

AKHÉ

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\$2 Donation

The Bay Area's Journal for Black Lesbians



I love the shapes of us...that which is full and soft and beckons to be sung to.
This image is one of a multitude that seem to pour out from me in various forms
and in many ways my art gives testimony to my passionate reverence for the rich beauty
I see in our thick bodies, we daughters of the diaspora...

Tobe Melora Correal

Aché

The Bay Area's Journal For Black Lesbians

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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 week of each month and the deadline for submissions is the 20th 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 your submissions. Please specify if you would not like your name reproduced in Aché.

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Aché is dedicated to the memory of Pat Parker.

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Help!! The printing costs have gone through the roof. If you have any ideas about how Aché can get a discount on offset printing or have access to a copy machine that can print on 11x17 paper, please call (415) 824-0703.

■ Here it is, September 7th, and I'm finally typing these last few words to finish up this month's Aché. Many apologies to those of you who have made a few trips to the bookstore to see if it was out yet, but you know how it is....

■ Many, many thanks to all of you who came to the "Voices of the Gods" Aché benefit. It was really hard to believe that anything could pack La Peña on a Wednesday night but we did. All during the film, people just kept coming, and for those of you who asked, yes - it might get shown again in the semi-near future. It was the most successful fundraiser Aché ever had, and for the first time, the cost of producing Aché is totally covered by funds raised and donations. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

■ Speaking of fundraising, are you interested in helping create ideas for Aché fundraisers, or want to learn more about producing events? An Aché fundraising committee is being formed, and needs input from creative, energetic women. For information call 824-0703. Get involved!!

■ Next month's (October's) theme was created by several of you who, I'll assume independent of each other, sent in submissions about their mothers. If you have anything relating to the topic of mothers, please submit it. The deadline is officially the 20th, but if you need more time, give me a call and we'll work it out. OK?

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

For those of you who have already gotten yours and thought it was over and done with, we are now offering the 2nd Aché shirt!! This shirt features a beautiful Dread-woman graphic by N.Y. artist/poet Storme Webber (this art-

work was featured on the 1st issue of Aché back in February.) These are available in the same colors and sizes as listed above.

To order, send a check or money order along with your name & mailing address to:

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

(Specify which shirt, size & Color. Call first to make sure that the color and size is still available.)



ACHÉ

by Storme Webber

ACHÉ



"5 Women Watching"
by Barbara Sandidge

B O Y C O T T I N G

Who, Why and What Results?

Cheryl Spear

Noticeable results are happening; large corporations, small businesses and groups of individuals have begun to take a stand on the exploitation of our peoples - like us, they are saying no to apartheid wherever it exists. Even so, there are so many others who are refusing to relinquish control over goods, natural resources, and monies that in no way belong to them. In fact, every time we turn around, someone is trying to get over, to subsist off of the hard labor, poor conditions and poverty of a peoples who have repeatedly been broken down and stepped upon.

The August issue of *Aché* contained an incomplete list of establishments to boycott. This issue will cover why and what results are being reported.

■ Kellogg's

Why?

In the township of Kwathema, where Kellogg's employs some 300 black South Africans, they not only give blacks a fraction of whites wages, but also do not allow them to join the trade unions. Kellogg's also pays taxes to the South African government and supports their military; they are also a major supplier of food products to the South African military.

This third party relationship among the South African government and Kellogg's is to be seen as significant. Kellogg's need not be on the firing squad of the South African military to claim responsibility for their oppressive behavior. Irregardless of Kellogg's faulty reasoning, having third party or even fifth party relationships with the South African government, we say cut the bullshit and get the fuck out.

What results?

- 1.) Public schools on the east coast who have the free breakfast program have been asked to boycott Kellogg's cereals and other products completely. Participation has been excellent.
- 2.) After hearing and reading about anti-apartheid themes, children have been encouraged to write letters and draw pictures demanding that Kellogg's completely divest from South Africa.
- 3.) EAA (Educators Against Apartheid) is currently putting together an anti-apartheid ethic curriculum to be taught in the public schools.
- 4.) EAA has produced and distributed a film strip titled "Apartheid is Wrong."

[It is important to note that the EAA has instigated this boycott. Also, keep in mind that Kellogg's is a kids boycott, unlike Shell, Coca-Cola, and others which are participated in exclusively by adults.]

For information on the boycott write:

Educators Against Apartheid, Paula Bower
164-04 Goethals Ave., Jamaica, NY. 11432
(201) 836-6644

or write to:

President, Kellogg's Corporation
Kellogg's Square
Battle Creek, MI 49016-3599
(616) 961-2000

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Thoughts on A Black Women's Study Group

ERICA WILSON

In the May issue of *Aché*, a topic question was raised concerning what books we should be reading. I thought about writing an answer. I'd been thinking of putting together a study group for black women and making lists of books covering different themes, issues, history, literature - everything and anything that seemed relevant were strewn around my house. The topic was definitely in the front of my mind. I'd been talking for months with whoever would listen about

how we don't read enough or that we didn't read the "right" books.

Yet, in spite of all that I never wrote. I didn't, primarily because of what Darlene Angela mentioned in her letter in July's *Aché*, that is that we, black women/black lesbians, have a hard time claiming ourselves as writers. Even more than that, we have a hard time claiming ourselves/each other, at all, with any semblance of wholeness. We live in a world that does its best to convince us we're not worth claiming. When I sit down to write all my baggage comes and sits down with me, on the end of my pen, in my face on my keyboard daring me to love myself. I've recently begun writing with Darlene's example and not so-patient-patience, and Dr. Chinosole's, my *teAché*/mentor/friend/elder, gentle and not so gentle criticisms. They insisted

that I keep writing and helped me start a long, barely begun journey towards myself. This article is a step towards finding and refining my voice. The study group is a step towards finding and defining what I want to say with the voice I uncover. It's about empowerment.

The first meeting of a study group for black women met on Monday, July 17th. As I had hoped, we met across sexual, class and generational differences. It promises to be a very dynamic

was wearing a t-shirt that said "It's A Black Thang, You Wouldn't Understand." So, in our tradition of improvising with whatever happens to be around (and if nothing happens to be around we'll make up something), we named ourselves Eye To Eye, It's A Black Thang- a black women's study group was born.

When I think about the reasons I had for getting something like this together, it mostly comes down around the fact that I'm from Bos-

ton and feel very far from my home. I've been in California for about three years and

We need a time to get through our own issues with ourselves and each other...

group. We should get a lot of good work done. It's what keeps me going, it feeds me. It is profound, sitting in a room with all these beautiful black women choosing to learn about ourselves. That's a revolutionary act in a society that has erased our history, that knows it must at all costs keep us from each other and from ourselves. We meet twice a month, in the harsh warmth of our differences and our need/love for each other.

We named ourselves that first night. Our name comes from Audre Lorde's essay "Eye To Eye: Black Women, Hatred and Anger", our first reading. The article deals with black women, our issues with each other and also our deep need for sisterhood, our need to look at each other eye to eye. Then, Liane

have heard a lot of talk about community and seen a tremendous amount of fragmentation and alienation come down. As the child of an interracial couple I am well practiced at walking among many fences and have felt the pain of coming too close or straying too far off the path and banging my shin. But, I know there is work I'm here to do and to do it I need some support around me. Because I feel such a strong connection with black women, they are at present who I chose to study with.

We can't act effectively without community. Without it, we have no sense of commitment and end up doing the San Francisco "pc" dance, we flit from one issue to another as they come up. We can't even identify, much less address,

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Thoughts on a Black Women's Study Group

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what our needs are. As black lesbians, our communities are varied. We do a lot of work to build community but much of it is not sustained. We flit from one cause to another. We need a place to come together in all our diversity and figure it out. We need a time to get through our own issues with ourselves and each other. My hope is that through studying together we can find a little more direction.

Why have it across sexuality? I debated that for a long time. There are a few reasons. The first is to tie together black lesbians with our sisters, to heal some of what I see as an artificial separation. I am a black lesbian feminist, soon to be aunt, and my sister isn't. And, it is her I want to talk with. It is my niece or nephew I want to build a future for and to do that I'll need her help and her input on the kind of society we should build together. Also, because I wanted the group to be open for the sisters who are living inside the black community and who are closeted but who have been doing work there for years. I think they deserve our support. Those of us who can or who choose to be out, get very righteous about closeted lesbians. Yet, in my experience, some of the worst alienation is from black women who deal exclusively in the women's community. Then there are sisters who are in the women's community but to limit the amount of interacting with white women, they have surrounded themselves with women of color. For me that's a limited choice. It makes it easier to live but limits the kind of work we can do. San Francisco is like fantasy land where we are all supposed to be equal. It is a kind of temporary in-

sanity when we walk down the street and see another black woman and cannot look her in the eye. As Chinosole would say, we have to bond. I don't mean finding a lover or even finding a best friend. It means being able to count on each other, when we run out of grocery

A study group for black women is a celebration of us; a celebration of our needs, goals, thoughts, and connections.

money or the car breaks down or our children need to be looked after while I go to an appointment.

The need in the black community is so great for people to act. The rate of illiteracy is soaring. Our history is hidden from us and our children are not learning the skills to uncover it. We are dying, being killed and in need of some serious empowerment. On the week of Dr. Huey P. Newton's murder/assassination, this all seems so much more relevant. He was an important leader in the black community. And he believed in the power of knowledge. He was an intellectual, in the best tradition of intellectual activism; he used the knowledge he gained for his people and brought all of us to a better place. And yes, there were many questionable and destructive sides

to Huey Newton, there are many questions I needed to ask him. So, I simply want to acknowledge the death of a brother, who acted in the name of the people he believed in and helped believe in themselves. A brother, who like many of my brothers, may not have been able to see who I am because I am not interested in merely standing by his side, though I would gladly bear arms with him.

Black lesbians stand at the crossroads of change because we name ourselves black, woman, lesbian in a society that wishes we'd go unnamed. A study group for black women is a celebration of us; a celebration of our needs, goals, thoughts, and connections. It allows us to hear our voices undiluted; the voices of our writers, theoreticians, artists and also the voices of those of us that sit in that room. A study group that's exclusively for black women allows us to develop autonomous voices. Voices independent of the crushing impact of racism and sexism (except that which we carry in with us). You can't build community or coalition without having a strong base to work from. Study groups are important but, on their own, they're not enough. I see them mostly as stepping stones, a way of clearly sighting our goals, a necessary step towards putting theory into practice. I'd like to see this study group evolve into the Black community so that we actually put into practice the commitment we talk about.

For many different reasons I see the black community as being central to any substantial change in America. We have a long and sustained history of radical protest and political work. Today, we continue to work for change despite the bru-

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COME OUT? NOW, WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO DO THAT?

by
Winn Gilmore

As a dedicated, though surreptitious, Aché reader, I am deeply concerned- nay, worried- by this month's topic of Negro Gay ladies' coming out. Now, I'm sure many of you readers will take issue with that phrase, but listen to my reasoning. If, after considering my argument, you still disagree with my anti-coming out convictions, I'll merely count you among the many, the proud, the (sigh) Black Lesbians.

First, the idea that one needs to stand up to self, family, friends, and community and be identified with a loathed minority group implies that the group to which one is claiming association is discriminated against. Now, I have no problem with real minorities claiming their rights.

I support, for example, those myriads of Californians who thrust their ageing American automobiles in front of mine, sporting such decals as "Born American", "If You Can Read This, Thank Your Mother For Not Aborting You", and "Honk If You Love Jesus". It's obvious, you see, that in the first

instance, our beloved, and universally envied, America is under fire from Communist insurgency from both within and without. In the second instance, every American poll has indicated that anti-abortion-rightists are a minority. Finally, the Jesus-lovers may not be in the minority now, but they will be if, when honking, they are caught in a rhapsody of their Lord and Saviour, and all die in a million-car pile-up while en route to church.

Obviously, these minorities have every right to announce their proclivities and demand not just respect, but also government monies (read, your tax dollars). We Negro Gay ladies, however, are not persecuted, as these groups are. Why, if we want to walk down the street holding our lovers' hand, we need only escape whatever burg we live in and trek to a particular two-block area of a specific street in a certain city. If we long to see positive role models on screen, we need only make sure we don't miss the one film shown during the one night devoted to Third World people during the one-week run of the Gay film festival.

Now, as everyone else- and many a Negro Gay lady, too- will tell you, we are not a real minority. "What you do behind your bedroom door is private," they say on their most generous days. Or, as a few of you may have been reminded by Negro liberals, "Well, Gay rights are important, but don't you think the Black Movement should come first? Why don't we

address those special interest, Gay concerns after we get rights for all Black people, in general?"

Yes, you must realize that there are lots of other Negro Gay ladies who completely agree with me, and with the fore-mentioned attitudes. I am not a unique exception. Why, just the other day, one lady told me, "Of course I'm out to my family. I don't talk about it, you know," she continued, smoothing her fluttering hand over her dreadlocks. "They know, though." Within a few minutes, she'd pulled out a glossy three-by-five of her sister sitting on her husband's lap, holding a pair of grinning two-year-old twins.

And she's not the only one like me, either. A couple of days ago, a friend with a respectable job in the Financial District called to borrow one of my Givenchy dresses for a company party. When I asked what her lover was going to wear, she laughed embarrassedly, then said, "She's not going, silly! There are a few other Gays in the office, but none of us are out to the others. Luckily, there's an equal number of Gay men and women. We're all paired off for the party." See? There are lots of us who're embarrassed of being Lesbian. Hide! I say. Why, once you become adept at invisibility, I dare say that one day you can even disappear from yourself. Now, wouldn't that be grand?!

And, by the way, we should emulate the Negro community at-large. Now, back in your '60's, we were rightfully incensed be-

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Hide! I say. Why, once you become adept at invisibility, I dare say that one day you can even disappear from yourself!

Come Out?

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cause we couldn't vote or sit with non-Negroes in cafeterias. Finally, we've won both of these rights- in most places, anyway- and we've stopped fighting. We got our piece of the American pie, sat down under the nearest shade tree, and ate it. We Negroes are very greedy, you must admit, so we licked the plate clean and stretched out beneath that shade tree and fell asleep on our full bellies. We haven't awakened yet. And, why should we? All our battles are won! I bet not one of you can name one thing we, as Negroes, are missing.

My point, you see, is that you so-called Black Lesbians should be content with the rights we've got now. Let's not call attention to ourselves. Maybe the purported enemy will overlook us and pick someone else to slaughter in the streets. Now, how can you be overlooked if you come out?

For example, a Negro lady who was walking down the street the other day, sporting that bold, double-woman symbol on the back of her jacket. Now, do you think those six fine, young, clean-shaved boys- why, they were so clean, they had no hair on their heads! - would've broken those beer bottles over her head and carved that swastika on her back if she'd been dressed like normal people? No, I say.

But, follow the example of the Negro community at-large, and don't do anything about such incidents. If we learn anything from this, it's that we should wear our feelings inside, and not on our

sleeve- or jacket, as it were.

So, you see, we shouldn't come out to our communities. Who needs the pain and probable rejection? Pay no mind to the pain we start feeling around mid-October, when we wonder how to deceive our lover into believing that we can't take her home for Xmas because great-aunt Lulu is ill, and this is probably the last time we'll see her alive.

Never mind the resentful revulsion we feel each time we see Dick embracing Lisa, tongue deep in her mouth, on the silver screen, while every Maria and Jillian inevitably end up slashed to pieces while the audience nods its behemoth, collective head, murmuring "They deserved it!! Dykes!."

And, by all means, don't mind the way our lover quickly drops our hand and rushes away from us whenever a car full of boys drives by.

By no means should we come out to anyone, least of all to ourselves. I applaud the ladies who insist, "Lesbian is just a word, a category that you want to put me in. I don't call myself one because it's confining." Instead, let's go about our common, everyday lives, licking lustily on the lollipop of ennui. Let someone else fight for Negro Gay ladies' rights. We know what a good job they'll do. Why, that's why we're in such a wonderful place now.

In closing my argument against coming out, let me quote from an old Negro spiritual...

"Don't worry; be happy."

Thoughts on a Black Women's Study Group

(continued from page 6)

we continue to work for change despite the brutality or the seeming hopelessness of our situation. We have consistently been on the progressive side of most issues. Because of the overt nature of racism in America we have been kept out so thoroughly that we have been able to resist the cooptation that has often happened with other groups who have been able to integrate more readily. Black people are a large enough body just in terms of numbers, so we can affect some change. Black lesbian feminists are writing the most radical and important revolutionary theory today so I see us being integral to any important political change.

I'd like to see the group function on many different levels. As a network, as a support system for black women who are trying to push forward, as a tool to keep me working and thinking. Many of the women in the group are artists. I'd like to see some writing/artistic work come out of the group. [Aché is an important resource to us, maybe some of us can become a pool of resources to the magazine, writing, analyzing, taking pictures, reporting etc.]

I'd like to see study groups set up to explore other interests like literature, or history, etc. In this group we have already talked about a small group of women looking at some of the black radicals, Cedric Robinson, Walter Rodney ... Look out for it. We will be forming that group some time after christmas.

WOMEN OF COLOR LAUNCH ADVENTUROUS PLANS FOR A WOMEN'S BUILDING -- EAST BAY

by D.A. Walder

Four brown women sat around a breakfast tray placed strategically between their bodies...bodies gathered not only to share Just Desserts delights which were luringly placed near the coffee and herbal tea on the tray, but gathered primarily to share ideas, plans and strategies for the soon-to-be, now being created and imagined, East Bay Women's Building. The early evening, not-yet-foggy San Francisco light filtered in through the tall windows of Annette Martin's Western Addition flat as UJAMAA's monthly meeting began.

"The building will be open to all women...available to anyone who agrees with it's central purpose" says Suzanné Lovest, co-founder and Board member of UJAMAA, a newly organized group of women/lesbians of color dedicated to the concept of cooperative economics. Annette Martin, also a co-founder and board member, explains: this building is to be "a place of empowerment for people of color. "UJAMAA," as we use it, means cooperative economics -- which means for us to own our own shops, businesses and stores and profit from them collectively." Suzanné chimes in "that profit is then

We never want to get away from the community because the community will make us strong.

given back to the community by providing services for the community itself. The center will belong to the women of the Oakland community."

UJAMAA, in its grant proposal to the Women's Foundation, states that its purpose is to establish and operate a facility for and by women of color which will house retail businesses, offices and meeting spaces for non-profit organizations, as well as temporary housing space.

The building is to be located in the East Bay, says Suzanné, where a high percentage of women of color reside. "We have no particular location in mind. We have looked at different areas of Oakland." However, Suzanné is quick to explain UJAMAA's current status: "basically, what we're trying to do right now is raise the money so that when it comes time to approach a real estate agent we don't get hit with the common phrase 'do you have any money for this?' Unless you have money you can't do anything. What we're trying to do is raise the money first and then go out into the community and say we have a \$100,000 - we wish to purchase a building that has approximately four stories that can house the following..."

UJAMAA, still in its infancy, is being woven together. "The whole idea only came about in March of '89," says Suzanné, as she seemingly reminisces. "In that short period of time we have managed to get our name out to the community. If you say "UJAMAA", a lot of

women know what "UJAMAA" is.

They know who the people are who are working in UJAMAA. The last two events that we have had (the first one was a dance, and the second event was a benefit at COLORS,) were very successful. We had anywhere from one to two hundred people each time at these events."

In its infancy, UJAMAA is still trying to weave its organization together. Annette: "one of the things we are doing right now is getting our structure down...our board of Directors, our members, becoming visible to the community, both in San Francisco and Oakland so that people know who we are, that we are serious about this, that we have a lot of energy and that we need help."

A grant from the Women's Foundation to fund UJAMAA's start-up costs would add a lot of colorful yarn to the weave. According to Annette, "if funded by the Women's Foundation, UJAMAA will receive \$10,000 to set up an office, to hire somebody to work in that office, to help buy equipment, to be able to start putting into action what we believe is a part of UJAMAA."

Annette says that UJAMAA's ultimate goal is to be self sufficient and in that vein, UJAMAA has embarked upon an active fundraising campaign. For example, Annette explains "we have events planned from August to December 31st...which is a way of networking with other women of color, other lesbian of color organiza-

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Profile: Vera Martin

activism (ak' te vi'zm) n. the doctrine or policy of taking positive, direct action to achieve an end, esp. a political or social end - **ac' tiv ist** adj. [See also **BLACK LESBIAN EMPOWERMENT VERA MARTIN**]

■ Vera Martin is a 66 year old African-American lesbian activist who lives in the root of the word not the rhetorical. Martin is a worker bee not a queen bee, who after retiring from 30 years of service with the County of Los Angeles continues to devote her time and energies toward social and political activism within the wimmins community. Currently, she serves on the Board of Directors for the Connexus Women's Center, is a member of the Natl. Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum lesbian task force and planning committee for the upcoming NBLGLF conference in Atlanta. She is an organizer for the West Coast Celebration for Older Lesbians and, as if that were not enough to keep her busy, she regularly volunteers as an escort at Los Angeles area abortion clinics.

Martin is definitely a womyn of distinction who maintains an wholistic approach to life. She has exquisite taste in art, furnishings, apparel, in fact, everything about Vera Martin suggests consistency and integrity whether it be philosophical or aesthetic. As I entered her West Los Angeles home for this interview, I couldn't help but chuckle as I surveyed the airy pastel interior of her living room. The proximity of her house to the ocean and Vera's crisp summer white shirt, khaki-colored pants, sandals, meticulously manicured mauve-colored fingernails and even the pastel blue oscillating fan could have come from a glossy Southern California culture magazine layout.

But then again Vera Martin is an L.A. homegirl - she attended McKinley Jr. High and Jefferson High schools as an honor student. She got married in her senior year in high school, to the only man she had ever dated. She remained married for 15 years and subsequently had two children. The following is an excerpt from an interview I had with Vera Martin - our discussion covered many topics while engaged in documenting this bit of Black lesbian herstory. I certainly hope Aché readers will benefit from Vera Martin's story as much as I did.

Skye: Give me a little biography. Where were you born?

Vera: I was born in Natchez, Mississippi. I lived most of my life with foster parents in a small rural town in Louisiana. I had been estranged from my mother from the time I was one month old until I came to live with her in California when I was 16 years old. My mother did not want her friends to know that she had a daughter who was 16 years old. She had not made any friends who had teenage children or any other kind of child. So there was nobody for me to associate with. I was surrounded by adults. So what she did was put my age back - she told everybody I was 14 years old...

S.: Prior to and while you were married were you totally into the heterosexual trip?

V.: No! When I was probably 11-12 years old I had this very special girlfriend who's name ironically was Camille. [Vera's lesbian granddaughter is named Camille] ...See, I was not allowed to play with other children but for some reason this old lady [foster mother] decided that I could bring Camille home. Camille was a city kid. I convinced them to let me bring her home for the weekend which meant I got to have my bedroom all by myself except for her. And we had a rip roaring good time exploring and exploring!! I never forgot it - it was a permanent etching on my brain.

S.: Did it seem very natural for you to have that kind of intimate relationship with a girl?

V.: Yes. I thought it was great! As a child growing up I didn't like boys because I thought they were vulgar. They embarrassed me...I had big legs, tiny feet, long hair down to my rear, that stuff they called "good hair".... and so I was a facination I guess for them. They teased me a lot. I thought they were really vulgar and I was afraid of them - so I didn't really like them...and I never really dated. My husband was the first male I ever really dated and my mother set that up.

S.: For a womyn who's only intimate contact was at the age of 12 years old with another girl, what was going through your mind when you married him?

V.: Well it was absolutely outrageous. I was a virgin when we got married and I remember him having to tell me every move to make. I was so dumb it was embarrassing. I knew nothing about birth control of any kind. I was so dumb it was scary!!! [laughter]

S.: Was your ignorance due to your being sheltered by your mother?

V.: It wasn't because I was sheltered. It was because I was just denied everything. I couldn't go anywhere or have friends over. . . When I first came to Los Angeles

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Profile: Vera Martin

and went to school, these two girls just went out of their way to show me around and include me at recess and lunch, they just made me feel comfortable.

Well I invited them to my house after school. We had been sitting in the living room talking and having a good time. These were two dark skinned girls and my mother was one of those Louisiana bigots. When she came in from work she went into the kitchen and she opened cupboards, she banged doors, pots and pans...and finally they began to get the message. I didn't know any better so I wasn't getting it. I just thought she was annoyed at me and I wasn't sure what for... After my friends left my mother read my beads. She told me I must be out of my mind. How dare I bring those kids home.

And if I EVER brought those BLACK NIGGERS in her house again she would beat me to a pulp!!

S.: Was this colorist attitude pervasive in the Black community of this time? [1940's] Was your mother's attitude in line with the larger Black community of Los Angeles?

V.: Yes. I'm sure it must have been. I remember some of her cliches like "Black people are evil, and don't want to be bothered with any of them black skinned folks they are evil." I couldn't understand what complexion had to do with whether one was evil or not. To me that [being evil] had to do with one's character.

....You see coming from a small town in Louisiana I had read about New York and California and a lot of other major cities that were not

southern. And everything you read said you didn't have to deal with these kinds of issues in those places. And I sincerely believed every word that I read. I didn't expect any of this kind of stuff.

[In 1957 Vera's daughter was 13 years old and her son was 3 years old. After 15 years of marriage she separated from her husband whom she had not seen the entire three years he was in the service and later found out he had been having a series of love affairs. Vera was in the midst of her long term career with the County of Los Angeles. Between 1957-59 she had her first adult lesbian relationship.]

S.: Tell me about your first adult lesbian relationship.

V.: A fella I had been dating saw that our relationship had been going nowhere....he said, "Vera I got this really nice girl that I'd like for you to meet, she really needs a good friend." And I said, "Oh?...well you arrange it and I'll be glad to meet her." She invited the two of us for dinner at her house. This was the most gorgeous Japanese womyn I had ever seen in my life. That night she was wearing this dress in earth tones and she had her hair in a beehive, and she had the cutest accent I had ever heard. I sat there and said to myself about this fella [Chuck], "I don't know what you had in mind but I think you just screwed up!" [laughter] I don't know what he had in mind but it was the best favor he ever did me. Kay and I became very close....Kay had two children and was separated from her husband. She saved enough money to buy a house....every

spare moment that I had I spent at her house.

S.: How long were you and Kay together?

V.: Two years. We had become very close - as a matter of fact, we were making plans to go to Japan. But she became sick and died.... The bad part is we had had a misunderstanding. There is nothing worse in the world than feeling that you have not really made peace, that you didn't say everything that you wanted to say, you haven't properly said good bye. It was terrible....I was so disturbed by it I went berserk.

S.: Did you start dating men again as a reaction to Kay's death?

V.: Yes, that was the most terrible thing that ever happened to me. And I thought "I can't ever let this happen to me again - I can't handle this!" Because I had NEVER been so attached to anybody in my life as I was to her.

S.: Was there a Black lesbian/gay community and was it called as such? [1961]

V.: Not as we know it now, though the population was there.

S.: How did lesbians and gays meet?

V.: In house parties....they played butch/femme roles and the butches were just outrageous. It was really dangerous because they attracted so much attention to themselves. And men would lay in wait for them. I mean it was a blast for a couple of guys to snatch a butch and rape her

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BOYCOTTING

(continued from page 4)

■ Nestle

Why?

This is not Nestle's first violation. Nestle has repeatedly gone against the WHO (World Health Organization) international code of marketing BMS (Breast Milk Substitutes), first established in 1981. Alongside Nestle is AHP (American Home Products) who are now the leading distributors of infant formulas.

ACA (Action for Corporate Accountability) are the major instigators of this boycott against Nestle and American Home Products. Nestle and AHP have:

- 1.) Imported the largest supply of BMS (breast milk substitutes), infant formula into our sisters homes and hospitals.
- 2.) UNICEF reports at least one million children dying annually from malnutrition, diarrhea and disease associated with feeding infants BMS.

How this happens?

- a) Mothers are encouraged to bottle feed instead of breast-feeding infants while in the hospital.
- b) The mothers breasts stop producing milk by the time she is released to go home.
- c) BMS, infant formula, is too expensive to purchase.
- d) Formula which is purchased is diluted with contaminated water to make the minimal supply of milk last.
- e) Infants with already weak systems are poisoned and recovery from digested BMS is nearly non-existent.

If mothers are encouraged to breast-feed their children, the babies would have a chance to receive nutrients and antibodies so vital to their fighting disease and sickness. As it stands, out of 45 hospitals surveyed in 4 Asian countries, ACA found Nestles supplying 80% of them while AHP is also supplying to 64% of these hospitals. This is only one example of their repeated

violations.

What results?

We (the U.S.) are boycotting both Nestles and AHP and so is the United Kingdom, Ireland, Norway and West Germany.

For information on the boycott write:

Nestle/American Home Products ACA
3255 Hennepin Ave. South, Suite 255
Minneapolis, MN. 55408
(612) 823-1571

or write to Nestle at:

Alan MacDonald, Nestle Co.
100 Manhattanville Rd.
Purchase, NY. 10577

or American Home Products:

John Stafford, American Home Products
685 Third Ave.
New York, NY. 10017

■ Coca Cola

Why?

Coca Cola, like Shell, Nestle/AHP, Kelloggs, has only PARTIALLY DIVESTED from South Africa.

The South African government continues to profit from independent Coca-Cola bottling companies. Also, they profit from the sales of franchises and licenses in South Africa.

Here is how Coca-Cola justifies their actions:

- a) They give divested stock holdings to Black

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BOYCOTTING

(continued from page 12)

businesses.

- b) They send money to South Africa for non-traditional education and housing for Black South Africans.

Coca-Cola's actions would be acceptable except:

- a) They are doing business in South Africa.
- b) They are profiting from the apartheid system.
- c) They are clearly not in support of the freedom for all Black South Africans.
- d) A more subtle point is, they are helping to create a distinguished middle/upper class.
- e) Most obvious is, they are keeping us, through their presence in the U.S., accomplices to the oppression of our own peoples.

What results?

- 1.) Community colleges and universities across the country have staged protests.
- 2.) Vendors which sell Coca-Cola have either been banned from these campuses (SFSU being one of them) or boycotted.
- 3.) The Atlanta headquarters is continually being boycotted.

For information on the boycott write:

Coke Divestment Campaign
Malkia M'Buzi
92 Piedmont Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 586-0460

or write to Coca-Cola at:

Carl Ware
Vice President of Urban Affairs
P.O. Drawer 1734
Atlanta, GA. 30301

■ Shell

Why?

**SHELL FUELS THE APARTHEID SYSTEM!
What results?**

Response is happening at the grassroots and government level:

- a) Berkeley's City Council voted to ban the purchasing of all Royal Dutch/Shell products
- b) Sanctions imposed by Congress in 1986 yielded a \$417 million decrease in South African exports to the U.S.
- c) In 1987, U.S. investment to South Africa was cut by \$110 million.

To support sanctions write:

Members of Congress at U.S. Senate
Washington D.C., 20510

For information on the boycott write:

Boycott Shell Campaign
c/o United Mine Workers of America
900 15th St. NW
Washington D.C., 20005
(202) 842-7350

or write to Shell at:

Shell Oil
Frank H. Richardson
#1 Shell Plaza
Houston, TX. 77001

Royal Dutch/Shell Petroleum
L.C. Van Wachen
30 Carol Van Bylandtlann
The Hague, Netherlands

To be continued next month....

This Month In...

■ DANCE

Fri., Saturday, Sept. 1, 2 - Spirit Theatre of Dance presents an evening of choreography with dancers, singers and musicians. 8pm at the Black Repertory Theatre, 3201 Adeline St. in Berkeley. For information call 652-4017.

Sunday, Sept. 11 - The Jazz Tap Revue featuring the Nicholas Bros., Jeni LeGon, Wayne Doba and Zane Taylor at Kimball's East, 5800 Shellmound Dr. in the Emery Bay Marketplace, Emeryville. 7pm. For information call 658-2555.

■ EVENTS

Thursday, Sept. 14 - "Coffee Will Make You Black" a dramatic reading by writer April Sinclair from her novel in progress at 7:30 pm at Modern Times Bookstore, 968 Valencia St., in San Francisco. \$3 donation. For more information call 282-9264.

Friday, Sept. 15 - "Happy Birthday Geronimo ji Jaga Pratt" Remember America's political prisoners with MC Avotcja and the Levi Lloyd blues band at Your Place, Too, 5319 MLK Jr. Way in Oakland. 8:30pm. \$5. For info call 655-2587.

Friday, Sept. 15 - Edwina Lee Tyler & A Piece of the World percussion and dance ensemble, with storyteller Diane Ferlatte - a night of talking drums, chants, dance & song, combined with African storytelling, a powerful evening of performance at Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez in San Francisco. 8 & 10pm. \$12.50 advance/\$14 at the door. For information or tickets call 841-2672.

Sat. & Sunday, Sept. 16-17 - "Festival de las Americas", the 24th street fair will be held in the Mission on 24th st. between Mission and Hampshire St. in San Francisco. From 11am to 6pm, featuring live music, poetry, folklore, comedy, arts & crafts, and food. For information call 826-1401.

Saturday, Sept. 16 - The San Francisco Drum Festival returns to the Golden Gate Park bandshell with a performance by women drummers, highlighted by a special appearance by N.Y. dancer/percussionist Edwina Lee Tyler. Also featured is master Cuban drummer, Orestes Vilato. 2-4pm. FREE.

Sunday, Sept. 17 - A reading and book signing by 1989 American Book Award winner, J. California Cooper. Cooper is the author of 2 story collections and seventeen plays, and was awarded the 1988 James Baldwin Award by International Black Writers and Artists, Inc. 2-6pm at Koncepts Cultural Gallery, 480 - 3rd St. at Broadway in Oakland. \$6 donation. For more information call 638-3106.

Tuesday, Sept. 19 - 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.

Friday, Sept. 22 - An evening of poetry and music with Avotcja, performing her own work and that of Pat Parker's at Mama Bears, 6536 Telegraph Ave. in Oakland. 8pm. \$5.

Sunday, Sept. 24 - The Folsom Street Fair will be held from 10am to 6pm on Folsom St. between 7th & 11th streets in San Francisco. Includes the best in local entertainment, arts & crafts, food and stimulating visuals.

Thursday, Sept. 28 - UJAMAA presents an erotica reading with Stephanie Henderson, Donna Terry, Julie Mau and others at the Asian Resource Center, 310 - 8th St. at Harrison in Oakland. 7:30-9pm. \$3-5 sliding scale. For information call 255-2155.

Thursday, Sept. 28 - Filmmaker Elena Featherston will show and then lead a discussion on the making of her film "Visions of the Spirit", an intimate portrait of Alice Walker which explores the roots of Walker's Southern Black feminist consciousness through interviews with the writer and members of her family. FREE. 12-1:30pm at Toland Hall, UCSF.

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This Month In...

■ FILM

Tues.-Wed., Sept. 12,13 - "Voices of Sarafina" a film based on the Broadway musical which told the real-life story of and starring a South African high school class that is inspired to create their own show about Nelson Mandela. In addition to performing many musical numbers from the production, the cast also talks about living under apartheid. Call theatre for showtimes. The Red Vic, 1659 Haight St. in San Francisco. 863-3994.

Thursday, Sept. 14 - Dynamics of Color film series presents: "The Wash", a searing drama focusing on a Japanese woman in her 60's taking power and leaving a stifling relationship of 40 years. One daughter tries to mend it; one defends her mother as she defends her own interracial marriage and loyalties. Also showing is "Girls Apart" - Two 16-year-old girls, Sylvia and Syska, one black and one white, inhabit separate worlds prescribed by apartheid. They have never met, nor are they likely to. In this movie, they bring us into their own worlds and tell us in their own words about their lives. \$5-10 sliding scale. Proceeds to benefit the Dynamics of Color conference. 7:30pm, at the York Theatre, 2789 - 24th St. in San Francisco. Bathrooms are not wheelchair accessible. (Please note: The film "Loyalties", which was advertised, was no longer available.)

Sunday, Sept. 17 - "Imitation of Life" This film, (reviewed in July's Aché), while focusing on the relationship between mother/Lana Turner and daughter/Sandra Dee, also tells the story of their black maid, Annie and her daughter who tries to pass for white. 3:30 & 7:30pm at the Roxie Theatre, 3117 - 16th St. in San Francisco. 863-1087.

Tuesday, Sept. 19 - A special benefit preview of a new drama about South Africa "A Dry White Season". The director, Ms. Euzhan Palcy (who also directed the beautiful film "Sugar Cane Alley") will also be on hand to speak to the audience. Special

guests are Lindewe Mabuza, new chief representative of the ANC to the U.S., and the Vukani Mawethu Choir. 7:30pm at the Century 21, 2141 Chestnut St. in San Francisco. \$10, tickets available at City Lights bookstore, Modern Times and Cody's Books. 655-3838.

■ MUSIC

Friday, Sept. 1 - A special performance by singer/keyboardist Gwen Avery and a host of friends at the Artemis Cafe, 1199 Valencia St. in San Francisco. 8pm. \$5-7 sliding scale.

Friday, Sept. 1 - Tuck & Patti celebrate their new album at the Great American Music Hall, 859 O'Farrell in San Francisco. 8 & 10:30pm. \$12.50.

Sat. & Sunday, Sept. 2-3 - The 4th Annual Reggae Explosion features non-stop reggae by international and local reggae artists. Also Caribbean foods, arts & crafts and information booths. 1-11pm at Fort Mason, Pier 3 in San Francisco. \$17 per day. For information call 752-6716 or 921-7976.

Thursday, Sept. 7 - Blues Thursday with Lady Bianca at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in San Francisco. 9:30pm. Free. For information call 282-3325.

Saturday, Sept. 9, 10 - The 17th Annual San Francisco Blues Festival is the oldest ongoing Blues festival in the country. Featuring too many names to mention. 11:30am to 6pm at the Great Meadow at Fort Mason, Marina Blvd. at Laguna in S.F. For information call 826/6387.

Sunday, Sept. 10 - Natalie Cole and comedian Warren Thomas will be performing at The Fillmore, 1805 Geary St. in SF. 8pm. \$18.50/\$19 @ BASS.

Saturday, Sept. 16 - An evening of Afro-Cuban dance music with Charanga Tumbao y Cuerdas at La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley. 9:30pm. \$6. For more information call 849-2568.

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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 the 25th to: Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA. 94706 or phone (415) 824-0703.

Calendar - August 1989

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

Calendar abbreviations are as follows: C - class, D - dance, E - events, F - film, M - music, N - nightlife, T - theater, TV - televi- sion For descriptions and details on calendar listings, see the "This Month" section on pages 14, 15, 18 and 19.		1	2 TV - "Billie Holiday" 10:45pm	3 F - "Mapantsula" 7:30pm M - Lady Bianca 9pm M - C.J. Chenier 9pm M - Poncho Sanchez 9 & 11pm N - "No Alcohol Dance Party" 9pm	4 R - "La Verdad Musical" 12-3pm TV - "Rockschool" 2pm M - Poncho Sanchez 9 & 11pm M - Phyllis Hyman, Cherelle 8pm M - Ziggy Marley 8pm M - Irma Thomas 9pm M - Joe Higgs 9:30pm	5 T - "Seeing Double" (Berk.) 2pm E - Mujerio fundraiser 6pm-2am E - Salsa para El Salvador 8pm M - Poncho Sanchez 9 & 11pm M - Irma Thomas 9pm M - Grupo Sinigual 9:30pm TV - "Aretha Franklin" 10pm & mid.
6 T - "Seeing Double" (Berk.) 2pm N - Black Orpheus @ El Rio 4-8pm	7 E - Karen Wald/Cuba 7:30pm M - Afro-Caribbean Festival 8pm TV - "Celebrating Bird" 8-9pm TV - "Vanishing Black Family" 10pm	8	9 M - Tania Maria M - Fela Anikulapo Kuti 8pm	10 E - South African tradewomen 7:30pm F - Dynamics of Color Films 7:15pm M - Tania Maria M - Balafon Marimba Ensemble 9pm N - Live music at Colors 9pm TV - "Vanishing Black Family" mid.	11 R - "La Verdad Musical" 12-3pm TV - "Rockschool" 2pm M - Tania Maria	12 T - "Seeing Double" (SF) 2pm E - Pat Parker Memorial reading 8pm M - Tania Maria M - Claudia Gomez, John Santos 8:15 TV - "Louis Armstrong" mid.
13 M - Gospel in the Grove 2pm T - "Seeing Double" (SF) 2pm N - Charanga Tumbao/Cuerdas 4-8pm	14 TV - "Louis Armstrong" 8pm	15 E - Open lesbian/gay reading 7:30pm	16 E - Carmen de Monteflores 8pm	17 F - "Mapantsula" N - CURAS benefit @ Colors 8pm	18 R - "La Verdad Musical" 12-3pm TV - "Rockschool" 2pm F - "The Great Jazz Singers" 7:30pm E - Avotcja reads Pat Parker 8pm F - "Mapantsula" M - Machete Ensemble 8:30pm M - Len "Boogsie" Sharpe 9 & 11pm F - "History of Jazz Dance" 9:30pm	19 E - 10th Annual Git Together 11am E - Int'l. Percussion Explosion 1pm T - "Seeing Double" (SF) 2pm F - "Say Amen Somebody" 5:45pm F - "Mapantsula" F - "History of Jazz Dance" 7:40pm M - Luis Enrique 8pm-2am M - Corpo Santo/Brazil 9:30pm F - "The Great Jazz Singers" 9:40pm
20 T - "Seeing Double" (Ala.) 2pm F - "Mapantsula" N - Candela @ El Rio 4-8pm	21 F - "Mapantsula"	22 F - "Mapantsula"	23 R - "Sister/Outsiders" 7-8pm TV - "Maya Angelou" 7:30pm F - "Mapantsula"	24 F - "Mapantsula" N - "Hot Summer Nite" @ Colors 9pm	25 R - "La Verdad Musical" 12-3pm TV - "Rockschool" 2pm F - "Mapantsula" M - Al Green 8pm M - A. Flechero/C. Mason 8pm M - Our Boys Steel Orch. 9:30pm	26 T - "Seeing Double" (Berk.) 2pm R - "A Bit of Melanin" 7-7:30pm E - Karen Williams 8pm F - "Mapantsula" M - Al Jarreau/Take 6 8pm
27 T - "Seeing Double" (Berk.) 2pm F - "Mapantsula"	28 F - "Mapantsula" TV - "James Baldwin" 8pm	29 F - "Mapantsula" F - "Malcolm X" 7:15 & 9:15pm	30 F - "Mapantsula" F - "Malcolm X" 7:15 & 9:15pm F - Aché film "Voices/Gods" 7:30pm	31 N - UJAMAA benefit @ Colors 9pm	Calendar listings may change without notice, so dou- ble-check with the source for any last minute changes. To list something in next month's Aché calendar, send description and details to: Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, Ca. 94706 or phone (415) 532-1719. Deadline is the 20th of each month.	

This Month In...

Saturday, Sept. 16 - King Sunny Ade & his African Beats will be performing at the GiftCenter, 888 Brannan St. in SF. \$19 advance/\$20 day of show. Tickets at BASS, 762-BASS.

Thursday, Sept. 21 - An evening with singer/songwriter/guitarist Deidre McCalla at the Great American Music Hall, 859 O'Farrell St. in SF. 8pm. \$9. For information call 885-0750.

Friday, Sept. 22 - The east bay concert debut of Coro Folklorico Kindembo in an evening of Afro-Latin folklore, emphasizing the Cuban diaspora and highlighting original and classic rumbas. 8:30pm. \$6. La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley.

Friday, Sept. 22 - Soul II Soul will be at the Warfield, 982 Market St. in SF. 8pm. \$18/\$19, tickets at BASS. For information call 775-7722.

Saturday, Sept. 23 - The Redwood Music Festival '89 will be held at Estuary Park, Embarcadero & Fallon St. in Oakland. Featuring tons of entertainment including, Luis Enrique, Faith Nolan, Sinigual, Ceedo, Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir and Phavia Kujichagulia to name a few. \$15 advance/\$18.50 at gate. Tix at BASS. For info: 428-9191.

Saturday, Sept. 23 - Afro-Cuban dance music with the bay area's **Conjunto Céspedes** at La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley. 9:30 pm. \$6.

■ DAY/NIGHTLIFE

Saturday, Sept. 2 - The grand opening of Colors Too, featuring LA's hottest DJ Claudette, and live music upstairs in the cabaret room with Anna Flechero and Charlene Mason. \$8. 9-2pm at Rex's, 59 Grand Ave. at Webster in Oakland.

Sunday, Sept. 3 - JAM PRODUCTIONS presents "SOUL II SOUL", a party for men and women of color and their friends featuring performances by Anna Maria Flechero, Charlene Mason, Sonya Brooks with DJ Diane Tucker. \$5, from 9-2am at Koncepts Cultural Gallery, 480 - 3rd St., Oakland. A portion of the proceeds will go towards THE BLACK AIDS FUND,

a fund established by JAM PRODUCTIONS to provide special assistance for black gays and lesbians living with AIDS.

Thursday, Sept. 7 - A benefit for Aché at Colors with DJ Sandra spinning a wide variety of funk, salsa, reggae and soca at Colors, 22 Fourth St. in San Francisco. \$6. 9pm-2am. For information call 777-0880.

Saturday, Sept. 9 - DJ Sandra spins her special mix at Colors Too. 9-2pm at Rex's, 59 Grand Ave. at Webster in Oakland.

Thursday, Sept. 14 - An anthology of Chicana music: oldies, rancheras, cumbias, etc. with DJ's Chata Gutierrez and Diane Felix at Colors, 22 Fourth St. in San Francisco. 9pm-2am. For information call 777-0880.

Friday, Sept. 15 - Grand Opening of The Connection, a new dance club, with DJ Terry Hayes, at 59 Grand Ave., corner Grand and Webster, in Oakland. \$3. 9pm-2am. For info: 893-4562.

Saturday, Sept. 16 - Celebrate Mexican Independence with Mariachi's & DJ's Chata & Diane. 9-2pm at Rex's, 59 Grand Ave. at Webster in Oakland.

Thursday, Sept. 21 - Flechero and Mason will be performing with Dee Harris on bass at Colors, 22 Fourth St. in San Francisco. 9pm-2am. For information call 777-0880.

Friday, Sept. 22, 29 - The Connection, a new dance club, with DJ Terry Hayes, at 59 Grand Ave., corner Grand and Webster, in Oakland. \$3. 9pm-2am. For info: 893-4562.

Saturday, Sept. 23 - DJ Sandra spins her special mix at Colors Too. 9-2pm at Rex's, 59 Grand Ave. at Webster in Oakland.

Sunday, Sept. 24 - Grupo Sinigual will perform at a benefit for Theatre Rhinoceros at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in San Francisco. 4-8pm. \$5.

Thursday, Sept. 28 - A benefit for Mujerio at Colors, with proceeds going towards "Encuentro", the 1st annual Northern California Latina Lesbian retreat.

(continued on page 19)

This Month In...

9-2am, \$6-10 donation. 22 - 4th St., San Francisco.
For more information call, 587-7384.

Saturday, Sept. 30 - DJ Lori's coming in from LA to spin her own mix at Colors Too. 9-2pm at Rex's, 59 Grand Ave. at Webster in Oakland.

■ RADIO

Friday, Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 - "La Verdad Musical/The Musical Truth" with Avotcja. She plays jazz, blues, salsa, reggae, hip hop, and the whole spectrum of Pan-African music. Avotcja's show 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.

Sunday, Sept. 10 - A profile of pianist Geri Allen featuring her solo performance recorded at Concepts Cultural Gallery in November 1988, and other works. 2:30pm on KPFA, 94.1 FM.

Saturday, Sept. 23 - A profile of Della Grant; and introduction to her music and her insights as a woman in reggae, a wife and mother, and a daughter of Rastafari. 1:30-2pm on KPFA, 94.1FM

Saturday, Sept. 23 - "Puerto Rico: The Voices of Independence" a look at the independence movement on the island today. Features interviews with Puerto Rican POW's, along with music, poetry and commentary. 2pm on KPFA, 94.1FM

Saturday, Sept. 23 - A Bit of Melanin, looks at the relationship of African Americans to other Africans of the Diaspora. 7-7:30pm on KPFA, 94.1 FM.

Coming in October

Sunday, Oct. 1 - CASTRO STREET FAIR!!!

Friday, Oct. 6 - "Brightness" a beautiful film from Mali which follows the conflict between a young boy on the verge of manhood and his father, a sorcerer. 7pm. at the U.C. Theatre, 2036 University Ave. in Berkeley. Also showing with the film "Chocolat."

Sun.-Mon., Oct. 8,9 - A tribute to Josephine Baker featuring "Princess Tam Tam", (this film is highly forgettable but worth seeing for Josephine Baker alone), and "Zou Zou", a wonderful showcase for Baker's talents which features a priceless nightclub scene - not to miss. Call theatre for showtimes. Roxie Theatre, 3117 - 16th St. in San Francisco. 863-1087.

Wednesday, Oct. 11 - The premiere of "Making 'Do The Right Thing'" a behind-the-scenes look at filmmaker Spike Lee and crew in Bed-Stuy during the filming of the acclaimed movie. 7 & 9:30pm at the U.C. Theatre, 2036 University Ave. in Berkeley. Also showing with Lee's film "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads."

Monday, Oct. 16 - Aché presents straight from N.Y., poet/performance artist Storme "Like a Train" Webber reading her latest work at Modern Times Bookstore, 968 Valencia St. in San Francisco. 7:30 pm. \$5, proceeds to benefit Aché.

Tuesday, Oct. 17 - Aché presents "Bahia: Africa in the Americas" a remarkable documentary that examines the African cultural traditions preserved by the people of Bahia, Brazil in their music, dance, art, food and especially the Candomble religion. Principal commentary in this documentary was provided by author/anthropologist Dr. Sheila Walker, who did a presentation on African culture in Brazil at the very first Aché benefit back in May. 7:30pm at La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley. Donation.

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On The Table...

What are your experiences being accepted or not accepted as a lesbian in the Black community?

■ Sarita Johnson-Calvo

I first came out when I was eighteen. Long before then, when I was five, I'd already known about and had accepted my own lesbianism. I assumed I was the only one of my kind and chalked it up to a pleasant quirk in my personality.

What initially made my coming out so exciting was the realization that I wasn't alone. I'd become good friends with a freshman, named May, at my high school. I'd first seen her on the basketball court, and because we were both jocks, the school year was to bring us increasingly closer. We were both genuinely impressed with each other: May had a black belt in karate, a good sense of humor and quick reflexes. I was an agile athlete, could draw, and had an equally obnoxious sense of humor. In April, we began walking each other home.

On one of those absurd promenades during which I'd walk her home, then she'd walk me home, then vice-versa (which usually landed me in hot water with my mother as I sauntered in at 7 pm), May said, "I like you." I knew what she meant; I said I liked her, too. There was, I admit, a bit of stumbling on my part, because for the first time, I was confronted with the shock of my not being the only lesbian. One part of me was exhilarated: "FINALLY I HAVE COMPANY!" Another part was terrified: "Wait a minute! I LIKE BEING ALONE! Besides, I don't

even know how to date!" Being a lesbian, I'd always felt I had good reason for not being a part of those acceptable quasi-sexual rituals of the teen years.

So, May and I decided right then and there, on the corner of Snell and Blossom Hill, that we would be lovers. In fact, we were so excited about our new status, we decided to tell our mothers. My mother wasn't thrilled, and her eye wandered to the left as it usually did when she forcefully controlled her rage. She assumed it was a phase and ordered May and I not to see each other. May's mother was no less pleased. I was no longer allowed in May's home.

So May and I spent even more time together at school. We were so focused on one another, it was annoying. When we showed up late twice for track practice, our coach threatened to remove us from the team. May and I left coded love messages on classroom blackboards. We snuck kisses in the gym before the custodian arrived, and we did the "wild thing" as best we could on the cold floor of the girls' locker room.

We kept up this feverish pace until the onset of summer, when May went off to Florida for vacation. My mother was pleased to find that May and I were truly separated, and that I would soon come to my senses and concentrate on my college education.

During my first week at San Jose State, I picked up the *Spartan Daily* wherein a sympathetic expose of the campus' Lesbian Femi-

nist Alliance happened to be plastered on the front page. I immediately sought the Women's Center, spoke with the LFA coordinator (a dyke wearing the first metal double-woman-symbol I'd ever seen), and signed up on the spot for their basketball team.

I came home beaming! There was a spring in my step my mother hadn't seen for months. "Guess what, Mom? I've joined a basketball team!"

My mother was very happy for me, as she knew I'd latched onto something with which she could identify. Something wholesome and American. "Great, baby! What's the name of the team?"

"The Lesbian Feminist Alliance."

She tried throwing a glass ashtray at my face.

If there's one thing that characterized my coming out, it certainly was not tact. After braving coming out to my mother twice, I came out to anyone who engaged me in conversation for more than five minutes. I wasn't afraid of alienating people from me, for I'd been alone before. Also, being aware of other out lesbians, I knew I would never really be alone.

I guess I came out to so many people so forcefully because I felt that I would never get to come out again. I suspected that if I didn't speak up immediately about my lesbianism, other people's circumstances, assumptions, and fears would gradually push me back into a closet I had recently outgrown. More importantly, I felt that everyone should be honored to see them-

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On The Table...

selves in the presence of a whole person with no hidden parts!

■ Adésina

I am a black lesbian living in San Diego. My work places me in the Rasta community because we deal with music promotion. In order to keep the respect of the black community at large and the Rasta community in particular, who are radically homophobic, I must remain in the closet. The black community is like an ostrich (what you don't see won't hurt you) so as long as my lesbianism is not visibly offensive to them, they might know but just choose to deny it.

Being the invisible woman is very hard for me, because it creates havoc with my self image. I am a lover of wymin, but in order to deal with the black community I must conform to societal norms of what a heterosexual ethnic woman must be. Each time I deny myself, the pit of my stomach revolts against my inconsistencies. My lesbian voice that screams to be heard is quelled in my throat by self denial. Each time I internalize their homophobic responses to my lesbianism it chips away a little more of my self image and self worth. Communication is hard for me because I hold everything inside, afraid to say my true feelings.

Fear imprisons my mind and my thoughts, it doesn't allow me to develop to my fullest potential. Fear imprisons me in the straight jacket

of self limitations!

I am learning now through meditation and positive thinking to change my mind set and release myself from fear and resentment. It is a hard and daily struggle to change the bad habits of negative thinking to more positive ones. Only through determination and will is it possible to erase the mental grooves in our mind set and replace them with images of self love.

I love myself. I love myself as a lover of wymin, and I love myself as a black lesbian. I am who I am. I can't and won't be denied.

■ Synthia Green

Acceptance of all I am by any one community I've lived in has not yet happened in my life. One aspect of my life is the journeying toward communities where I will find acceptance of all my identities.

I specifically began searching for black lesbian company six years ago. In that process I found white lesbians who rejected me for being different in body size (I'm fat,) different in race, class, education, sexual practices, etc. Black lesbians were/are variously rejecting around some of the same issues. Now that was a killer! Of course, the closest I've come to a sense of total acceptance has happened when I was/am among black lesbians.

I have lived in three black com-

munities. My first 15 years I lived in a segregated black community in a mid-sized Southern city. White racial oppression was very hard on black lives. Women very often led families but sex-role stereotyping called for black women to be subservient to black men. My mother hated this system and sought to teach us five children equality of humans without regard to sex. In this she failed as she could not gain equality of power in her relationship with my domineering father. She could not protect us from his abuses just as he could not protect himself from abuses on his job and in society as a black man. As a girl, I was not accepted as a person with full human rights in the family/community/society I grew up in. The first oppression I was fully aware of was for being female.

At school at age seven, I somehow knew that I should not allow my teacher and the other students know of the tender feelings I had for the little girl I sat next to. My mother forbade me to carry the girl's books home or to accept the Twinkies she liked to buy for me on those afternoon strolls. Asking why I couldn't have this fun was answered with uncomfortable silence from Mom.

Later, in junior high, I rode the city bus out to a suburban white school that I and a few other black students were integrating. We were profoundly ignored by the whites at school. Riding home when the bus got back to our neighborhood, students from the black school would crowd on. I

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dreaded the inevitable snickering laughter arising from the inevitable question thrown into my hearing "Is that a boy or a girl?" In the neighborhood I heard people laugh and saw them shake their heads when a young man swished by. People said he was "funny" and demonstrated a limp wrist to explain what that meant. Mom said the two women who lived across the street were "funny." What does that mean I asked? Well, you know, they go with each other.

At church there was preaching against homosexuality. I wondered what was wrong with men loving each other. On rare occasions, an "enlightened" minister would preach against love between women. These remarks always made me uneasy and I did not agree. In the church literature there were denigrating statements about men "marrying" men. I just tried not to let anybody know how I felt about certain girls and women.

In church, family, school, community and society, it was clearly shown - while almost nothing was said, that who I was to become was not acceptable.

I left home. My second black community was religious, on the periphery of a Southern city in the deep south, numbered about 5000, was all black, was centered on education, and aspired to middle-class living. Being there was very good for black identity, regressive for women, and hostile to the development of positive sexual identity for me.

Working my way through the

boarding school, I had roommates who didn't want to live with me but wouldn't specify their reasons, just that I was "different."

I am convinced that what I've gone through has been common to many black lesbians' lives. Not one of us is alone.

At college I first felt strong physical feelings in the presence of a woman who was my best friend at the time. An influential faculty member broke up our tender, passionate friendship. The heartache lasted many months. It confused me that I hurt so bad over a woman I viewed as a friend. In my textbooks I couldn't find any references to women who were homosexual. My psychology professors made no mention of homosexual women but I knew they must exist and maybe I was one. Gay male choir members were being thrown out of school. That sent a message that I shouldn't ask about what was on my mind. Silence, ignorance, ridicule and rejection at home, in church, and at school sent strong messages that I would become an outsider if I made known how I really felt. It was impossible for

me to unfold at a normal rate as a whole, balanced personality because the development of my sexual identity was quite delayed.

After leaving the South, I came to accept myself as a lesbian and shared this conscious awareness with my growing-up family. I survived my father calling me a freak, my brother calling me a pervert, another brother telling me I was a bad influence on his children, my sister-in-law saying I was unnatural and my sister telling me she wished I would disappear! I survived my mother telling me, when I came out to her, "It's better for you to love who you want than to not love at all." But when I lived with her, she could not stand to hear the "L" word and subsequently threw me out of the house telling me not to write, call or ever come there again.

The last black community I lived in was a huge urban ghetto of a West Coast megalopolis. In the beauty salons, at the barber shop, at the nurses station in the black hospital, conversations about gays and lesbians spontaneously arose among others as they became aware of my presence. Nobody would talk directly to me. But the conversations usually went something like this: "I don't have anything against somebody doing what they want to do. But you know, if one of them ever tried something with me, I'd have to give 'em what for. 'Cause, you know, if just ain't right. Now I don't mind somebody doing what they want to do but I don't see why they want to

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do something like that in the first place. I ain't got nothing against them but I can't see why they go that way."

High school students frequently asked, "do you have any children? Are you married?" A janitor felt free to shout "freak!" in my direction as I went about my duties bringing AIDS risk reduction messages to sexually active teens in a drug-infested environment. In particular, one male student hurled "faggoty bitch" at me one afternoon!

In the black press and in "mainstream" civil rights organizations, I haven't heard much about the need for laws that protect my civil rights as a black lesbian.

At a recent conference on African-American women and AIDS, the special concerns and contributions of black lesbians were inadequately dealt with after it was noted that our risk for acquiring HIV was quite small and the "L" word was spoken. Our fear, risky behaviors, and need for education did not seem to concern the conferring women.

In summary, I have experienced many instances of homophobia in the black communities in which I've lived. The acceptance I've gotten has been when I was silent about my feelings for certain other women who were attractive to me. My overtness in dress and grooming has inspired many a homophobic remark but I have to be as I'm psychologically comfortable. The hostility and/or indifference I've experienced as a lesbian in the

black community angers me. I am angered and saddened that an oppressed people have yet to learn that freeing others protects the hard-won partial freedom African-Americans have fought and died for in this, our own country!

I am a black lesbian MD living in S.F. Composing this essay allowed me to focus on and express many personal experiences with black sexist homophobia. Breaking silence, telling what I felt is a therapeutic, strengthening and healing process. I am convinced that what I've gone through has been common to many black lesbians' lives. Not one of us is alone.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ■ Amana Johnson

Coming out as a lesbian within the black community is just one of the ways in which I come out on a daily basis. There is always a pervading danger in doing so. To come out is to be one who jumps out of planes to land on a trampoline or dives off a cliff to a two-foot space between the jagged rocks.

People tend to think that if you are lesbian that you are all about sex. That sex and sexuality are your primary points of definition and reference. To have to come out sexually is an unnatural act in itself. Why are we talking sex-talk

in defining who it is that we are anyway?

Homosexual is a cumbersome and narrowly defined term. It does not *begin to even think about* describing lesbians or gays. Homosexual describes but one characteristic of an individual. What is important is that we do not fall into the trap of coming out only as sexual beings. We must define for ourselves who we are and use those terms and that language to describe ourselves in our coming out. Somehow by allowing others to describe us as being lesbian or gay or bisexual is to lend the pivotal point of our being to sex and sexuality.

There are all kinds of closets and I am coming out of one or more of them everyday. Each time I walk through the 10 foot doors and cross the plush persian carpet of someone's office I am coming out. In not attempting to mimick the american standard of beauty I am coming out. By daring to *move* through a world that I am denied "living" access to, as a black womyn, saturated in my own self worth, dragging a head full of locks like medusa's hair into their midst, I am coming out. Coming out as a lesbian is just another coming out act that I do, and I by no means do it as frequently as coming out as a black womyn in a racist society that expects all wymon, and particularly wymon of color, to conform to its definitions and standards.

When I first started coming out as a lesbian I was petrified that

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some form of harm would be done me. I was afraid that I would not survive the revelation of this deep secret. During this time my presentation was not at all convincing. The first few people laughed and thought I was making a joke. Indeed at the time, I was not sure if I was making a joke or not. With time I would learn that ones presentation in itself can either confirm or challenge the preconceived notions held by whoever it is you're coming out to.

When finally I came out to my family, my insecurity was so complete that it threw me at their mercy. What I was seeking from them was validation, acknowledgment and acceptance. Instead, in my uncertainty, I found them powerful over me in their beliefs that my love of wymin was not a natural state. They prayed hard over me in refrains of... "you are going through a stage", "you are having an identity crisis that will go away", "soon you will remarry", "it is all so confusing to you right now." By now, I am reeling to remember what it is I've forgotten, groping to touch what it is I thought I was feeling.

I needed to see, hear and touch other black wymin who would

shatter the internalized myths I held, even about myself. Though in some essential place I also knew that those lies were not me, that I was made up of more than one component, every voice I heard recited these myths, and somewhere under the surface of my skin I believed the lies. Somewhere lying in my subconscious was the belief that I was tainted. It permeated my concept of myself, and for a time I did not know where to go to get access to images of myself in the faces of other black women.

On the whole, the black community has the capacity to embrace monumental variations in our culture, to blanket those members who live on the fringed edges, the marginal areas that are not quite a part of either the american mainstream or the traditional values of black american culture. This includes the drug addicted, the drunkard, the prostitute, the gay organist at church, the unwed mother and her children, the unruly and unemployed youth in the streets, et al. We are a people who have been taught to despise ourselves in all our beauty and glory. For many of us the thought of adding yet another despicable aspect to our character and carriage is

many times deemed suicidal and doomed for eminent failure. In other words to choose to be a black dyke in the eyes of some members of the black community is deemed downright stupid, whimsical or even "counter-revolutionary."

In general, black wymin, tend to be close. From childhood we grow up with each other, we bathe together, get dressed together, consult with each other on the most personal issues, sleep in the same bed, play in each other's hair, tell each other intimate stories and share our hurts and pain to ears that will only understand the depth of our emotions because we have felt it and shared it and looked into each others eyes and seen our reflection. It is because of this bond with black wimmin that makes their negative responses almost unbearable. It is this bond with black wimmin, who I know are my only allies in this war, that makes her rejection of me most hurtful and heartfelt.

Some black women will shun me, turn their heads and cast their eyes in another direction in fear and shame...their own shame that my image could conjure the thought that they themselves could bend to kiss the mound between another wymins legs. I have known the black dyke to be excluded physically, verbally and in print from many black organizations, activities, etc. Perhaps for some fear that lesbians might infiltrate the wymin and turn them all into some carnivorous, black dyke beast.

Then again, I have come out to

For me to choose the company of other wymin over him is to castrate him, vilify his maleness, hate him, hurt him and reject the very thing that makes him something in this horrendous world of racism.

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black straight wimmin and they have welcomed my arrival and visibility, presenting to them choices they never realistically conceived of.

Black men present a myriad of different responses to my lesbian self. They are sometimes insulted to know that they do not, may not, can not have access to my body. Some think that you are trying to be a man and wonder why you cannot be like a lady and do things that ladies do in a lady-like fashion.

It seems to be a personal insult, a loss of power, as though I had thrown a glass of red wine into their faces, stained their starched white shirt, then slapped their faces, acts that need physical retaliation. I am sure we are all familiar with lesbian and gay bashing. I have had many friends hospitalized for their brazenness.

There is a response that incites in me a reluctance to be "out". That response usually comes from the hostile brother, the socially deprived, economically trapped brother. The one who has only his maleness, his coolness, his manhood defined by the appendage between his legs to call his dignity and integrity. For me to choose the company of other wymin over him is to castrate him, vilify his maleness, hate him, hurt him and reject the very thing that makes him something in this horrendous world of racism. This is the black male who would rather see my death than to feel what he considers my rejection.

I feel it unfortunate that the only black male friends who are not threatened by me as a strong, black, lesbian womyn are black gay males. Rarely do I find the opportunity to share in a friendship with a straight black male where the power play of sexuality is absent, where we can meet and equally stand, both feet planted on the ground with irreverence and respect for each other. I look forward to the day when the bridge will stand between me and my brothers, but in the meantime I must continue to be the warrior that I am, warring against any who try to stand on my back.

In closing I would like to say that it is the self determined, self-defined black womyn that embraces me. It is this sistah who considers me as no threat to her. This is the womyn who can take care of herself, who knows what it is that she likes and knows that she cannot be forced to accept anything that she does not have a hankering for. This is the black woman who I learn and exchange the most valuable information with because she is the one that I can see myself most clearly reflected in the shimmer of her skin. She is the one who I would be most secure to go to battle with against our common oppressions.



* * * * *

"On the Table" is a monthly forum where you respond to various topics. If you have any thoughts about anything that you read here, please respond so that the dialogue may continue.

Next month's topic:

If you could say or express anything at all to your mother, what would it be?

Deadline for response is the 20th of each month, however; to check for a possible late addition, phone Aché at (415) 824-0703.

Please specify if you would not like your name included.

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

Race Suicide

by Darlene Angela

the homophobes
have given me the power
to stop my whole race
the Black race
in their fear
they cry
if Black women become dykes
who will have the babies?
i am in whole
agreement with Anita Cornwell*
when she exclaims
"if my not having babies will mean the end
of my race, then hail to the Holocaust
because I will never sleep with
another man again"
in their ignorance
there is a major amount
of truth
for i am woman
the giver of life
the sustainer of life
and
the destroyer of life
for i am a direct descendant
of generations of slave women
who knew of herbal remedies
to abort their pregnancies
who murdered their own offspring
to save them from
a life of slavery
in my capacity to produce life
i do have the power
to withhold life
i will refuse to make babies
until all women are truly equal
i will prevent fertilization
until all people of all colors
of all races
are truly emancipated
i will never procreate
unless there is no class
no caste system
that supports a few
on the backs of many

i am woman
and in me lie the eggs
of my race
of my society
of my culture
i am woman
and in me lies the future
of my race
of my society
of my culture
i am woman
and without me
there is no race
there is no society
there is no culture
you better do right by me
or there will be
no one left
for i am woman
determiner of life

*Anita Cornwell, author of
Black Lesbians in White America

darlene angela finds it easy
to be a student, an activist,
and an introvert, but finds
the challenge in her life
comes as she dares herself
to be seen and heard
as the writer/poet she is.

COMING TO KNOW

by
Earthlyn Manuel

My blood ran hot
and I'd dream of laying my head
on one of her breasts
And hope that she would rub my face
Once over softly

I was thirteen
And it came to me then.

My heart lost its rhythm
when I could not be with her
Sorrow, anger and passion overwhelmed
My pit of feelings.
I cried.

I was seventeen
I knew then.

Fear paralyzed my
loving nature,
Pushing down on the deep
part of the pain.

I was twenty
I knew then, I had to be lesbian.

Whispering her intentions,
I moved onto her long,
stretch of fleshy body.
Carmel sweetness.
And I was caught in a
perpetual spin of constant satisfaction.

I stood up
and began a journey into myself

Hard to tell.
Where to go.
What to do.
How to be.

Mother said
Daddy was a good man
Sister screamed!
Brother denied.
Society stood in a row with
it's head bowed to the ground
And its back to my disappointed expression.

And so it rang,
Like a call to the curious
I was a lesbian, a dyke, a dyke, a dyke.

Like walking between the redwoods,
Where the path was there for me,
I did not have to search.
And the sun is shining even though
there are clouds.

My blood ran hot
My heart lost its rhythm
Fear paralyzed me
But I loved her anyway.
I came out to know her
Thus, coming to know myself.

UJAMAA

(continued from page 9)

tions. To help pull in their support and hopefully by doing that we can also expand our board. We want to set up our bylaws....get an advisory board together as well."

Now that the founders have woven a groundbreaking pattern for UJAMAA, they are excited about other women participating in the project. As Annette puts it, "UJAMAA is basically a grassroots organization." "I can't stress any more than Annette can," says Suzanné, "that we need women to participate - not just by coming to the events that we have planned but also to participate with their time...we need women who are willing to sit down for an hour and input information into the computer or maybe comprise our mailing list for us. We need women who are willing to hand out flyers. We need women who are willing to give their time to come to meetings every third Wednesday and come up with ideas. We need women who are willing to head committees. We need women who are willing to dedicate at least one year of their time to this organization."

Suzanné ends what she and Annette calls UJAMAA's Wish List by summing up the situation. "We are trying to raise \$100,000 in two years. \$100,000 is not a lot of money and two years is not a lot of time. I believe that the community can do it. We are trying to have major events but we also have smaller events planned so that we can always be a part of the community. We never want to get away from the community because the community will make us strong. We never want to forget the community, because we are a grassroots organization. We know that there are a lot of women out there

who want to do this. I'd like to see these women who say they think 'it's a great idea,' who thinks 'it's wonderful,' to send in some donations to our organization. It doesn't have to be money...it can be equipment, we need filing cabinets, we need desks, we need their time...."

According to Suzanné, UJAMAA speaks to the needs of many women of color. Part of UJAMAA's lure and attractiveness may be that its events are designed for fun. But according to Wendy, a new recruit sitting through her first UJAMAA meeting, there's a more serious side to the attraction. Wendy: "my interest came from just realizing that there are so many services that could be provided by an organization like this and how much the community is crying out for these services...I'm a Black woman who has just moved to the bay area and am realizing how difficult it is to form a network, a support system of other women of color. I also work with teenage girls. I'm a childcare worker. [My interest in UJAMAA also came from] knowing that a lot of these girls, (all of different ethnic backgrounds,) are going out into the world at a young age and they don't have any kind of support system or network out there in the community...and really wishing that there was something out there for them...something that they could use as a resource... something which they don't have. I realize how important that is and I was wondering how we could go about getting that when I heard about UJAMAA. Gosh, you know, if we could just get them!! It would be amazing!"

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artist/curator
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Profile: Vera Martin

and beat the hell out of her.

S.: What was the motivating factor that kept butch dykes so flamboyant in the face of that kind of danger?

V.: I can't imagine but they would get into a rouse all the time....because basically what Black butch dykes did was date white wimmin. They thought it a real big deal to go into a restaurant like Norm's on Washington and La Cienga Blvds, with a white blond hanging on each arm. There would be like two Black dyke running buddies. So they would each have a white lesbian on each arm....and they'd go in and sit down at a booth and in no time at all, all hell would break loose. The guys would start making cracks....

S.: The men would make comments about the butch/femme thing or the Black/white dynamic?

V.: Both. They had two issues to deal with....I mean these wimmin would be dressed so-o-o hard! The men's shoes, mens argyle socks, men's pants, haircuts...

S.: I have been told by a few older Black dykes that in order to be accepted in the larger Black community one had to identify either as a male or a female, but wimmin-identified wimmin were unacceptable. Therefore butch dykes took on the persona of males...

V.: I've heard that it was safer to do that too, but I know many people who had respectable jobs and could not afford to do that. And they lived together as two ultra feminine wimmin and nobody ever

knew the difference except their personal friends who were privy to the information....and they were safe. It was a matter of choice. I didn't feel I had to play any roles and I had a lot of trouble dealing with it when I got into my first long term relationship [that lasted 8 years.] She was one of those severe dressers, right down to the men's underwear and I had a lot of problems with that. My thing is I'm in love with a womyn so why are you trying to rob me of this privilege? I don't understand the masquerade...

[In September, 1976 Vera and Juan(ita) had a full blown MCC wedding in La Brea Heights. It was an elaborate ceremony and the church was filled to capacity. Later that evening they celebrated with a very festive reception that featured a wedding cake in the shape of a bible. Vera and Juan stayed married for 8 1/2 years.]

V.: There were so many factors that destroyed that relationship. She had worked so hard to change her identity into a masculine one that she was out of touch with sensitivity. She thought she was treating wimmin the way a man would treat them. I kept trying to make her understand, "you've missed the point, I would never allow a man to treat me this way! Mean, insensitive, domineering, extremely jealous, constantly accusing....I said, "if you are going to emulate them, why don't you pick the good qualities?" And, my god forbid, if you should ask a butch to wash a dish...

....Prior to meeting me Juan had been going with a married womyn and she found that to be unsatisfac-

tory. Juan was looking for someone who was unattached and that she thought was capable of being in a committed relationship, she wanted something that she could call her own. I didn't realize that the whole definition of that was to really own me. My definition of a committed relationship was to feel secure that I had a partner that was monogamous with me. I didn't know that her definition meant to own me and dictate my every move.

....You see I had been a rebel all my life and I was not ready for that kind of behaviour. So we struggled with it for 8 1/2 years and on three different occasions she lost control in the process of her anger and hit me. That was a NO NO - whatever you do, don't hit me!!!

S.: Did you ever date white wimmin in a long-term relationships?

V.: No. Maybe two dates - I never could get close to [white wimmin] because I feel if society is permeated with racism you got to have some of it - and under stressful conditions it will come out.

....I've found that in some interracial or intercultural relationships an attitude prevails among white lovers that says, "you are adorable and I love you because you are different, but I don't want to be around those other Black folks." "Don't bring your family over and for godsakes don't bring your friends into my neighborhood."

S.: Do you still feel pretty much the same way in terms of dating white wimmin?

V.: Oh heavens yes - more strongly than ever!I can deal with

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Profile: Vera Martin

them on a social basis but not on an intimate level....Because on a social level if somebody slips and says something offensive I will sit down and take my time and read their beads right then and there!....I never get that close with them, but we can become telephone buddies, visiting buddies, or see each other at functions etc.

S.: Where you ever involved in the womyns movement of the 60's-70's?

V.: I never got involved in the wimmin movement in the sense that I ever became a "member"....NOW was encouraging wimmin to find themselves but I was never lost! I always had to work so it wasn't a matter of me working to find myself. I had to work so that I could provide the education, housing, clothing and good health care I wanted my children to have. So I told them [white feminists] when they hit upon some issues that related to me to get in touch.

S.: In 1978 the Combahee River Collective (a national Black feminist organization) was formed and a Black feminist agenda was formally established. Did this have an impact on you?

V.: To my best knowledge the Combahee River Collective never really had an impact in Los Angeles. So it never really had an impact on me.

....Just this past spring I heard Audre Lorde speak - she is terrific. And anytime I hear Barbara Smith is speaking somewhere I try to go hear her talk....I'm really interested in finding out what this Black

feminist agenda is all about and what womyn in my age bracket are involved with and supportive of. What I find in the Black lesbian community in my age bracket is that they were rejected by the whole white lesbian community for years because the job situation was so critical - that was just one more issue they didn't want to endanger their jobs with...

S.: What issue?

V.: Being known as a lesbian. So they lived very closeted and it became a way of life....and they are still closeted. Both times we had the West Coast Celebration for Older Lesbians I couldn't get Black lesbians to participate. Their excuses were "I don't want to be called old and I don't like that word lesbian." ... I said what other label would you put on it?!!

I remember when we were called jigaboos, I remember when we were called colored, negro, black, and finally we've gotten to African-American - which is what it should have been all the time. Why can't we be what we really are?!

S.: It sounds like when you made a conscious decision to be with wimmin you didn't have any problem with it and you were determined to live your life wholistically and openly....

V.: I didn't have any problem with it. I had been researching and reading everything I could get my hands on. I tried to meet people who could act as role models...and talk with them about the pitfalls so that I could know as much as I could about the work that would be

involved. When I finally met Kay and decided that's what I'm doing and this is who I'm going to be with, I sat down and thought about the possibility of losing my kids completely, that I might alienate them and that also meant I might lose the grandchildren, which would have hurt me a great deal. I knew I would lose most of my heterosexual friends. I was a well known person as a heterosexual because I was an activist all my life.

I belonged to CORE, SNCC, NAACP, the Urban League, and Fair Housing. I decided I played the game/roles to the best of my ability as an acceptable part of the heterosexual community. I made as many contributions as I could make as a means of paying my dues for the privilege of being on this planet. Now my kids were adults. I had given them a good home, the best character building I could offer, a good formal education and now I was through!

S.: In terms of outreach to Aché readers and other Black lesbians what would you like to say?

V.: Protect our freedoms and don't take lesbian gains for granted. Don't write off old lesbians.

S.: Vera, thank you.

Skye Ward is an Afrofemcentric lesbian activist living in Northern California, and a regular contributor to Aché.

Bulletin Board

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!! All those interested, please call me, Darlene Angela, at (415) 821-9207 as soon as possible. Thank you!!

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Black Lesbians!!

Come to the 2nd annual gathering, sponsored by the NIA collective, Nov. 17-19, 1989 at the Marin Headlands Institute in Sausalito. This year's theme is "Loving Ourselves."

We have space for 150 women and the weekend will include workshops, entertainment, and free time for fun. The workshops will be on such topics as interracial relationships, teaching in underprivileged neighborhoods, black lesbian in academia, abuse and co-dependency, and AIDS. The cost is \$75, which includes meals and dormitory accommodations. Call for a registration form at (415) 531-2682.

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

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 DreadWoman 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

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 multicultural 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

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

THE BACK PAGE

Make Aché work for you!! List your service (send us a business card), find a roommate, organize a group whatever!! FREE...The deadline for all submissions is the 20th of each month.

✓ Groups

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



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 Brenda at 465-7720 or Vivienne at 339-1475.



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

Beautiful sunny room for rent in a large victorian apartment in S.F. near Golden Gate park. For information call 751-8924.



Sunny, open, spacious artist

space to share in SF - also possibly live-in arrangements. Call 586-4485.

visit to the bay area. You all will always be in my heart, in sisterhood, Love Mary.

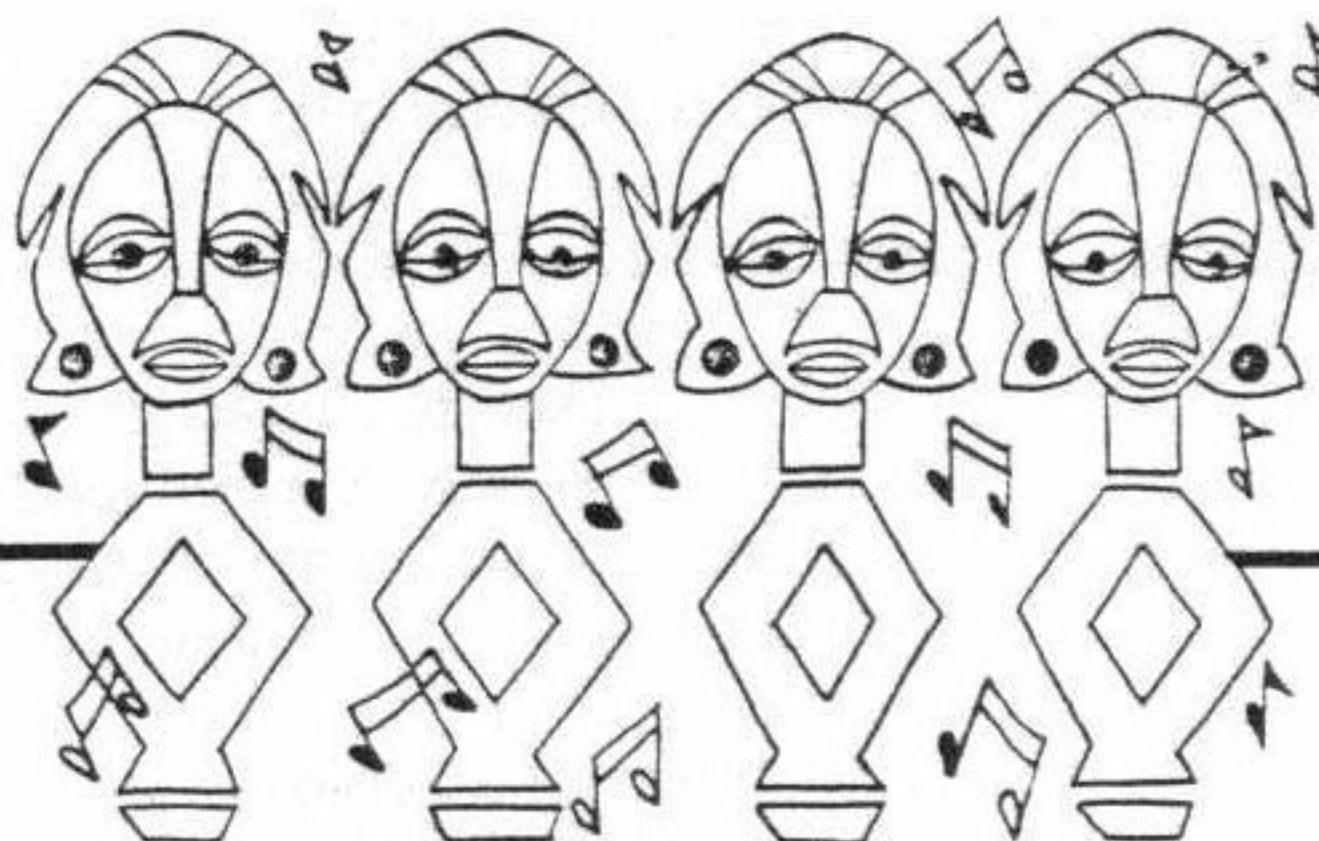
✓ Personals

Many special thanks to Skye, Lisbet, Amana, Pippa, Alixe and Angie for the kindness, love and positive energy I received during my

✓ Services

Black women mathematicians available for tutoring children and adults. \$12/hr. For info call Marguerite at 654-5432.

Avotcja models her shekeres after those originating in West Africa (Niger, Benin, Togo). Music is an integral part of African daily life



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IACHÉ!

and ritual, and as such occupies a position of high value. Avotcja's attachment to her cultural legacy is thus expressed: "The shekere is one of the most wonderful and beautiful of Africa's gifts to the Western hemisphere. It is one of the most powerful and magical instruments on the planet, both religious and secular, sensual, medicinal and spiritual. Let it heal what ails you. Que viva la musica."

"Ach  ." Ach  , vol. 1, no. 8, Sept. 1989, p. [1]. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, link.gale.com/apps/doc/PICFFL200811074/AHSI?u=umuser&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=5b433e19. Accessed 8 Dec. 2022.