

AKHÉ

FEB./MAR., 1991 Vol. 3, No. 1 \$2 A JOURNAL FOR LESBIANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT



"Self-Portrait" by H.L. Keller

**Aché: [a form of the Yoruba word ase or ashé]
the power-to-make-things-happen;
the breath that gives life,
literally "so be it," "may it happen."**

From the Editor

There's a lot of changes going on; with this issue and these words, I end my role as editor of the Aché journal. Though I will still wear the hat of publisher, I am now looking forward to being able to devote all my energies to the building of an organization that can sustain the rapid growth Aché has undergone in the past two years.

In February, 1989, my partner Pippa Fleming and I had a idea of starting a newsletter for our friends in the community. 6 months later, the publication had tripled in size and my partner had Pippa departed. In the following 18 months, while I still had enough energy to keep the journal going, the rest of the project just kept growing in scope—to unmanageable proportions for one person. It became clear that in addition to publishing the journal, an organization had to built: to raise the money needed to produce the journal; to enlist other women's help; to spread the word about Aché; to somehow keep it all going.

Now, 2 years later, All the dreams I've ever had for Aché are coming true. There are currently over 20 women working on the project on five different committees: Journal, Political Action, Fundraising, Events, and Outreach. I'm excited—even my partner Pippa has

Aché is an organization for lesbians of African descent. Through our empowerment we work to strengthen the bonds between our sisters and brothers around the country and around the world.

Aché's goals are:

- 1) To document black lesbian herstory and culture.
- 2) To create a local, national and international network for black women, and lesbians & gays of color.
- 3) To further develop the artistic, political, and economic resources in our communities.
- 4) To provide forums where issues impacting our communities are openly addressed and analyzed.
- 5) To celebrate ourselves, our communities, and our accomplishments.

come back!! With every month, Aché is growing in some new way, and me—well, I'm just enjoying the process. I'm looking forward to exploring other aspects of Aché and yes—finally getting out of the house and away from my computer.

With the next publication there will be a whole new team working to make the journal be even more. The new editors are; Blake C. Aarons, Submissions/Entertainment; Amana Johnson, Entertainment; Ekua Omosupe, Poetry; Paula Ross, Fiction; Akiba Tiamaya, Spirituality & Healing; and DeeAnne Davis, Senior Editor. DeeAnne is a previous editor for Sinister Wisdom and is currently on the board of

Aunt Lute Books, a feminist press in San Francisco. Her talents, energy and visions for the journal will take Aché far in the coming months. Welcome aboard to all!!

Kicking off the Aché event season is our 2nd anniversary celebration, "Tribal Connexions," held on March 2 in Berkeley. (See the back page ad for details.) Also, the Aché Series will begin again at La Peña on March 20th, please come be a part of it all...

*Blessings, Peace,
& Aché to you all,
Lisbet*



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Aché (pronounced a-chay) is a bi-monthly publication by lesbians of Afrikan descent for the benefit of all black women. Aché reflects and celebrates the wide spectrum of our experiences. We are committed to open and critical dialogue about the issues affecting our lives. We especially encourage submissions from women who have never been published.

The deadline for submissions is the 1st of the month prior to publication. Neatly hand-written, typed materials and 3.5" Macintosh disks using MacWrite or Microsoft Word are accepted. Include name, address, & phone # on all submissions. Don't submit originals: we do not have the resources to return them. Please specify if you would not like your full name reproduced in Aché.

Our editorial team will edit, if necessary, for clarity and length. Every effort will be made to maintain the author's form, written style and language.

Aché will not print anything that is oppressive or demeaning to ourselves as lesbians or as black women. The appearance of names or images in this publication does not indicate the sexual orientation of that person or persons. Subscriptions are \$10-25/yr. (donations always welcome.) To subscribe, phone or mail your name & address to:
Aché: P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA. 94706

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Aché is dedicated to the memory of Pat Parker & all the black women who have passed before us and whose work we continue today.

Table of Contents

Letters to Ache	2
Cover Artist's Statement	
Underexposed: The Photographic Image and Black Lesbian Identity <i>H. Len Keller</i>	4
African-American Women Put Themselves on the Line...Again	6
Sistah Boom Lives! (and Multiplies)	7
Women and Unions <i>Julianne Malveaux</i>	7
Conference Report: National Conference on Women and HIV Infection <i>Imani Harrington</i>	8
Jeté: I'm Dancing For You I'm Dancing For Me <i>Debra K. Floyd</i>	
Winnsome Words: Bomb-Dumb <i>Winn Gilmore</i>	11
Erotica:	
Lost Passion <i>Shakira</i>	12
Unspoken <i>Natalie Devora</i>	13
share my bed <i>Ekua Omosupe</i>	13
Thunder and Lightening <i>Blake C. Aarens</i>	14
Snapshot Erotica <i>Ekua Omosupe</i>	16
untitled <i>Boa</i>	17
Black Women in the Ancient World: The African Origins of Humanity <i>Paris Williams</i>	18
Queen Mother of the World <i>Earthlyn Manuel</i>	20
We're All Gringos on the Bus/Ode to the American Butch <i>Michelle T. Clinton</i>	21
Untitled <i>Arlette</i>	23
Life Walks <i>Earthlyn Manuel</i>	24
My Truth <i>Jala Akilah Waleed</i>	25
Afra-Sapphism: Sex as a Sacred Act <i>Asungi</i>	26
Bulletin Board	32
Calendar	34
Untitled <i>Boa</i>	36

Letters

Dear Aché,

Your publication has been chosen as one of two recipients of funds made available by Audre Lorde, winner of the Bill Whitehead Lecture 1990; Ms. Lorde asked that her award money be used to nurture literary work in the lesbian and gay people-of-color community.

The recipients were chosen by the Triangle and based upon a recommendation made by a committee of lesbian and gay people of color that that convened several months ago.

We at the Triangle wish that more funds were available to support fine publications like your own and hope that you will be able to put this small contribution to good use. Best of luck with all your efforts.

Sincerely yours,
The Publishing Triangle,
A Group of Lesbian & Gay Publishing Professionals

To whom it may concern,

I ran across your ad in B & G Magazine and I would like to get some info on how to get your publication Aché. I'm a black lesbian from N.Y. and I just need to reach out and develop a new road to growth for myself. I feel so lost and alone in my thoughts and desires for love, life and a future of happiness. I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks.

D.G.

Hello women from Aché,

I found a notice of you in a German women's magazine. I am a Black German lesbian and I am very interested in your work and Aché. I would like to take in your magazine if that is possible. So if that doesn't cause too many problems for you I would be glad to hear from you soon! And something else: could you please give me an explanation of the word Aché? Thanks a lot!!

Katharina,
Germany

Dear Aché,

On November 28, Aché presented a Sapphire Theatre production that was by all reports, the best attended of your Wednesday night series. Ironically, however, the production "Lesbfriends" was the most disappointing. And this was not simply a matter of "inexperienced actors" (something I was prepared in advance to forgive) or the fuzziness of a "work-in-progress" or even the result of no budget (or a very low one). This was simply shoddy work and I am not throwing that word out casually. I've participated in a lot of productions, and I know it takes a great deal of work to pull something off.

I feel compelled to say something because I was quite uneasy throughout the play. However, the uneasiness turned to shock when at the play's conclusion, several women in the audience jumped up and applauded.

I know that we sometimes want to support each other so much, that we'll overlook glaring deficiencies to do so. But I think we do each other a disservice when we don't say what the truth is. It's patronizing to the creator and participants, and a bit insulting to the audience to put out and accept unequivocally mediocre, or in this case, shoddy work.

How did Aché come to produce this event? I want to say that in the future I will think twice about attending any Sapphire Theatre productions. Also,

while I will sign my name to this letter, it is not without trepidation. I'm concerned about being perceived as hypercritical by Sapphire and by women who are connected to it. But this I do know; the Great Mother did not give me the ability to see situations clearly as they are without giving me the backbone to deal with potential repercussions.

Sincerely & respectfully,
Renaye Brown

Dear Renaye,

Aché first presented the Sapphire Theatre Co. in November of 1989, when they preceeded a film screening with a short play. Based on the enthusiastic audience response I approached the director of Sapphire about the possibility of presenting the company for an entire evening. "Lesbfriends" was the result. The turn-out was spectacular, however, as you stated, the quality of the production left much room for improvement. Had I taken the time to preview the production, Aché would have either offered additional entertainment for the evening or postponed the event entirely.

Through discussions with various attendees of the event, I was surprised to find that though they were able to share their thoughts about the play with me; few, if any, had the courage to speak their true feelings about the production directly to members of the theatre company or its director. I agree that it is a disservice when we are not truthful; we must have faith that honest critique and feedback will only further the growth of what should be an important arm of our community. I hope that in our hunger for true images of ourselves, we don't settle for less than we should or underestimate the wealth of talent that exists in our communities.

An important aspect of Aché is to nurture and support new community projects in various stages of growth—we will continue to do so. However, in the future I will take more care in insuring

the quality of any event Aché produces, so that our audience is never disappointed. Thank you for your letter.

Lisbet,
Producer, Aché series



To the audience of "Lesbfriends" and the Wimmin of Color community,

On January 23, 1991, the editor of Aché presented me a letter submitted to Aché by Renaye Brown encouraging me to respond. Upon reading the submission I was surprised by the high level of opinionated negativity that obviously lacked any level of sensitivity.

Bearing in mind my awareness of some disappointment regarding the length of the play (too short), sound problems, and quite possibly the casting of inexperienced actresses—this may have warranted some comment; however, I cannot agree with accusations that the audience patronized the courage of creativity, nor can I invalidate the audiences' privilege to participate by granting a standing ovation and claim their freedom of choice as a disservice. We no longer are bound by "slave mentality"—we do have freedom of choice.

Constructive criticism supercedes the badgering of a highly opinionated individual who may choose to criticize without a total understanding of "a work in progress." Nor was there understanding, while there was criticism, of the purpose and design of Sapphire Theatre Co. which is to empower, encourage, and attract those who seek creative freedom; whereby they can entertain, empower, and educate their audiences.

Yes, I realize there were areas of deficiencies and therefore the results have come forth. As of January 12, 1991, I am teaching acting workshops at EGYPT Theatre Co. in Oakland for beginners and experienced actresses. I have been invited to the upcoming Gay & Lesbian conference in L.A. to do a

theatrical workshop. Also, Sapphire Theatre Co.'s first year celebration will be held at the end of April at Theatre Rhinoceros. I have begun the process for incorporation, making Sapphire available for funding. These funds will increase our resources.

I am proud of all the productions Sapphire has done thus far and I look forward to the future when we will continue to empower, educate and entertain our audiences with performances of quality.

In closing, I thank the present members of Sapphire for their commitment and endurance. I welcome interested new members. I thank Aché and its readers for their support. I personally thank Renaye Brown for her submission.

In Sisterhood and in struggle
Sacul L'Adnbré,
Founder and Director of Sapphire
Theatre Co.



An open letter to Aché readers,

We are writing this letter to address the matter of the firing of Lillie Robinson, former bassist for The Blazing Redheads. We are a multi-cultural group of women, the majority of whom are musicians, and we are quite concerned because the circumstances under which she was fired appear to have classic racist dimensions. We are also concerned because The Blazing Redheads are a visible group in our community drawing most of its musical inspiration from Afro-Cuban, jazz, R&B, funk, and latin idioms. However, they do not appear to be doing this with sensitivity or responsiveness to the needs and concerns of people of color, particularly Lillie Robinson.

Apparently, Lillie attempted to draw their attention to the racist elements of their interactions with her. She was met with much dysfunctional behavior, denial, invalidation, and eventually, dismissal. This dismissal

included, but was not limited to, being fired from a band that she was actually a partner in. She was not merely a hired musician called in to play a part. This move was precipitated by their producer, a straight white man that Lillie was also experiencing racism from. His ultimatum "It's me or her" was used as the excuse to remove her—a move we see as an effort to quiet her. After being fired, Lillie proposed mediation. They refused to do this until after the album release. The Blazing Redheads are about to release a new album "Blazing Redheads—Crazed Women," an album that includes much of Lillie's input.

We are asking that the community boycott this album including dances, concerts, tapes, etc. until they show good faith and agree to mediation and begin to fulfill any legal obligations to Lillie. We see this as a temporary measure, one intended to show that there are repercussions to denying people of color validation, consideration, and respect. We do not wish to malign The Blazing Redheads, we see them as a part of our community. We do not perceive this as an us-or-them situation, but we do demand and expect accountability.

Signed,

Terry Berman, Renaye Brown, Anna Maria Flechero, Angela Wellman, and a group of over 20 local musicians, artists, activists and supporters.

Next Issue's Theme:

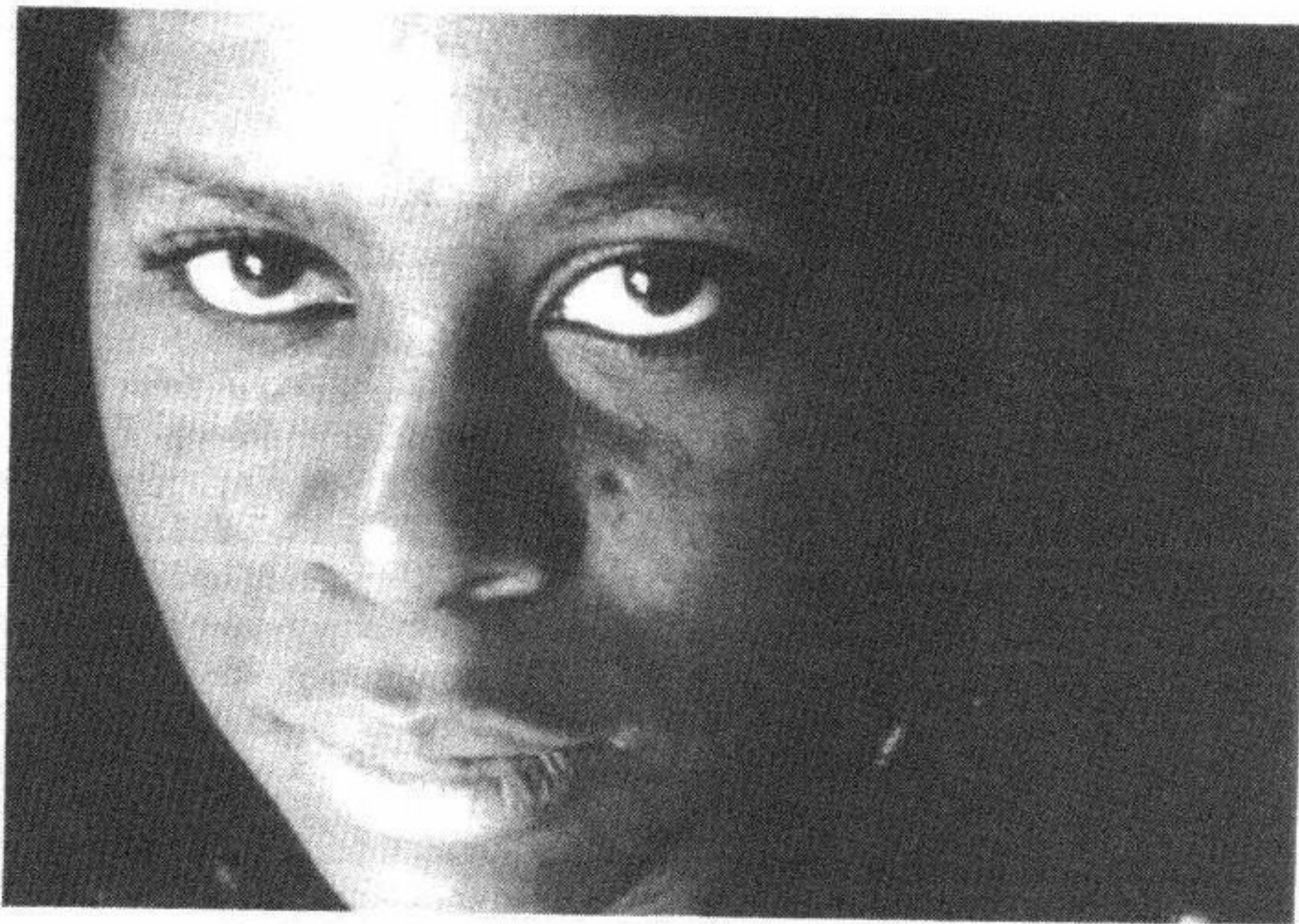
*War and the
Wars We Wage
Against
Ourselves*

UNDEREXPOSED: THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE AND BLACK LESBIAN IDENTITY

H. Len Keller, Photographer

*"...went out last night with a crowd of my friends
they must have been women cause i don't like no mens
they say i do it, ain't nobody caught me
sure got to prove it on me."*

*(Ma Rainey, 1927)
Prove It On Me Blues)*



A photograph is, at minimum, a visual proof, a document that an event or experience occurred. Because of the issue of "context," deciphering exactly what the event or experience was becomes debatable. The context in which a photograph appears is highly significant in how it is interpreted. For

example, images of young black youth repeatedly appearing within the context of what has been defined as pathological behavior; (i.e., drug dealing, gang warfare, etc.) begins to unconsciously influence your view of black youth. Unless you

are conscious and are somehow able to counteract the negative impact of this media dynamic, it can begin to influence your interactions with black youth and at the same time subtly erode (because of unconscious racial identification) your own sense of self as a black person in

this society.

Most of us grew up looking at photographs, private and public, in family albums, books, magazines and newspapers etc. These images have had a tremendous influence on our formation of self-concept within this culture. Our

sense of identity was affirmed or denied by those images we saw as little black girls. As I can recall, there was not much that was affirming, or even available for me to view in the late '50's and early '60's, and the occasional glimpse of a black child or person in a magazine or book was an exhilarating experience. I had an intense hunger to view in print any image of a black person (regardless of context) that might possibly provide some amount of self



H. Len Keller has been photographing in the Bay Area since 1981. She is currently at work on a series of "constructed" (multi-media) photographs of black lesbians.

revelation or reflection.

As early as the age of five, I can remember experiencing a photograph and feeling at that moment that my identity, my life's course was shifting, encompassing new information that would forever alter my sense of self. The photographs of the little black children being stoned and jeered at by an angry mob of white people (all genders and ages) in Little Rock, Arkansas, were devastating

and horrifying. For sure then, my childhood's innocence was stripped from me—I knew from those photographs that evil truly existed in the world, evil much more real and frightening than that on 'Chiller Diller Theater'. To me (then and now) nothing could ever justify that kind of behavior toward a child. The cruel reality was forced upon me then, that as a black child, I too was vulnerable to that evil, that there were things and people in the world that even my parents

couldn't protect me from, solely because of the color of my skin.

Almost forty years later, an adult and parent myself, I still feel vulnerable, sometimes more so. Now that I know the extent of the desire of some to dominate others, to feel falsely superior, and their irrational, insane reasons for hating and wishing destruction upon those "others"—sight unseen. Perhaps that's why I hesitated to include the self-portraits in

this issue of *Aché*. Maybe that explains why there are so few public photographs of black lesbians; documentary or artistic. Yet, we need these images to examine who we've been, who we are now, and who we're becoming, in spite of all the oppressive forces that daily bear down on us.

African-American Women Put Themselves on the Line...Again

Two Reservists File as Conscientious Objectors and Speak Against War

Black women make up almost 49% of all women enlisted in the army, a rate even higher than that of African-American men. In all branches of the service, African-Americans are disproportionately represented compared to the percentage of blacks in the civilian population. The reasons for this are fairly simple; lack of jobs and lack of educational opportunities for our youth make the lure of benefits, education, training, and travel promised through the Armed Forces' deceptive media campaign make enlistment seem like a viable option. In addition, black and latino youth are specifically targeted by the Armed Forces; graduates of the Oakland School district complain of being harrassed by phone calls and visits from military recruiters on a monthly basis.

However, African-Americans, both military and civilian, are becoming more visible and vocal in the anti-war movement. Being questioned are both the overrepresentation of people of color in the Armed Forces and the reasons for war being put forth by the Bush government; inadequate reasons for sending troops consisting primarily of people of color to, quite possibly, their deaths. Azania Howse and Farcia DeToles, two African-American women reservists at the Oakland Army Base, filed for conscientious objector status late last year. The following are speeches they gave in San Francisco on January 26, 1991, at one of the largest anti-war rallies seen since the Vietnam War era.

Azania Howse:

"My name is Azania Howse and I'm a conscientious objector, an African woman of peace. My allegiance

is to the world. I'm very proud to stand in front of you today and declare my opposition to war. I'm very proud to be amongst peacemakers and peacedreamers because if this war is to be stopped, it will be because persons of peace refuse to be sucked into the hype that war is a necessity. What is a necessity is the immediate attention that this government should pay to our own abandoned domestic problems. As wealthy as this country is, no one should ever have to sleep on the street or be hungry or be without a job. It's up to all of us to make those changes. What nerve this government has to force poor people to kill and die abroad to come back home to be subjugated and oppressed.

Why should we fight for the interests of the wealthy, elite imperialist military mechanism? U.S. troops in the gulf do not represent a liberating force but a force for domination and control by U.S. corporate and military interests. It's a very serious thing we're doing here today. It's called self-determination. We are taking our lives and our futures into our own hands. We are saying 'No! I will not take part in the mass killing America is committing against the Iraqi people.' We are saying 'No! I will not take part in the mass killing America is committing against every American soldier whose life is taken in Operation Desert Storm.' We are saying 'No! I will not be manipulated by the government's deceitful propaganda, disseminated by the media to make us believe that Americans are not responsible for the bloodbath in the Persian Gulf.'

If we are to stop this war we have to be together in this struggle—that means putting differences aside to accomplish a common goal. We have

to tell our friends, we have to come out of the woodwork. The government expects us to fuss over this thing for a little while, a week, a month or so, and then die down. They expect for us to become weary with rallying and demonstrating. They expect for us to become complacent after a while. But they better think again! We will build a grassroots resistance to the war by our direct action campaign of demonstrating, teach-ins, sit-ins, and any other means at the disposal of the poor. Mass direct action is the voice of the oppressed and the path to self-determination. We have a lot of power here together! We have to continue this fight against war. We have to demonstrate to the ones held safely inside their homes that this war is everyone's problem. The future of humanity is at stake. Please support GI resistance. And please continue to support our troops by demonstrating—let's bring them home now!!"

Farcia DeToles:

"My name is Farcia DeToles and I'm a conscientious objector. I believe that there is no reason for the United States to be over there in Iraq. I believe in peaceful negotiations. I believe it's time for us to be civil to one another around the world; my allegiance is to the world. I thank you all for the support that you're giving us because it is you guys that give us the strength to carry on. We stand five years imprisonment for doing what we're doing if we receive orders to go. But I say this: I'd rather go to jail than go over and kill some Iraqis that never called me a nigger!!"

Note: The next issue of Aché will feature an interview with Azania Howse.

SISTAH BOOM LIVES!

(And Multiplies)

Ten-year old group builds alliances and unlearns racism through music.

For ten years, the women's percussion and dance ensemble, Sistah Boom, has been bringing its Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean music to Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day in San Francisco. With their resounding bass sourdos, and their ringing agogo bells, these women have enlivened such events as the Gay and Lesbian March on Washington in 1987, and the Sonoma County Take Back the Night rally this fall. In addition to supporting Gay, Lesbian and Feminist events, the group play frequently at rallies, marches and benefits for peace and social justice organizations.

Ten years is a long time for a community based group to hang together and grow. In the course of those years, Sistah Boom has shared a process consciously adopted to guide the band away from its origins as a predominantly white group to an organization in which women of color are in the majority, and feel comfortable and powerful. About five years ago, the group struggled its way to consensus to an affirmative action program, opening new memberships to women of color only.

In addition to adopting a new membership policy, Sistah Boom committed itself to the internal work they call "Unlearning Racism." Working in separate caucuses for women of color and white women, and then coming together periodically for coalition building workshops, Sistah Boomers have explored the different experiences of anger, pain, and guilt that racism creates in each women's life. In sharing those individual experiences, band members have begun to build trust and to tell the truth to one another, forming some profound alliances.

Building this kind of unity has not been easy, and patience and honesty are continually demanded from everyone. But the women of Sistah Boom are proud of what they've accomplished. As they look toward the future, band members see a decade to come with continuing joy in playing their Brazilian and Caribbean rhythms. Some of their visions include performing at the Vancouver Folk Festival, playing for women in California jails and prisons, and drumming at the 1992 Lesbian Encuentro in Puerto Rico. Nurturing these exciting dreams, Sistah Boomers are digging into the reality of rehearsing for their 1991 season, which opens with the Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade in June.

Arranging, rehearsing, adding new rhythms and tightening up the pieces in their repertoire is at the heart of what Sistah Boom is all about. The band's drummers, bell and tambourine players, and artistic directors, are practicing together now, moving the band into the high energy samba, comparsa, and afuche grooves that energize bodies and souls of performers and listeners alike.

Part of Sistah Boom's preparation for the season will include adding some new musicians. The band is looking for women of color who are musically inclined and drawn to percussion music, who feel comfortable with the group's political commitments, and who want to participate in the ongoing process of unlearning racism.

If you are a woman of color and you'd like to learn more about joining Sistah Boom, you can call Carol at 647-4225 or Kay at 654-3360. Please call by March 1st, 1991.

Women and Unions

by Julianne Malveaux

Full time women workers earned 75% of what men earned in 1988, \$315, compared to \$449 that men earned. The pay gap is consistent across race, age, and occupation. But women who belong to unions have slightly higher wages and a narrower gap, primarily because their unions fought to protect their wages.

The average union woman earned \$403 in 1988, over \$100 a week more than her non-union sister. One in eight women workers is in a union, and one in seven is covered by a union contract. In addition to wages, unions have bargained for women's health and safety, for child care, parental leave, flexible work schedules and pay equity.

Women's union membership is on the rise, but most recent growth has been among women over 45. Membership has dropped among younger women. And one in three unions contracts will be bargained in 1991. With recession a harsh reality, many employers are likely to argue for give-backs instead of pay increases.

But recession or not, union membership is a good deal for women. And women's membership is a growing part of total union membership. Within the trade union movement, thousands of women have developed leadership and organizational skills. And the six million women who belong to unions represent a well-informed and powerful part of the labor movement.

Julianne Malveaux is a syndicated columnist, and an economist currently teaching at U.C. Berkeley. This commentary was previously aired on KPFA.

CONFERENCE REPORT

National Conference on Women and HIV Infection

by Imani Harrington

The first National Conference on Women and HIV Infection occurred on December 13-14 in Washington, D.C. There I witnessed the kind of power women have when coming together. It was empowering for me to see women forging alliances, addressing and challenging those issues that have the most crippling impact on our lives. At this conference, the fight against a racist, sexist and classist health care system successfully went into effect. Women from various parts of the U.S. were present. There were students, nurses, physicians, public health workers and activists from communities around the nation.

At the opening plenary was a contingent of women predominantly of color. Most of these women were activists representing various groups, such as N.Y. AIDS Task Force, LifeForce, and ACT UP N.Y. and D.C., all of whom diligently confronted three top public health policymakers who are employed by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. What must be remembered is that most major research organizations are largely funded through the CDC and set their policies and agendas by CDC's guidelines. The first addressed were Anthony Fauci (considered the most progressive), Daniel Hoth, and James W. Curran. Each were confronted on their collusive involvement in the discriminatory policies that exist within government agencies. Of these three figures, Curran's colloquy was the least favorite. The theme, "Change the Definition," was swiftly challenged. During Curran's speech, one woman after

another and later two at a time silently walked up to the foot of the panel and stood before the speaker while holding various cardboard signs that had the words "This Man Is Lying" or "Redefine AIDS For Women" or "Curran, Do Your Job." A procession of about 30 or more women joined together were orchestrating a strong chorus. Their posture and spirit were revolutionary in every sense. Even at the point where their tactics became rather inflammatory, these women still were able to command the attention they deserved.

The most emotionally filled session for me was the one in which a number of women spoke of the inhumane treatment they had been subjected to while going through the health care system. Others who could not get through the system spoke equally on their inability to receive effective therapy or adequate access to direct health care services. Their stories reflected the deep horrors and principles of their fight to keep their dignity.

The most inspiring speeches came from two renowned Afro-American women in this country fighting against AIDS. Rashida Hassan, founder and director of Blacks Educating Blacks About Sexual Health Issues (BEBASHI), spoke most eloquently when she promised not to do another conference, as she had "given up masturbation for the real thing," and therefore, she continued, "It's time to come." Rashida's ideology is best expressed in her statement: "If we act as if the AIDS epidemic is a crisis and we mobilize our forces, then we have a

good chance of slowing its spread, but if we let it filter naturally through general societal activities until it lodges in the populations that have the least ability to do anything about AIDS, then the people who have been historically ignored—the poor, racial and ethnic minorities—will bear the brunt of the disease." Rashida emphasized "We don't need them to validate anything for us—this we must do for ourselves." Yet another dynamic sister, Dr. Janet Mitchell from Harlem Hospital Center, went on to say, "This conference has been a long time coming and for the first time the program reflects the demographics—our sistah's are dying and we must not let it be in vain."

In addition to these speakers, there were other dynamic women of color speakers present. Antonia Novella, U.S. Surgeon General, offered a strong message: "Women are the caretakers, it's time to take care of ourselves." She went on to make the point that in order to get what we need we must demand what we want. Like Rashida, Antonia also received a strong response from the audience. Janice Jirau, V.P. at Washington Coalition of People with AIDS, spoke eloquently on our issues. (See this month's issue of *Ebony* where the life of Janice Jirau is featured.) Another sharp sistah, Sally Ju with the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Project, addressed the realities of the women in the Asian community with HIV. These women are just a few of the forces we had present at this conference.

A later workshop, Cultural-Ethnic/Racial Issues, which was led by a

Due to the lack of adequate research and general knowledge about HIV in women, most gynecologists are not trained to identify or treat HIV infection specific to women.

host of diverse women of color representing the Native American, Haitian, Pacific Island, Chinese American and Afro-American communities, dealt with the issues of coping styles, cultural differences, and presented recommendations on building alliances and community strategies. This workshop alone possessed all the qualities to have served as a foundation for the conference and should have been presented after the opening plenary. Instead, it was the last workshop scheduled at the conference.

We all know too well the problems that come with not organizing our own conferences. Our lack of involvement in the planning stages and setting the agenda was one of the crucial drawbacks to this conference. It was reflected in the structure of panels and in the obvious lack of representation of women from Southeast Asia and other ethnic communities. The lack of representation and leadership from the lesbian community was also apparent.

The most valuable information I gathered at this conference was on the gynecological manifestations of HIV disease. Those manifestations are pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), vaginal candidiasis (chronic yeast), and human papillomavirus (HPV), which can lead to vaginal warts. Even though these sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) are specific to women in general, they are not taken seriously as an HIV-related condition. Due to the lack of adequate research and general knowledge about HIV in women, most gynecologists are not trained to identify or treat HIV infection specific to women. If a health care provider is not trained to perform gynecological procedures, the HIV positive woman will most likely go untreated; if a gynecological manifestation is diagnosed, then it will probably be viewed as a separate condition rather than HIV-related.

The episodes of STD's found in HIV positive women are much more pronounced and aggressive. The appearance of these diseases are persistent and are hard to treat. What should be remembered is that because an HIV positive woman's immune system is already impaired, she will be vulnerable to a wide spectrum of infections. For this reason, 65% of women die without an AIDS diagnosis.

Recent findings reveal that women who are HIV positive have a much higher incidence of cervical abnormalities and have abnormal pap smears more often than women who are HIV negative. It is recommended, therefore, that women have at least two pap smears a year. This includes an anal pap smear and a colposcopy (an examination of the cervix that detects cell abnormalities). Colposcopies are considered safe and painless and can be performed on pregnant women.

A definition of AIDS was developed by the Center for Disease Control. The definition includes many opportunistic infections, such as Kaposi Sarcoma (cancer that causes purplish blotches on the skin) which is most commonly found (in the U.S.) in men and not in women. Gynecological manifestations of HIV specific to women are not included in the CDC's definition of AIDS. Yet many women have died from these complications. Recent discovery of HIV-related conditions found in women need to be added to the current definition of what is defined as AIDS.

The CDC's dilatory response to expand the definition of AIDS specific to women has impacted the problems that women are already facing. For example, there is a need for the inclusion of women in clinical trials and the need for support services such as the right to claim disability. These are just a few of the handicaps that exist in the health care system.

Women's primary medical complications are directly related to the female organs. We must examine the impact of such a harrowing fact. Through a predominantly male medical establishment, women have been tortured, dissected and (mis) diagnosed. Under this system, our realities have been ignored. My observations at this conference have reinforced my belief that the oppressive conditions of sexism, racism and classism under which women of color live in this country, compromise our immune systems the most. This battle-axe we have learned to carry on our backs daily has become a major causative agent in the speedy delivery of AIDS into and through our bodies.

Women are the leading users and providers of the health care system. We must begin to use this leverage and take control over our bodies. In addition, women of color have access to the non-Western healing approaches of our ancestors. We must reclaim our power and explore these other approaches to healing. We, as women of color, are the true revolutionary spirits of this era. To reiterate the words of Antonio Novella: "It is time to take care of ourselves."

Imani Harrington is a cultural activist/artist working toward social change. She is a dancer, actor and poet. Her most recently published work appears in the landmark anthology, The Black Women's Health Book.

jeté by Debra K. Floyd

For The Sheer Love of Dance

I'm Dancing For You I'm Dancing For Me

I'M DANCING FOR YOU, I'M DANCING FOR ME, I'M DANCING FOR US, I'M DANCING FOR WE,
I'M DANCING FOR SHE, I'M DANCING FOR HE, I'M DANCING FOR HER, I'M DANCING FOR HIM, I'M
DANCING, I'M DANCING, I'M DANCING, I'M...

I AM MOVING THE BEST THAT I CAN
I AM MOVING BECAUSE I CAN

I AM MOVING BECAUSE YOU DO NOT
I AM MOVING BECAUSE YOU CAN NOT...
YOU DID. YOU DID— YES, ONCE YOU DID, OH, HOW YOU DID!
YOU MOVED FORWARD AND BACKWARD
AND THEN DOWN AND UP AGAIN.
YOU FORMED STRAIGHT LINES, AND CURVED LINES,
AND LINES OF CHARACTER AND ATTITUDE.
YOU GAVE US GREATER DRAMA — AND GREATER TEARS.
YOU GAVE US FAST, YOU GAVE US SLOW
YOU GAVE US RHYTHMS ON TOP OF RHYTHMS ON TOP OF
RHYTHMS ON TOP OF—
TIME.

YOU GAVE...THAT'S IT—!
THAT WAS IS, WAS AND STILL IS
GIVING FROM YOUR LOVE, FROM YOUR HEARTFELT LOVE
OF DANCE
FROM YOUR SOUL FELT LOVE
OF MOVEMENT.

NOW
I FEEL YOU DANCE BESIDE ME, IN FRONT AND BEHIND ME —
ON TOP OF AND BELOW ME
YOUR DANCING NEVER STOPS
'CAUSE YOU CONTINUE TO DANCE
THROUGH ME
AND OTHER ME'S
YOUNGER ME'S AND OLDER ME'S AND...

I'M DANCING FOR YOU; I'M DANCING FOR ME
I'M DANCING FOR US AND
I'M DANCING FOR WE.

This is the text part of a newly presented performance art piece that fondly remembers four dancers that are making a difference in how I look at my life today as a dancer. Ruth Beckford, Katherine Dunham, Ed Mock and my long-time dance partner, Leon Jackson. These wonderful artists are not dancing in the sense that we think of as dance (Miss B and Miss Dunham are retired and Ed and Leon have passed on), yet they are dancing with me in my life.

WINNsome Words

Bomb-Dumb

by Win Gilmore

Negro gay ladies, I've been hearing these ominous, cryptic cries of late: "Bomb 'em, bomb 'em, then bomb 'em again!" is the cry of the day. Now, you ladies know this call has nothing to do with the retarded, flatulent results of eating too many black-eyed peas to welcome in the new year. While February and March are usually heralded as the months of love, international sisterhood, and African-American story (aka history), *this* February is indubitably different. It's all about war.

Now, February is my birth-month, so I called Marty, my best friend, to remind her (covertly, of course). Marty's one of my most politically correct, open-minded Negro gay lady friends, and she's been known as one of the very few of you who could drag me out to one of your gay lady bars and other functions. So you know she's a good friend. Anyway, when she answered the phone, she sounded distracted.

"Marty," I said, "is something wrong? You sound like something else is on your mind. Are you PMS?" Worry furrowed my brow as I tucked my feet beneath me on the couch. "How's your girlfriend?" Marty's lover is one of those notorious ladies who's rumored to have more back-door lovers than a cat has lives.

"Oh, she's alright," Marty murmured distractedly. I sighed. No gossip this time. "And I'm not PMS. It's this damned war stuff. Can you believe that asshole Hussein?! I mean, bombing a peaceful nation of women and children. Shit!"

"Well, Marty," I interjected, "there is the age-old argument over Israel versus Palestine, and there's the Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians. But, you know, my birthday's coming up, and—"

"Birthday!" she shouted. "Did you just see that television footage of the Jewish woman struggling to put the gas masks over her babies' faces? How can you be thinking about your birthday when our country's at war with the second Hitler?"

Whose war is this, anyway? What jobs are these people gonna get when- and if- they get back? Why, this government will probably leave them over in some foreign land to tend their property, just so they won't come back here..

Well, I nearly dropped the phone when she said that. Marty's normally one of the most thinking ladies I know. And she's gay, to boot. So, I hadn't expected the Hitler comparison.

"Marty," I said in my most calming tone, "war is a messy thing. It's not that I'm belittling the Israeli's plight, but don't you also wonder why we haven't heard *anything* about the number of Iraqi and Kuwaiti deaths? I mean, doesn't it kind of remind you of the televised reports out of South Africa when they say

seven white cops were killed by brick-wielding Black rioters?" I sighed. "You know what I mean girl. They never say anything about the number of Black rioters killed by gun-wielding cops."

"That's a totally different issue, girl, and you know it!" she shouted. "Sure, we bombed Iraq first, but we warned Hussein it'd happen if he didn't take his Allah-shouting ass out of Kuwait."

Honeys, you could've scraped my mouth off the floor.

"Sure, Marty honey, but that's no justification. If it were, you could also say that Hussein warned us he'd target Israel first if we attacked him."

"Anyway," she continued, and I knew she hadn't heard a word I'd just said, "we got women in the Forces this time, so we got a double duty to support our troops." Her tone changed, became more sensuous. "Have you seen some of those sisters in their combat fatigues? Girl, I'm no pillow queen, but they sure did look good."

"Marty," I said, astonished, "I can *not* believe you. You sound just like a war-glamorizing heterosexual lady drooling over some finely tuned male weapon of death. War is about *murder*, girl. Those fine fighting ladies you've been ogling, the men, children, and whatever else lives, could be killed."

"You don't understand," she dismissed, sucking her teeth. "But, of course you wouldn't understand." I

(continued on page 17)

Erotica

Lost Passion

by Shakira

Nights of candle lit rooms and
starry nights.
Deep chocolate lady sits in front of me
Wine glass in hand

Your eyes are deep and penetrating
Cutting deep into my thighs
and the places where my passion lies
Soft, gentle touches make my body rise
to feelings in a way that I have never felt before

Your presence is that of a knowing seduction
One that you know will take me
and bring my soul to heights and levels that
no other can
You are my chocolate desire

Passion racing, you touch every core of my being
with a simple stare
A knowing stare
That lets me know that the love between us
will not be spared
But will be expressed
To me
On me
With me
And most important
With you
You are my passion lady

The desire is more than I can stand
It raises me above the clouds
and the oceans
Crashing on me like a wave
I am taken
Taken to a place of uncontrolled
emotions and feelings

Smells
Sensations
Induced movement
Uncontrolled response
You are my chocolate kiss
My chocolate desire
My chocolate dream

You are
My lost passion

Unspoken

by Natalie Devora

Anne shifted the backpack from her left to her right shoulder angrily. "Shit this damn streetcar is late again," Anne muttered aloud to no one in particular. She stood at the stop along with ten other people who were undoubtedly thinking the same thing.

Anne watched ten minutes later as the guilty streetcar slowly inched its way through the open tunnel to stop miraculously enough directly at her feet. She knew it would be crowded beyond belief. All of the financial district clones and clones squeezed into a tight space. They were all so damn polite she thought.

Anne pushed her way toward a semi open space. She stood near the exit door gripping a pole for balance. Facing her was a woman with short brown hair who reflected the smile she saw exuding from Anne. She looked familiar to Anne, yet try as she might Anne could not place her.

Once underground, the streetcar jammed to a halt causing Anne's forearm to press into the brown haired woman's breasts. Anne shifted to move her arm and readied to apologize but didn't. Was it her imagination or was the brown haired woman actually leaning purposely pressing her cleavage into Anne? The two women glanced at one another from the corners of their respective eyes. The brown haired one had a twinkle in her eye as she smiled giving her permission.

Anne shifted and pressed her arm more firmly into the softness of the brown haired woman's breasts. The woman returned the push with equal force. Anne could feel juices begin to flow from her cunt to her panties. She stifled a moan and

pressed harder against the brown haired one. Anne could feel the woman's desire. She wanted to take the breasts into her hands and pinch the nipples, hard. Anne suspected that this one would enjoy such harsh treatment.

Anne felt the urge to back the woman against the door, press her hard body against the other's softness and grind. But no, this was San Francisco and not New York. That option was out.

Neither was conscious nor did they care whether any of the other passengers noticed their nonverbal foray. Anne's stop was approaching. She looked directly into the brown haired one's face, smiled, took a step toward her and leaned/pressed herself against the object of her desire. Anne felt the woman's nipples stiff against her white blouse. She heard the raspy breathing that resembled panting more than breathing. Both she and the brown haired one moaned. Anne hoped that the loud sound of steel connecting with steel masked their sex sounds. Each pressed close to the other trying to prolong the moment. Had there been more time Anne was sure that one of them would have come.

As the train pulled into Van Ness station Anne no longer regretted being late. As the train slowed to a halt she pressed one last time into the brown haired woman's breasts, stared into her eyes and smiled as the doors opened and Anne departed to begin her day.

A working writer who makes her living by day working with children, Natalie is a native of Oakland living in San Francisco, California.

share my bed

by Ekua Omosupe

let me lay
between the mountains
of your breasts
stroke the insides
of your thighs
nuzzle your neck
kiss your mouth
leave a trail of kisses
from your belly button
to the hood of your clit
let me taste
your pussy
juicy melon sweet
I want to smell you
taste you
hold you tight
share my bed tonight

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A 39-year-old single parent with three children, Ekua currently lives in Santa Cruz where she is a poet Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Thunder and Lightning

by Blake Cassandra Aarens

Kore lay on her back staring at the acoustic tiles in the ceiling. Though the basement air was cool, the sweat of earlier dreams dampened the sheets and made them cling to her muscular brown body. She scanned the darkened room, averting her eyes from the lighted dial of the clock. Gently, she peeled the sheet away from her skin as if afraid it would stick like adhesive tape, leaving her raw and irritated.

Next to her, Magdalena stirred. Kore rolled over on her side to watch her lover dream. She slept lightly, her eyelids fluttering, her thick, long braid draped across her neck. Her mouth was open just slightly; Kore wanted to trail her tongue over the thin upper lip and then probe deep inside, but she thought better of it and satisfied herself with looking.

Kore watched Magdalena's chest moving rhythmically up and down with her breathing, her large breasts spread flat against her body. With a mischievous grin on her face, Kore flicked her tongue across Magdalena's right nipple and blew air on it, watching the nipple grow erect.

Magdalena frowned in her sleep. "Don't start," she mumbled, "I have to teach at 8 o'clock." She pushed

Kore away and rolled over onto her side.

But Kore had turned herself on and wasn't to be turned off so easily. She draped her leg over Magdalena's hip and trailed her mouth across the nape of her neck, the dimpled flesh of her upper arm. Magdalena chuckled and began to respond.

"Magdalena—" Kore breathed, giving a Spanish lilt to her voice, "—so warm and soft."

Magdalena stiffened. "What did you call me?"

Kore shook her head, rolled onto her back, and let her breath out with an exasperated sigh. "Your given name."

"Well, give it to somebody else. How many times do I have to tell you to call me Maggie?"

"I've a good idea of something else I'd like to call you right about now."

Magdalena didn't respond with words. Instead, she scooted to the very edge of her side of the bed and buried her face in the pillow.

Kore frowned and stuck her tongue out. She absentmindedly began stroking the insides of her own thighs. I know just the thing to make me feel better, Kore thought. She made lazy circles over her hips, ran her fingers through her coarse, bushy pubic hair, and lightly tapped her clitoris. Moving her hips in time to the stroking of her left hand, she reached for the top drawer of the bedside table with her right. Her hand encountered empty air. Cussing under her breath, Kore remembered they were sleeping in the basement due to the heat. Their toys were all upstairs in the bedroom.

Abruptly she stopped touching herself and let her hand fall back onto the mattress. Magdalena lifted her head from the pillow and turned in Kore's direction.

"I understand that you can't sleep," she said icily, "but please let me. I have to teach in the morning."

Kore rolled off the bed and stomped out of the room. She climbed the stairs to the main floor, the temperature rising with each step she took. The upstairs was muggy, the air thick and heavy despite all the open windows. A trickle of sweat ran between her breasts. She grabbed a dish towel from the handle of the fridge and wiped her skin dry. She draped the towel over her shoulders and peered into the refrigerator.

Carrot juice, a bowl of fresh cut veggies, some uncooked mochi, and a bowl of brown rice. "Damn!" she muttered. "Just once I'd like to look in here and find some french onion dip, a bag of salty chips and a Coke!" She slammed the door closed.

*Cussing under
her breath,
Kore
remembered
they were
sleeping in the
basement due
to the heat.
Their toys were
all upstairs in
the bedroom.*

Kore prowled Magdalena's living room. There was still no television, but the massive stereo caught her eye. She rifled through the record cabinet looking for something loud and obnoxious to put on. Before she found an album that suited her mood, she heard a faint rumble of thunder. She let out the breath she'd been holding and smiled. Leaving the record cabinet open, she went to the window.

A light breeze followed the thunderpeal, barely ruffling the limp curtains. Kore leaned toward the window and watched the goose pimples form on her forearm. She inhaled deeply.

"It's gonna be a wet one," she said. "Finally."

She wrapped her body in a crocheted afghan, grabbed a cushion from the couch, and headed for the front porch.

She didn't have to wait long for it. The first slash of lightning cut horizontally across the sky before Kore'd sat down on the cushion. She stared up at it, her mouth and eyes wide open with wonder. The entire block was illuminated in the flash.

Kore scrambled onto the cushion, anticipating the thunder to follow. When it came, a long, rolling boom, Kore arched her body into the sound and shuddered. She felt her cunt grow moist. The wind picked up; she uncovered her breasts to the night air.

For the next few minutes the sky shone with bolts of lightning. Three, four, five, six in a row. A bird began uncertainly to sing, but it was silenced by the reverberating blasts of thunder. The house shook; the windows vibrating in their frames. Kore placed the flat of her palm against her clitoris and rocked with the sound. She sucked in air between her clenched teeth. She tossed her head back and forth with the sensations shooting through her body and the noise crashing about her ears.

Then, all was silent. Kore whimpered and grew still. She waited for the next streak of lightning, her entire body tingling.

The sound of the screen door opening caught her off guard. Slowly, she began to slide her hand out from between her legs.

"Don't. Leave your hand right where it is," Magdalena instructed. "I knew I'd find you out here."

Magdalena came up behind Kore and joined her on the couch cushion. She lifted the afghan from Kore's body and draped it around both of them. Kore pressed back against her, feeling the warmth of sleep still on Magdalena's skin. A jagged bolt of lightning cut across the sky, jerking them both alert.

For the next few minutes the sky shone with bolts of lightning. Three, four, five, six in a row. A bird began uncertainly to sing, but it was silenced by the reverberating blasts of thunder.

"Here it comes," Magdalena whispered into Kore's ear.

At the first sound of the thunder, Magdalena bit Kore hard on the neck, sending shocks through her body and causing her breath to catch in her throat. As the sky rumbled above them, Magdalena slid Kore's hand farther inside her cunt and then slowly drew the fingers out. She brought Kore's hand up to her mouth. With exaggerated slurping and sucking, she licked each one of Kore's fingers clean.

Starting just below Kore's ear, Magdalena slid Kore's hand down her body until it was once again between Kore's thighs.

"Are you ready?" Magdalena asked.

Kore nodded eagerly as the first drops of rain splattered on the porch railing.

Blake C. Aarens is a writer and filmmaker living in Oakland. She's new to the community and is hard at work on a collection of erotic short stories and revising her screenplay entitled: "Shades of Our Sister." This is her first piece published in Aché.

Snapshot Erotica

by Ekua Omosupe

my fingers
crawl
like blind women
over
the surface of your skin
feeling for shelter
a warm cave
they enter one by one by one
into your darkness

we
ride each other
two horses
to the top
of a mountain
before we slide
into the sea

kiss

my tongue
your clit
melting inside
my mouth

Magnetism

the darkness
I am
burning in
your bush
breathing fire

My pussy
slides down
the mountain
of your thigh
catch me

chocolates

dark pussies
with
creamy centers

Bomb-Dumb

(continued from page 11)

imagined her crossing her legs and sitting back in her favorite leather chair. "These women are fighting for our rights. Not just for the American way of life, like Bush says, but for women's rights here in America. But, as I said, I wouldn't expect you, a straight woman, to understand."

Well, that was all I could take. Friend or no friend, birthday or no birthday, I had to give her a piece (of my mind, that is). "Marty, you're about as intelligent as a bag of rocks. And so are these other poor people who think they're supporting a cause that's their own. All the wars engaged in by this country, even before it was a country—"

"Now, you just shut up!"

"Hell, no, I won't shut up! Who do you think navigated that lost fool Columbus to this territory? Us! Who begged to fight in the War of so-called Independence? Us! Who beseeched the whites to battle with them in the Civil War? Us! World War I? World War II? Korea? Vietnam? Us, dammit! And every time, Marty, we came back to just what we'd left... hatred of us. Whose war is this, anyway? What jobs are these people gonna get when—and if—they get back? Why, this government will probably leave them over in some foreign land to tend their property, just so they won't come back here. Girl, war is a messy thing, I tell you! And it solves nothing."

"Uh huhn!" she shouted triumphantly. I held the phone away from my ear and frowned. I knew that tone too well. She had something up her sleeve. "So, missy," she continued

slyly, "you support that Hussein because his country oppresses women, I bet. I should've *known*."

My integrity was impugned. I jumped up on my couch—in a ladylike fashion, of course—and screamed loud enough to God, the Orixas, Allah, Buddha, and anyone else in heaven or Nirvana to hear. "How dare you, Marty Ann!"

She knew I meant business now, because I *never* use her hated middle name except in times of insuperable anger. "That's below low, girl! I love ladies, too, and I have never supported oppression! No where, no time, never! And if you think I'm any other kind of lady, you can just forget about our friendship," I insisted, left hand resting on my hip, "forget about my birthday, forget about seriously thinking through those so-called principles upon which your lady-loving is supposedly based!"

Well, I banged down the phone and gave it the most evil stare I could muster up. So, you can imagine my surprise when about ten minutes later, it rang.

"Girl," Marty mumbled, "maybe we can talk about this some more over dinner. When is your birthday, anyway?"

It just goes to show you what can be accomplished when you really try. Too bad Bush, Hussein, and their cronies couldn't just yell out their anger over the telephone while jumping up and down on a couch. After all, they may have more in common than my friend Marty and me. Let's see: they hate women and love domination; consider material wealth more valuable than human health... but then, so-called leaders are no better than the people they lead, or those who support them.

untitled

by Boa

don't try to tell ME
the difference between
ugly and beautiful

weren't that you
there on the corner
wiff yo' rag-wrapped head
'n too tight skirt
shoutin' down that white man
in the cold?

weren't that you
whose chile covered his eyes
to not see his momma
convulse on the kitchen floor
from not gettin' it?

weren't that you?
out all night
til dawn's light
high's a kite
no man in sight
to set you right?

sistah, you 'n them dime bags
is due for a talk
no, you don't take 8 a these
an call me in the mornin
and that's not the same rock
they say is forever

when you gonna wake up
and snort the coffee?
girl, sunken, dark rimmed eyes
ain't beautiful
drooling, slackened lips
ain't beautiful
swollen, punctured arms
ain't beautiful
you are

Black Women in the Ancient World:

The African Origins of Humanity

by Paris Williams

W.E.B. DuBois' famous prediction that the "problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the color line" has been applied to many political and social circumstances. Until recently, modern science has seemed to operate outside this reality, as a sort of bastion of objectivity. However, the discussions currently raging among biologists and paleontologists on the subject of human origins is one in which racism is playing a major role.

In 1987 a study was published in *Nature* describing research in mitochondrial DNA to determine the oldest human genetic stock. This project took placenta (afterbirth) samples from women from every major ethnic group. Mitochondrial DNA is the genetic material that passes only from mother to daughter and does not combine with the DNA of the male parent. To quote *Newsweek* (Jan. 11, 1988), "The DNA fell into two general categories, one found only in some babies of recent African descent, and a second found in everyone else and the other Africans. There was more diversity among the exclusively African group's DNA, suggesting that it had accumulated more mutations because it had been around longer—and thus was the longest branch of the family tree. Apparently the DNA tree began in Africa, and then at some point a group of Africans emigrated, splitting off to form a second branch of DNA and carrying it off to the rest of the world. All the babies' DNA could be traced back to

one woman." The conclusion of this study was that the entire human race can trace its ancestry to a single Black woman who lived in East Africa approximately 200,000 years ago. This study in biology is supported by fossil finds at Klausie's River Mouth in South Africa of human fossils dated at 200,000 years, compared with human fossil finds in Europe (40,000 years) or Asia (60,000 years).

into Asia and Europe and evolved into modern humans *separately* from each other, and most importantly, from their distant African cousins. This theory would allow scientists to speculate on the superiority or inferiority of specific human groups as contrasted with the essential unity of the human community implied by the DNA study. It also assumes for humans what has never occurred anywhere else in nature: the creation of the *same being* more

... the entire human race can trace its ancestry to a single Black woman who lived in East Africa approximately 200,000 years ago.

This African woman, misnamed the African Eve, was not the first or only woman in her community. She was probably the only woman who, from that time to this, had an unbroken line of females in her posterity, allowing scientists to follow the mitochondrial DNA trail.

Considering the careful process of this study and the fact that its conclusion is supported by fossil evidence, it would seem that the scientific community had earned its claim to objectivity, despite the social implications of this inquiry. Unfortunately, this is not entirely true. Those who oppose this study's conclusions propose that Homo Erectus, a *pre-human* prototype, left Africa before modern humans evolved. The proto-humans went

than once. In this case three times: Africans, Asians and Europeans.

Another version of the opposition is the idea of the "Killer Africans." This theory proposes that when the proto-humans were in Asia and Europe, peacefully pursuing their separate evolutions, "Killer Africans" invaded and displaced them through mass murder!

While this idea may hold a grain of truth, if these "invaders" were Europeans they would have been characterized as displacing an earlier and more primitive population as the result of more efficient technologies, not as "Killer Europeans."

It is interesting that the literature generated by this debate has never

In an African scenario, food gathering (not hunting) and sharing is what distinguishes humans from apes. In all likelihood this behavior was initiated by females as infants became dependent for longer periods of time.

once mentioned the word racism. In my opinion, this is the crux of the entire matter. After all, is scientific inquiry only for the sake of knowing? Or is it for the sake of solving human problems?

What is also revealed is a reluctance to acknowledge the central role of the Black woman in learning more about the forms and substance of human existence. If you consider that Africa's human fossils are 200,000 years old and the oldest human fossils outside Africa are 60,000 years old, then you must conclude that for the first 140,000 years of human existence only Africans lived on earth. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence for thirty or more years recognizing the African origins of humanity, discussions of cultures and civilizations have ignored Africans. Even the word Africa, coined in ancient Egypt 6,000 years ago as AF-RU-E-KA, means birthplace. It is truly ironic that after 500 years of "debate" over whether or not Africans are fully human, we find ourselves to be the earth's first human inhabitants and the originators of the crucial technologies and social forms that have made our species so successful.

The roles of Black women in this evolutionary process were undoubtedly essential. Most scientists would say that *group cooperation* is what separates us from our ape ancestors. The scenario that is most often conjured to illustrate this idea is the male hunting group of the

stone age. Part of the problem with this scenario, and there are many, is the assumption that what gave humanity its thrust toward group cooperation was male initiative and power, reflecting the current status quo. Another problem is that the stone age is very late in the period of pre-history, in effect, late enough for Europe to be important and African to be de-emphasized. A more realistic approach to human beginnings would be to look at a much earlier period: in Africa 200,000 or more years ago.

In an African scenario, food gathering (not hunting) and *sharing* is what distinguishes humans from apes. In all likelihood this behavior was initiated by females as infants became dependent for longer periods of time. Before the need for stone weapons was the need for digging sticks, food containers and carrying devices for babies. Knowledge of the seasons and habits of plants and animals became important, creating a basis for language in order to preserve and build upon collective experience.

What is remarkable in how little removed women are from this reality today. Think about sitting around the kitchen table with mother, grandmother, aunts, sisters or girlfriends cooking and watching the kids. A woman runs to the store or out to the garden for that extra bit of something to sweeten the pot or stretch the meal for additional mouths. Think also of the lessons learned, the wisdom passed from

generation to generation over the preparation and consumption of food. I can't help thinking that perhaps the "nuclear family" (a much later invention) with its implicit isolation, was meant to subvert this happy and powerful process.

Think also about our aspiration as Black people to build community. The existence of 5 billion human beings descended from an African mother is overwhelming evidence of Black people's ability to build community. The reluctance of scientists to acknowledge this kinship and debt to Africans is indeed an attempt to ignore the presence, accomplishments and aspirations of Black people living today.

Locally, nationally and internationally, we are faced with violence and despair engendered by racism. Perhaps in the face of cruel indifference to our most cherished desires we might recall the struggles of our most ancient mother. She, who without fang or claw, survived and flourished in a natural world—likewise indifferent to human desires.

Paris Williams is an historian, anthropologist, world traveler and event planner living in Oakland, California.

Queen Mother of the World

by Earthlyn Manuel

Perhaps I've seen her before,
Half buried beneath the sands of the Caribbean
And taken by the effortless passing of the Kansai River.
Mother of humanity; I've seen her.
Black and golden
Cream and Caramel.
Under the monsoon storms in the Amazons,
Sorrowed by the fading Rain Forest.
There she is; her image flat upon an Alaskan glacier
built over an infinite time.
She makes praline candy in Louisiana,
And up above unknown mountains she maintains our rituals.
She holds the camel's reins.
And I've seen her before.
She led us across the African continent,
Over the seas to Tokyo and then to India creating races.
She walked up past Morocco to Europe and created,
The rest of Earth's people.
The city streets carry her soul in the beat of its pace.
Redwood trees shade her ancient trails, while her
Strength lies in a mysterious mosaic of the past, present and
future.
Her dance is fluid and universal.
I've seen her before.
Breasts full circle and dark,
Head high and strong,
Lips often pressed lightly across the cheeks of loved ones.
Ocean salts stick to her skin and shine like diamonds
from the sun's interaction.
Notice her monumental stance.
She is forever present.
And within ourselves, we've all seen her,
the Black Woman Creator.

First published in Aché, the journal has motivated Earthlyn to continue her writing. Originally from Los Angeles and now living in Oakland, she is currently working on a collection of short stories.

Untitled

by Arlette

I am your island woman
embedded in clay soils
lime stone
and coral reefs
nourished by cool underwater springs
and sustained by your distant love.

I am your island woman
embellished with sea shells
shaded by majestic coconut palms
surrounded by emerald hills
exotic flora
and harnessed by blue, blue violet, blue green, seas

I am your island woman
embryo of mother Africa
dancing to the rhythms of the exiled drum
each movement
each beat
traces each chain link
in my island mystery
the island history
the island present and past
a monument
shrouded in tribal beauty
Monarch of the caribbean sea.

©Arlette

We're All Gringos on this Bus/Ode to the American Butch

by Michelle T. Clinton

judy the straight girl
showed me mexico
taking into account i hate
traveling/ traveling
to me is mostly about eating in cafes
having servants
& collecting rip off stories
to flash your interesting-ness
& your excess cash worth
like:

i ate eyeballs in thailand
i got robbed in europe
i lucked up at the airport in jamaica
& found a sucker who put me up for days
got me fully drugged
& showed me how to beat native prices

like you pack up your gringo power
pay pennies for religious artifacts
overlook mutilated beggars
& fail to take note
of racism

you take like the mexico
judy the straight girl gave to me
was about dark skinned people
removing the plates & hand
washing our underpants while
white mexicans pick up the cash

plus time lays out like a woman
what-to-do is a list that struggles
with i-need-a-nap burn out
& mostly i get scared
because what do i know about traveling

judy, bi-cultural jewish
homie, hetero sexual to the max
details of her man addiction
would gag a political dyke
had straight people confusion anyway

even though she had that feeling
about that thing
she figured she should think about women
i mean like think about thinking about
ideas about intercourse with women
even though she never had a crush on a girl
not once kissing lessons in the tom boy club
& no appreciation for butches

so girlfriend i says to judy
on the mexican bus
where hopefully nobody speaks english
let me hip you to the american butch
it's their boots
it's their motorcycles
it's the way they take basketballs
away from men
to me there's four categories of humans
you're bi-lingual, i'm bi-sexual
you got your boys
good for certain kinds of deliciousness
you got straight girls like yourself
i never touch
lesbians who scare me worse than traveling
& butches who look like drag queens
when they put on dresses
& manifest sexual powers
with or without penis imitation
censored by american porn

judy pulled her face back
like i was taking up too much air
& crossed her eyes like
no capech, no compendo
this aspect of collective consciousness
is not in my head space
i was thinking about thinking about
thoughts of improved emotional
communication w/ girls
i wasn't talking about fucking
men thrill & hypnotise me
w/ hard body language
& that freudian thing

i just like closeness w/ my girl
friends better

yo judy, i tried to hip her
that ain't love based erotica
that ain't mysterious forces
that get us in bed, in relationship
with god knows who

hell we in mexico
we out here traveling
like we own the world
i seen your titties
you talk about my tacky bras
& ain't no desire to it
that's buddyship & sharing fascination

with no interior impulse
no use trying to play
w/ dangerous forces
inside wild gay territory
it's the fourth fucking dimension
it takes more than an airline ticket
costs more than straight girl double language smarts
can secure
will take you to places of foreign knowledge
without a bus pass
without a easy frame of reference
without the heart to recognize
anything you used to think
was home.

Michelle T. Clinton is a 1990 American Book Award winner and author of High Blood Pressure. She is a poet performance artist living in Los Angeles, California.

Life Walks

by Earthlyn Marselean Manuel

In these shoes,
I've gathered stones
that lay in my way
And passed over some
unassuming hillsides.

I've worn the hell
out of the struggle to love all of me
Leaving a little of the shoe's soul to
bear the rest of my walk.

In these shoes
I've kicked up the dirt
to cover those obviously mistaken steps.
But when I move further down the
path the patterns somehow re-appear.

But I've seen these shoes,
over and over again,
On other black women.
Not quite the same, but similar
around the instep.
Flat and sturdy.

Moving over the same
unassuming hillsides,
making patterns.
Watch out, Don't step on those cracks!
Don't split that pole!
Don't walk so fast.

And sometimes I take off these shoes,
And study my bare feet,
to see the marks where I've been rubbed
once too many.
Where the big toe curves in.
Where the flesh has thickened from walking in those shoes,
for so many years, over so many hills,
just to reach loving myself.

But what amazes me so is,
I can hardly remember what my feet used to look like.

My Truth

A incest survivor shares her story and offers words of hope

by Jala Akilah Waleed

I remember when I was about 6 or 7 years of age being invited to spend the weekend at my grandparents and looking forward to these invitations with great anticipation. I saw these weekends as a break from being around my father and his alcoholic rantings and ravings which occurred consistently and coincidentally with the weekends. He verbally and physically abused my mother, as well as me and my siblings. Going to grandmother's provided me with a much-needed haven. Little did I realize that I was selecting the lesser of two evils.

I would usually go to sleep at my grandmother's in just my tee-shirt and white cotton panties. On one occasion, I awoke feeling some type of sensation that was new and foreign to me in my vagina. Upon fully awakening, I saw my grandfather looming over me with his finger in my vagina. I don't have any idea how long he had been standing there doing this to me, but I also gradually became aware that my grandmother had walked up beside him and asked him what he was doing. I can't remember his response, but I do know that my grandmother had seen what he was doing to me. I assumed that what

my grandfather was doing to me must be okay. My grandmother certainly had not tried to stop him and no one else would discuss it. And staying at my grandparents was certainly preferable to staying at home on the weekends with my father!!

After this incident and subsequent incidents of the same nature, I knew that there was no one in this world who would protect me, not my mother, my abusive, alcoholic father, and certainly, not my grandparents. I somehow rationalized in my child's mind that if I wanted to be protected, I would have to do it myself and, in order to accomplish this, I would have to be "big" to take care of myself. I also realized that "something" had been taken away from me—even though a few years would pass before I knew exactly what the "something" was.

After my grandmother first discovered my grandfather, the number of invitations to her house gradually increased and during the time spent at her home, she would make big, wonderful meals for me. I indulged her and also became the "big" person who would protect herself. I can't help but wonder, in retrospect, if these meals were my grandmother's way of making everything up to me.

I've gradually found out over the years that one of my sisters, a friend, and a cousin of mine were also molested by my grandfather, and I suspect that there were more

women who chose to keep silent and suffer.

I've chosen to give you this small piece of my life, my truth, because recently I have been reading a book about incest, *The Courage To Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis. In this book, they prescribe the telling of the truth as a part of the process of healing. To say that writing this has been difficult is an understatement; sharing it, indescribable agony. Nonetheless, I give you my truth and hope that I will be healed.

This process of healing is difficult. I feel there is some correlation between my inability/fear of staying in bed too late in the morning. I overeat when I'm scared or angry. I wash myself, my genitals much too hard, as if there was something there that I must get rid of and cannot.

I would like to say to all of you that if you are an incest survivor, and I find the word "survivor" most appropriate, please tell your truth. Seek out a self-help group, therapy, spiritual counseling, read books on the subject. Please start healing yourself!!

"Everyone has a right to tell the truth about her life"—from *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*.

AFRA-SAPPHISM: SEX AS A SACRED ACT

by Asungi

"The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self, and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire. For once having experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognizing its power, in honor and self-respect we can require no less of ourselves... It is never easy to demand the most from ourselves, and from our lives, and from our work. To go beyond the encouraged mediocrity of our society is to encourage excellence... This internal requirement toward excellence which we learn from the erotic must not be misconstrued as demanding the impossible from ourselves nor from others. Such a demand incapacitates everyone in the process, for the erotic is not a question of what we do. It is a question of how acutely and fully we can be in the doing. For once we know the extent to which we are capable of feeling that sense of satisfaction and fullness and completion, we can then observe which of our various life endeavors bring us closest to that fullness..."

Audre Lorde¹

AFRA-SAPPHIC EROTICISM AS A SPIRITUAL IMPLEMENT

Bein' the Afracentric revisionist² that I am, I believe that it is essential for Afrikan-sapphic³ sistahs to recognize that even our most intimate sensual images of womin-bonding are a result of years of (struggles against, if we are lucky) internalized Afraphobic⁴ oppression which not only socially condemns our desires to bond with other wimmin in intimate sensual pleasure, but also





condemns any sexual choice we make that is not intended for "procreation", including masturbation and celibacy. Even more recently we have been confronted by a more confusing (for me) struggle against the "New Age" social condemnation that we are "racially ethnocentric" —DARE we admit to a preference for bonding with other wimmin of Afrikan descent. It is little wonder then that we don't recognize how our modern internalized images of 'womin-centered sexuality' seldom include or even bring us to consider the SPIRITUAL POTENTIAL in Afrikan wimmin-bonding...let alone know that Sapphism as a "Sacred Act" was a MAJOR spiritual practice among our Afrikan-foremamas.

Fortunately, as a result of publishings by Sistah "Sapphic writers" like Audre Lorde, Pat Parker, Barbara Smith, etc. as well as our ever-perceptive "Wominist writers" like Flo Kennedy, Barbara Christian, Angela Davis, and Alice Walker (esp. in "The Color Purple"), we've finally come to realize and discuss the social/political power of the "Erotic" in Afrikan womin-bonding. Their insight and vision have inspired me during the last several years as I've pursued a greater understanding and development (in myself) of the Spiritual Roots of Afra-Sapphism, which has always "driven" me to continue on a path toward a "personal excellence" that I have come to label "AFRACENTRIC Spirituality." Unfortu-

nately, like many sistahs in the Diaspora, I had no AFRA-positive model for developing these spiritual roots of my Afra-Sapphism, that were a major part of my "erotic" sensibility.

It is in this sense of necessity for an AFRA-POSITIVE SPIRITUAL MODEL for myself and our community that I've focused on retrieving the "lost Herstorical records" of our Afracentric Spiritual Legacy. Firmly believing that "religion MUST GLORIFY YOU", it is my hope in reclaiming and sharing our ancient womin-centered Afrikan spiritual traditions, as well as the Herstorical MAMA-ROOTS⁵ of 'Sapphic Sex As A Sacred Act' with other Sapphic sistahs, that this knowledge becomes a "POSITIVE SPIRITUAL BALM that heals our broken wings" and helps us to dis-spell in ourselves the dis-ease of internalized AFRAPHOBIA, and finally come to re-create a modern community of truly healthy Afra-centered-womin-bonding...where we will once again remember that we CAN FLY!!!

SACRED SISTAHOODS AND SAPPHISM

We should first look at the Herstorical reason for WHY womin-centered unions became morally and socially forbidden. On one hand, it is a simple one: if the strugglin' male-dominant social-religious customs were

to finally establish themselves successfully over the age-old, popular Afragoddess Temples, they had to absorb the popular "themes" of that system, while repressing those customs that could not be re-written and assimilated as "origin myths" of their newly established theology of a 'self-created god the father'. Sapphism was therefore a serious threat because of its major symbolic ritual use in celebrating wimmin as an earthy reflection of a Supreme MAMA Creatress. So the eventual repression of "Sapphism" by the Judeo-Christian theo-crats was another of endless measures taken toward "self-preservation" and theological dominance over our ancient Afrikan-female-centered religions, to insure its firm establishment and continuance as the ONLY divinely "Chosen Religion."

While it is imposible to creditably pin-point the ACTUAL beginnings of "Sapphic Sex as Sacred" among our Afrikan foremammamas, I will begin this discussion by revealing a few of the Herstorical "roots" of these sacred spiritual practices of Ceremonial Sapphism as they existed and were recorded among our Afrikan foremammamas in South India, as well as Northern, Central, and Souther Afrika. In some of our most ancient times 'sexual magik' was used as an integral part of the initiation of a priestess, and was not a practice used merely for the sake of procreation (as we are misled to believe today), which in early times was NOT even seen as connected to the act of sex. And since 'sex as magik' was often used for the sake of "ecstatic self-transcendence"...a sexual-spiritual fusion of the initiate with MAMA as the Great Cosmic All, the initiate priestess-rank and their servant class were specifically taught the practice of Sapphic sexual-union as a sacred discipline, to be used for ceremonial MAMA worship and personal spiritual growth. Sapphic sexual union was an essential ingredient in the ancient ritual called; "Dance of Awakening the She' Ba" in ancient Kamaat' or called; "Shakti-Kundalini", the "Touch of Awakening the Serpent Fire", and was a sexual invocation of the vital principle of female power (Shakti) as a raw energy force (Kundalini) in the body used in Tantric Yoga in India. A Sapphic erotic way...I always like to say, of "makin' yah Kundalini rise..." and enjoying your BLISS while workin' on your spiritual ascension stuff...

While Sapphic Adoration and Sexual Union were essential ingredients in Ancient Temple Ritual; used for dis-spelling evil, for healing, and for prophetic divination, it should be noted that wimmin-centered sexual bonding was in no way limited merely to the Priestess Class nor exclusively limited to sacred ritual-use in Southern India

or Afrika. The vagina and breasts were worshipped as sacred physical symbols of the "Great MAMA Forces In Nature" and womin sought to honor MAMA in themselves by "attending erotic pleasure" to these particular areas during Sapphic union with each other. "Kissing" the breast (the Mound of Heavenly Pleasure) was an erotic gesture of honoring Aset/Hat-Hera (Isis/Hathor) as the MAMA who "Gives Forth the Milky Nectar of Life" and "kissing" the vagina (the Lotus Flower of Pleasure), was an erotic gesture of worshipping Mat/Nut (Mut/Neith) as the MAMA who "Gives Forth the Honey Nectar of Life." It was believed that oral genital "worshipping" evoked and blended the HIGHER and LOWER spiritual energies, which resulted in creating magikal potentials that could be used by the initiated for healing, prophesy or spiritual empowerment. Of course, you've seen the thousands of images of wimmin holding out their breasts to be suckled or opening their legs in erotic gesture... I believe that these images are misinterpreted when they are noted as being "birthing" images and I will say here that they are actually images which symbolically celebrate the erotic nature of MAMA, and Her subsequent requirements for womin-centered sensual pleasure as they were practiced in our early sexual Mystery Rites.

In ancient India it was considered NORMAL for wimmin to have "intimate relationships" with each other. Among the wealthy households, it was typical for a womin to be brought up in the company of one or more "Sakhis", female companions of poorer families (sometimes even distant relatives), who would live with her "like a sister" in close relationships which included physical intimacy. It is said that in many "eastern cultures", close physical contact between wimmin has always been considered normal AND HEALTHY, and it was common for sistahs and close wimmin friends to share the same bed.

Even the word "SAKHI" or "woman friend" is rooted in the sacred word, "SHAKTI"; the "Vital Touch of Awakening", the central feminine power principle in Tantric sexual practices. It was considered "vitalizing, auspicious and special" for a womin to have a SAHKI as a companion, because it was widely believed that such "sisterhoods" strengthened the femininity of all participants, since a Sakhi ADDED her own qualities and experiences to those of her 'sistah'. That such Sapphic sistahoods were considered "normal" is evidenced in their frequency and long standing portrayal in ancient Indian art. In the household of a wealthy Indian womin, a

number of female attendants were employed to "serve" her in duties which included bathing, oiling, massaging, and generally 'beautifying' their mistress, which also included attending to her sensual pleasures.

In ancient Kamaat these Sacred Temple Sistahoods were called "HAKATES" or "HARAKATES." Their hieroglyphic root words were: "HAT KA" and "HAT RA", whose sacred image was of two wimmin holding hands and loosely meant (in my interpretation) "Two wimmin whose embrace of adoration joins them in their reflected Radian Enlightenment." A variation of this sacred title; "SAHACAT" can be found in the book; "Another Mother Tongue", where author Judy Grahn quotes Edward Carpenter, who quotes Leo Africanus (1492), who calls them "...diviners, who are women-witches..." and who also describes them as "...North African diviners...who have a damnable custom to commit unlawful venerie among themselves..." Commenting wittily on his outrage at their erotic popularity among the wimin at the time, Grahn ventures "...The SAHACAT sorcerers must have been irresistible women to arouse so much attention from local women and so much envious derision from Leo..." Two of our most famous names from this ancient Afrikan sistahood were Hypatia and Sappho, who are rarely noted as having been High priestesses (SAHACATES) of the AFRIKAN Mystery System.

Even the infamous male-dominant "Kama Sutra" texts on ritual eroticism, includes instruction for "female-centered" sexual techniques for satisfying ancient Sapphic sexual desires. And as recent as the 18th century, in Hindi paintings you can find depictions of our Sapphic sistahs as, "Gopis in sensual dalliance on a bed together" as well as in references in both Tantric and Buddhist literature that point to the "transcendental and regenerative power" inherent in these Sapphic Sistahoods. One source I ran across, claims as many as FIVE distinct categories of Sapphism still exist in contemporary Hinduism even today, where it is said that practices that are "MOST found in Western Lesbianism" are thought of (by the Hindi) as largely rooted in aggressive "sexual role playing" and are considered to be the 'lowest type' of Sapphism, which they say is far removed from the "higher" more spiritual forms of sexual sistahood practiced in the "East."

So, you say, what has this got tah do with Afracentric Sapphic-sexuality? Well, in addition to recent scholastic records that inform us of the legacy of indigenous Af-

rikoid people in Southern India, there has always been considerable cultural-religious exchange between the people of Southern India and Kamaat, both famous for their "rich silks, spices, and lavish livin' styles", which included ceremonial celebrations full of sensual wimin-temple dancers. In ancient Kamaat we clearly find tomb paintings which depict female "attendants" caressing their mistresses in a similar manner to what we find in Indian paintings. Also in a manner very much like our sistahs in India, our sistahs in Afrika were said to live in exclusive "temple communities" which were encouraged by the ruling class.

I have also come across sources that state in many non-Christian/Arabic cultures around the world intimate sexual contact between wimmin is considered natural. And while the "jury is still out" on this subject, many references can be found that point to this as a particularity of matriarchal societies world-wide, including tribal groups not only in Afrika, but in Asia, the Pacific islands and South America, which are said to include Sapphism as an INTEGRAL PART of their SOCIO-RELIGIOUS systems. Among the "PAIA", a Bantu tribe of Afrika, one source notes that a wimin is ONLY allowed to have her virginity taken by another wimin, who is carefully chosen by her, and who then becomes her "sistah"; living with her for three days every month, during which time they "practice Sapphism". This source also notes that among the "LUKUDU" wimmin of the Congo, girls are "paired off" early in life. And among certain tribes in New Guinea, it is deemed customary for a young wimin to "perform oral love-making with her older female friends" in the belief that by doing so, she will "absorb some of their feminine wisdom." Of course we can find this belief in the "unlimited feminine power" as a source regenerated each month with the completion of the menstrual cycle, a common theme in Afrikan and Eastern religious systems. Meaning that in many of these social systems remains the subsequent belief in the NATURALNESS of wimmin "sexually nurturing" each other's vital essence as a fundamental principle for feminine health.

That these ancient beliefs in the social/spiritual naturalness of sexual wimin-centered sistahoods have been intentionally eradicated from western social/moral codes is inherently proven by the lack of viable records of our Afrikan sistah Sappho, also widely known as the Greek "Tenth Muse." While she is noted as one of the MOST IMPORTANT literary figures today, very little of her actual writings (which were full of Sapphic references) remain.

The majority of her writings were destroyed in 1073 A.C.E., by order of Pope Gregory VII, another act by the Roman Church, intent upon erasing any and all record of the primacy of Female-centered autonomy, Divinity and spiritual practice in ancient Kamaatic Sista-hoods.

USING SEX AS A SACRED EROTIC ACT IN OUR MODERN LIVES.

"...As women, we need to examine the ways in which our world can be truly different. I am speaking here of the necessity for reassessing the very quality of all aspects of our lives and our work.... It has become fashionable to separate the spiritual (psychic and emotional) away from the political, to see them as contradictory or antithetical.... In the same way, we have attempted to separate the spiritual and the erotic, reducing the spiritual thereby to a world of flattened affect—a world of the ascetic who aspires to feel nothing. But nothing is farther from the truth.... The dichotomy between the spiritual and the political is also false, resulting from an incomplete attention to our erotic knowledge. For the bridge which connects

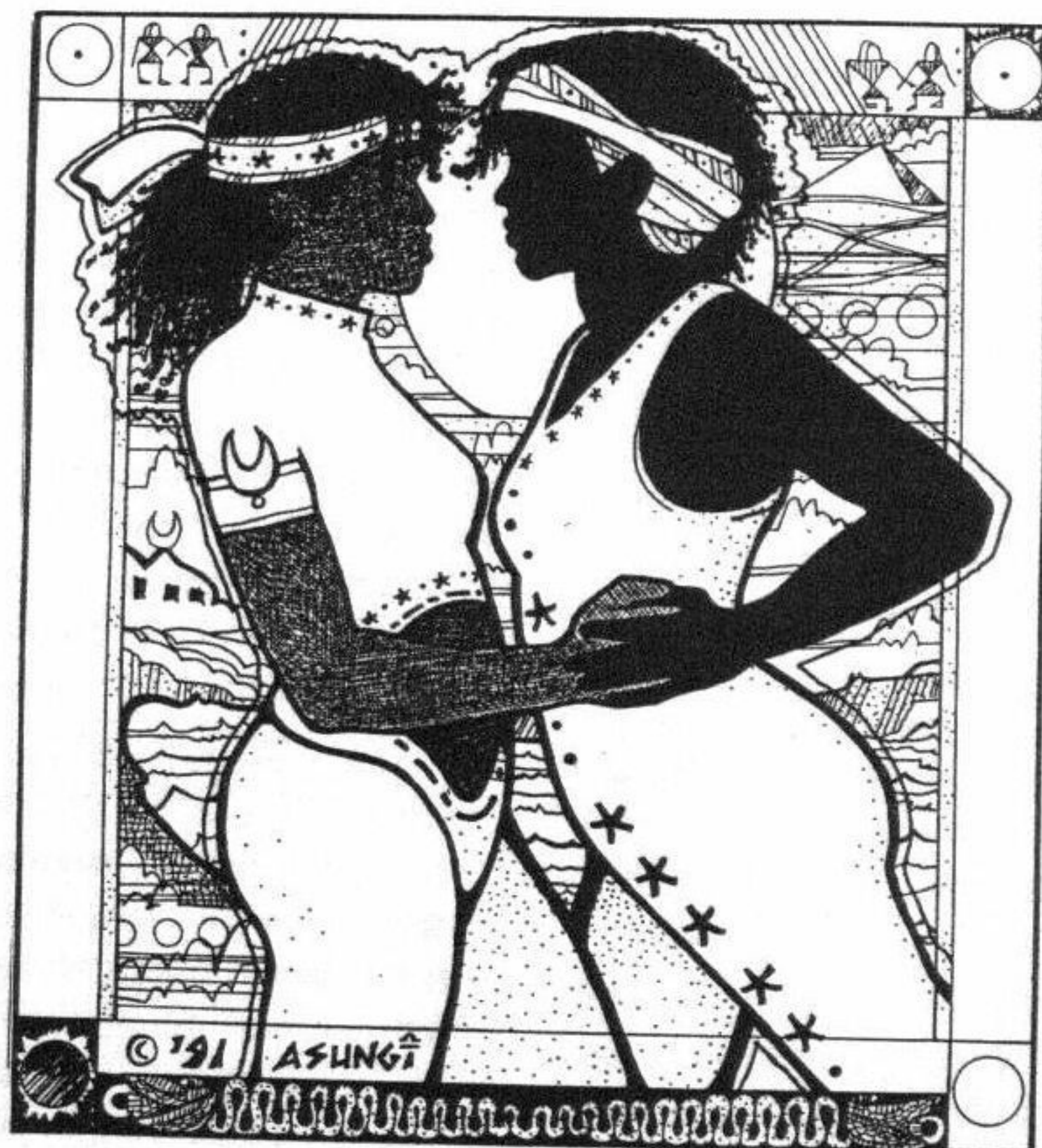
them is formed by the erotic—the sensual—those physical, emotional and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passions of love, in its deepest meanings..."¹

Perhaps what we can learn from these ancient models of Sacred Sapphism is how we Daughters of MAMA in the Diaspora, in these "modern times", have lost our true karmic/spiritual connection to the MAMAROOTs of our Sapphic destinies, and how we can...through conscious intuitive re-membrance and re-integration, begin to re-create purposefully "heal-ty" Afracentric relationships, sexual unions, and sista-hoods. And that the need for wimmin to worship the Black-faced One (7) as a self-reflection and not a lack of self is an ancient one. And while the power of "Sexual Healing" is even today still one of our greatest mysteries, our use of the erotic for sexual healing (I know you remember the popular song "Sexual Healing") and using erotic Sapphic adoration to empower the soul is potentially one of our most powerful tools for Afracentric Growth.

Of course, I'm talking about a sexual practice, performed between two sista-hs who are Afracentrically balanced and therefore emotionally, spiritually and erotically responsible to each other, since like ALL ancient and modern forms of "Self-awakening," using sexual/

erotic intimacy as a tool for "Sacred Work" has to be done with respect, restraint, and responsibility. In fact, ALL healing needs to be performed as a gift one shares unselfishly...and whether it is done for benefit of self or between two sista-hs, any EFFECTIVE healing has to be done with good intent, equality, honesty, trust and spiritual wisdom.

Sapphic sex can serve us as a sacred ritual tool which we can use to open our sleeping "womin centers" on physical, intellectual, psychic and metaphysical levels. Physically, as we give and receive sexual adoration to/from one another, we reinforce our need and ability to know, trust, open and bond with one another on deeply intimate levels. As we open our sensual centers to our sista-h-lover, we re-affirm our psychic need for womin-nurturing-connect-edness, as well our intellectual need for visual mental images that reinforce our positive erotic Afra-selves. As we trust our sexual selves with one another, we open our sleeping psychic selves to a sensual re-connection to MAMA's Eternal Cosmic Fire, and are allowed once again to experience the "altered state of metaphysical universal beingness" that mutual sexual/psychic journeying brings us. And if/when



we are that erotically re-connected, we can transfer that state of "sensual creative ascendancy" to our metaphysical "womin centers" and unite as one with self, each other, and the MAMAROOT Mysteries, joined in Her Sacred Fire of Sistah-Love. It is at this state of sexual-metaphysics that we can use the "Sacred Fire" for ceremonial healing of the self, the pair, or the community. It should be noted here that this last level of Sacred Sapphic erotica is not easily mastered, and is therefore rarely accomplished, since it requires a great deal of spiritual, emotional, sexual and metaphysical discipline on the part of the sistahs who wish to develop these Sacred Sapphic skills, therefore it should not be "the goal" for most of us as we explore our erotic Afra-Sapphic potentials.

And in concluding, I will say that this article is no way intended to be a comprehensive discussion on our timeless legacy of Afra-Sapphism and its ritual uses as a Sacred Act, but it is mostly intended as an introduction and basic framework for a more expanded work which I am developing on this subject. The information I share is essentially an Afracentric Herstorical "patchworking," instigated by my personal need and determination to retrieve and re-create a positive Afra-Herstory from the scarce 'bits and pieces' of written materials which I've recovered and compiled over the years. Afra-revisionist that I am, I've also reinforced this "thin patchworking" by interweaving it with a whole lot of "MAMA-Guided" Afra-revisioning, so that it becomes a viable AFRA-HERSTORICAL Quilt, in which we Afra-Sapphic sistahs today might positively enfold and rekindle ourselves.

NOTES:

1. Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power." Out and Out Books. New York, N.Y. 1978.

2. AFRACENTRIC: A term I created in 1983, to describe my evolving philosophy of being Black and womin-centered as a norm. It asserts a cultural sensibility that an Afra-affirming language, vision, Herstorical, spiritual, political and social reality is essential for Afrikan wimmin. Aware that language transforms, I constructed the root-word; "AFRA" which means Black female-centered, and created a group of derivatives like; AFRAPHOBIA, AFRASISTAH, AFRAGODDESS, AFRA-SAPPHIC, etc. to further describe this principle.

3. AFRIKAN-SAPPHIC: Wimmin of Afrikan descent who are also lesbians, but who are not Afracentric in their identity or Sapphic intent.

4. AFRAPHOBIC: The state of fearing, or a state of

internalized self-hatred of Afracentricity.

5. MAMARROOTS: An Afracentric term that describes our Legacy of Afragoddess Spirituality and reclaims our Afra-gynecentric roots in a culturally viable language. MAMA is the original utterance used to describe the Mother-Goddess concept among Afrikan peoples, and meant "to give/giver of light/life, air, breath."

6. KAMAAT: An Afracentric re-creation of "Kemet" and Afro-centric interpretation of the hieroglyph, "KMT" for Egypt. I've chosen to use the root words, "KA" meaning "Black, or Blackfaced" and "MAAT" the title of the "MAMA of Divine Truth and Righteous Justice," which I believe is the original utterance rather than Kemet, since interpretive vowel selection is an arbitrary one anyway.

7. BLACKFACED ONE: Another title for the Afragoddess of Kamaat, who I have also named "MAMI KA" and define as the "Blackfaced Giver and Taker of Breath of Light/Life." "Sunkissed" is another term that denotes a "Blackfaced" sistah, while it also acknowledges our roots as "Children of the Sun," another lost and recently retrieved label for Afrikan people.

Untitled

You are my Bathsheba
 nestled between fertile breast
 textured by soft greens and rugged
 rock browns
 Oasias!
 Jewel of the East
 Your fresh salty breezes
 bring me peace
 your thundering surf
 buoyant
 cold
 and crystal clear
 arouses passions
 deep and real
 that explode with the echoing sea spray
 scattering your bountiful treasures
 upon the golden sand altar
 at which I kneel
 my homage to pay

©Arlette

Bulletin Board

GROUPS

For Afro-American women who are interested in exploring and healing the effects of our internalized oppression/violence, I am forming a group. Anyone interested, please contact Akiba at 704-8410.

The dreams of our spirit-self are calling to us to become a part of our awakened life... If you hear the whisper please join us. New facilitated group forming, the inexperienced welcome. For more information call 849-2416.

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

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

LESBIAN OF COLOR SUPPORT GROUP every Thursday evening from 6:30 - 8pm at the Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley.

MUJERIO, the bay area Latina Lesbian organization, holds monthly meetings on the 3rd Saturday of each month, 5pm. All Latina Lesbians welcome. Info: 587-7384.

Multi-cultural Lesbian writers group forming. For more information call 995-2730.

First-time group for lesbian survivors of incest and childhood molestation. Members must be in individual therapy simultaneously. 16 weeks. Mondays 1:30-3pm. Sliding scale. For more information call Aleisa Kurz at Operation Concern, 626-7000.

HOUSING

ROOMMATE WANTED, Lesbian preferred, age 30+ to share house in Maxwell Park. Must be a non-smoking, responsible adult. Owner seldom home. House has lots of storage, a fireplace and hot tub. It is very quiet and serene. You can bring the excitement! Another dog o.k. Quiet street, parking available. Rent \$400/month. Call 469-2034.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

COORDINATOR for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Speakers' Bureau. 1/2 time facilitating program of volunteer speakers. Open immediately. People of color encouraged to apply. EOE. (415) 548-8283 M-F 10-10.

Feminist Bookstore News has one opening for a three-quarter time Office Manager and Production Coordinator. Responsibilities include routine office work, office management, ad tracking and billing, layout and production for an 125 page bi-monthly trade magazine. For more information or to apply send resume and a business letter (or other sample of your writing) to: Carol Seajay, Feminist Bookstore News, 456 -14th St. #6, San Francisco, CA. 94103

NOTICES

Black Lesbians 40+ interested in forming a once a month social group for pot luck dinners, theater outings, card and board games parties please contact Brenda at (415) 465-2573.

The 1991 National Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Conference organizing committee needs non-affiliated black lesbians to help work on preparing a bid for bringing the 1992 conference to Oakland. Please come to our next meeting on Sunday, Feb. 24, 3pm at 625 O'Farrell, S.F. For more information contact Gypsy at 482-8575.

The First Northern California Conference on African-American Women and HIV will be

held on May 4th, 1991, at San Francisco State University. Registration for the one-day conference will begin at 8AM. For more information contact the Black Coalition on AIDS at (415) 553-8197.

ATTENTION OLD LESBIANS!! The place to be on April 24, 1991 is Atlanta, Georgia for the Old Lesbian Day of Celebration at the National Lesbian Conference. Following 2 West Coast conferences, lesbians over 60 are going national with a special day of celebration which will include workshops, networking, and a dance. The Bay Area Old Lesbian Organizing Committee (OLOC) needs funds to send a large, diverse group of old lesbians to Atlanta in April. Your tax-deductible contribution can be made to OLOC/OC and sent to Operation Concern, 1853 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94103, Attn. Rosemary. For further information write OLOC, P.O. Box 14816, Chicago, IL 60614 or call Gertrude at (513) 767-7180.

A HOME OF YOUR OWN - Excellent opportunity to get into home ownership. Lesbian of color seeks woman to share duplex/house in Oakland or SF. Both women to find and purchase suitable space together as tenants-in-common. Woman must have good credit, good income, plus down payment of \$15,000. Leave message for Sharry at 469-2034. (52)

Looking for "real" female musicians of color to form a band and do original music and top 100. Need: drums, keyboards, bass, guitar. Catches: 1) you have to sing too!; 2) be able to rehearse during the day, weekend performance only. 3) Know your music-personal referrals; 4) If you're not serious, skip this ad. I need musicians who aren't afraid to have a good time with music and have excellent stage presence. If interested, write DIVAS, P.O. Box 24078, S.F., CA. 94124.

SAPPHIRE THEATRE CO. announces an acting workshop for beginners & experienced. Workshops are ongoing. \$5 each workshop. For more information call 653-4945.

Women-identified women with locks for interviews. I'm a photographer (with locks) interested in doing a documentary. Gerris, 655-0545.

FINALLY! AN AFRAGODDESS SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL NETWORK: Join our innovative International Sista-hood! Sista-membership includes a free subscription to the quarterly: MAMAROOTS: AJAMAJEBI dedicated to Afrikan Matristic Spirituality, Mythology, Her-story, Culture & Politics. We welcome \$ contributions and submissions: articles, reviews, images, short stories, rituals, events, correspondence, resources. Membership/sub.: \$18-25/yr. Send a SASE for info/sub: Asungi Productions, 3661 N. Cambell Ave. Suite 108, Tucson AZ 85719-1524. (602) 327-0987

Are you a disabled woman who likes to perform? Come join "Why Crips" - Disabled Women's Theatre Arts Project. We do readers theater, skits, songs, etc. Come share your creativity. Give us a call today at (415) 601-5819.

Donate your paperback books to women in jail! Especially in demand is poetry, lesbian erotica & fiction, and books by and about people of color. To donate materials contact Amy or Catherine at Alameda County Library Extension Services, (415) 745-1477.

PERSONALS

BLACK LIPSTICK LESBIAN - Desperately seeking others like me, to join in spirit, friendship and support. I live in Sacramento but am open to commuting. If you are interested, don't wait - call me!! (916) 362-6923.

SAN DIEGO WOMAN of art & culture would like to begin meeting some friends in the Bay Area. Not looking for a lover (yet), just out to make friends. I will be in S.F. for the Castro St. Fair. Call (619) 291-6734. Let's connect!!

Help! I'm a 26-yr.-old African American lesbian looking to connect with my sisters everywhere but especially within Trenton, N.J. and surrounding areas. If this is you, please call me, Lisa (609) 396-0617.

PUBLICATIONS

BLACK/OUT - Special 10th Anniv. edition of Black/Out now available. This bi/annual magazine from the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays contains essays, reviews, poetry, news and announcements concerning the Black Lesbian and Gay community. Sample copy \$6 plus \$1 postage. 1 year subscription (2 issues) \$10 to BLACK/OUT, c/o NCBLG, 19641 West Seven Mile, Detroit, MI 48219

SERVICES

Sandra Lebby, MSW, is pleased to announce the opening of her private practice of Psychotherapy. "I am a black woman interested in working with clients of color." Sliding scale. (415) 534-5006.

CHIROPRACTIC FOR THE NEW AGE - directional non-force technique provides deep-level healing and lasting correction in minimal time. Honor yourself with my Optimal Wellness Program. Call or write for a brochure/information. Francesca A. Jackson, D.C. 5349 College Ave., Oakland, CA. 94618. (415) 653-6029

COUNSELING FOR WOMEN
"Let's break the bonds of the emotions of oppression and fly with the sun in our hearts"
Simbwala, 465-3933

SUPER FUN KIDSITTING
Creative childcare specialty tailored to meet your child's personality. Sports, arts and crafts or adventures. Occasional sitting ONLY. Take a break this weekend and leave your kids to us. (Oakland & Berkeley.) Heather, 832-4753.

Is your daycare provider understanding of your special family? Daycare by Stephanie, a developmental program for children. 8 wks. to school

age. 7am to 6pm. Mon-Fri. O.M.I. area, SF. For info, call 334-2077.

Creative Murals & Trims
Children's rooms, kitchen, and bathrooms. Professional, experienced designer. Montez, 832-4753.

Fashions Management & Consultant Services
Deborah Matthews
(415) 841-2672

"A SAFE & CARING MASSAGE"
by Debra K. Floyd for yourself or a friend. An hour treatment (\$35) consists of a full body massage, grounding, relaxation breathing and ends with a warm wrap. Call 548-2143 for an appointment.

THERAPIST AVAILABLE
Supportive counseling including cross-cultural, sexual abuse, and substance abuse issues for individuals and couples. East Bay. Sliding scale. J. Segal, MFCC Lic. # MXD 2357. (415) 532-2452.

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

GWEN AVERY FOR HAIR
Precision haircuts, styles, colors and perms. 550-7666.

Dancing Lady who is very interested in keeping her strip tease skills honed, is available for your next special event. If you're having a party or even a smaller more intimate occasion—let me entertain you!! Fee negotiable. For info, call Teri, 532-8836.

SUBMISSIONS WANTED

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS to Anthology on Lesbian and Gay Marriage. Interviewing couples who've had a public commitment ceremony; couples who don't believe in lesbian/gay wedded marriage; individuals who would like to write a critical piece. Contact Suzanne Sherman, (415) 267-5606 or 530-7559.

Women's Cancer Resource Center

A place to gather strength and support women with cancer, their friends, families and health practitioners

• **WCRC and Bay Area Black Women's Health Project** join together for a facilitator training, Feb. 23, 1991. Women with personal cancer experiences needed for multicultural support groups. Call us for more information.

• **Open House: Sunday, Feb. 3, 1-5pm. No scents.**

**3023 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705
(415) 548-9272**

Aché PRODUCTION COMMITTEE is looking for a few good women

Production of Aché offers a great opportunity for you to learn a new skill or just help get the publication out. We need Macintosh-literate (or semi-literate) women for:

Typing stories and articles

Desktop publishing

Some training is available.

We always need proofreaders. (No Mac skills needed.)

Call Janet Wallace, 531-2682.

Aché OUTREACH COMMITTEE FORMING CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

If you are excited about the work Aché has been doing and would like to be part of the Outreach-Liaison Committee please contact Skye-Ward, Outreach Coordinator. We need volunteers to help with these areas:

Conference/Events Tabling

Liaison to grassroots organizations

Liaison to university campuses and women's centers

Designing promotional material

Soliciting human resources (e.g. events volunteers, co-sponsors, etc.)

National/International outreach/liaison

Office staff volunteers

Contact Skye Ward c/o Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706

Calendar

DANCE

Friday-Saturday, March 1-2

Hassan Al Falak, Jeff Friedman, and Jon Weaver will be performing as part of the Bay Area Dance Series at the Laney College Theatre, 900 Fallon St. in Oakland. 8pm. \$12. For more information call 748-3141.

The 9th Annual African Cultural Festival featuring dance performances by Ceedo Senagalese Dance Co., Fua Dia Congo, Dimensions Dance Theater, with music by Zulu Spear. 8pm. Calvin Simmons Theater, 10th St. & Fallon in Oakland. For more information call 763-3962.

Friday-Saturday, March 8-9

Bill T. Jones/Amle Zane Company with The Julius Hemphill Sextet
The company will present several new works including "The Cabin," from the evening-length *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin* accompanied by music composed by avant-garde saxophonist Julius Hemphill. 8pm. \$12-20. Zellerbach Hall, U.C. Berkeley campus. For more information call 642-9988.

Friday-Saturday, March 29-30

Zaccho Dance Theater, featuring director/

choreographer Joanna Haigood will be performing as part of the Bay Area Dance Series at the Laney College Theatre. Haigood explores AIR as a realm for dance as she and her company fly, walk walls, and throw themselves into space—the result is magic. She is not to be missed. 900 Fallon St. in Oakland. 8pm. \$12. For more information call 748-3141.

EVENTS

Friday-Saturday, February 8-9, 15-16, March 1

The Bay Area Black Comedy Competition will be held with 3 rounds of events hosted by last year's winner Lester Barry. All rounds begin at 8pm. 2025 Broadway, Oakland. \$20. Tickets at 762-BASS.

Thursday, February 14

Aché's 2nd Annual Erotic Explosion - "We Come...In Colors"
Hosted by Stephanie Henderson featuring Blake C. Aarens, S. Diane Bogus, Natalie Devora, Winn Gilmore, Margaret Sloan-Hunter, V. Papaya Mann, Mary Midgett, Ntombe, Stephanie Smith and Donna Terry reading their hottest work. Also featuring a special guest appearance by erotic dancer Teri Lethridge. Last year's event sold out and packed the sidewalk—don't be late!! 7:30pm. \$5-10, no one turned away for lack of funds. Modern Times Bookstore, 968 Valencia St. (between 20th & 21st St.) in San Francisco.

Sunday, February 16

Storyteller Diane Fertatte's "Sapelo: Time Is Winding Up" at 2pm in the James Moore Theater, 1000 Oak St. in Oakland. For more information call 273-3401.

Thursday, February 21

"Female Rap Rising - The State of Women in Hip Hop" is a presentation by rapper/actress Dominique DiPrima focusing on the role of women in the broader context of the rap world. Outlining the current surge of female rappers, DiPrima will cover issues facing women in hip hop and explore where it is going from here. Sponsored by the UCSF Women's Resource Center. Noon-1pm. Toland Hall. Free. For more information call 476-0400.

Saturday, February 23

War at Home: Militarism Impacts Racism, Sexism & Homophobia - a community sponsored teach-in sponsored by Modern Times Bookstore. Forum with Julianne Malveaux, African American scholar, author & columnist; Paul Didonato, attorney for lesbians and gays in the military; Carlos Munoz Jr., U.C. Berkeley La Raza Studies professor and others. Modern Times Bookstore, 968 Valencia St. in S.F. Info: 282-9246.

The Exploratorium features "Cultural Rhythms," a series of performances, films and activities highlighting the cultural origins of black children's games. Storytelling, music, and double-dutch and more, all focusing on the influence of African American rhythms are

featured in a tribute to Black History Month. Saturday and Sunday at 1, 2:30 & 4pm. 3601 Lyon, S.F. 563-7337.

The Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame Gala Dinner and Dance will be held at 6:30pm at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 1001 Broadway in Oakland. For more information call 465-0804.

Sunday, February 24

Jean Weisinger will exhibit black/white photographs of the Oct. '90 "I Am Your Sister" conference in Boston honoring Audre Lorde and her work at Mama Bears, 6536 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. Reception from 3-5pm. No charge. For more information call 428-9684.

Bay Area Old Lesbians are hosting a Pre-Spring Dance for lesbians old and young from 3-6pm at the A.C.T. Center, 450 Geary St. (nr. Powell BART.) Entertainment, door prizes, raffles, fun & frolic. \$10 adv./\$12 door, no one turned away. For more information call Rosemary or Pat at 626-7000.

The Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame presents the 18th Annual Oscar Micheaux Award Ceremony at 4pm at the Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway in Oakland. For more information call 465-6400.

Thursday, February 28

"Impact II:" is a performance benefit by lesbian writers featuring Paula Gunn Allen, Cheryl Clarke, Holly Hughes, Ana Maria Simo, Judy Grahn and more!! Victoria Theatre,

16th & Mission Sts., S.F.
8pm. \$8/sliding scale.

Open Reading at Old Wives Tales featuring Stephanie Henderson, Stephanie Smith, Darlene Angela, Earthlyn Manuel, Blake C. Aarens & Ntombe. 7:30pm. Donation. 1009 Valencia St., San Francisco.

Friday-Sunday, March 1-3

OutWrite '91, the second National Lesbian and Gay Writers Conference will be held at the Cathedral Hill Hotel in San Francisco. OutWrite '91 will explore the creative and political issues facing writers, editors, booksellers, critics and agents in the lesbian and gay communities. Guest speakers include Kate Millett, Paula Gunn Allen, Urvashi Vaid, Cheryl Clarke and others. Also a wide range of panelists including Karen Williams, and Janet Wallace of Aché. Register at the conference site. For more information call 626-3334.

Saturday, March 2

Come join us as Aché celebrates her 2nd anniversary: "Tribal Connexions:" a magical extravaganza featuring emcee/storyteller Betinda Sullivan; dancer Sharon Page Ritchie; actress Donna Terry; musicians Gwen Avery, Melanie DeMore, Rashida Oji, and Vicki Randle. The evening will begin at 6:30pm with a special exhibit/reception, and the main event will begin at 8pm at the Berkeley Conference Center, 2105 Bancroft Way (NE corner Shattuck Ave.) in downtown Berkeley. Tickets are \$12.50 adv./\$14 door.

Last year's event sold out, so get your ticket soon!! Advance tickets at Mama Bears Bookstore, 6536 Telegraph in Oakland.

Saturday, March 9

An evening of comedy with Karen Williams and Marga Gomez at the Noe Valley Ministry, Sanchez St. in San Francisco.

EXHIBITS

February

"The Black West: Historical Figures and Work," a month-long exhibit, will be held at the Samuels Gallery, Embarcadero at Alice, Jack London Square in Oakland. Mon., noon-5pm; Tues.-Sat., 11-6pm. Free.

FILM

Sunday, February 17

Sponsored by the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame, A BIGGER PICTURE is a panel highlighting production roles in four new films by black directors: Floyd Webb, Assoc. Prod. "Daughters of the Dust"; Mrs. Harris, Exec. Prod. "Chameleon Street"; David Johnson, Script Writer/Director "The Session"; and Michelle Colbert, Director "Saving Grace". Panelists will discuss their roles in these productions, film clips will be shown. James Moore Theatre, Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak St. in Oakland. \$3.

Monday, February 18

"Killer of Sheep," (1977, 83 min.) set in Watts, is an offbeat observation on black family life by

director Charles Burnett ("To Sleep With Anger"). 7:30pm at the Pacific Film Archive, 2625 Durant in Berkeley.

Tuesday, February 19

Flashbacks & Wide Angles: Autobiography is an evening of short films including "Coffee Colored Children," (15 min.) by Ngozi Onwurah, is an autobiographical portrait of two black children of a white mother and absent Nigerian father. Over re-enacted footage, Onwurah recalls her childhood, and the difficulty of forming a sense of identity when all reflections, save those of her brother and the mirror, were white. 7:30pm at the Pacific Film Archive, 2625 Durant in Berkeley.

Thursday, February 21

Video Brazil '91 is an evening of works by Brazil's video artists featuring "Rite and Expression" which depicts the conflict between the Church and African culture, and various other works. 7:30 pm. Also showing this evening is "Ile Alyé" (1989, 52 min.) by David Byrne, which explores the pan-African religion Candomblé in Bahia, Brazil. 9pm at the Pacific Film Archive, 2625 Durant in Berkeley.

Friday, February 22

The Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame 1991 Black Independent Film, Video & Screenplay Competition Award program will be held at 7pm at the James Moore Theater, 1000 Oak St. in Oakland. This is the kickoff event for the Oscar Micheaux

awards weekend. It features a screening of the winner in the "Best Film" category and award presentations to winners of this international competition. A catered reception follows. \$10. For more information call 465-0804.

Wednesday, March 20

The Aché Series returns with "Gotta Make This Journey," a video documentary of Sweet Honey in the Rock by director Michelle Parkerson. This wonderful work features intimate profiles of each of the six members. The evening will also feature a special poetry reading. 7:30pm at La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley. Donation, proceeds to benefit Aché.

MUSIC

Sunday, February 17

The Soul & Gospel of Gwen Avery, is not to be missed at Josie's Cabaret and Juice Joint, 3583 - 16th St. at Market in S.F. 4pm. \$6. Reservations for all shows: 861-7933.

El Grupo Sinigual will be performing at El Rio, 3158 Mission St. in S.F. 4-8pm. \$5. Info: 282-3325.

Thursday, February 21

An evening of reggae featuring Sista live with Fenton & the Elevation Band at Ashkenaz, 1317 San Pablo Ave. (at Gilman) in Berkeley. 9pm. \$5. For more information call 525-5054.

Friday, March 1

Melanie Demore and Rashida Oji will be per-

forming together at the Freight & Salvage, 1111 Addison St. In Berkeley. 8pm. For more information call 548-1761.

TELEVISION

Friday, February 15

"Descendants" (USA, 1988) is an engaging exploration of the relationship between Africans and African descendants in the diaspora: lineage, social and cultural history and interrelationships, similarity and diversity. 9:15pm on cable channel PCTV. (rebroadcast on Wed., Feb. 20 at 8pm, and Tues., Feb. 26 at 9:45pm.)

"Sidewalk Stories" by filmmaker/actor Charles Lane is a silent, black & white film which focuses on the relationship between a homeless street artist in New York and a two-year-old girl who becomes his charge when her father is killed. 11pm on KQED, channel 9.

Saturday, February 16

"Consequences" (Zimbabwe, 1988) is the story of an African teenager who gets pregnant while in high school and the consequences that result. An interesting portrayal of African culture and teenage life. 5pm on cable channel PCTV.

Friday, February 22

"Chasing a Rainbow: The Life of Josephine Baker" is a wonderful documentary which chronicles the extraordinary life of Baker from her early career in the U.S. to her rise as the

most popular entertainer in France. 9pm on KQED, channel 9. (Rebroadcast on Feb. 26., 10pm on KQEC, channel 32)

"A Duke Named Ellington" is a two-part retrospective on Duke Ellington's long career, focusing both on the music and the man behind it. 10:30pm on KQED, channel 9.

Saturday, February 23

"The Orisha Tradition: The Gods In Exile" by the Urban Video Project, NY looks at Santeria and other African religions practiced in New York City. 4pm on cable channel PCTV. (Rebroadcast on Mon., Feb. 25 at 9:30pm.)

Wednesday, February 27

"Older Stronger Wiser" (Canada, 1989) is a moving saga about five Black Canadian women in Ontario, Canada. From the descendents of slaves, these women were self-determined and made productive, fulfilling lives for themselves and their families. Their accomplishments and positions in the town range from: basketball coach; National Board of Farmers, Union President; Methodist Episcopal Minister; founder of a Black Studies program, and establishing the first Black bookstore in Ontario, Canada. 8:30pm on cable channel PCTV.

"A Tribute to Katherine Dunham" by Clarence Smith. 9pm on cable channel PCTV.

COMING SOON

Tues.-Sun., April 2-7

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, led by artistic director Judith Jamison, will be performing a mixed repertoire, including works by Jamison and several Bay Area premieres at Zellerbach Hall, U.C. Berkeley campus. Tues.-Sat. at 8pm, and Sat./Sun. at 2pm. \$13-27. For more information call 642-9988.

Friday, April 5

Open rehearsal preceded by a question-and-answer session with Judith Jamison, Artistic Director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will be held at Zellerbach Hall, U.C. Berkeley campus from 3:30-5pm. \$5.

April 23-May 28

"I Dream A World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America" This special exhibit features photographic images by Pulitzer prize-winning photojournalist Brian Lanker of 75 African American women whose lives and work have had a significant impact on the nation. Maya Angelou, Angela Davis, Katherine Dunham, and Alice Walker are among the women featured. In conjunction with this special exhibition, the Oakland Museum will offer cultural performances and events in celebration of symposium on the status of African American women in contemporary America.

untitled

by Boa

IMAGES
FLOAT THROUGH
MY MIND
LIFE'S TRUTH
TURNED TO
ILLUSION
ONE
MORE
TIME
LIFE
ONE BIG
CONTINUAL
LIE
SANTA CLAUS
TOOTH FAIRY
YOU AND LOVE
I SHOULD
HAVE KNOWN
IT WAS JUST
ANOTHER
FAIRYTALE
BUT
YOU
TOLD
IT
SO
WELL

Peace



(Members of Aché's 1990 core group, from left to right: Janet Wallace, Teri Lethridge Erica Wilson, Jean Weisinger, DeeAnne Davis, Reatha Fowler, Lisbet, & Skye Ward)

PHOTO BY ANNIE VALVA

& Aché

Come join us in celebrating Aché's 2nd Anniversary...

"TRIBAL CONNEXIONS"



A magical evening featuring:

**Gwen Avery
Melanie Demore
Rashida Oji
Vicki Randle
Sharon Page Ritchie
Belinda Sullivan
Donna Terry**



Saturday, March 2nd, 1991 8pm

Doors open at 6:30pm for a special Aché exhibit/reception.

**Grand Ballroom, Berkeley Conference Center
2105 Bancroft Way, NE corner Shattuck Ave., Berkeley**

\$12.50 adv./\$14 door

Advance tickets available at Mama Bears Bookstore, Oakland

●A Deborah Matthews/Fashion Management Production●

"Ache." *Aché*, vol. 3, no. 1, Feb.-Mar. 1991. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, link.gale.com/apps/doc/JTMEOB843091580/AHSI?u=umuser&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=a41abc8d. Accessed 8 Dec. 2022.