 - Excerpts from "Robben Island", an autobiography by Indres Naidoo, a former inmate of South Africa's Robben Island, are read by Danny Glover and Ed Markmann. 11:15am on KPFA, 94.1 FM.

July 19 - Collected speeches by Civil Rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer. Including excerpts from a speech at the Vietnam Moratorium rally at U.C. Berkeley; the documentary "The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer;" and from "Profiles of Movement Activists II: Voices of the Civil Rights Movement." 10:15-11:30am on KPFA 94.1 FM.

July 22 - Highlights from "Sisterfire '87" (Washington D.C.'s multi-racial women's arts festival) featuring Alice Walker, Sweet Honey in th Rock, Odetta, and Toshi Reagon. 12 noon on KPFA, 94.1 FM.

July 22 - "A Bit of Melanin" is a new program focusing on the relationship of African-Americans to other Africans of the Diaspora (Afro-Cubans, Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Colombians, Afro-Venezuelans, the Maroons of Surinam, and others). This month's program features an interview with Phavia Kujichagulia, bay area poet-singer-dancer-musician-cultural historian. From 7 to 7:30pm on KPFA 94.1 FM

July 22 - An interview with bassist and musical director of Conjunto Libre, Andy Gonzalez, a young Puerto Rican from New York who has played with everybody from Ray Barretto to Eddie Palmieri. Also featured are some selections from the many sessions that Gonzalez has participated in. 8-10pm on 94.1FM.

TELEVISION

July 8 & 14 - A look at the music of Youssou'N Dour, Senegal's top singer on cable channel BRAVO, on the 8th at 8pm & 2am / the 14th at 7pm & midnight.

THEATRE

July 1, 7, 8 - "Langston" by Ossie Davis celebrates the early poetry and passion of poet Langston Hughes with drama, dance, music and song. Choreographed by Leon Jackson. 8pm with 2pm matinees. Presented by Oakland Summer Theatre at the Laney College Theatre, 900 Fallon St. (at 9th st.) in Oakland. \$6 (\$5 students & seniors.) For more information call 273-3896.

through July - "Seeing Double", the San Francisco Mime Troupe's new show is about 2 young Americans, one Jewish and the other Palestinian, who switch places after a plane crash. This play continues through Sept. 4 at parks throughout the bay area. On the 4,8,9th - at Dolores Park, Dolores and 18th St. in San Francisco. On the 15-16th - Mosswood Park, corner Macarthur & Broadway in Oakland. On the 22nd - Precita Park, Precita & Folsom near Army in San Francisco. On the 23rd - Washington Square Park, Columbus & Union in San Francisco. All shows start at 2pm (the music starts at 1:30pm.) For more info call 285-1720.

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Black Lesbians/Gays for Health and Justice

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there were several names in individuals who were involved in organizing the International Gay and Lesbian People of Color Conference '86. Weren't you too involved in that organizing effort?

A: Yes. It's ongoing activism. As African-American activists I feel it's very important that we be concerned about all these issues. (reproductive rights, health and justice, etc.) I don't think we can be just concerned with the Briggs Initiative. We cannot afford to be one-issue people.

S: The BLGHJ manifesto as printed in The Real Read Magazine (Apr. 1989) states a commitment to building alliances and working with non-gay progressive African-American people as well. How is this being done?

A: We are putting out feelers. I think the Black community is starting to acknowledge a very sad fact.

People who have AIDS are not just people you don't know. They don't have to be gay, wimmin are dying of AIDS, children are dying of AIDS. People who were infected with AIDS via drug transfusions are dying. It can impact all of us.

One of the way BLGHJ is dealing with it is by getting into the Black church - talking to ministers and doing workshops. Cleo [Manago] has a workshop scheduled at a church in Los Angeles. A traditional Black baptist church...

S: A traditional Black baptist church?!!

A: Yes! [laughter] They are concerned about what is happening in their community and they want to be educated. So BLGHJ goes in and does workshops, talks about the crisis, education and prevention in front of a group of ministers who are considering having

[BLGHJ presenters] come to their churches.

S: How has the reception been from Black church officials to gay activists wanting to do outreach in their congregations?

A: It's been mixed - some of them support us. One group in Sacramento had made plans to do work with some ministers in Sacramento, a presentation on AIDS. Verbally they have been receptive but in terms of following through they haven't done much.

S: So the gay outreach in the churches has mostly been around the AIDS crisis and not necessarily around promoting lesbian and gay rights.

A: No. Not yet. [wry smile]

S: What are some of the outreach methods employed by BLGHJ?

A: Mostly conferences and distributing information.

S: The BLGHJ manifesto acknowledges African-American gay and lesbian youth. What outreach is being done to reach the youth?

A: Cleo [Manago] has done some presentations in the schools, youth groups and at churches.

S: What role do African-American lesbians play in terms of helping to define and meet the goals of BLGHJ?

A: I think we bring our vision to BLGHJ. Black lesbians in the organization are concerned with getting information out to the public about alternative health care. I think sometimes as lesbians we want to separate ourselves from other wimmin. We have the same kind of health care issues. A friend of mine died of cancer last year. I know of a couple of wimmin who have died of cancer. I think we have a commitment to get regular health check-ups. A lot of

times...here again lesbians who particularly are not sexually involved with men also need to get a pap smear every year and get checked out for communicable sexual diseases...

S: Do you mean African-American wimmin who are not currently sexually active with men? Because lesbian by definition...

A: You are making an assumption...

S: That's true.

A: That's a bad assumption we make...

S: I guess it's wishful thinking... [laughter]

A: We can't make that assumption - people aren't always honest about their sexual activity. Particularly something like that - they're not going to tell you that they deal with men. And we have to be realistic about that.

S: In addition to the health issues that are specific to African-American wimmin, what other issues or what other perspectives are African-American lesbians bringing to BLGHJ?

A: Again to reiterate the issue around justice. The fact that a lot of wimmin who work, may be working at jobs without health insurance. Or may be working in conditions that are unhealthy. Environmental factors. Particularly in low paying jobs - think about it. We bring in terms of own experiences as Black lesbians and also as grassroots people who not necessarily have always worked in office jobs...and I think that gives us a perspective in terms of health and justice for wimmin.

S: In regards to process, are these concerns brought up as discussion topics or raised with the intention of initiating some type of activism?

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Black Lesbians/Gays for Health and Justice

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A: Initiating activism. Bringing up issues we can do organizing around. Also in working with other people, one of the things the organization wants to do is to network with other groups, so as not to reinvent the wheel.

S: What other organizations has BLGHJ begun to do outreach and/or coalition work with?

A: Nation of Islam, Freedom Alliance and individual progressive African-American organizations.

S: In alliance building and in working with other groups and people who are very different from ourselves, a lot of stuff comes up. In terms of intercultural, intergender conflicts and sexism etc. What focus has BLGHJ taken in terms of addressing those issues so that things go smoothly, or so that alliances aren't so easily broken?

A: That's a good question. So far that hasn't been an issue in our group. And we will have to talk about how we will deal with those issues within the group. The wimmin in the group are kinda outspoken there so it's [sexism] not an issue. "Out there" in the sense that they are definitely not wimmin you would expect to take a back seat. In terms of their being an important part of the group and being a part of the decision-making process, they are active.

S: That may be a positive commentary on the caliber of the men in the group...

A: We wanted the organization to be co-sexual. I feel the men in the group have a lot of respect for wimmin. That's one of the things I feel good about.

S: Is there a Black feminist presence in the organization? Wimmin who openly identify as Black feminist and who are promoting Black

feminism as part of their Black lesbian agenda?

A: Yes there are.

S: Do you identify yourself as a Black feminist?

A: I kinda like Alice Walker's term "womanist." But I would also accept the term feminist. The term feminist as used in the past has been one-dimensional.

S: I think the term feminist takes on a more political connotation - whereas the term womanist doesn't. What distinguishes this organization from any other Black lesbian/gay organization that you have been involved with? What would you say to Aché readers that would indicate to us that Black lesbians may find a future in this organization?

A: I would say that the group is very important because Black lesbians are respected, are equal members of the group, feminist issues are taken seriously, and that the men in the group are very much concerned about wimmin's issues and are committed.

I would also say that it's [BLGHJ] good because of our activism and our diversity. I may have strong values or feelings about something other people in the group may not believe...about relationships, lifestyles, politics...but we are respectful of our diversity and differences. I think it's very unique. We don't tolerate diversity very much in our communities sometimes.

S: Which community?

A: When I speak of community, I'm speaking specifically of the lesbian community. In a lot of ways we are a part of all those communities and in other ways we are not a part of any of them.

S: Are you saying we do not ac-

cept diversity in many of the communities we participate in, whether it be Black, gay/lesbian or wimmin communities?

A: Yeah. There is this kind of conformity and inability to look at alternative lifestyles...I came into "the life" to live my life the way I want to. If I weren't a lesbian my lifestyle wouldn't change that radically (except with being involved with wimmin, of course) but not in terms of my politics and values.

We have to re-examine as activists, as Black lesbians and gay men our own value systems too, because all of us have been really inculturated by living in this society.

S: Is there any thing you would like to say to the Black lesbian community in terms of outreach?

A: Yeah. I hope that more sisters will get involved with the project and be supportive in any way that they can. Find out more about the project because we want to grow. It's a core grassroots organization - any kind of input Black lesbians want to give in the organization is welcome, in terms of bringing community issues to the organization. We are not a clique. As our manifesto states, we welcome transsexuals, drag queens - and a lot of people have a problem with that...I'm not saying I'm totally comfortable with it either. But it's open. The group, while working in different communities, affirms all those different parts of ourselves. We affirm our Blackness, our feminism, our being lesbian and gay. All those things we should feel good about ourselves. But we also in doing so create our own new communities and we bond with ourselves. And that is a very strong and important

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On The Table...

What is our communal responsibility in addressing child-rearing issues? What personal work must be undertaken by the Black lesbian community that will influence the role of Black males in our community?

Lynn

Undertaking personal and communal work to positively influence boy children is no light-weight task. Of all the "ISMS" that plague us, sexism seems the furthest from enlightenment.

We must examine our own experiences as children and understand how those experiences effect our attitudes and behavior with children now. For me, the inner journey has been both painful & productive. Though I am accepting that I have been the best parent that I can be I know that it was an immature, narrow understanding of myself that was the framework for much of the parenting I did.

We need also to accept the fact that male energy exists on this plane, and further, that it exists within us women. Would changing the word "male" to "X" make it more acceptable? I see "X" energy as the weight that balances another energy ("Y") in me and brings me into inner fulfillment.

$X + Y = \text{wholeness.}$

Behavior by males on this planet is out of hand! We can and must be the change-agents. We cannot discard boy-children because "they're going to end up messed up anyway." Again, we must kick in the doors and tramp on the taboos. Beyond taking over the sex education of children (yes, we cannot expect males/society to teach what they do not understand), we must deepen our personal relationships with all children. Spend time, spend time, spend time with boy &

girl children. Children need to learn by doing vs. watching (TV, videos, movies). What are they watching anyway? They need to be active in life not to passively watch it. They need adult guides who are consistently in their life (even after the break up). It is not enough to say at Christmas and on the child's birthday "call me anytime." Being there for children, means being with them often - being close enough to sense something going on, being sensitive and trusted enough for the child to open up. Join in with other families for meals, games, trips, museums, lectures, creativity (art, music, dancing, storytelling).

Many times during my active parenting years, I was torn between devoting time to my children and time to my social group (primarily lesbian). The two were not one and the same, and did not flow smoothly together. Please understand, I believe that every woman ought to have space and time to herself - that is as sacred as our children. Who will allow the mother this?

Committing time to children is a lifestyle change. The amount and type of socializing changes because of the needs of young people. As more women commit personally to children, mother or not, the character of the community changes as it manifests a more fully developed existence.

✓ ✓ ✓

Anita Green

I read Amana's letter regarding "On The Table" with love and dread. Though I feel the weight of responsibility of helping to raise healthy male children, I also feel my resentment and pain from past and present hurts.

I can remember having a "discussion" with my father when I was a younger woman, in which he tried to tell me that he had never played favorites with his children, that he treated the boys no different than the girls, how he loved us equally.

I don't know what he was remembering but I could not forget my four years of participation in high school sports that never got a rise out of him, that did not get him to one game. I remembered the special diet, the proud look and the many hours he gave to my younger brother when he became active during his high school years.

I will not list all the ways in which my parents gave subtle and not so subtle indications that, indeed like the society of which we were a part, my parents valued sons over daughters. My father may have wished it different but it was not.

When I was pregnant, I hoped for a boy because I did not want to chance having a girl who liked dresses and giggled a lot. My daughter has turned out to be more than my vision. And I wonder, what males are out there strong enough to deal with her independent, outspoken self? What kinds of choices does she have for male

On The Table...

companionship? Where are the healthy men and how do they get that way?

It is not enough to say that the men must take care of the boys. The boys are watching us and taking clues from our behavior towards them about how we feel about them. I do not want to further the misogynistic tendencies of our culture. At the same time, I want to be able to have my own space to not deal with male energy at any given time. Both things need to happen at the same time. I feel that I can listen to another woman talk about her struggles to raise male children and give her support to find healthy ways to do it. At the same time I would not volunteer to watch her child because I have too much resentment that comes up when I'm around any child other than those connected to my daughter.

We have positive models for an all women's space (or men's.) It does not have to be a negative act.



Reatha M. Fowler

Lesbians are making the choice to have children at increasing numbers across the country. In the past most of the children in our community were the result of previous heterosexual relationships. I myself have been experiencing the emotional and hormonal pull to raise a child through adoption.

When I envision the logistics of this, I look to myself and my personal resources. I also expect my closest friends will be of support to me. But, I also realize my circle of friends will have to expand to include many other women, lesbian

and straight, with children, where I would most likely get the greatest support.

I never imagined that raising my child would be the responsibility of the lesbian community. Because having a child is a woman's choice -- why should it be the responsibility of a community? The issue is much deeper than that. The community, be it African or lesbian can and does play a role. As adults we need to play an active role in guiding and supporting our children. Not just as lesbians but as African people; not just children of lesbians but all children.

Our children are faced with some serious obstacles: poverty, drugs and alcohol, sexual and physical abuse, teenage pregnancy and poor education. That list doesn't include the interpersonal conflict that adolescents experience just because they are adolescents. Nor does it include world issues like apartheid, U.S. intervention, the rapid destruction of the rain forest and nuclear weapons which affect those community issues in a very real way.

For those of us who care about the future of African people on this planet, we need to work from many directions. But one of them has to be providing support and direction to our youth, even if we are not parents.

If we understand the need for supporting our children, then we should not have to ask the question "what is the role of the black male in the lesbian community?"

Raising a child is a definite challenge, but if you are a feminist, raising an African man child is not one that most women actively seek. I frequently hear women make the comment, "I'm so glad she has a

girl" or "a girl is much easier to raise." The fact is that raising a child, male or female, is difficult.

Audre Lorde has written about the personal challenge to raise a boy in this society to be a sensitive person. A parent's philosophy on life gives a child his or her suitcases for traveling but what he or she puts inside those suitcases is greatly influenced by their experiences outside the home and in the media.

Those things we cannot control. That is why I heard a friend's son make a sexist comment when his father was trying to teach him to cook a meal. His mother is the last feminist, one would never think this child would make such a statement. Hopefully, he doesn't believe it but has been conditioned to verbalize it.

I don't know. But I do know we cannot turn our backs on African male children. Can you imagine what life must be like for them? White people see all of them as thugs, purse-snatchers, drug dealers, rapists, criminals. What does this do to their self-esteem? Does it empower our children or does it reinforce the self-hatred that African people have deeply embedded in our psyche since slavery? When I walk down the street, I'm sure there are racists who think mammy, prostitute, welfare mother, drug addict. I may see hate in some of their eyes, but I rarely see fear, even with my "angry Black woman" look.

I think it is important for us (African lesbians) to do what we can as individuals and as a community to respect and nurture the children of the women in our community.



On The Table...

Amana Johnson

The lesbian feminist line of separating from men has been deemed by some black lesbian feminists as the lines of white lesbian separatists. It has been stated that we are not at all shunning motherhood, child-rearing, men and male children, that we are merely saying we do not want to focus and concentrate valuable energy that we need to be using to create safe, separate spaces to explore our depths, to heal, nurture, understand, define and empower ourselves on men. That yes, we will support the black male in his endeavor to do that for himself but we will not do it for him.

But what about the black male child of the lesbian parent who is already a part of our community? Perhaps we as black lesbians say we are not separatists but where are the community activities that welcome our male children? Where are the individual friends to these children who represent the lesbian community? Let us move forward and not backward on this issue. Shall we continue to do lip-service to the black lesbians who are raising tomorrows black men? When will we truly begin to embrace the struggle of the african american lesbian parent within our communities? Do we really have a choice of not embracing this male man/child? By not embracing our children wholly (particularly our black male children) we monkey the same white male arrogance that disregards and destroys the earth, having no regard for its future productivity vis a vis, no regard for the future productivity of our children/male children. What happens tomorrow? What of our daughters

who choose to love men and what of tomorrows black men who will be the lovers or murderers of our daughters? In whose hands should we leave their upbringing in?

The society in which we live is systematically annihilating the black community in general, male, lesbian and gay in particular. The nuclear family idea within the african american community is an accepted, yet unrealistic and basically non-working concept. As for black lesbians, the nuclear family concept is a total myth or anomaly at most. More often than not the black lesbian does not own a nuclear family. Because she goes against the traditional grain of family values, she stands alone and quite often is not embraced by the traditional black community.

What of our daughters who choose to love men...

The african american lesbian mother has, through this separation, broke loose of traditional child rearing practices where the responsibility of raising a child is shared by the mythical nuclear family or the responsibility is shared by sectors of the community. On the whole, the oppressions borne by lesbians both societally and within the black community make lasting lesbian relationships a rare and precious occasion. Consequently, the african american lesbian mother raises her children in an

isolative world where there is minimal community support, nurturance and healing.

The task of raising a child single-handedly in today's fragmented society is a murderous job (some would even call it suicide). It requires a staunch inner discipline as well as social and economic support and stability. The children of lesbian mothers are lacking a viable and stable community they can cling to and learn from. Consequently, they are not understanding the values of the black lesbian community and developing within it in a self-determined fashion.

It is during the worst years of early development, which I define as puberty/adolescence and pre-adulthood, and call more accurately the "change of life" time, that the black lesbian community must be at its strongest in support of the lesbian parent. A time as severe to the teenager as the menopausal/change of life is to the adult. The years that can bring insanity or murder. The years that can set the gel of hatred in a bowl of confusing choices. The years when the child seeks identity, voice and expression, and chooses the values that they will accept as their own. Unfortunately, this is the time when community support is flakiest. This is the time when we say in unison, "this ain't my shit!"

At the close of these years, from what choices will these young people receive their sweetest rewards, will they be most greatly embraced? Will it be from the very community that not only appears to be nebulous but that has also kept them invisible, silenced and shut out?

The privileges and rewards derived from embracing the larger

On The Table...

mainstream societal values do, at least superficially, appear to be more abundant. At least their hatred of lesbians and gays, their bashing of us, their rejection of us will elicit applause from within the black community and the society at large be it religious, athletic, economic, political, academic...all sectors.

What work can I do personally to influence the role of the black male in the lesbian community? Firstly, as a lesbian parent, I can continue to love, nurture, educate, heal and empower myself thereby teaching a healthy lifestyle by practice and example.

On an individual level I must be self defined, self determined and clear about my responsibility to myself that I may give without giving myself away, without being sapped or drained, while still maintaining the essential autonomy necessary for continued growth. I believe that the best influence is a living, visible example. As a community, we must know and interact with the children, adolescents and young adults of our community to whatever extent we can. We should endeavor to embrace our children, teaching them the layers of information that we have gained through our experiences, that they will embrace us in return and expand upon our knowledge...

Here we are at point "A" back to art forms, back to creation. A person is being molded. A person who will one day grow up to be a lesbian, or gay, or heterosexual male or female. Whatever their personal choice of loving, we must facilitate the creation of people who will be evolved enough to embrace all of their community without bias. Whose example will they fol-

low?

What of the extended family, the ancient tradition of indigenous peoples of color, an absolutely essential component of child rearing in order to raise a whole, healthy, autonomous individual? Who is the extended family of the child of the black lesbian parent?

Every black lesbian who does not have a child of another lesbian in their life should make it a point to become intimately acquainted with an assortment of girls/young women and boys/young men. That means knowing their concerns, knowing their issues and giving to them what we can of the information that we have to this very date in order to facilitate their personal growth and exploration.

Children of lesbians need space and the opportunity to meet each other and get to know each other. They should be encouraged to talk to each other about their responsibility of being raised in a lesbian household. It is the responsibility of the black lesbian community to create and/or thoroughly support those endeavors and make those spaces safe, just as we do for our own personal growth and development.

Black lesbian parents can not/must not allow their children to be made invisible and silent within our community even amongst the very strong tendency to ignore them on a community level. We as a community should have more activities that encompass the entire Lesbian Family. Does "Lesbian Family" sound like an unfamiliar term? What can we do to make that a reality? You have to have family before you can have community.

✓ ✓ ✓

"On the Table" is a monthly forum where you respond to various topics. Please, send us your thoughts and comments on anything you've read here so that the dialogue can continue.

* * * * *

Next month's topic:

Is practicing safe-sex a part of your sexual relationships, why or why not?

What innovative approaches are there to eroticizing safe-sex?

Deadline for response is July 15th.
Please specify if you would not like your name included.

Mail to: Aché, P.O. Box 6071,
Albany, CA. 94706.

* * * * *

SKYEVIEW

(continued from pg. 19)

bond...to bond with ourselves and to celebrate our own diversity and differences.

Skye: Aeisha, thank you very much.

Skye Ward is a regular contributor to Aché.

To Those Who Carry

by Amana Johnson

**For those who carry
Manchildren from the womb
How do we let them go?**

**Audre, my sister once said
We must send them away
To grow and live apart from us**

**What is the preparation
For this ripping and snipping of the cord?**

**How do we send them i ask?
How do we restrengthen
From the sowing and smelting
Carving and molding**

**How do we avoid the guilt
Of casting them out into thick of jungle
Knowing we have given them this life?**

**Do we lie awake wondering
If the seeds
we've sown
in their souls**

**Will sprout
them shelter
in the soil
of their lives**

**Or how well
We have smelted the iron
Alloyed the metals
To create the tools and weapons
For their black battle**

**Or if they will even find them
Buried somewhere amongst the ruins
Of their manhood
And pick them up aiming at the enemy
Who hopefully they've not defined
As their mothers?
How do we send them I ask?**

CORRECTION

**The following is the corrected statement
from Amana, last month's featured artist.**

**art is my breath and heartbeat
heartbeat in my hands
fingertips of pulsing pearl tongue
a fertile womb about them
giving birth to myself
to my world**

**art is the voice of my soundless self
my cry, my purge, my joy,
my scars, my heal, my rejoice,
my conjure**

**it be words, texture, images
conversing with you
your senses
touching without reaching
offering you taste of my bittersweetness
taste of yourself, vision behind my eyes
smell of emotion**

**it be self preservation, gratification,
sanity and empowerment
it be beautification, confirmation,
experimentation, through these...
creation
creating my world as i rebirth myself
from my hands**

**art is my breath and my heartbeat
it is simply what i do**

Black Gender Politics

(continued from pg. 9)

of disenfranchised peoples, but most importantly, that of Black Lesbians and Black heterosexual women.

It is essential that Black Gay men become visible in the Anti-rape movement with the understanding that the same motivation which causes acts of sexual violence to be inflicted upon Black women, causes the escalation of incidents of fag-bashing. It is important to Black Gay men to support the Equal Rights Amendment with the realization that a capitalist system which denies parity of workers' compensation on the basis of gender, is the same system which disburses unequal pay on the basis of race, and further, will deny employment on the basis of sexual orientation/affectional preference. Black Gay men must become active in the Pro-choice Movement and see the direct correlations between a woman's right to decide not to complete the gestation process and likewise, to be protected from forced obstetrical interventions, and the rights of HIV-infected Black Gay men to access drug therapies through clinical trials.

We must always strive to see these connections and to create a movement which is more powerful, and as priceless as the quilt which hangs in the Smithsonian. As a reminder, and as inspiration, let us look to the images of the three generations of Black women in "Links and Lineage"--the grandmother piecing together the bits and scraps to weave a protective covering for generations to come.

©1989, Craig G. Harris

Craig G. Harris is a New York based author and activist.

¹Walker, Alice *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, NY, 1984, p. 239.

²Harris, Craig G., "Coming To Power," *The Advocate*, April 12, 1988, p. 38.

³Ibid.

⁴Majors, Richard G., "Cool Pose: The Proud Signature of Black Survival," *Changing Men*, Winter 1986, p. 6.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Lorde, Audre, *A Burst of Light*, Firebrand Books, Ithaca, NY, 1988, p. 23.

⁷Ibid. pp. 21-22.

⁸Nierenberg, John R., "Misogyny, Gay and Straight," *New Men, New Minds*, ed. Franklin Abbott, The Crossing Press, Freedom, CA., 1987, p. 133.

⁹Smith, Barbara, "Working for Liberation and Having a Damned Good Time," *New York Native*, March 3, 1986, p. 27.

¹⁰Ibid.

"Imitation of Life"

(continued from pg. 11)

but we were laughing in agreement. My point is that Sara Jane and all the Sara Janes are not the way she is portrayed in "Imitation of Life."

Although the film isn't intended to portray Annie Johnson or Sara Jane as Black people with their particular plights, you can't help ask certain questions. Like, where are all the other Black folk in this film?

If you blink, you really can miss some very significant points. Annie Johnson tells Miss Meredith how she has always fantasized about a grand funeral where all her friends come and pay tribute. Miss Meredith is astonished as she asks, "why, what friends Annie, I didn't know you had any?" It is there we

learn that Annie Johnson has a whole community she relies on and in response to Miss Meredith's astonishment she replies, "why, Miss Meredith, you never asked me about my friends."

Within Annie Johnson and Sara Jane's world, Miss Meredith is very small. Yet, the impact of Sara Jane's hatred toward her mother and being Black is disproportionately out of perspective. I wanted to see these characters interacting with their community. This would give insight as to why poor Sara Jane was so tormented. It would also give respect and context to Annie Johnson's life. It amazed me that the only time we saw Annie Johnson's community was indeed at her funeral. Why, even Mahalia Jackson was there. The filmmakers would like us to believe this entire Black community came out of the same void as Sara Jane's repulsion to being Black.

I happen to think "Imitation of Life" is a great study of racial dynamics and unfortunately, some very common misconceptions. The films' racism parallels that of the film industry. What lends this film its creditability is not its blonde Hollywood sex star, but Juanita Moore's fine acting role. It is important to acknowledge that Moore received a nomination for an Academy Award for supporting actress. Keeping in mind the era "Imitation of Life" was released might help when viewing this film.

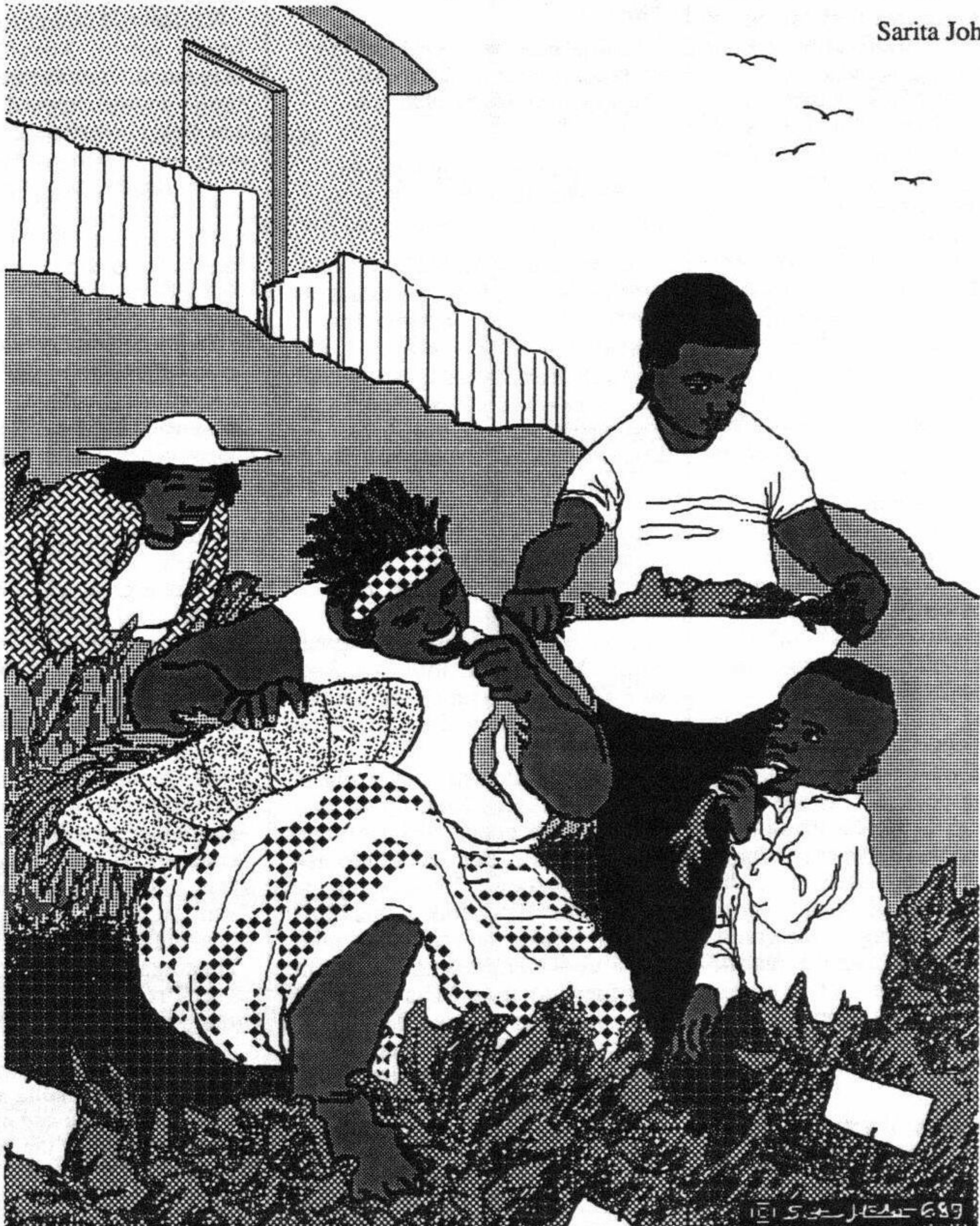
Then again, maybe not. In either case, I recommend seeing it with your point of view.

"Imitation of Life" is available on video and is available at Blockbuster, Captain Video and other video stores throughout the bay area.

Artwork by Sarita Johnson-Calvo

To me art is merely a pool of creativity that each person has at her disposal. With this in mind everyone you know becomes an artist. I like that. My art is divided among many channels; writing, knitting, sewing, making up words, drawing and painting. Not one of these feels any more important to me than the other (to the dismay of my art school instructors.) These are just things I always do. My drawings, through illustration, do link me with other people easier than my other activities. I enjoy showing others what I see. Currently I am illustrating the Bible.

Sarita Johnson-Calvo



Bulletin Board

"Cotton, Silk, Cassava and Corn: Writings by Women of Color, Single Mothers"

edited by Opal Palmer Adisa and Lula Fragd are calling for submissions covering (but not limited to); difficulties/joys of single motherhood; personal experiences w/the welfare system & other legalities; the balance between motherhood & sexuality; raising children of mixed heritage; difference between raising boy & girl children; issues of lesbian mothering. Prose/Essays/Reflections: max. 25 pgs., double-spaced; Poetry: any length. The deadline is September 30, 1989. Send 3 copies to Opal Palmer Adisa, P.O. Box 10625, Oakland, CA. 94610

STUDY GROUP FOR BLACK WOMEN

There is nothing more beautiful or more powerful than Black women working together. We need to come together across our differences as Black women, straight & lesbian. We will study and share, read and discuss books relevant to our lives as Black people, Black women, Black lesbians. We'll discuss:

- anger
- health
- spirituality / Yoruba tradition
- homophobia
- relationship to our communities
- Black feminism
- colorism
- the African diaspora and more

Our first meeting will be Mon., July 10th, 7-9pm. We'll start by reading selections from "Sister / Outsider" by Audre Lorde. Reading material will be made available to those of us who can't afford to buy the books. Requires at least 2 months commitment. Childcare available. For more information call Erica, 641-0187.

UJAMAA

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 building to house a multi-cultural center. We wish to provide an area for growth and prosperity for all

women of color. We need your ideas and expertise, as well as your time!! All volunteers will be gladly accepted. For more information, contact Annette Martin: (415) 255-2155, or Suzanne Lovest: 832-0531. You may write UJAMAA at 6116 Merced Ave. #373, Oakland, CA. 94611

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 submissions to Janet Wallace, P.O. Box 20390, Oakland, CA. 94611

VOICES: Bay Area Lesbian Choral Ensemble has openings for altos with basic music reading skills. Rehearsals are on Tuesday nights. For info, call Allison, 658-8119.

"DYNAMICS OF COLOR"

A call for entry to Lesbian Visual Artists! All 2-d/sculpture media accepted. All work must be done by lesbian artists and speak to the issue(s) of racism. Exhibit dates:

Oct. 4-Nov. 4, 1989. Deadline for entry - August 12, 1989. Jurors: Wendy Cadden, Esther Hernandez, Orlanda Uffre. Slides or photos: \$3-5/entry...3 max. For complete information send SASE to Lesbian Agenda for Action, 3543 - 18th St. #32, SF., CA. 94110 or phone 415-552/5677 (voice); 530-7803 (TDD.)

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.



Pat Parker gave Pippa and I a gift.

**She gave us time
when her time was the most precious.**

**She gave us her guidance
and her blessings.
Through her belief in Aché
she gave us the courage
to believe in ourselves
and we will never forget.**

**She gave of herself to us all.
She leaves us her words
and her life as example
of all that can be
and all that's left to be done.**

**We dedicate Aché
To the memory of Pat Parker.**



"Artwork by Sarita Johnson-Calvo." *Aché*, vol. 1, no. 6, July 1989, p. [1]. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, link.gale.com/apps/doc/UHEDBC483392691/AHSI?u=umuser&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=b56ba36c. Accessed 8 Dec. 2022.