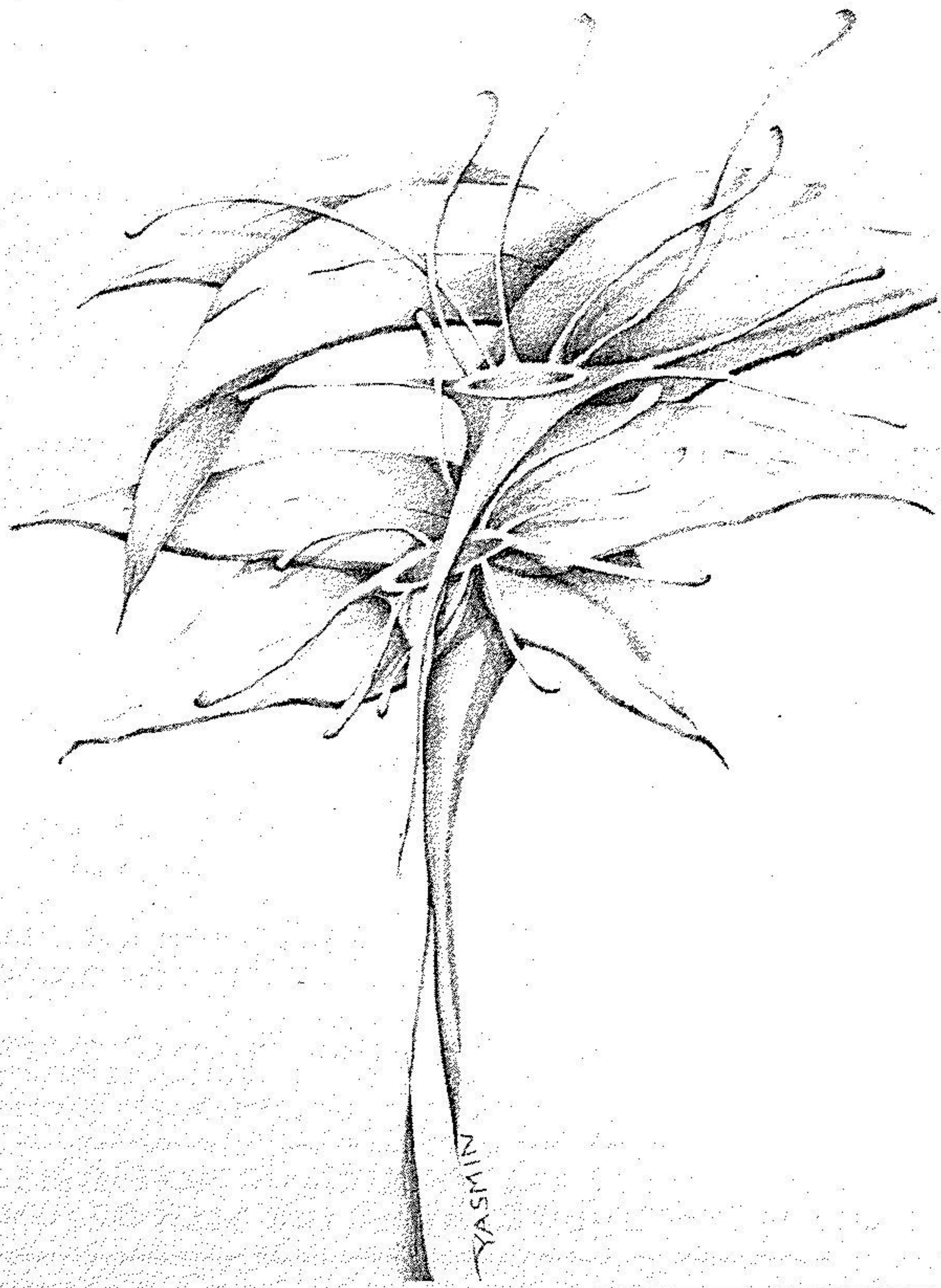


# AKHÉ

JUNE/JULY 1991 VOL. 3, NO. 3 \$2 A JOURNAL FOR LESBIANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT





**IN JUNE & JULY, ACHÉ PRESENTS:**

**THE ACHÉ SERIES  
CONTINUES:**

**WEDNESDAY,  
JUNE 26TH, 7:30PM**

**BY FILMMAKER  
MARLON RIGGS  
"TONGUES UNTIED"**

**WEDNESDAY,  
JULY 31ST, 8PM**

**AN EVENING WITH  
FILMMAKER  
AARIN BURCH**

**THE ACHÉ SERIES IS HELD THE  
LAST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT:**

**LA PEÑA CULTURAL CTR.  
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**OTHER ACHÉ EVENTS:**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 20TH, 7:30PM  
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**"ART, THE CREATIVE PROCESS  
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**A WORKSHOP/HEALING**

**WITH  
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**BRING A PILLOW AND A  
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3 PM TO MIDNIGHT**

**BAHIA TROPICAL  
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**ACHÉ & HOT COLOURS  
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**2 DJs, AND THE DEBUT OF  
BLACK ONYX**

**AND DON'T FORGET TO LOOK FOR OUR  
BEVERAGE BOOTH AT  
THE CELEBRATION SITE!!**

**ALL ACHÉ EVENTS ARE WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE &  
NO ONE IS EVER TURNED AWAY FOR LACK OF FUNDS.**



## **From the Editor**

We have so much to tell, so many rich stories. We are ancient women waiting to be born.

I recently returned from a study tour in Cuba where I witnessed a powerful base for political and social change. I met people whose outlook on life was refreshing, because it was political, heavily dipped in reality with local and international breadth. The Cuban perspective was also social in nature, based in community.

The African Americans in the group received the great gift of being allowed to meet with Assata Shakur, a beautiful African American sister who is living in Cuba as an exile. The experience was heightened by a warm, drenching thunderstorm that knocked out the lights and electricity in Havana just prior to her arrival. We sat in a circle of metal lattice-backed chairs on the veranda of our hotel, the wind howling, the gray early evening sky providing our only light — besides the long yellow beams from the headlights of the few cars on the streets, illuminating our faces as they passed.

Assata struck me as a woman clearly in her power. She was very relaxed with us. Gentle, humorous, philosophical, spiritual, open and firm. She spoke of building an international network that would combine ideas and experiences and work together in its struggle for social justice worldwide. This group, with everyone's differences intact, could at least begin, she thought, by realizing some common human goals like eradicating racism, classism, sexism and homophobia. (Not a bad place to start! And, she noted, it's already beginning to form.)

The strong squeeze she gave my hand at the end of the evening lingers with me now. This small action on her part was a gesture of encouragement, I believe, and I remember feeling good about the work I am doing. But as I return to my life here, I realize that I'm still trying to figure out exactly what that work is. What does it mean for me to be "in my power?"

I've been thinking a lot about this, getting downright overwhelmed with it. I'm discovering, of course, I'm not alone. There are many of us thinking about this idea of power. What does it mean to give the best of ourselves to life and get the best results in return, considering the inequities that exist for most people.

We, as women, do not want to replicate the exclusionary, divisive strategies of patriarchal culture or the example of male hierarchical power relationships as they exist today. The women I met in Cuba had a sense of themselves that expressed pride, dignity, intelligence and a natural inclination toward supporting and helping one another in whatever way was necessary. Initially I felt disillusioned, though, because I had expected to see more visible examples of women's new won power under socialism. Don't get me wrong, women held professional and leadership positions and stood out amongst the practitioners of folklore but they also consistently served the coffee and men still held most primary posts.

But I had to get away from the idea of trying to find women's power in traditional places (as these positions exist in patriarchal culture). Individually, women showed me their personal power: skill and expertise, strength and intuition, passion and generosity. I realized that maybe I needed to look a little deeper to ascertain the level of female influence in the country. I can't say that I have an answer. I'd need more time and some system of measurement to determine what's going on in Cuba for women, but it's my sense that women work in mysterious ways (our powers to perform).

Maybe we are moving from the inside out, exploring from our guts and hearts new ways to be in power — *in our own power* — which doesn't have to do with superiority or ownership or competition, but emphasizes life/peace/equality/honesty/health/community/expression/justice/discipline/responsibility.



Matriarchy was based on many of these ideals: egalitarianism, flexibility, developing relationships that benefit the corporate well-being of the community. A family model of management, let's say, instead of the current military model with its inherent rigidity. It's from this place that I think about African American women.

We're ancient women waiting to be born.

I've been thinking about what it means for us to be in our power. Many women come to mind: Barbara Jordan/Bernice Regan/Toni Morrison/Angela Davis/Judith Jamison/Johnnetta Cole/Mary Frances Berry/Byllye Avery/June Jordan/Elizabeth Catlett/Sonia Sanchez/Leontyne Price/Ruby Dee/Toni Cade Bambara/Barbara Christian/Faye Wattleton/Alice Walker/Ellen Stewart/Mother Hale/the scientists and researchers/the healthcare workers on the streets/the teachers of our children/the community organizers/the priests and healers — the list goes on and it's hard not to be able to call all of the names, those who are so dynamic and already contributing to the idea of what a "new world order" should look like from a woman's perspective. A human perspective. I know I could fill up this page without any trouble.

I have to say, though, that my thoughts are on all of us who aren't quite happy with who we are or what we're doing. I think this is a time of intense healing for many of us. It's a time for discovering this power within ourselves, the kind that allows us to receive all that is good and to give back, to express ourselves from a place of strength. To fight for what is right, which should translate as being right for the planet. (We can't survive without it.)

This issue on disability is a lot about healing — from women who are disabled or physically challenged to women who are hurting and hiding inside. There are lessons for us here. From these examples I hope one more person gains the courage to call on their hidden strengths and begin to heal. It is a time of healing.

I truly want Aché to be a place where we can feel safe to tell the truth. (Didn't I say that last issue? Listen, just like your mama, I'm gonna repeat myself in this column.) I hope that women who send material to Aché — in fear and with feelings of vulnerability — can be applauded and supported by our readers. Our lives are woven with complex webs, often painful webs. I encourage women to write/sing/dance/paint/cut pictures and make collages/go for a hike/act/tell stories/go fishing/sit in a park/make a new friend/call up that person you've been avoiding (and missing) for too many years over some stuff that went down too many years ago. Do something to release the hurt, the shame, the guilt, the confusion, the knotted muscles. Underneath all of that lies our power.

We have so much to tell, so many rich stories.

And, hey, if you're sitting in your power, moving in the dream you've made reality: creating/researching/teaching/practicing your passion — share it with us. We need to hear your brave stories, get a glimpse of your spirit, be in touch with our models to help some of us who are still trying to get over, get beyond, get to it and get on with it.

As you might have noticed in the last issue, we managed to get rid of the typos, but now we're cutting off introductions and endings. Even the second page of the calendar ended up lost at the printers. We're going to keep trying to get it all here. The last part of Ekua's introduction in "I'm Out, Now What" and the end of Winn Gilmore's column, Winnsome Words, are reprinted in this issue. You'll have to go back to April/May to piece it all together.

Remember that it's important to laugh, have fun, nurture your body and your spirit. For starters, come to the Aché event series at La Peña. It's off to a great start this season.

DeeAnne





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Aché (pronounced a-shay or a-chay) is a bi-monthly publication by lesbians of African descent\* for the benefit of all black women. The journal serves to reflect and celebrate the wide spectrum of our experiences. We are committed to open and critical dialogue about the issues affecting our lives, but Aché will not print anything that is oppressive or demeaning to ourselves as lesbians of African descent. We especially encourage submissions from women who have never been published. The editors will work with all contributors to ensure that the final published text has been mutually agreed upon.

The appearance of names or images in this publication does not indicate the sexual orientation of that person or persons.

The deadline for submissions is the first Monday two months prior to publication. Neatly handwritten, typed materials and 3.5" Macintosh disks using MacWrite or Microsoft Word are accepted. Include name, address, and telephone on all submissions and a biographical statement no longer than 20 words. Please specify if you do not want your full name reproduced in Aché. Don't submit originals; we do not have the resources to return them.

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

\*By using the terminology "lesbians of African descent," we are able to acknowledge women of different shades and hues from every corner of the globe.

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# Letters

Sisters:

Thank you very much for running the announcement for the Black Lesbian anthology recently. We received some dynamite West Coast submissions. *BloodSister: Creative Writings by Black Lesbians* presently has over 300 pages from forty Black Lesbian contributors!! Firebrand will receive the manuscript within seven days.

We are so excited and have y-o-u to thank for a good part of our success.

Be well.

Terri L. Jewell



Dear Editors of Aché:

As a white woman actively involved in working against racism in all aspects of my life, I feel compelled to respond to the letter in the April/May issue of Aché by the Blazing Redheads.

It is very apparent to me that even though the Blazing Redheads stated that they are committed to struggling against racism, not once in their letter or in their actions and responses to Lilly Robinson have they addressed the ways in which they were racist and compliant with the racism expressed by their producer towards Lilly.

I believe that one of the

strategies we as white people use to avoid dealing with our racism is denial, to claim that there are "other issues" or that race is not the issue—in this case by declaring that "the core issues were artistic differences" when Lilly stated that they were about racism.

This is clearly the case for the Blazing Redheads.

I want to reiterate that I am not interested in trashing the Redheads or in portraying them as "bad people." However, I do believe that their racist behavior needs to be challenged and for this reason I support a boycott.

Terry Berman

*Editors Note: The Aché editors will be publishing an article exploring racism in the music industry. (Anticipated publication date: October/November issue.)*



Dear Aché Readers,

I am writing to give you a profile of an African American Lesbian, who also happens to be physically challenged. I do so willingly because I feel that it is time to impart the real truth about what it means and what it doesn't mean to be physically challenged.

First, you should know that it means...I don't refer to myself as cripp, gimp,

handicap or disabled. I am a woman with abilities which are challenged by a myriad of barriers, obstacles, attitudes and prejudices.

Second, you should know that the above labels denote negativity and distort the perception of my handicapable condition.

Third, you should know that it means...the loss of my limb does not subtract from my mental acuity or sexual prowess. And you should know that it means...I ambulate with a prosthesis, not a wooden leg.

Finally, you should know that it doesn't mean...I resist courtesy and gentleness of a woman's touch when I am in need. And it doesn't mean...that I meet all of my challenges. It also doesn't mean that I don't want to say "what the fuck are you looking at?" when I walk down the street.

In closing, I would like to add that being an African American Lesbian who is physically challenged provides me a chance to see the world through many lenses. Through this letter, I have shared an abbreviated, but lucid view of how I see the world and I hope that, in some way, you can glean my message.

Yours truly,  
Donna Walton

## Aché Editorial Themes

The editorial theme will be used to direct the content of the feature stories. However, other editors may choose to tap into the theme as they develop their sections for each issue.

We encourage submissions for any particular theme to be sent in as soon as possible.

**August/September**  
Who we are and who we love

**October/November**  
Cycles of Life

**December/January**  
Health

**February/March**  
Diversity of sexual expressions  
(Anniversary Issue)

The deadlines are on the first Monday of the month, two months preceding publication date.



# Conference Report

by Skye Ward

## Northern California African American Women Convene AIDS Conference

African Americans are 29% of the cases of AIDS, but only 11% of the population. Women are the fastest growing population of AIDS cases and African American women have fast become infected at least three times more rapidly than white women.

"Lighting the Way For Community Survival" was the theme of the Northern California African American Women and AIDS/HIV Conference held May 3-4 at City College of San Francisco. The purpose of the conference was to provide a safe, non-judgmental place for African women to come together to discuss their status and strategies as related to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus that causes AIDS.

"The Northern California African American Women and AIDS Conference is long overdue," said Diana Madoshi, Conference co-chair and member of the San Francisco Black Coalition on AIDS. "The AIDS epidemic has

made a profound impact on people of color, particularly the African Americans."

On Saturday, May 4, nationally recognized AIDS expert Dr. Janet Mitchell, M.D., MPH, Chief of OB-GYN and Perinatology of Harlem Hospital in New York, was the keynote speaker. In addition to two plenary sessions: Living with AIDS/HIV Perspectives of Support and a panel of HIV positive women sharing viewpoints, the program consisted of a variety of concurrent workshops in Sexuality, Drugs and Public Policy. The conference also presented a workshop series for men by men, about responsibility and survival.

To obtain cassette recordings of the conference proceedings contact the S.F. Black Coalition on AIDS: 333 Valencia Street, Suite 101, San Francisco, CA 94103 or call (415) 553-8197.

*Editor's note: The last line of the introduction to Ekua Omosupe's "I'm Out — Now What?" was deleted in the April/May issue. Here is the final paragraph reprinted in full.*

The theme of this conference was "Come Out! Come Home!".... Indeed, the purpose of the conference was to continue the processes of self-discovery, the discovery of each other, to "transform our

silences into speech and action," our fears and frustrations into courage and hope, our misconceptions to understanding, to confront our fears and our doubts, as well as acknowledge the ways in which we are working to reconstruct ourselves in our own images rather than settle for those that have been imposed on us. We came together to "query the institutions" of racism, sexism,

## What You Don't Know Can Hurt You (and Me!)

When I went to take my HIV test in April, I was ushered into an airless, mustard-yellow colored room in an outpost clinic of the S.F. Public Health Department to watch a video on AIDS. I was the only Black Lesbian among an intake group of five white gay men and one white woman—no one in that room reflected me or my life experience!

Ironically, the same agency that had administered my test (UCSF AIDS Health Project) conducted the on-site testing for the NCAAW HIV/AIDS conference. I witnessed a markedly different scene as Renaye, a Black woman who works for the project, made her way through the main registration area gently encouraging attendees to get tested.

A small group of Black Lesbians had gathered at the Aché table and were discussing their fears and anxieties about taking the tests. My humble gesture of support for two friends who had decided

to get tested was to walk with them to the Health Center. I was happy to see other Black Lesbians I knew seated in the waiting room—all of us nervously grinning and joking with one another as my friends took their seats.

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The on-site testing at the conference provided sistahs with the confidentiality of anonymous testing but also the shared experience and support of testing with other Black Lesbians from our community. I highly recommend those considering testing to do it with a buddy—NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE, your sistahs should know... Break the silence.

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### Resources:

*The Positive Woman* is a Washington, D.C.-based national newsletter by, or, and about HIV-positive women. To subscribe, write them at P.O. Box 33061, Washington, D.C. 20033-0061.

*Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases (WORLD) WORLD* is an S.F. Bay Area newsletter by, for, and about women facing HIV disease. For information and to obtain Spanish language issues, contact them at P.O. Box 11535, Oakland, CA 94611 (415) 658-6930.

*BCA Bulletin* is an informative newsletter published by the San Francisco Black Coalition on AIDS. Write them at: P.O. Box 11908, San Francisco, CA 94103.



# The True Perspective of A Physically Challenged Woman

by Donna Walton

It is believed that our perceptions shape and mold our lives. Clearly, I feel that our perceptions influence the way we relate to the world and contribute to the way we cope with ourselves. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that how we perceive ourselves, how we perceive what others perceive of us and what we think others perceive of us impact significantly on the way we relate with each other.

In this article, I will share how I perceived my amputation before and after surgery. I will discuss the impact of negative perceptions I have endured and how I perceive myself today as a woman, who happens to be physically challenged.

It has been fifteen years since I lost my left leg to bone cancer. I was seventeen, terrified of hospitals, scared to die and extremely vain. So much so that throughout the cancerous ordeal, I would sometimes find myself looking into a mirror to see if the cancer was spreading over my face. You see, I knew that losing a leg was going to force me to adjust to a prosthesis, but my vanity would not give way to thinking about cancer spreading over my face. It was most ridiculous, I confess. However, osteogenic sarcoma was a foreign word to me and I had not a clue as to how my life would be affected by this disease.

Spending months in hospitals and arduous hours with physical therapists, I grew to understand the meaning of osteogenic sarcoma. It meant serious! Serious changes my body would go through as I received numerous doses of chemotherapy. A serious attitude adjustment, and serious confrontations with people who would negatively characterize me handicapped, crippled, disabled. However, despite the seriousness, I knew I could receive support from the medical community. I honestly believed that doctors, prosthetists and therapists would be sensitive to the needs of their patients.

I was misled. As a matter of fact, it was doctors who introduced me to negative terminology associated with amputated limbs. For example, "stump," a term associated with an amputated limb and commonly identified by veterans, was used throughout my convalescence.

Years later, I learned that my amputated leg could be called a residual limb—a term that helped to reinforce and build positive self-esteem.

Still, after fifteen years of dealing with my challenges, I am amazed at the perceptions and comments I confront. I tolerate all kinds of questions ranging from what happened to your leg? to are you wearing a wooden leg? to why are you limping? and were you in an accident?

I am most disturbed at the curiosity of strangers who confront me in the subway, at the grocery, concerts, banks, and in parking lots just to ask what happened to me. When I see an individual walking with a cane, I am not compelled to query them about why they walk with a cane. Are you?

There is another situation which forces me to give thought to how people perceive me. It occurs when I drive into a parking space embossed with the wheelchair symbol. For instance, when I pull into the space, driving a sporty car, I am challenged by strangers who echo penalties for parking in the space reserved for handicapped individuals.

However, when I get out of the car, ambulating with my cane, their perceptions of me change. When I confront them, they say, "Please accept my apology. You don't look handicapped." Sarcastically I retort, "Neither do you, but your comments are."

I have observed treatments of people who are physically challenged. I have learned that people with challenges are treated differently according to the way they look, dress, speak and interact. These perceptions, however, are prejudiced and must be challenged.

I have developed a strong perception of myself by realizing that I am not handicapped or disabled. I am physically challenged. And I realize that I will always be challenged by my physical limitations as well as by the mental limitations of others. I have had to overcome many obstacles and barriers which for some people may appear to be insuperable.

Finally, despite the difficulties, I will continue to educate and enlighten individuals who continue to possess limited perspectives of people who are challenged by visible and invisible conditions.



# Grasping Therapy: It's all about coming home!

by Annette S. Martin,  
M.S., M.S.W.

*A recreation director,  
social worker and  
community activist.*

*My commitment list: to  
live in Africa for at least  
one year, to develop  
personal growth,  
leadership and commu-  
nity organizing  
programs for African  
based youth and to  
continue to love who I  
am.*

This article is dedicated to Helen Page Martin, my mother, who during our Monday "therapy sessions" via US Sprint, gave me strength through her knowledge, love, support, spirituality and acceptance.

The purpose of this article is to provide support to those of us who have chosen to be therapists, those of us who are seeking therapy, those of us who are in therapy, those of us who have been in therapy and were helped or not helped, for those of us in support groups who want to share their support with others, for those of us who write, read, dance, act, sing, perform, for those of us in recovery, for those of us who haven't found recovery, for those of us who don't want any part of this, I write this article so that we may pursue new ways of finding and caring for ourselves and becoming visible.

Therapy, what is it, why is it? Why should any African based\* lesbian take advantage of inner self communication with the help of another person, specifically a therapist? I myself had to take this into consideration as I read my acceptance letter to graduate school in social work. By applying and being accepted, I had actualized my commitment to assist my people — my sisters and brothers — in calling out the names of their pain and acknowledging hers/his own individual and collective strength. It is with that same commitment that I share these thoughts, ideas and words.

*Among the things that use to be*

— willie m. coleman

It has been dangerous for African based people to be aware of and express our feelings. We are a people who, no matter where one may be presently, have had to disengage from our feelings in order to survive. Historically, we come from a continent where expression was a part of our daily design for living. Rituals, chants, music, dancing, healing, birthing, and dying were the ways in which we maintained ourselves mentally. As enslaved people we crossed the Middle

Passage and landed on different shores. We were forced into racist dehumanizing belief systems that tried to, unsuccessfully, tear away our African values. We held fast to these values, such as: righteousness, mutual aid, justice, adaptability, truth, spontaneity, role flexibility, natural goodness, inclusivity, unconditional love, respect, restraint, responsibility, cooperativeness, oneness of being, interdependence and reciprocity. These values are illustrated in the echoes of the voices on the slave ships, on the auction block, in the field, in the quarters, in the "big house," on the underground railroad, as we jumped the broom or jumped the fence to freedom. Listen, listen...those are our ancestors telling us how to reclaim our mental health; they are teaching us the life skills that are essential to our psychological and physical survival — our mental and physical well-being.

As African based lesbians, we have been socialized by an eurocentric system that does not have our best interest in mind. How we view ourselves, our sexuality, our abilities and our world mind has been influenced by this system which does not care to understand (if there is no economic gain) our ancestral, sexual, spiritual or cultural life plan. We have been injected with negative, destructive images, ideologies and pressures concerning who we are which has created psychological stressors to our mental health.

We interact in a world that is full of dichotomies, misconceptions, abuses, oppressions, insecurities and phobias. Our lives very often become unmanageable; we become disillusioned, anxious, depressed; we may begin to use drugs, alcohol, sex, work, food, violence, people, money, self-hatred, denial and death to eliminate the pain. We may also use art, dancing, writing, performing, talking to supportive people, i.e., friends, partners, group members, co-workers and family members. In either form, our body is telling us to let go, to discharge the negative thought and painful feelings that lie within.



*my sistah, my sistah, tell me what the trouble is...*  
— monie love

Then where does therapy begin — what is therapy for an African based lesbian? There is no quote/unquote correct answer. I do know that as African based women, we have an oral tradition — one in which talking and sharing our herstories is a way of educating, healing, catching up, and affirming our existence. Therapy is just that, an opportunity to share your herstories, to check out where you are, how you got there and where you want to go; therapy allows for an understanding of what you want to change and how to feel comfortable with those choices.

I see therapy as an opportunity for African based lesbians to get in touch with and let go of their pains, fears, insecurities, childhood issues, sexual abuse, anxieties, internal and external oppressions. Therapy is a tool for understanding how to live life by harnessing your personal power — your full powerful self. When you learn to address, let go and move on from the burdensome experiences of the past, it may be possible to accept and love who you are and how you live your life so that you are able to love and accept others.

In preparation for becoming a therapist, I received academic and clinical training. I became disillusioned many times because of the lack of racial, gender or sexuality-specific therapeutic interventions available. As so often is the case, in this eurocentric, racist and sexist educational system, I had to educate myself, pulling from ethnic and women studies materials and from the richness of my African based community.

I would like to pay homage to the beauticians, barbers, cashiers, ministers, spiritualists, bodyworkers, healers, facilitators, children, friends, lovers; those sisters and brothers in the community who opened my eyes to the understanding of Africanness. Their rhythmic voices, laughter, and love embraces me as I listen to the

experiences of the woman, man, child, teenager, couple, family in front of me. As a therapist, I see my role in this process as a guide, a sounding board, a student, an educator, investigator, supporter, challenger; in basic social work terms — a change agent. I chose "this line of work" so that I could be available to my sisters and brothers who come ready or not so ready to begin addressing the stressors in their life.

*i found god in myself, and i loved her/i loved her fiercely.*

— ntozake shange

Since therapy is the process of self-care, it is imperative that you find a therapist who you feel safe with as well as one you feel will be effective. Listed below are four steps to consider when seeking and/or selecting a therapist.

1. Ask friends you trust for suggestions and referrals for therapists.
2. Interview the therapist and/or agency concerning their methods, style, perspective; years of practice, knowledge of political, cultural, racial and sexuality issues confronting an African based lesbian; professional and sliding scale fee.
3. Write down what's happening in your life that is creating stress, also include your goals, what you hope to accomplish by coming to therapy. Bring this to your first session; it will help the therapist better understand you.
4. After your first session, consider how comfortable you felt. Is there agreement between you and the therapist concerning goal setting, type and length of therapy? Will you and the therapist be able to work together each week? If not, continue in your search; you have the right to terminate at any time. A good therapeutic relationship is the key to successful therapy.



The African based lesbian community is reaching out, trying to embrace ourselves and others. This is evident in the articles that appear in this and other publications, the workshops at conferences and gatherings, the music, the performance pieces, the creation of dialogue between African based lesbians and gay men. We are healing, setting in motion communication that encompasses all of who we are as a people.

SO BE IT!

I use the term African based because we are from Africa, yet we were born in different parts of the world.

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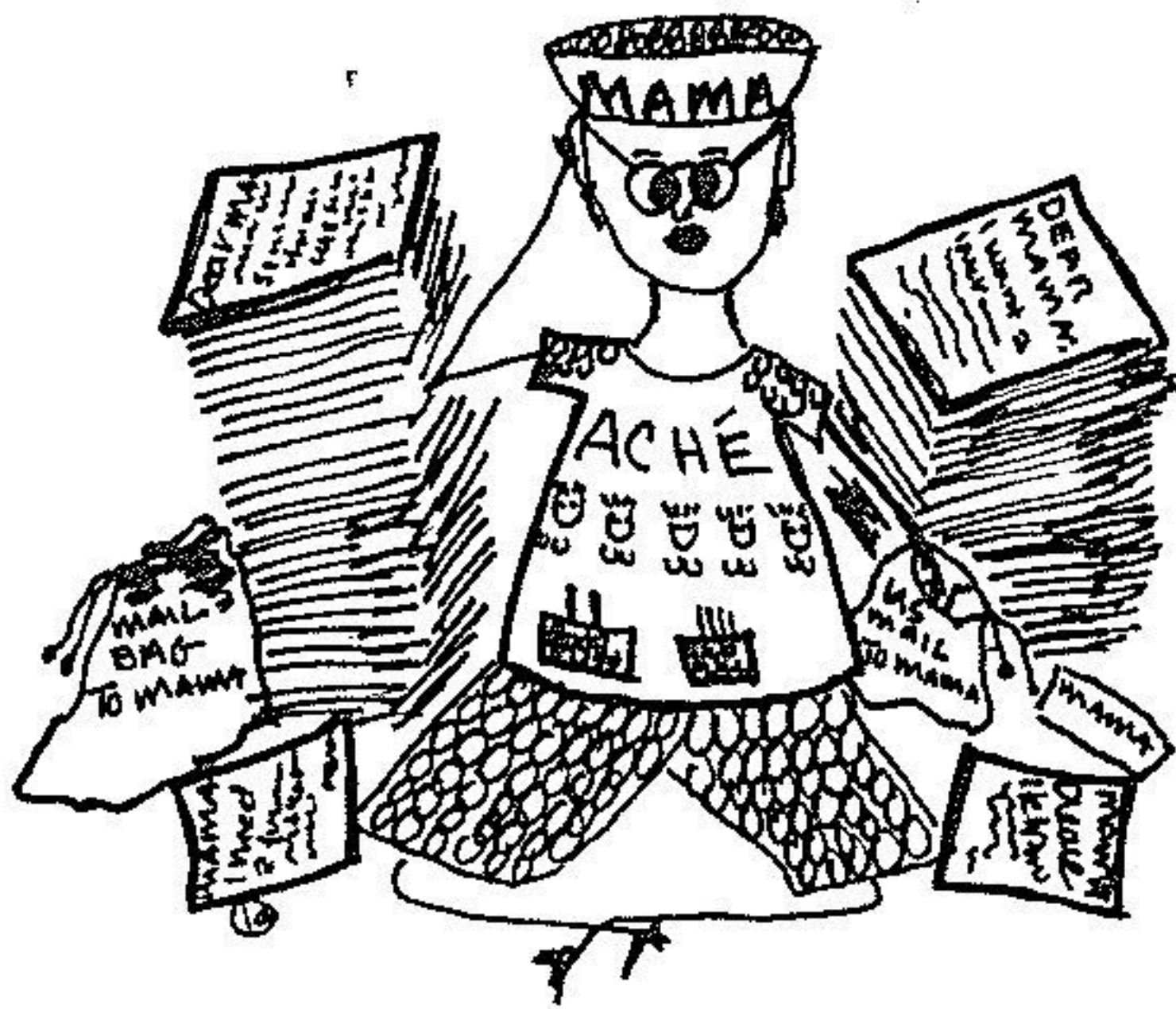
## *Awe*

by a.s. martin

Therapy comes in many forms—many forms. By playing or listening to the drums you can hear your past, in the country of your birth and the land of your ancestors. Listen, listen to the sounds of the drums—the hands beating against the tightly stretched leather sends sounds that reverberate throughout and within the air that soothes your heart so your mind can rest and let go. Go inward to the memories—those memories you know you know and those you know and choose not to know.

The winds blow slowly and gently over your body and as you shiver, you welcome the drums calling out your name. Listen, listen...one by one dancers circle around the drummers, swaying, moaning, and chanting praises and affirmations to the journeys of your life so that awareness, strength and reclamation emerges.





As lesbians we all have questions about love, sex, relationships and our emotional, physical and mental health. We may feel unsure about how to get answers and get our concerns addressed, but whatever it is that you're going through someone else has gone through also. Questions you have running through your mind, others have thought them. It may be scary, but, girls, in the matter of sex, ignorance is not bliss. Recognize and accept your own sexuality. We need to ask our questions and tell our thoughts AND have safety and security in the sharing process.

Airing our issues gives us information and the validation that's a necessary ingredient for our individual self-esteem. Loving ourselves is paramount and self-love is wondrous. We all know that feeling when you're hot for someone. Imagine having that feeling for yourself. Imagine doing special things for yourself on a daily basis and reciting mantras like "I love you" to you for you. How sweet!

Our sexuality is ours. It's something that is precious and sacred and it's ours to express in the many many ways that help us feel loved, satisfied and good about ourselves. For as many people as there are on this planet, there are that many sexual expressions that give us pleasure. We are unique in what we like and how we want to be touched simply because we are unique individuals. However, what we like sexually may be someone else's turn-off and what turns us off, may be someone's orgasm. It is important to know what you like, how to get it, and how to communicate those likes and

# Tell Mama

dislikes to your partner before you get into the sexual act.

How to do that? Start a relationship with yourself. Experiment with what makes you feel good. Say those things out loud to yourself. That's great practice for communicating with others and could be HOT pillow talk.

If you run into snags... Tell Mama

*Q: I am a woman who likes oral anal sex (rimming). How can I tell a perspective partner of my tendencies without freaking her out?*

*The Rimmer*

Dear Rim,

The anus for many people is quite sensuous and easily eroticized. Hopefully your perspective partner (PP) is in that category or is at least willing to try something new. In that case, bingo! Talking about your sexual likes and dislikes before getting into the sexual act is a way to ensure that all parties involved are taking responsibility for giving and receiving pleasure. Tell your PP what turns you on in bed and ask for an honest response. Sometimes people "freak out" because they are misinformed. Be prepared to give details of your intentions. Also be prepared to be SAFE. The anus, erogenous as it is, houses bacteria not intended for the mouth. Plan ahead. Make sure the anus is clean. Bathe with soap and water and/or use a bulb enema (available at your local Walgreen's) to clean out the rectum. Never use your tongue from anus to vagina or elsewhere without rinsing first. Also, don't forget about latex barriers or plastic wrap and gloves. They're just perfect. Have fun. Your PP is in for a good time.

*Q: I fantasize and I want to make my fantasies a reality. BUT I'm shy. Please help.*

*Too Shy*

Dear Shy,

Practice makes perfect. Say your fantasies out loud. Play with them. They are yours. Write them. Get used to them. Own them. A definite



yes: Pick a time and place where you are feeling safe, secure and bold—and you will not be interrupted—and talk to your partner. **A definite no:** Don't try communicating when she is busy, in bed, or about to fall asleep. Take a risk. Just as long as there is consensus all around. Fantasies can be your own dreams come true.

*Q: My girlfriend doesn't seem to have "major" orgasms when I go down on her. She says she has a lot of little ones and gets really excited but she says they are not like the ones she has with her vibrator. Are there big ones and little ones, and why can't she have a big one when I make love to her? I want to please my girlfriend.*

*Concerned*

Dear Concerned,

Congratulations! Keep doing what you're doing! Your girlfriend is a lucky woman and multi-orgasmic as well. Women's orgasms vary. And, an orgasm is an orgasm. Some are very intense and one might feel the need for oxygen. The small ones, however, may build up and up and... You know you are having an orgasm if you feel some tension in the genital area with vaginal muscle contractions followed by a period of relaxation.

Be patient, take your cues from her. Trust her if she says she is satisfied and is having fun. Sometimes it is a matter of preference the way someone has orgasms. While you are going down on your girlfriend you may want to try stimulating her vagina and/or anus for variation. Don't forget to be safe, use barriers, gloves and plenty of lube.

And about the vibrator—incorporate it into your sex play. Keep talking to your partner about it. You need to tell her that she needs to let you know what a good lover you are.

*Q: My girlfriend wants to be butch in bed all the time. What should I do?*

*Unhappy Femme*

Dear Femme,

Lay back and enjoy it! Being able to receive, in and of itself, is a gift. However, it is really important to talk to your partner about your desire to give to her. The bedroom is not the place for control and power games without consent. It is not okay. However your butch may have issues around being touched and receiving that need to be explored further. Be sensitive. Continue talking. Mutual satisfaction in love making is the only way to go. Good luck!

**An important reminder from Mama:** Lesbians can, will, and have gotten AIDS. It is irresponsible and misleading to foster the myth that because we are lesbians we are in a low-risk group. Lesbians are women and as women we are at risk for any degree of HIV disease. Lesbians have children, lesbians have sex with men, lesbians use I.V. drugs and share needles, lesbians have had blood transfusions, and lesbians practice unsafe sex. Lesbians have given HIV to other lesbians.

I know we can enjoy our sexuality and each other, and we should as long as we are safe. Be honest, take responsibility for your actions, have fun and play safely. Next issue: more on lesbians and AIDS, transmission and safer sex. If you have questions please call in the Bay Area (415) 863-AIDS; in Northern California (800) FOR-AIDS, TDD (415) 864-6606 or the National AIDS Hotline: (800) 367-2437.



Tell Mama welcomes your questions concerning sexuality and relationships. Confidentiality guaranteed. Address your questions to Mama, c/o Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706.



**A Reminder:  
The Strait\* Person's  
Guide to  
Understanding the  
Black Lesbian**

by Terri Jewell

Just when you think you're safely tucked away in your nice, quiet, plush closet, someone like me comes along to cause trouble in your head. That's right! You figure if you just lie low and say nothing, you'll be overlooked. You have a good job now, a house in a clean neighborhood, and influential strait friends over for ping-pong every now and then. If you're very careful and can keep your lies in order to family members, employers, and your God, no one will bother you because you have a love for women. Just play the game and follow the rules, right? *I don't think so!*

Perhaps you don't understand that people who fear and hate you for your choices don't rest. They're always looking for you. You threaten their universe ("uni-verse" or "one-liner") that revolves around the outdated notions of "the family," "country," and "Christianity." Need I say more? Your existence skews their whole sense of right and wrong. And you still think I'm being paranoid? If so, why do you need the closet?

The following excerpt is from Shahrazad Ali's book, *The Black Man's Guide to Understanding the Black Woman*. You may ask, "What on earth does her book have to do with me?" You are a Black Woman, aren't you? Oh, yeah, she made room for you. If you've been up on things, you know this woman has been on all the major TV talk shows and in the national press. She's toured with her book all over this country and has spoken before thousands of people. This is what she's written about Y-O-U:

*Ever so often, especially these days when gay liberation is prevalent, the Blackwoman will decide due to her failed encounters with Blackmen that she no longer wants to be a woman, and instead she wants to be a man. She is then classified as a lesbian and if she goes all the way masculine, a dyke or butch. She may cut her hair short, start dressing in a masculine way, talk hard, take hormones and grow a beard or mustache and vie with real men for the attention and affection of women.*

In this short paragraph, Ali not only manages to pervert you (and show her extreme ignorance at the same time), but she makes you an immediate threat to strait Black men. She continues:

*Her idea is based on her belief that she knows how to treat a Blackwoman better than a Blackman. She thinks she knows where to touch a Blackwoman to make her feel good and how to satisfy her more proficiently than a man. She seeks to intimidate the Blackman by her presence, representing an unfamiliar foe, and will become violent if provoked.*

How does that closet feel now? Not only are you a competitor with Black men, but you are potentially dangerous... physically. What kind of situation is this setting up?



Nevertheless, I'm sure you're thinking that since you don't appear butch or "dykey," you have nothing to worry about. Well, Ali was well ahead of you. She says in her book:

*The lesbian Blackwoman is repressed by the secret normal looking Blackwoman who practices lesbianism. They [secret, normal-looking Black lesbians] prefer to keep their secret sexual preferences to themselves and continue to act feminine. The full blown lesbian Blackwoman is to be pitied. She represents a huge problem that ultimately the Blackman must confront. She is the most unhappy and frustrated of them all. She is far away from reality and transforms herself to represent what she doesn't understand—which is how to be a Blackman. She is trying to deal with a human being that she understands, another woman. Like herself, she knows that try as she may, she does not have a penis, and will never have a real one, so her insecurity about her mate does not change, she must be ever watchful that a brave penis-toting Blackman does not get close to her woman.*

Well. You are "normal looking" and you "practice" lesbianism.

So, according to Shahrazad Ali, you really aren't a lesbian. So, what are you? Now, you must remember that this book is being read by thousands of people and discussed by those same folks you're so careful to hide from! Now, if you're closeted, you can't correct any of these gross misconceptions or express the power and confidence you feel with your woman. Your silence gives credence to the picture painted by Shahrazad Ali and affirms what so many people routinely fear and hate about lesbianism.

So, wise up. You don't have to remain completely in the shadow of the garbage that people like Shahrazad Ali lay out. Consider this a reminder of the women — like you — who've lost their children, their cushy careers, their families, their church memberships, their rights, and their very lives... when they thought they were safe. Those who fear and hate you never stop looking for you. Help eliminate the ignorance by setting straight people straight about their lives and loves.

\*According to *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, "strait" is: narrow; limited in space or time; constricted; causing distress.

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*Terri Jewell, a Black Lesbian Feminist from Lansing, MI, has had poetry, book reviews, essays and profiles appear in many Lesbian/Feminist publications. See "Letters" for a recent piece of exciting news about Terri's upcoming co-edited anthology: BloodSister: Creative Writings by Black Lesbians.*



# Hitting The Road

by Paris Williams

Growing up, I can remember most Black people going "home" every summer to Louisiana or Texas for vacation. Often, this was to show off the new prosperity of Western immigrants. Just as important, I suppose, was the need to keep in touch with relatives and to acquaint California-born children with their roots in the rural South.

The next phase in Black travel has taken us to the Caribbean. Even on a budget, it has been possible for us to enjoy beautiful beaches and exotic foods in countries and cultures with a strong African element. What few Americans know, especially Black people, is that now there are many *affordable* destinations for the prospective traveler.

For those West Coasters who wish to leave the country but are a little short on time or money (or both), Mexico is an excellent choice. The important thing is to get beyond the border towns and experience the "real" Mexico. Because tourism has been slow in recent years, airfare and hotel/air packages are attractively priced. \$399 will buy airfare and seven nights hotel accommodations in Cancun, while air only is \$299.

To the west Coast resorts of Mazatlan, Puerto Vallarta, and Acapulco, airfare can be as low as \$99 each way. If you want or need to spend a week on the beach or browsing in shops, these are all good choices. If you want a little adventure, I recommend Acapulco for its Las Vegas atmosphere and the large number of Black Mexicans living in the area. For a real adventure, rent a car and drive about four hours south to the town of Quajiniquilapa on Sunday (market day), and you might think yourself transported to Africa.

Another option, especially for first-time visitors, is a group tour. This minimizes the difficulties of adjusting to a new environment and maximizes the ground you can cover. Group tours can also provide a focus for your trip.

In August, a small group will leave California's Bay Area for a two-week visit to

Mexico City and the Gulf Coast cities of Vera Cruz and Villa Hermosa. The tour's focus is the African presence in ancient America. The group will also visit the ancient Mayan city of Palenque, one of the most beautiful archeological sites in the world. This portion of the tour will include four days of exploring the surrounding rain forest by horseback and canoe. The tour is limited to six participants interested in *Black history before slavery*. For more information, call (415) 638-3106.

Finally, if you're not interested in group tours or beach resorts, Mexico still has a lot to offer the budget traveler. The problem for most Americans is that little or no English is spoken. Broken Spanish usually works (sometimes with humorous results), as does international sign language (make it up as you go along).

While airfares are low, this is a great time to take advantage of Mexico's abundant low-priced hotels. By low-priced, I mean \$8 to \$40 per night, based on double occupancy. These hotels are used by middle-class Mexicans when they travel within the country. Generally, the hotel price includes breakfast, a pleasant room, and clean sheets daily. Following are some of my favorites.

**Hotel Gillow, Mexico City, (905) 518-1440.** Isabel la Catolica 17 (corner of Cinco de Mayo) Zocalo District.

\$16 per night, double occupancy. Top floor is best. Near many tourist attractions; great 24-hour restaurant across the street.

**Hotel Villa del Mar, Vera Cruz, (29) 32-0227.**

About \$30 per night, double occupancy. Rooms and cottages with swimming pool and tennis courts. Across the street from the beach; 20 minute walk to downtown (five minutes by bus). Rooms and cottages are identically priced. Near nightlife.



**Hotel Cencali, Villa Hermosa (931) 5-1994. Calle Juarez y Laguna de las Ilusiones.**

\$40 per night, double occupancy. Lovely hotel across the street from La Venta Park Museum.

**Hotel La Cañada, Palenque (934) 5-0102.**

\$13 per night, double occupancy. While most visitors to the nearby ruins visit only during the day and return to Villa Hermosa at night, this hotel can make a few days in this small town a wonderful experience. Rooms and cottages are identically priced. The restaurant serves the best chicken tostadas on earth.

**Hotel Delores Alba, Merida, (922) 2-13745. Calle 63 #464.**

\$16 per night, double occupancy. A very comfortable hotel with many amenities. Ground floor rooms are noisy, so insist on a second or third floor room. A short walk to Merida's great Central Market. The Sanchez family also owns a comparable hotel in Chichen Itza.

Generally, travel agents are unaware of these bargain-priced hotels. It's worth the price of the phone call to make your own reservations. To research accommodations in other areas, I recommend a visit to your local library. There are many travel guides available for most parts of the world.

Good luck and good travels.

*Editor's note: At press time, the Mexican peso to U.S.A. dollar rate was 2,895 to 1.*

*Editor's note:*

*The last word of WinnSome Words, "Smart Bombs=Dumb People," was deleted in the April/May issue. Here are the final two paragraphs reprinted in full.*

They called Hussein "not a member of the same human race," and they meant it just that way. But, he was our nigger in the war against Iran. Then, when he rose up against us, his master, he became totally dehumanized. It was just a slight slip from where the American power elite initially saw him to his now-perceived less-than-human state, but he is a colored person.

Remember that when they move to the next stage of premiering the new world order. That message to him, my friends, was a message to us. Their threat is not idle.



**Sex and the  
Wheelchair Girl**

By Valerie Brown

For those of you  
Who wouldn't dare  
But lust me anyway  
I pose to you a question dear  
Isn't there a fear  
Worth seeking?

To those of you  
Who do not care  
And are wondering  
Why I'm speaking  
I do...Because I can  
And will...Not tolerate  
That "LESS THAN" thinking.

But if you are  
One of those...  
Whose eyes just might meet mine  
Go ahead, make my day  
Honey, ask for what you want.

Remember now I'm a wheelchair girl  
My arms are very strong  
I'll lift you up  
And twirl you round my never ending tongue.  
You'll melt in my mouth and hump on my hands  
We've only just begun to have the sex  
that good girls don't.  
Now ain't you havin fun?

I'm a wheelchair girl  
My legs are weak  
But not so everywhere.  
With just the right touch I'll  
Show you how  
To make me come and come.

Hello to you who've listened well  
You now know something new.  
Tell it on the mountain, print it in the news  
Dish the dirt girlfriend  
Say it loud Say it proud  
Wheelchairs and sex  
Wheelchairs and sex  
Is hot if you know what to do.



**Ballet**  
by Roxanne Stanard

Ballet of madness  
leaping onto the stage of insanity  
turns that spin into  
forever  
no chance to spot  
frantic tempo changes  
stumbling  
twisting  
violently  
and it's all a  
question of balance  
stretching, straining, extending  
through the pain  
(is it true — no pain no gain?)  
breathless  
trying to coordinate  
this beautiful  
brutal  
modern dance  
attempting to choreograph  
out of these whipping winds  
and sweaty seas  
something more than  
madness  
something like  
love.

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**Midnight Birds**  
by Roxanne Stanard

My heart is a  
midnight bird  
that slips from me  
when I am lost in sleep  
to fly away to you  
on rays of moonlight  
and shows you  
how to fly in the night  
to dance with the stars  
when all midnight birds  
fly free  
across the moon.



**Poem Unearthed  
by Regression**

*for Yusef Hawkins*

by Dawn Lundy

I. Mississippi

A swollen state,  
once so thoroughly immersed  
in blood  
swimming in it was easy.

I've heard stories  
almost forgotten now  
of political people with political hair  
who marched clutching hope  
to their chests. One fine Sunday  
afternoon breeze moved the people  
like a wave. An angry White Zion  
rushed in fresh with epithets like lava.  
They shook their bare asses from under Sunday hats.

The specific scent  
of burning hair lies  
thick over rivers.



## II. Yusef Speaks

The worst thing  
about death  
is missing  
the smell  
of Mama's morning bacon,  
my teeth pressed together  
as I come awake,  
my stomach grunting —  
And also not being there  
when everyone raids  
their windows  
to watch  
the brownstone  
across the street  
turn to burnt cinders —  
And the fire hydrants'  
relief in July —  
And not to have ever  
really loved.

The pain was so great.  
A glass lung  
someone stomped  
black smoke into.  
I sighed as I drifted  
from one white abyss  
to another.  
The faceless weeds  
had cleared  
And I could feel  
millions of souls  
crying themselves  
to sleep for me —

## III. Going Home

How strange the way our cities wilt.  
This planet, terrified by bombs.  
Yusef Hawkins dies, smashed  
into the hot Brooklyn pavement.  
I walk down hollowed streets  
counting the chalked police  
outlines of brothers gone mad.

Understand *my* fear, then, of  
a dead battery at night  
a well wooded road  
twenty miles out from the city.  
The bright lights flash  
in my window as I crouch  
beneath my seat  
blinking at darkness till dawn.



# Passed

By Natalie Devora

I passed. I passed for many things. I passed as able bodied because it was easier to lie and say that I could see instead of continually having to explain that my eyes weren't capable of seeing simple things like chalk boards, street signs, birds in trees, the stars above at night. Growing up my eyes were my arch enemy. I hated them for not doing what I thought they should do. I hated my eyes because they along with my skin made me stand out. I had to sit in the front row at school. I had large print books that in the second grade were bigger than I was. I was forced to give up the violin at nine because the teacher was uncomfortable teaching with me in his class.

I passed as white, at a white university, in a white town. There my skin color provided me with privilege. My skin color allowed me invisibility. I passed for my survival.

I passed because you would not have me. You shunned me. Told me I was not one of you because I did not look like you, talk like you, or act like you. I passed because you would not welcome me into your arms as I saw you welcome the others. And you welcomed them, you did. Invited them to your parties, helped them find a job, shared your laughter. I watched you through eyes that bore no tears.

I even began to believe that you were right. How could I think or remotely believe that I, Natalie, could/would be accepted into your community. I didn't even think to call it my community. I felt that I was ugly compared to you, inferior because of my whiteness. When I saw you I coveted your beauty, your Africanness. I could smell the oil on your curly hair, touch your smooth skin, taste your round full lips. I would silently wish that I looked like you. I thought that if only I had brown skin I, too, would be beautiful.

I was unable to see myself as a black woman. When I looked into my mirror I saw a white face peering back at me. I saw skin that burned if it was exposed to the sun for too long. I saw pain. I did not see African features. I did not see beauty. In my mind beauty was associated with skin color.

My mother was the first black woman who instilled the painful knowledge that beauty and color were synonymous. I was my mother's porcelain doll, her good little girl who never cried, her daughter who got straight A's, her daughter who, despite her looks, would achieve great things in her lifetime — her constant reminder of imperfection.

My mother cried for months after my birth. She was ashamed of me. She did not know how to explain a white baby to the family. She, as a young mother, was not equipped to deal with my many needs. There was not much information about Albinism in 1962. She had no idea that my skin required extra care, nor that I would more than likely be legally blind. I remember the stories that she would tell me of sitting in the reception area at Children's Hospital amongst mothers with children that were severely disabled. The other children would make her feel awkward. She would cry because she was embarrassed and ashamed. The doctors told her that I



would either be a genius or an imbecile because of my albinism. I remember her talking about having me fitted for my first pair of glasses when I was nine-months-old. I recall her telling me that when I was two I came in from the backyard, naked, covered with dirt, because I wanted to make myself dark like my brother. She said that I cried in the tub when the dirt washed off. Her memories are filled with pain. Her shame became my shame.

My mother's memories entwine themselves with my memories. When I was a little girl our family would be out visiting and strangers would ask my mother whose child I was. There was a basic assumption that she had not and could not have given birth to me. I would watch her face redden with anger as she told whoever had asked that I was HERS and no one else's. How many times was she required to explain me?

When I went into kindergarten I had a rude awakening. Some children in my class asked me what color I was. I stared at their faces, brown white and yellow, and decided that I must be white. One of the white children told me, "Oh no, you're not white. You don't have blonde hair. You don't look like me. You look like Casper the ghost." That day at recess several children, mostly black, gathered around me and began chanting, "Casper the unfriendly ghost." I went home in tears. I said to my mother, "All those black kids teased me. I don't like them. They told me that I wasn't white. They told me that I was a ghost."

She tried to explain to me that indeed I wasn't white and that in fact I was black just like she and my father but that I simply didn't have brown skin. I didn't believe her. In my child's eyeview she and I saw two different things. She saw me trying to make sense of her reality and I saw her attempting to deny me mine. I went into school not having any concept of who I was. I didn't know that I was different from anyone else. Race/color had never been discussed within my family.

School changed me. I went from being an outgoing five-year-old who was inquisitive to being a shy fearful five-year-old. I had been removed from a loving environment in which I was ordinary and run-of-the-mill to a harsh cruel one where I was taunted and teased, had rocks thrown at me, and where I was victimized daily by other kids who did everything from calling me names to peering over bathroom stalls to see if I was the same color all over. In most cases, most of the time, these children were black.

I learned to stay away from black children. Most of my friends were either white or latino. Mostly I had no friends. By the time I reached high school I wanted to be anything but black. Blackness was not something I wanted to embrace. I had learned that I was hated, despised for something I had no control of. By the time I'd reached 18 I had removed myself and been pushed, by my mother, out of the black community.

When I came out as a lesbian I hoped that I would be more readily accepted. I was wrong. Instead I found myself experiencing many of the same things I had as a child. Women were curious about my background, about my ethnicity, yet I found that many black lesbians steered away from



me as if I carried some sort of plague. Once at A Woman's Place Bookstore in Oakland I attended an open reading for black lesbians. I was told by a sister that the event was for "black women." This woman later read a story that attacked all the light skinned women in the room. She read with anger. Her anger was directed at me. I was shocked. I wrote a poem in response to her story entitled "Color Wars." Despite being terrified I read my poem. I sat, shaking in my chair afterward waiting for a response. To my surprise I was validated and supported by many of the women. It was a beginning.

6 February 1985  
A Woman's Place  
Bookstore  
In response to  
"Color Wars"

Color Wars?  
My life has been a war  
of claiming my color, my heritage.  
I have nightmares still, of being called  
White Girl, Chalk, Ghost  
by my brother and sister,  
who both have brown skin,  
skin I have always wanted.

For years I have struggled  
both at home and in the outside world  
to claim my identity, my blackness  
concealed inside.

Even now I battle daily  
when I leave the safety of my home.  
I talk, argue, and educate my sisters  
who too often still only see skin color,  
women whom I'm told are supposed to be my sisters,  
Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, White,  
sisters who have betrayed me.

Color wars?  
Must I compete?  
Must I establish my place of rightfulness?  
Sometimes, usually, almost always,  
I must compete.

Color wars?  
They never end.  
Nor does my work  
in striving to feel comfortable.  
To feel Black.  
to feel ME.



I tried to fit into the disabled community but I found that I wasn't disabled enough. In the hierarchy of the disabled community, being albino simply wasn't enough to qualify. I was the least stigmatized by my disability. I could function in the non-disabled world. I could pass. I tried to find a place within the white lesbian community but there I was only tolerated. I was invisible. I realized that I wanted to be amongst black women, women like me.

When I think about my disability in relationship to my life's experience, being legally blind is the least of my problems. I have learned to compensate for what I don't see. I have learned to create the community of lesbians of color with disabilities that I need for support. My issues lie more with color and how our community participates in colorism. It angers me that we still segregate ourselves along these lines. We size one another up, look one another over, and determine long before saying hello whether the other is "black enough." This passing of judgement has hurt me. I carry the scars of ostracism. I also carry the hope that it doesn't have to be this way.

It has only been in the last five years that I have begun to embrace myself as an African-American Albino woman. I am now able to love myself for who I am. I can look into a mirror and tell myself, "I am a pretty colored girl." I am rediscovering my heritage and culture. I know now that I have a right not to merely exist but to be a part of an African-American lesbian community knowing that I have as much to give as my pigmented sisters.

In my bedroom there are three photographs, two black & white, one color. In the first, I am the feisty three-year-old: open, happy and mischievous. The last photograph shows me at 27. I am exuberant, glowing with excitement. It is the middle picture that surprises people. I am 17 with penciled brows, darkened lashes, rouged cheeks, glossed lips and flaming red hair. It is this picture that I keep in plain view. I keep it to remind myself of who I once was. Someone who passed because it was too painful to be who she really is.

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# BREAK-IT-ON-DOWN

by Akiba

It all started one night after work — NO it started after birth... when her life was her mother's and her father's. They held the food and the spoon that fed it. At six when her father removed her panties, spread open her tiny legs, and intrusively placed his fingers between them, she was convinced that her life was his. When he showed her the ugly thing — she'd felt so alone in that bathroom — just she, her father and the big worm that would find its way between her legs whenever it wanted to. When terror shook her little being it was he that evoked it. Then, there were her mother's screams that pushed her out of her body.

By 13 it was mother that controlled the movement — "What's wrong with you, you fuckin' whore, slut? Can't you do a goddamn thing that I ask you to do? Maybe you should go to work and I'll stay home! I work like a fuckin' dog to take care of your ungrateful ass, and all I ask of you is to watch your brothers, clean the house where you live and cook the food that you're going to eat and you can't even do that. You can't get decent grades in school, what can you do? I work two fuckin' jobs and I can't trust you to do a goddamn thing! You're just like your father — a liar and a thief. Don't you roll your eyes at me! And shut up...before I really give you something to cry about! I'm the one who should be crying — if it weren't for you I could be having a good time! Do you think I like to work? Do you think I like cleaning people's houses? But you're going to do what I say...if I have to beat your ass everyday! Now take off your clothes!"

BUT she went on over the edge that night when Jonesy said, "I came in and Lyla and Clay walked out of the bedroom." She sat there with her legs crossed trying to act like she wasn't really affected cause she'd been knowing that Lyla (her wife) was capable of that and so much

more, so why now should she be surprised? But as she listened to Jonesy, Lyla's ex-lover, go on and on, her sanity slipped way beyond the past.

She began to devise a plan of escape. She'd known other women who had just ended it — taken red devils, turned on the gas or something, anything to change it even if it meant to just die and quietly leave the shit behind.

When Jonesy left she turned on the gas. The house was quiet no one else was there, that is no one besides her and all of the people living inside her, who had issues with her life. The gas was on now but what should she do, sit there and die in the kitchen chair? This one sister she'd known had just stuck her head in the oven, but she couldn't do that it was just too much, anyway someone might come home and find her ass sticking out of the oven before she died. So she went to her room, closed the door, turned on the gas heater and laid down never bothering to light it — a good plan she thought — *but what if someone comes in and lights a match — blow up the whole damn thing!* No, this would not do. She would really have to give the process some serious thought! So, she took the pills. Carefully she opened the capsules, all 15 of them, letting the white powder dissolve in the large glass of warm beer. *Damn this shit is nasty, maybe I can't do it, fuck I can't keep it down, just enough now to make me high...and why is everyone looking at me? Shit I feel so crazy! Can't you see that I'm depressed? No one even wants to hear my story, but everyone wants to know why I'm acting this way? Well so the fuck do I!*

*My nerves are gone and lately my stomach is always churning even with the tranquilizers, and the psychologist doesn't seem to know shit! When I see him, I give him the report for the week, he takes his notes but never has a plan for me — I always have the plan and he has the analysis.*

**AKIBA TIAMAYA:**  
*I found this month's issue on Disability to be extremely challenging, exhilarating and transformative, both in the writing of my own piece and the gathering together of works from other women. Once again, I was reminded of the profound value in seeing the wholeness of an experience, as I realized that how "one gets to be who one is," is just as important as "being who one is!"*



*God did I feel stupid that day when Elana and Sandy came over and fuckin' forced me to swallow a raw egg so I would vomit up all those bitter red devils. I was so embarrassed. This time I tried swallowing the capsules but I couldn't make it work, I just got sick. I was so high all I could do was nod my head. Everybody kept saying, "What's wrong? We've never seen you like this before." That's right I'd always been so strong. But couldn't they see? Everything hurts so much!*

*One day she took all the tranquilizers she had, right in front of everyone, no one had even tried to stop her this time — as if they could — so she walked around all morning eating them like candy. Surely now she could just lay down and die but no... she laid down and couldn't move. Her nerves were becoming paralyzed — no longer in communication with the rest of her body. Her eyes would no longer focus, she could hardly raise her arms — *Shit, am I dying? I thought it would be just like going to sleep. Fuck, this is scary! Try to be calm! Call Lyla, God can I dial the phone? Where's your pride? She is sick of you...but who else can I call?**

*The ride in the cab was the sweetest — she felt safe and warm in Lyla's arms — she had her lover's attention. At last Lyla was noticing that she needed something! But in the hospital people just grabbed her, strapped her down, made her swallow a tube and pumped her stomach. She was on her period — blood everywhere — Lyla left and she was alone with the pump and the 1000 questions that the nurses and the doctors were asking her. They acted concerned but she knew — they were just doing their job!*

*Out in one day? Fuck, where to go from here? Not back there! The psychologist can't give me any more pills — they say they're dangerous to me, God how am I going to make it? Stay high — I have my drugs, I have plenty of drugs — oh fuck, my*

*bladder...hell it's my appendix. Well at least I can rest in the hospital and people will take care of me...damn I feel so bad.!*

*Back on the streets again, and the psychologist still doesn't know anything. Maybe I'm never going to feel better. I feel so isolated at work. I'm not supposed to talk to anyone, just sit on one stool or stand in one spot all day and stick mail into slots. If only I didn't have to think, especially about Lyla, I can see it in her eyes — it's over!*

*Oh, my God, my mind...maybe if I just count 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 sing the numbers, someone please help me, I feel like my mind is leaving!*

*She watched her mind trail off into the labyrinth of darkness: the one that used to push her off the cliff in her dreams sometimes, the one that she would crash into as a child each time she heard someone's fist slam against her mother's body or felt the belt bite into her own flesh. She could feel it's mouth sucking her into the thick void and she felt all the nerves in her stomach churn in unison. "Hold on to the song sing the numbers 1,2,3,4,5...!"*

*This was the day of choice, this was the day that she had gone as far into the slimy maze as she could go, without her last ounce of logic being ripped apart. She'd called her therapist... nothing, she'd spoken with one of her friends still nothing — she'd reached for everyone, and in one last glance she grabbed herself.*

*She sat there for hours, singing her song of the numbers holding her mind into form giving it boundaries, and at some point during the 24 million years in that day she stood up and raised her eyes high enough to at least see the horizon. It would be a long hike back but now she had some new tools — her song, her numbers, herself and a desire to move forward!*



**Silence?**  
by Phyllis M.

Silence isn't golden!  
Silence in the wrong hands  
Can be used like a knife  
To get the point across.

Like cold, glaring neon signs,  
Silence reads, "You're not worth talking to,  
I will ignore you."

Silence punishes,  
Banish a little girl  
To a dark room in nothing  
But her underwear, with no  
Pillow or blanket for comfort.

Headlights of passing cars flash  
Like blatant, round yellow eyes  
across the wall.

The silence deepens,  
Intensifies  
As the small child learns  
Her lesson well.

*I am a struggling poet/  
student/ACA, living in  
Santa Rosa. More and  
more my higher power  
takes me to the hidden  
pool where all of child-  
hood fears and pain are  
guarded. Writing poetry  
helps me to bring those  
experiences back to the  
present to deal with, with  
honesty.*



## **Such Beautiful Women...**

by Trina Williams

*Born, bred and currently  
residing in Brooklyn,  
NY., Trina is very  
pleased to head West for  
her first publication.*

Such beautiful women  
should have no fears  
though they're born with them  
every day.  
Their parents  
turn the lights off  
and shout at them  
in the dark.  
They learn that  
nerves are for shattering,  
walls for hallucinating  
and they never get over  
the quick white fingers  
that jabbed them in the sides.  
They were told,  
over and over,  
"No love today."  
And sat thru it,  
holding their empty insides,  
while a family staged  
a thanksgiving feast of love  
at the table  
of the-one-empty-chair...  
and on the coldest of nights,  
these white hands snatched  
blankets from her  
shivering body,  
and snickered and laughed,  
coughed up blood to warm her feet,  
used her fingers to pick their noses,  
and opened her navel  
to deposit their insanities  
and their poisons...  
These were little girls  
who cried and warned:  
"Please, I feel everything...  
Please, I perceive everything...  
Please, I understand everything...  
Please, I remember everything."  
Such beautiful little girls  
went out into the world  
stuck on this groove,  
and gave of themselves  
much more than they had,  
building on the gases  
in their bellies,  
in the dark horror of rooms  
where men and women  
bleached their bones  
for good.



# CHANGING MY PERCEPTION

by Aisha

Since I've become high profiled, riding in this wheelchair in the 90's, I have been called handicapped and disabled — handicapped, to me, feels like something that a predator would benefit from financially — like at the horse races — you bet on it. I would be something you could feed on. Disabled, sounds like I can not take care of myself, I would be a liability — a total limitation: like I have no responsibility, I am a victim — have no involvement in the occurrence of the situation. I would have no participation in my wellness. I would be owned and possessed. I don't choose to have it that way for me. I will live, I must live, I will fight to have my life. I will fight to walk on my legs and feet again. Anyone want to join me in this revolution? I welcome them! Anyone wanna witness this evolution of revolution? I welcome them!

Physically challenged is what and how I've chosen to view my self and hopefully to be viewed by others. This approach of looking at my self allows me to take responsibility for my existence. It does not allow for a victim attitude (which says poor me and why me). It allows for self empowerment for my self and for others — in my discovering how my thinking and vision in FEAR (False Evidence Appearing Real) has damaged my life experience.

I, Aisha, have chosen to change my thinking and my vision toward seeking what my heart's desire is and striving for my goal of success. I am constantly challenged by my mind and the vision that I choose to hold real for me. I believe that I am not just body and my spirit is who I really am.

I personally feel that we all have challenges, some are visible and some are hidden, mine just happens to be physical, but yours is still there! It's really necessary that we recognize that we all have challenges and not get caught in the "one up" syndrome — but share openly. Get in touch with the ways in which you are being challenged by being able to share openly my challenge, which is quite visible, and not become frightened by FEAR, (False Evidence Appearing Real) superiority and bigotry.



How we are being challenged and how we are choosing to deal with our individual challenge is what needs to be dealt with. This is how I am dealing with "my challenge." I've decided to recognize that there is no separation, that we all are truly one and when it is spoken to love one another it means to take responsibility for each other as we would ourselves and recognize our limitations. When I love myself I know how to love others. (When I am healed, I am not healed alone).

I have become very aware that the body is likened to a computer — it has stored memories of pain, frustration, anger, sadness, abuse, disappointments, aggravation, jealousy, hate...etc. On a continuum these things have to be cleaned up from build-up. Like when you sweep things up under the rug, you continue to trip up and fall. I had stored multi-mountains of FEAR (False Evidence Appearing Real) in response to racism and internalized oppression in my body, which affected the collagen which tightened up on the connective tissue and caused insufficient blood supply to get to the blood cells and blood vessels and ultimately the brain. This caused severe depression and sadness — blurred my holy vision (which means to me that all living things are relevant and have a place and concern in my heart, and that I can only do what I can do and leave the rest to someone else to do).

I had to go back into my body and get in touch with where that hurt came from — a similar hurt. Then I could continue to clean up the massive mountains of hurt, chip away like a sculptor, and see who I am — I'm loving and lovable.

*My name is Aisha and I am trying to unlearn all the madness that this educational system has blocked my knowing with, and be in touch with my own reality — that is what is real for me. I have a PhD in Living, Dying and Death and am realizing that they're all one. I have experienced a Master son that lived for 20 years and escaped this Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde system!*

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# **Afracentrik Wimin's Creativity:**

## *A Spiritual Path to the Heart*

*An Interview with  
Asungi*

by Akiba Tiamaya

**ACHÉ:** *Although I'm an artist, I haven't always seen myself in that context because I thought that an "artist" was something you were only if you went to school to study. Asungi, how do you define artist?*

Asungi: Since I did go the route of school, I do make a distinction between what I consider a professional artist and an artist of the heart.

*You're talking about professional artist verses artist of the heart?*

I think everybody is creative and, as Alice Walker so well put it, if you don't allow your creativity to blossom the soul tends to die and the spirit tends to die. What I hear you speaking about is that need to express yourself creatively. I make a distinction beyond that. There is a part of me that knows that I must create for myself to survive personally, but there is also a place where as an artist or as a creative person I take on a larger responsibility that has standards. I've learned certain criteria and standards and I make a certain statement within a particular group of standards. A creative person is open to follow the heart.

We don't really have good words in English to define, with honor, people who are creative. Usually in the so-called "elitist" or scholarly circles they call 'em "naive" which means, I guess, you're too stupid to know you're creative. But the wonderful thing about the wimin's movement is that Alice Walker wrote and talked about the creative part in all wimin, that need for us to create in order to survive. It makes a new language for us, but I'm sort of biased towards trying to put all of that into one group. There are wimin who create from the heart and whose creativity saves

them. There are also wimin, in addition to that or maybe not in addition to that, who create for the larger society. Initially my art, my need to create art, came from an internal kind of thing. I've created visual drawing and painting all my life as a discipline. I think that there are some distinctions — it's a real long hard question for me because again those things haven't been defined. I'm giving you my personal way of giving honor to all those different divisions.

It's the same thing I see happening now coming out of the woman's spirituality movement. Before we came from an institutionalized spiritual hierarchy, where wimin had no way to talk about the sacred in themselves — what you see now are a lot of wimin who want to become priestesses. They think that becoming a priestess tunes them in with the sacred. The same way the creative force pushes wimin to heal themselves so does this sacred force. But I don't know that you'd necessarily say that a woman who is full of her own sacred energy, who's her own magician, is a "formal priestess" and ready to go out and work with the community. How are we going to define the difference? I think it's a new question. Any woman who needs to create Art to survive should do it.

*We all have that ability to create but it's real clear when I see your work that everything comes through it. You could draw a straight line or a circle and it would still have Asungi on it.*

That's what I mean, I've developed a language for myself. It's having mastered "a particular" craft "of some sort" that allows me to express my creativeness "in a particular set of ways" that



are consistent. I think that is the difference. We're all sacred but we may not have totally mastered our sacred gifts.

I think that what I hear you talking about for yourself is acknowledging that what you create is valid first for you, then it moves beyond that and transcends skill. At that point you're making a statement and that statement is valid. Art is a transcended experience and clearly anyone who creates art for themselves is experiencing their own personal transcendence.

*When did you first make the connection between your art and your self healing?*

I've always been in the process of self discovery on some level. In terms of my art maybe I didn't have the words, but my art was very special — it was created for me by me. There was an internal voice telling me (Mami Ka was telling me) this is for you. I held on to my art. I was known as the "artist who you couldn't even make give her art away." For me that's now a recognition that my art was very important to me in terms of my healing, my growing, my coming to know Asungi. As I grew stronger, I found it easier to let the "art" go. The "artist" now speaks in a larger voice to the community. It's more for healing the community as opposed to just healing myself. I was rather shocked that people could hear anything in my "art" — that's been the hardest thing to acknowledge.

Afracentrik comes from a kind of preoccupation with myself as an Afrikan woman and how to heal — again we're talking about an increased vocabulary. I started from a child — a perception of one kind of person; today it's still about

healing myself, but also recognizing that the "self" is in a larger community. Given now that I have mastered certain parts of self there are things that I can share with sisters who are on similar paths. I feel that the voice I best speak in is a voice which is to Afrikan wimin, who are looking to heal themselves in terms of their identity with the Afrikan Goddess, with our Afra Herstory as wimin-identified-wimin who want to love that Afrikan or as I call it the "Blackface" image in themselves. Wimin who recognize that we of the Afrikan Diaspora have a dysfunctional relationship with our Afrikan herstory and our Afrikan selves.

Having created art that makes a statement to other wimin creates another kind of dialogue for me in the world. That's why the workshops and sharing the art work is important. I'm really very much interested in letting wimin know just how important art is in our lives, not just in a modern way but in a Herstorical way. The original intent of art was sacred and it was intended to connect the human spirit with the sacred.

*Asungi, an Afrikan woman artist, living in Tuscon, AZ, will be conducting a lecture and workshop: Afracentrik Wimin's Creativity: A Spiritual Path to the Heart. June 20, 7:30 pm at La Peña in Berkeley.*



# Story/Art/Story: a book and event review of "Tar Beach"

by Cara Vaughn

Painter, quiltmaker and author Faith Ringgold visited the East Bay this past spring, giving two readings from her new children's book, *Tar Beach* (Crown, 1991, \$14.95).

A painter for several years before taking up quilting in 1972, Ringgold's quilting method combines acrylics, etching, lithography and permanent markers. Painting and writing directly on fabric, she narrates different aspects of the African American experience. The result is a story-quilt.

Excerpted from her story-quilt series "Woman on a Bridge," *Tar Beach* covers about five minutes in the imagination of Cassie Louise Lightfoot, an eight-year-old who lives and flies in 1941 New York. The story is deceptively simple: Cassie flies around the city and has a rooftop ("tar beach") picnic with her family and friends. Ringgold's language effectively captures the voice of this child looking over her life. And because Cassie is flying, even if only in her head, there is a lightness to her first person narrative: Life is not a bed of roses, but this kid has a positive outlook.

Tossed into Cassie's monologue, however, are references to racism, class structure, trade unionism, the vagaries of seasonal employment, providing, as the oldest child, for one's parents and younger siblings, and the question of whether happiness can be achieved through the acquisition of material things.

Clearly a children's book, *Tar Beach* still presents us with a challenge and an opportunity. Adults who read it to children should accept responsibility for discussing the contents with

them. For example, witnessing her father's pain over not being able to join the union, Cassie declares, "I'm going to fly over that building and give it to him. Then it won't matter that he's not in their old union or that he's colored or a half-breed Indian as they say."

There's a lot in those two sentences; I don't think that young children should be left to their own devices to make sense of all this. (*Warning:* This is a 37-year-old, childless woman talking, but I have some vague memories of when I was five and up, the ages of *Tar Beach's* recommended readership.) They need to know that "half-breed" is a pejorative; that African Americans struggled long and hard to unionize; that being able to give someone something big—like a building—doesn't guarantee happiness, no matter what the TV tells us.

The art work in *Tar Beach* is terrific. Ringgold uses bold, luscious colors and her pictures are filled with great details. The paintings are the exact size of the book pages—no reductions or enlargements here. The high-quality reproductions make *Tar Beach* a beautiful visual treat, which presumably explains why it costs about a dollar a page.

While the artwork makes *Tar Beach* a joy, the philosophy makes it an adventure. As Cassie says to her little brother Be Be, "All you need is somewhere to go that you can't get to any other way. The next thing you know, you're flying among the stars." These are words to live by. Black children especially need to imagine going anywhere they want, being in control, making life better.



Ringgold easily conveyed this philosophy to her young admirers at Cody's bookstore in Berkeley during the first of her two Bay Area appearances. About 40 people came on a Saturday morning in April to hear her read and talk about her work. There were more adults than children, more women and girls than boys, and by far more Whites than Blacks. Most of the children sat on the floor at Ringgold's feet, leaving the chairs for the "old people." Paying special attention to the children, she gave an introduction to the book and then read slowly, showing each picture. Afterwards, she encouraged questions from the kids. (The grown-ups took over after a few minutes.) Her love for children was clear.

"My most favorite people to teach are children," she said, referring to her days as a school teacher. The entire session lasted about 45 minutes, after which she signed books for another half hour.

The next day, Sunday afternoon at the Oakland Museum's James Moore Theater, was entirely different. An overwhelmingly African American audience of about 100 came to the reading. Ringgold stood on a stage and the distance between her and the audience meant that she could not hold up the book to show the artwork. The set-up of a projector and screen led the audience to expect a slide show, but this never materialized. Ringgold was introduced, gave brief opening remarks, read *Tar Beach*, and answered questions in 17 minutes flat. Disappointing to say the least. (And you should have seen the faces of the folks who came in late. That'll teach 'em to operate on C.P. time!)

Though 17 minutes may be about right for the attention span of the very young, the children there never got into the story. They didn't have a chance to settle down and become engaged. The entire event just blew by them. The Museum gets an "E" for effort on this one.

After her current book tour, Ringgold plans to finish what she says will be her last story-quilt series, "The French Collection." This series is about a Black woman in Paris in the 1920s (she calls her "my alter ego") who, among other adventures, models for Picasso and Matisse. After the quilt project, she intends to follow this first book, *Tar Beach*, with other children's books.

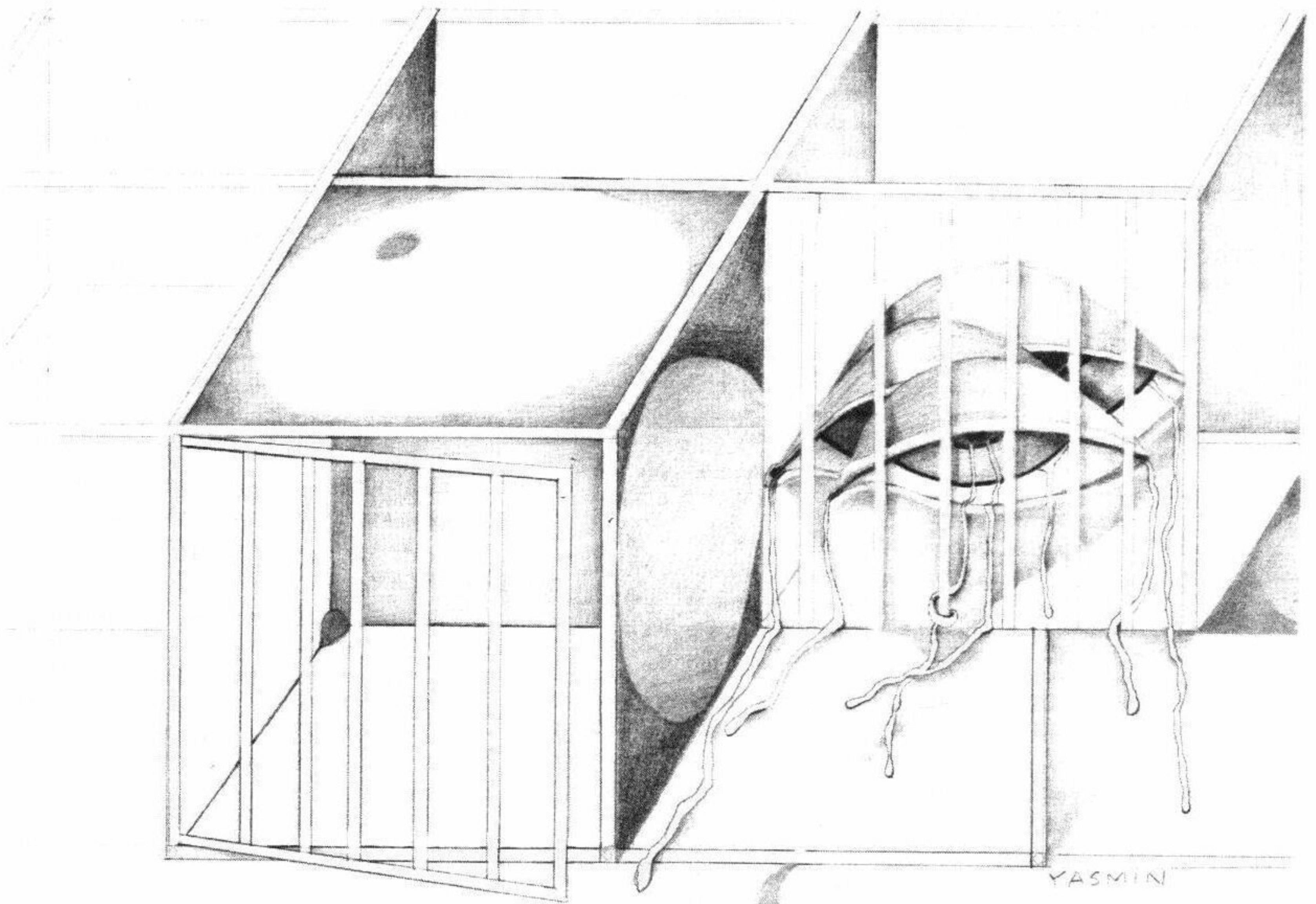
"I like children's books because I can read the whole book to you," she said. "People can come up to me and say, 'I read your book.' And I know it's true."

Ringgold, a classically trained artist and fourth generation quilt maker, divides her time between teaching at UC San Diego and working at her studio in Harlem. A 25-year retrospective of her work is currently touring the country and will be at Mills College in Oakland, CA, in September, 1992.

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*Cara Vaughn has lived in Oakland, CA, for nine years. A transplant from the East Coast, descended from a long line of people forced to keep their feet on the ground, she is determined to learn how to fly.*







## Artist of the Month

*Yasmin A. Sayyed, a native of New York City, is a visual artist, art therapist, a writer, a lecturer. She lives in San Francisco where she works in a non-public school for emotionally disturbed adolescents.*

# Falling

by Yasmin A. Sayyed

Several times — chuckle, chuckle — they said I had fallen from the second story window. The last time when I was five-years-old. Little do they know that I sat there, on the edge, and pushed off with my right foot against the building. I was five years old...just before I started kindergarten...

In my bedroom, with the wide, wooden, spindle-legged bunk bed and the old, worn-in-the-center Chinese silk rug, I pushed out the screen, sat on the edge until my right side was nearly numb, and pushed off with my right foot against the building.

Several times — chuckle, chuckle — they said I'd fallen from the second story window...and not once was I hurt.

She came into my room wearing her cleric collar and having that look about her face that bid me look to see if the window was open. She was my grandmother's lover. Her intentions clear. She came with that certain look of hunger in her eyes. I crawled under the bed. I lay motionless, silent, breathless...waiting/hoping to die. She pulled me out. I left...not the room...but my body. I hovered above in a corner of the ceiling, watching her hold down the body; watching, but not feeling the pain of things inserted. I watched — hating the body that was too small to be of any use to fight back..hating the body that was too small to accomodate the things inserted without bleeding. I hated the body's life that was meal for those who came with hunger in their eyes.

Several times — chuckle, chuckle — they said I had fallen from the second story window and never once was hurt. That is a lie my family tells. I was hurt before I ever learned the spelling of my name. I was wounded before ever memorizing the address of my first home. I was impaired by those who came wearing cleric

clothes...and saying that my soul would burn in the eternal fires of pain, if I ever breathed a word of what went on in that house.

I "fell" because I was wounded. I remained silent because the pain was too great to be anything but banished through grace-filled mental fainting. I grew to hate anything religious, hate anything spiritual, hate anything life-affirming. I trusted no one and nothing, especially my own perceptions. Indeed, I was injured before ever hitting the ground the first time.

Several years ago my right leg inexplicably gave out, and I went down. The pain was more excruciating than I had vocabulary to articulate. When the doctors wanted to know when had I before broken my knee cap...when had the unattended fracture in my right leg happened...and what about the multiple broken bones in my right foot, I had no answers for them. I had no recall.

My right side was damaged a few years later. I cried for that little child who repeatedly fell from the second story window, having never once been injured

Last month I was hit by a car in Atlanta, Georgia. My right foot is again damaged. I want my life back, I scream. I want ownership of my body, I moan. I want my sacred integrity, I whisper. I want intimacy, without shame. I want my self to emerge from the ashes of this ancient pain. I want to feel what it's like to feel fully. I want to know life without terror. I want every fiber of my body to know self-honoring. I want vitality of life... which sometimes sits on the edge...threatening to push off with its right foot. I want my life in its totality.

They said several times — chuckle, chuckle — that I had fallen, and never once...never once...never once they said, was I ever hurt.



# Gingerbread

by Alesia Montgomery

"Run, run, as fast as you can,  
you can't catch me,  
I'm the Gingerbread Man..."

At thirty Monique Wilson was a hard woman. The kind of dyke that hugged the bar at gay clubs, downing drink after drink. Although she rarely smiled her eyes were permanently amused. She laughed without parting her lips. Her hand on her thigh and her sideways glance made people uncomfortable. Her expression said, Don't mess with me, and most people didn't.

Down at Bella's and the White Horse, they knew her. She hung out with a crowd of equally tough women, women she'd drunk with for years but didn't really know. They joked around together, complained about bosses together, dished the "t" together, and occasionally crawled into each other's beds. But she didn't really trust them. She couldn't rely on them. Women run around talking about sister this and sister that and sister I got your back covered. Shit. When hard times come, lover may have, running buddy may have, but God bless the dyke that's got her own.

On this particular evening there was hardly anybody at all at the White Horse. Maybe the rain kept people at home. Every time somebody came in the wind rushed in too with the dampness and smell of the storm. Two gay guys sat by the fireplace. One was asleep, the other appeared on the verge of dozing off. The loud dance music muffled the rumble of thunder.

A woman she'd never seen before came in and slid beside her at the bar. Water beads glistened in her natural. Various gay pride and women's buttons decorated her jacket. A baby dyke. Monique rolled her eyes. Still, she couldn't help liking the woman. Her smile was irresistible, and her eyes were blackberry bright.

"You going to the Women of Color Conference tomorrow?" The woman asked.

"Where's it at?"

"Up at UC-Berkeley. Here, I've got the flyer." The woman pulled the flyer from her jacket.

Monique raised her eyebrows. Maybe she oughta check it out. A lot of fine-looking women went to these kinds of things. All them passionate political/artistic types, gussied up in their kente cloth and bangles. Mm-hmm. But no, no, she knew better than to go to any type of political gathering. It was too depressing. Speakers would stir up folks talking about unity and togetherness and women would get happy and practically dance in their seats. But there was no commitment. Something was missing that would link them together on a permanent basis. It was as sad and silly as a wedding where nobody could find the ring, so the marriage was cancelled and everybody went home.

The rain throbbed and howled as they sat at the bar, throbbed and howled and roared over the blare of dance music that nobody danced to. Monique and the younger woman chatted about nothing in particular for an hour or so. The liquor began to numb Monique. She rested her head on her hand and listened with half-shut eyes as the woman talked.

"You did it again," the woman said.

"Hmm? What? Monique mumbled.

"You almost smiled. It's like you started to grin but then you locked your lips. You remind me of my Aunt Cora. She smiles tight-mouthed too, but with her it's cuz she's missing a front tooth."

"I got all my choppers, but I lost my sweet tooth." Monique muttered, eyes almost closed.

"What?"

"I broke it on gingerbread."

Monique stirred herself, opening her eyes. She wasn't about to tell a baby dyke no bed-time story about her life. Sipping from her drink, her thoughts travelled back to her mother's house...



The only kind of men Monique's mother loved were gingerbread men...sweet playboys who ran away and left her broken-hearted. Monique's last play-daddy was a sweet man, no question about it. Into that house that smelled always of boiling beans, day in, day out, he came with black walnut ice cream, glazed buttermilk donuts, and packets of Juicy Fruit gum. It was like Christmas when he came. Like Christ's Second-Coming, nobody knew the hour of the day when he would return in glory.

Monique's mother worshipped him. Whenever he did show up, she made Monique wash his dirty laundry, while she cooked his favorite foods with saved-up money. The four younger children competed for his hugs. They were an almost family. Except he never stayed. Even when he was there, pouring out smiles sweeter than Eaglebrand cream, his eyes ran away from their faces, his thoughts somewhere else.

When he left for good all the sweetness left the house. His almost-family mourned for him. Yet precisely because he wasn't dead and was busy pouring out sweeter than Eaglebrand cream smiles to a new almost-family, they hated him. Anger was thick in the house. Screaming battles between Monique and her mother filled the silence he left them with. The younger children fought over the last cookie, the last scoop of ice cream....The house began to seem narrower and narrower, too small for the almost-family whereas before there had been more than enough room, room enough to welcome the world that the playdaddy brought in with jokes and stories about his wanderings.

With him gone Monique saw the walls, the faded wallpaper covering rotten wood. She no longer saw faraway places and people when she gazed at the window; there was only the plain glass through which she watched raggedy old men searching for cans in the vacant lot weeds. The freeway no longer sounded like the sea at night; it was a wall of noisy, aimless traffic around which prostitutes strutted and gang-

bangers shot at each other. And when Monique turned her eyes from outside to inside the house her mother seemed shrunken, an aging woman with sagging skin and eyes broken with loneliness and fatigue. She looked at her mother, the house, the hungry eyes of the younger children, and the view outside the window and wondered why it had taken the gingerbread man so long to leave. She envied his freedom.

Maybe her mother recognized that look in Monique's eyes. That longing-to-be-long-gone look. The lack of respect in her glance. Maybe that was why she began to hit Monique. Monique would be staring out the window and her mother would shove her from behind and make up something to fuss about.

The shoves turned to beatings that left Monique with bruises and ripped clothes. Three o'clock in the morning beatings about pots she'd put in the wrong cabinet the night before. Beatings that didn't make sense. It was as though her mother saw the gingerbread man hidden inside Monique's skin and it was him that she was clawing at. Monique wouldn't, couldn't strike back at her mother. So she ran.

"That's all right," her mother yelled. "You've got to come home sometime. You've got to sleep. I'll get you then."

And she always did.

Five years passed. Early one evening while her mother slept Monique laced up her shoes and left. She was eighteen, a woman, and the house was too narrow for her. The walls were closing in. Her legs moved without thought.

She rode the Greyhound from Los Angeles as far as her savings would take her. From Bakersfield she hitchhiked to San Francisco with a fatherly black man who warned her about the dangers of a young black woman alone accepting rides from strangers. He was from Baton Rouge, raised in a strict Catholic family. He knew how to respect a woman, he said.



Just shut up and drive, she thought to herself. Her insides were wound so tightly with anger she could hardly breathe. She wished a man would try to hurt her. She'd kill him and thank him for the opportunity.

The man's Louisiana accent was a hum at the side of her head while the world unfolded, mile after mile, beyond the windshield. They rode through the mountains in a bluish haze...Clouds passed low to the earth, casting moving shadows over the hills on which cows munched grass. Cows. Snow. Fresh air. Wide open space. All of it was new. She breathed deeply, relaxing. For the first time in her life she knew the meaning of *distance*, and her soul stretched out, pushing the fatherly man's words of caution past the horizon line and the memory of her mother's house even farther.

In San Francisco the fatherly man offered her a place to stay. No strings attached, he said. He couldn't bear the thought of a sweet, innocent young thing like her being taken advantage of.

In the middle of the night he draped himself over the couch and she lay still while he fucked her. The wetness on her face surprised her—he dripped tears on her cheeks. He said he wanted to comfort her, protect her. He rolled off of her and snored.

The next morning she was up and out before he awoke. There was downtown San Francisco to see, Market Street, the pyramid building, Embarcadero, the Bay Bridge. Even riding the underground rail was an adventure. The thundering of the Muni cars through the black tunnels streaked with lights was like riding through a storm.

With the change left in her pockets, she bought a small sourdough loaf and stuffed chunks of it into her mouth on the beach at Fisherman's Wharf. Pigeons fluttered around her, pecking at crumbs. She chased them off.

A seagull watched from a distance. Monique stared at the bird then held out her hand with a piece of crust between her first and middle fingers. The bird didn't budge. Monique bit a

piece of the crust then extended her hand again to the bird, humming and whispering to it. Her arm began to ache, but she sensed she'd have to be patient. The bird took a few hesitant steps towards her, paused, then stretched its neck for the bread. After it swallowed the crust, it came back again and again for more bread, until finally it snatched lumps of bread from her palm.

When the bread was gone the two of them stared at the water. A part of Monique hoped the gull wouldn't leave, and a part of her felt guilty. She couldn't quite put the bad feeling into words. Monique sprang up, clapping her hands to scare the gull away. It shot off into the sky. Monique watched it disappear, then she left the Wharf. By the time she made it back to the fatherly man's apartment it was night.

"Where were you?" he asked. "I was worried."

Dinner was waiting on the stove. After they ate he took her for a walk. She held his arm as he charged up and down hills, half-dragging her. Every other block he took a sip from a flat bottle inside his coat. He offered her a drink and she wanted to take a sip, but something in the wildness of his eyes made her refuse.

"You're a good girl," he said. "That's why I like you. I can tell your mama raised you right."

He brought her a slice of banana nut cake at a bakery. As she ate he poured out his life story. He was a gingerbread man, just like her playdaddies. It didn't sound like he stayed in any one place too long. Came from a big family which was poor but proud. Left young. Hung out with a bad crowd. Did some time for selling drugs. After that he'd tried his hand at a little bit of everything, traveling all over the country. Boxer, fry-cook, construction worker, father. He had children in three states.

"I guess you can call me Jack-of-all-trades," he said.

And that was what Monique called him in her mind, occasionally forgetting his real name. They lived together for a while, and whenever he



asked Monique if she loved him, she poured him a smile sweeter than Eaglebrand cream.

"Hello? Anybody home? Earth to Monique, earth to Monique, come in Monique." Jack-of-all-Trades knocked on her forehead one evening. She brushed his hand away, smiling.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"I don't know," he shrugged. "Sometimes I get this strange feeling we're not on the same wavelength, you know what I mean: Baby, I know I said I don't like gabby women, but you could say something every now and then to let me know you're still breathing. I ask myself, will I ever be able to loosen my collar and share a porkchop with this woman and laugh and joke and have a good time?"

If you bring the porkchop, I'll laugh, she thought. She remembered her mother shaking with laughter at some dud a gingerbread man cracked, shaking, shaking with laughter, holding her arms around herself as if she'd burst from too much happiness after so much loneliness all the weeks he'd been gone.

The next day the gingerbread man went off somewhere and didn't return for several days. Monique enjoyed his absence. The refrigerator was full, and she had the place to herself. She made herself piña coladas and margaritas with his liquor and drank them sprawled across the bed watching TV. One evening she thawed some porkchops, thought about her gingerbread man, and laughed.

When he came back, he seemed surprised she wasn't in mourning.

"You can't fool me," he said. "I know you missed me. Poor thing, you've probably been crying your eyes out. Listen, I been thinking. It's time for me to settle down with a good woman, stop all this playing around. How about it, Little Bit? You wanna be my one and only and have a baby?"

Monique slid out of his arms. The walls were closing in. She found herself a job and moved out.

Her job barely paid enough to cover the rent on her Tenderloin hotel room, but it brought in steady money that belonged only to her, so she was satisfied. In this tiny hotel room with fire trucks screeching by every five minutes, she had more breathing space than her mother had in her house in South L.A. Freedom to go and come when she pleased, no responsibilities, no gingerbread men.

But she was lonely. Occasionally the loneliness kept her up at night. She listened to all-night radio talk shows while drinking a Corona or two bought from the desk clear downstairs. While the radio yak-yakked in the dark, she sipped the beer and ran her hand along the inside of her thigh. She'd seen women on the street, couples, holding hands and kissing. Nutmeg/cinnamon/molasses brown women who whetted an appetite she never knew she had. She wondered where these women hung out, where she could meet some of them...

One afternoon she wandered into a woman's bookstore and met Yolanda. Sensuous Yoli, with her gazelle eyes and heart-shaped lips. The kind of black woman that the brothers call a fox, but Yoli obviously did not belong to any man. Her natural was in a buzz cut, her fingernails were stained with motor oil, and the heels of her workboots were flat and square. She followed Monique through the store, flirting, teasing, asking her had she read this book? How about this one? Girlfriend, let me show you this...

The courtship lasted two days. The third night — after a delicious dinner prepared by Yoli—they made love. In bed Yoli was a study in contrasts, soft honey skin over hard muscle, angelic hazel eyes above a devilish grin. She wanted Monique to ride her, but she was the one in control, driving, until she was satisfied.

Afterwards Yoli stroked between Monique's breasts. Monique gazed up into Yoli's gazelle eyes, feeling a rush of warmth for this woman. Her heart opened up, as if Yoli's fingers had pushed a boulder from her chest.

*continued on page 45*



# Bulletin Board

## GROUPS

**Latina Lesbian Therapy Group** starting in May or June on Thursday evenings for sixteen weeks. Come share your experiences. Sliding scale fee. For more information contact Micaela Lovett at 626-7000.

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.

**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.

**First-time group** for lesbian survivors of incest and childhood molestation. Members must be in individual therapy simultaneously. 16 weeks. Starts beginning of September. Mondays 1:30-3pm. Sliding scale. For more information call Alesia Kunz or Ruby Neal at Operation Concern, 626-7000.

## NOTICES

**The Nia Collective**, which sponsors the annual retreat for Black lesbians at the Marin Headlands, will be holding an orientation for new members on Sunday, August 11, 1991, at 10:30 am. Phone 652-9653 for more information. We look forward to your participation.

**To the Gay and Lesbian Community:** Could you please in advance notify the Nia Collective in writing whenever you would like to use the Collective's name in your advertising and/or for fund-raising purposes. Thank you. Nia Collective, P.O. Box 20835, Oakland, CA 94620.

**Women Against Imperialism** is a feminist activist group that's been around for a number of years, making connections between many issues such as: militarism, violence against women, lesbian oppression, racism, reproductive rights, sexism in general, political prisoners, and international solidarity with women in Central America, South Africa, Palestine, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and more. We function as a collective, often working in coalition with other groups and individuals. For more information write to: 3543 18th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110 or call (415) 995-4735.

**RADIO FOR PEACE INTERNATIONAL (RFPI)** is a worldwide shortwave radio station based in San Jose, Costa Rica. It is an international, independent and noncommercial station providing informational programming on a wide range of peace and justice topics. It provides a voice for geographically and culturally diverse communities concerned with global interdependence, communities that

are striving to create a peaceful and just world. For more information about RFPI, please contact the U.S. office at P.O. Box 10869-B, Eugene, OR 97440 USA. Or send women produced radio programs, up to 59 minutes of broadcast quality cassette or quarter inch reel to reel tapes recorded at 7 1/2 ips to the following address: Feminist International Radio Endeavour, c/o WINGS, P.O. Box 5307, Kansas City, MO 64131. Call in KC: (816) 361-7161.

I am an **African-American graduate student** at Howard University in Washington, D.C., conducting research in the historical role women have played in the transfer of Afro-Christian faiths such as Santeria, Candomble and Vodun. I am looking for African-American healers, Conjure women, Santeria practitioners, Vodun priestesses, Candomble practitioners, and Bush/"Traditional"/"Folk" doctors from the United States and the Caribbean. Please contact Jennifer Vest, 1375 Fairmont Street, N.W. #790, Washington, D.C. 20009. (202) 387-7361.

**Lesbian Introduction Service:** Come and join us in the new social experience. Non-alcoholic beverages and dinner served (Thursdays). For your personal invitation call (Mary) Midgett at (415) 648-3658.

**Bay Area African American Lesbians and Gays (BAAALAG)**, an educational (speakers bureau), political (we're visible) and social exchange (we network) among the sisters and brothers. A

group to network with and/or stay comfortable in the closet alongside of. Weekend gathering monthly. Call Midgett (415) 648-3658.

**African American Lesbians:** past or present overeaters, over-drinkers or over-druggies who are looking for network and support in San Francisco. Weekly meetings. Call Midgett (415) 648-3658.

**CONGRATULATIONS OAKLAND!** Host city for the 1992 Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Conference in February. The organizing group is looking for volunteers! To volunteer or to get more information, call one of the co-chairs: Tolanda McKinney (916) 429-6208, or Anthony Farmer (415) 824-3387.

**The 4th Annual Lesbian Separatist Conference and Gathering** will be held in south central Wisconsin, August 29-September 2, 1991. Play, talk, argue, spark new friendships, renew old connections, and have fun for a change! Sliding scale registration fee: \$110-175 (scholarships available, write for information). For more information, contact: Burning Bush, P. O. Box 3065, Madison, WI 53704-0065.

**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.

**SAPPHIRE THEATRE CO.** announces acting workshops 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 Sistahood! Sistah-membership includes a free subscription to the quarterly; **MAMAROOTS: AJAMAJEBI** dedicated to African Matristic Spirituality, Mythology, Herstory, 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. Campbell 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.

## SERVICES

**ASTROLOGICAL SERVICES**



Gain insight to your personality and relationships thru astrology. Services include FREE telephone follow-up. Call now, 24 hours a day (415) 874-4726.

Saundra Lebbby, 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" Simb-wala, 465-3933.

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.

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. Sliding scale. J. Segal, MFCC Lic. # MX0 2357. (415) 985-7157.

**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.

Need a tutor? Call Cara. 658-7737. I tutor ages 5 through adult. Students will receive assistance fine tuned to their individual needs. All subjects (K-12). For collegiate level, emphasis on math and chemistry. References on request.

### **SUBMISSIONS WANTED**

**Aché** is looking for works of fiction by lesbians of African descent for consideration in upcoming issues. We are interested in all fictional forms and particularly welcome experimental approaches. Work should be a maximum of 1500 words, typed, double-spaced or neatly handwritten. Macintosh disks,

(Microsoft Word), are also acceptable. Please include an SASE with sufficient postage if you'd like your manuscript and/or disk returned to you. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a brief biographical statement of no more than 45 words. Send submissions to: Paula Ross, Fiction Editor, Ache, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706.

**smell this is a journal** published by and about women of color developing in coalition.

The exclusion and oppression we experience based on our race, class, gender and sexuality has forced us into a position of self-definition.

**smell this** facilitates the need to define the experience of women of color so our culture and self-determination cannot be broken by the political-social-economic processes which undermine our say. Publish your say. Submit your art, poetry, prose to **smell this**. 312 Eshleman Hall, UC Berkeley, 643-9921.

**Anthology on PROS/CONS of SAME-SEX MARRIAGE.** Submissions by interview: long term couples opposed to marriage & couples who've had commitment ceremony. Contact: Suzanne, 5337 College #157, Oakland, 94618, 415/267-5535 by 6/1/91.

**The 5th annual Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference**, jointly sponsored by Rutgers and Princeton Universities, will be held 1-3 November 1991, on the Rutgers University campus. The organizers of the conference have called for papers or panel propos-

als on any topic to be submitted by 15 June 1991. Videotapes, film screening, performances and readings are also invited. Papers and presentations should run approximately 20 minutes and should be sent in full to: Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference, CCACC, 8 Bishop Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08903. Anyone wishing to propose a panel should send a one-page description together with the papers to be included. Information about registration, transportation, accommodations, child care, and other matters is available from the same address.

**The Florida Chapter, National Association of Social Workers**, through its Committee on Lesbian/Gay Issues and the Miami-Dade and Gulfstream Units, invites you to submit a proposal for a presentation at a one-day conference on "The Contemporary Gay Experience: Professional Awareness of Lesbian/Gay Issues." **Preferred format:** 1-1/2 hour maximum including discussion. **Abstract:** Submit 3 copies. Abstract should be between 250-500 words. Title page and resume(s) should be separate from the proposal. **Important dates:** June 1, 1991—deadline for submission (Call for extension). July 1, 1991—notification of acceptance. Send to: Allyn D. Gibson, ACSW, LCSW, Conference Chair, Barry University School of Social Work, 11300 Northeast Second Avenue, Miami Shores, FL 33161. Work: (305)899-3917; Home: (305)895-9914.

**We are looking for poetry, fiction, non-fiction** by and about Lesbian batterers to be included in an anthology about Lesbians overcoming abusive and violent behavior patterns. We are specifically interested in works about the process of healing and change. Please send submissions to: Vincenza Baldino Morgaine Wilder, 2260 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. Call (415)431-6564 or (415)252-8045 for further information.

**SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women.** Upcoming Journal Issues, Volume 8, No. 1, Relationships: Essays, personal narratives, and interviews which focus on women's friendship, sexual/intimate and family relationships are encouraged. The deadline for submissions is September 1, 1991.

**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.

**My Lover in the Mirror: Stories Celebrating Women Making Love to Themselves** seeks contributions by women writers. This collection of personal stories is aimed at bringing women's masturbation out of the closet and onto the page. This anthology is to be a creative display of a very important aspect of women's sexuality; a proclamation of



"Yes, we 'do it' and we like it." Erotic, autobiographical, fictional, humorous, poignant, political, joyful, healing stories of all types should be sent to: Jennifer Carlin, 554 Hawthorne St., Palo Alto, CA 94301. Please include a SASE and short bio. Works by new writers, women of color and disabled women is especially encouraged. Text may be edited to fit available space. If you have any questions regarding this ad please contact me at the above address. Thank you.

**Submissions sought** for anthology of women's experiences living and coping with immune system disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, endometriosis, chronic fatigue, MS, asthma, allergies, environmental illness. Send typed submissions (if possible) or write for more information to: Canaries in the Mine, 75 Hartford Street, SF, CA 94114. Response with SASE. Deadline November 1, 1991.

**Gay Siblings Anthology:** Seeking manuscripts especially in the form of narratives or interviews telling significant, humorous, tragic or poignant stories of lesbians and gay men with their gay siblings. Nonfiction essays of all types will be considered. Send to: Don and Molly Martin, 1016 E. 7th Avenue, Olympia, WA 98501. Deadline July 1, 1991.

## HEALING HELP WANTED

When I am healed I am not healed alone. I, Aisha, have been afflicted with a decubitus on the coccyx area—the tailbone, sometimes re-

ferred to as the kundalini—which has been six inches in depth, and is now three inches deep. The wound needs to be kept clean. This is done by bathing, which I do for myself everyday. The wound also needs to be irrigated and bandaged. I am unable to lift myself from the bathtub; unable to change my bed; unable to stock my bed with incontinent supplies (for my convenience due to my paralysis); and unable to keep a pleasant and clean environment. The way this wound has to heal is to have a high protein/high fiber diet with plenty of liquids. Due to excessive immobility, I am unable to obtain the groceries that I need from various health food stores.

At this time, I realize that I need the people that love me to participate in an active way. We are organizing a sisterhood of loving support for me. We are asking you to donate six hours for one day out of each month until the area is healed and I regain my strength.

There are questions that you should ask yourself about how you can help me in this time:

1. How would you be in this healing space with me?
2. Why would you be in this healing space with me?
3. What would you expect from being in this healing space with me?

For more information or to volunteer your time, call Amy at 465-9864.

## MEETING SPACE AVAILABLE

The Center for Third World Organizing Retreat and

Training Center is available for groups interested in a comfortable and accessible place to meet. The center can sleep up to 25 people and can accommodate groups of up to 50 people for meetings. Rental includes use of all the meeting rooms, the dining hall and the kitchen. Groups seeking meeting space can make weekday reservations. Rates: Weekend overnight: \$25/person (min. 2 nights). Weekend overnight: \$22/person. Meeting rate: Monday - Thursday \$5/person. Location: 1218 E 21st St., Oakland. For reservation, please call (415) 533-8064 or 654-9601 and ask for Alfredo DeAvila.

## Aché Announcements

**Outreach Committee** needs volunteers. The five member Outreach Committee has done a tremendous job keeping Aché visible in our communities and providing information to interested organizations and individuals and we need additional help. We are currently seeking new members for the committee. Prospective members must agree to the following guidelines:

- A minimum six month commitment;
- 90% attendance at meetings or arranging alternative follow-up;
- Flexibility in determining how tasks are completed.

Volunteer or send your inquiries to Skye Ward at the Aché office.

**Production Committee** needs several typists and a typing coordinator. The jobs require from 2 to 5 hours per issue (minimum 3 issues) Typists must have access to a Macintosh

computer and knowledge of MS Word. Coordinator will do no typing, but needs to be able to have a car to pick up and deliver typing. We're also looking for a layout person to take over for 1992. The layout person must have access to a Macintosh computer, and be able to learn PageMaker. Contact Janet Wallace, 531-2682. All other Aché business, please call the Aché office at 849-2819.

**The Political Action Committee** for Aché is looking for ideas for our lecture series and articles for Aché. If you would like to speak, write an article, make suggestions, or work with the PAC, please phone 835-1552.

## JOB Announcements

**SOJOURNER** is looking for a feminist editor. Associate editor needed with excellent writing/copyediting skills, familiarity with communities of color required. \$19-22K, good benefits. Resume, short writing sample to: Sojourner, 42 Seaverns Avenue, Boston, MA 02130. No calls. Women of color strongly encouraged to apply. Deadline: June 15.

## PERSONALS

**Barbadian woman**, 41 yrs old, great sense of humor, Painter, Print Maker, Into the Arts, Religious Science, T.M., Writing, Reading, Swimming. Now developing video camera and stills photography skills. Wants to meet visiting women with similar interest. Call Arlette 436-8547.

## Social Work/ Homeless Youth Program

### Clinical Supervisor

Provide supervision to two case managers and consultation/in-service training to 22-member interdisciplinary team of an innovative homeless youth program in S.F.'s Tenderloin. Oversee substance abuse education/intervention component.

Supervisor experience, sensitivity to diverse populations, MA or MSW required. License and sense of humor preferred. 30 to 40 hrs/week @ \$26-32,000 FTE. EOE. Bilingual-bicultural preferred, people of color encouraged to apply.

Submit resume to Personnel Officer, CCHH, 146 Leavenworth St., S.F., CA 94102.



# Calendar

*From the Calendar Editor: Being the Calendar Editor is the perfect job for me. I'm relatively new in the community and kept hearing about exciting things that were happening about two weeks after they had happened. This way I fill up my calendar as I type up this one. I am a writer. I've had several short stories published and am currently working on a play (a lesbian love story), a murder mystery, and a collection of erotica simultaneously! I'm glad Aché exists and am proud to be a small part of her.*  
Blake C. Aarons

## DANCE

### Friday, June 7, 8 & 9

**Move Dance Theatre** presents "Attitudes," a jazz dance theatre performance. Featuring choreography by Bonnie Sita and Toney Pennewell with guest choreographers Ann Lore and Tracey Tapscott. At the Open Arts Circle, 530 East 8th Street (at 6th Avenue), Oakland. 8 pm, matinee on 9th at 2 pm. Telephone orders and information, call 465-6678. \$8 advance. \$10 at the door.

### Friday & Saturday, June 14 and 15

**Dance Brigade** Presents: FURIOUS FEET V: A Festival for Social Change With Dance Brigade, Shakir & Family, Joanna Haigood, Patricia Bullitt, Liz Ozol, and Teirrah McNair. 8 pm Laney College 900 Fallon Street, Oakland (Across from Lake Merritt BART) Tickets: \$12 advance, \$14 at the door, \$10 seniors and disabled. For more information call: 465-3686.

## EVENTS

**Club Nzinga**, hot world music every Friday night at El Rio's, 3158 Mission 9 pm-2am. DJs, live percussion, garden dancing, food. Proceeds go to benefit the campaign

to change Amnesty International's exclusionary policy toward lesbians and gays.

June 5 — Benefit to launch Amnesty International Campaign

June 14 — Benefit for Hot Colors Gay Day Parade float. Live percussion by Sambo & Sistah Boom & resident percussionist Renee Brown. \$5.

June 21 — Benefit for Mujerlo who will donate proceeds to the International Lesbian/Gay Conference in Guadalajara, Mexico.

June 28 — Celebrate Gay Pride.

### Sunday, June 2

**Hot Colors** presents a fundraiser for Annette Martin. Annette has been accepted to a one-year postmasters fellowship in clinical social work at Yale University. This occasion will help raise funds for travel, shipping and housing expenses. Bahia Tropical, 1600 Market/Franklin Streets, San Francisco. 4-8 pm. \$10 (no one will be turned away for lack of funds.) Entertainment/DJ. Send donations to Annette Martin c/o Fred and Helen Martin, 57 Real Lane, Iowa City, IA 52241.

### Wednesdays, June 5, 12, 19, 26

**Yoga for women with illness** with Judith Fogler. Wear comfortable clothes and bring a towel. Women's Cancer Resource Center, 3023 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley. Noon-1:30 pm. \$5 donation requested but not required. All programs wheelchair accessible. No scents please.

### Wednesday, June 12

"For Love and For Live — Lesbian/Gay Movement in the 90s" A panel discussion with Skye Ward, Aché, Peter Klehm, Queer Nation, and others. 7:30 pm. \$3-5. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley

### Saturday, June 15

**Bay Area Coalition for Our Reproductive Rights** needs volunteers (no experience necessary; they'll train you on site!) to ensure women's safe access to all area abortion clinics threatened by an Operation "Rescue" blockade. In San Francisco, meet at 6 am at the Pregnancy Consultation Center, 1801 Bush St/Octavia. In Oakland, meet at 6 am at Family Planning Specialists, 100 Webster Street at Jack London Square. For other locations and times call BACORR at 541-5690.

### June 15-19, Reception on June 22

**Exhibit of Sarita Johnson-Calvo's work.** Branner Spangenberg Gallery, 728 Emerson Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301. 325-4959. Gallery hours: Thursday-Saturday, 11-4:30 pm.

### Tuesday, June 18

**Breast self-examination class** with Ruth Michaels and Judith Fogler. Women's Cancer Resource Center, 3023 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley. \$5 donation requested but not required. All programs wheelchair accessible. No scents please. 7 pm. 548-9272.

### Wednesday, June 19

**Come celebrate Juneteenth** with a dance against genocide. A benefit for the United Against Genocide committee. Place: The BOX, 628 Divisadero, between Hayes and Grove, San Francisco. Time: 9 pm to 2 am. Cost: \$5-\$20.

### Thursday, June 20

**Asungi**, an Afrikan woman artist living in Tucson, Arizona, will be conducting a lecture and workshop: *Afracentric Womyn's Creativity: A Spiritual Path to the Heart*. 7:30 pm, La Peña Cultural Center.

### Friday, June 21 and July 26

**S/M Lesbians Social Gathering.** An alternative to the bars. A great place to network. Come dance, eat, and meet new friends. Non-alcoholic refreshments. 8 pm — midnight. \$7 — \$10. For more information contact: Midgett 648-3658 or Aleatha 648-1009. Sponsored by: MIElaine Productions.

### Saturday, June 22

**Afrikan Lady People's Productions** presents: "Resurrection," featuring Donna Terry. Have you missed your coffee? Do you need Ms. Teddy's advice? Well, come

enter the world of tales of wimmin's fantasies and herstories. You're guaranteed an evening of laughter and celebration. **Mama Bear's** 8:00 pm \$6-8.

### Sunday, June 23

**Gwen Avery** appears at **Josie's Cabaret & Juice Joint**, 3583 16th Street at Market, San Francisco. 4 pm. 861-7933 for reservations. \$6 donation.

### Wednesday, June 25

**Chemotherapy and related issues** with oncology nurse Cheryl Breed, RN, at Women's Cancer Resource Center, 3023 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley. \$5 donation requested but not required. All programs wheelchair accessible. No scents please. 7 pm. 548-9272.

### Friday, June 28

**Harbor Lights Cruise.** Sail the Bay from sunset to midnight on the Theater Rhinoceros Gay Pride Week Harbor Lights Cruise. For your pleasure and comfort, accommodations include: a romantic open viewing deck, two enclosed decks for dancing and mingling, cabaret-style seating, an elegant buffet, and a no host bar. 8 pm — midnight from Pier 39. \$45. For tickets call: Theater Rhinoceros 861-5079.

**Lush Voices: An evening of poetry and song.** A benefit for the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Featuring Linda Tillery, with Teresa Trull and Vickie Randle, Jewelle Gomez, Dorothy Allison, JoAnn Loulan and Kitty Tsui. Herbst Theatre, S.F. Tickets: Women's bookstores, BASS, STUBS.



**Saturday, June 29**

**Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum** (BGLLF)/Unity Fund raising dance. 300 Hawthorne St., Oakland, at Merritt Peralta Health Education Center. 9 pm to 3 am. \$7. For more information, call 437-2163.

**The Women's Spirituality Forum** Presents: Eternal Isis: Great Auset. A Living Goddess Lecture from The Black Women's Goddesses Lectures. Come, share, enjoy. 10am - 3 pm 2700 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. Workshop Fee: \$60 Make checks payable to: The Women's Spirituality Forum, PO Box 11363, Oakland, 94611. For more information call: 451-0620.

**Sunday, June 30 and July 28**

**The Toybox West** (a monthly entertainment extravaganza for womyn). We begin the evening with card and board games, then progress to live entertainment by talented performers, followed by hours of dancing to the popular music of our female d.j. Admission: \$7.00. Includes free snacks and a cash bar. Join us, along with close to 200 beautiful sistahs at: Ramona's Nightclub 370 Embarcadero (off Broadway across from Jack London Square in Oakland). For inquiries, directions, or to be placed on the mailing list, call: (415)235-9346. Put your best face forward, because in The Toybox...The Toys R Us!

**Saturday, July 6**

**Lesbians of Color After Conference Party.** Come celebrate YOU! Dancing, entertainment,

hors d'oeuvres, and fun folks. Bring refreshments. 8pm - midnight 560A Moultrie Street, San Francisco (24 Muni Line) \$2 - \$10, no one turned away for lack of funds. For more information, contact: Midgett 648-3658. Sponsored by: MiElaine Productions.

**Sunday, July 21**

**Gwen Avery** appears at Josie's Cabaret & Juice Joint, 3583 16th Street at Market, San Francisco. 4 pm. 861-7933 for reservations. \$6 donation.

**TELEVISION**

**Tuesday, June 18**

**"Absolutely Positive,"** 11 people, women & men, gay & straight, share their stories about being HIV positive. 10 pm, KQED channel 9.

**Tuesday, July 16**

**"Tongues Untied,"** a ground-breaking documentary exploring Black Gay life in America, will have its T.V. premiere in the PBS series, Point of View. 10 pm, KQED channel 9.

**RADIO**

**Avotcja** hosts "La Verdad Musical/The Musical Truth," Fridays from 12-3 pm on KPOO, 89.5 FM. She also hosts "Rhythm Drive" on Thursdays from 4:30 to 6:30 pm on KPFA, 94.1 FM.

**Karolyn van Putten** hosts "Acoustic Journey," Wednesdays, 9-10 pm on KALW 91.7 FM.



**Audre Lorde acknowledges audience at a tribute to her work in Boston, October 1990. Photo by J. Weisinger**

Dearest FRIENDS:

AUDRE LORDE is in LENOX HILL HOSPITAL in New York—currently struggling with liver cancer. Her family and friends are requesting that our communities send AUDRE their prayers and energy.

Know that the WIND is powerful, that your THOUGHTS are powerful and that you can send healin and lovin ENERGY in the WIND to AUDRE.

In addition, they're asking for financial support for additional nursing care. Please send donations to: Clare Coss, 240 West 98th Street, Apt. 114H, New York, NY 10025. Or for more information, call Jean Weisinger at (415)695-2980.





**Gingerbread**  
continued from page 39

Before daylight the next morning Monique woke up in Yoli's arms. The hiss/crackle of electric buses rumbling by the open window almost lulled Monique back to sleep. Then she felt Yoli's arms tighten around her. In the darkness Yoli told Monique about herself, and the more Monique heard the more she envied and was fascinated by this woman. Yoli had travelled all over the country, trying her hand at a bit of everything: musician, truck driver, femme, butch. She had ex-lovers in five states.

"But I'm ready for a commitment now," Yoli said.

As their relationship deepened Yoli became increasingly possessive. Monique had to dress a certain way or Yoli would get pissed off. She'd disappear for days at a time but expected Monique to be home every time she called.

"I'm sorry I yelled at you, baby, don't cry," Yoli whispered over the phone. "It's just that I really needed to talk to you yesterday, and you weren't there. Can I come over?" Monique always said yes. Often Yoli needed to borrow a ten or a twenty. Monique gave it to her, although her own money situation was tight.

Nobody had ever affected Monique so strongly. The brush of Yoli's mouth over her lips made currents flash down her stomach. Yoli's absences and reappearances only made their

love-making more urgent, more exciting.

One evening as Monique approached Yoli's place on her way from work, she noticed a shadow pass the living room curtain of the window that faced the street. Funny, Yoli wasn't supposed to be at home tonight. She said she had to see about a sick aunt in Oakland. Monique climbed the stairs, imagining how surprised and happy Yoli would be to see her. As she approached the third floor she heard Yoli's laughter coming down the stairs. Then a woman's voice, then the smack of a kiss.

Monique's heart raced. She stood on the steps, unable to move, waiting.

Yoli and the woman continued down the stairs, Yoli's face buried in the woman's neck. The woman stiffened when she saw Monique. Yoli's face became expressionless then she poured Monique a smile sweeter than Eaglebrand cream...

Monique's heart pounded so fast she could hardly breathe. She clutched the railing a second for support before she closed her fists and fled...

**Run run as fast as you can...**

*Alesia is a writer and research assistant living in the South Bay. "Gingerbread" is a part of a collection of short stories-in-progress.*

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"Ach ." Ach , vol. 3, no. 3, June-July 1991. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/PXTNZZ064569979/AHSI?u=umuser&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=22ac43e2](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/PXTNZZ064569979/AHSI?u=umuser&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=22ac43e2). Accessed 8 Dec. 2022.