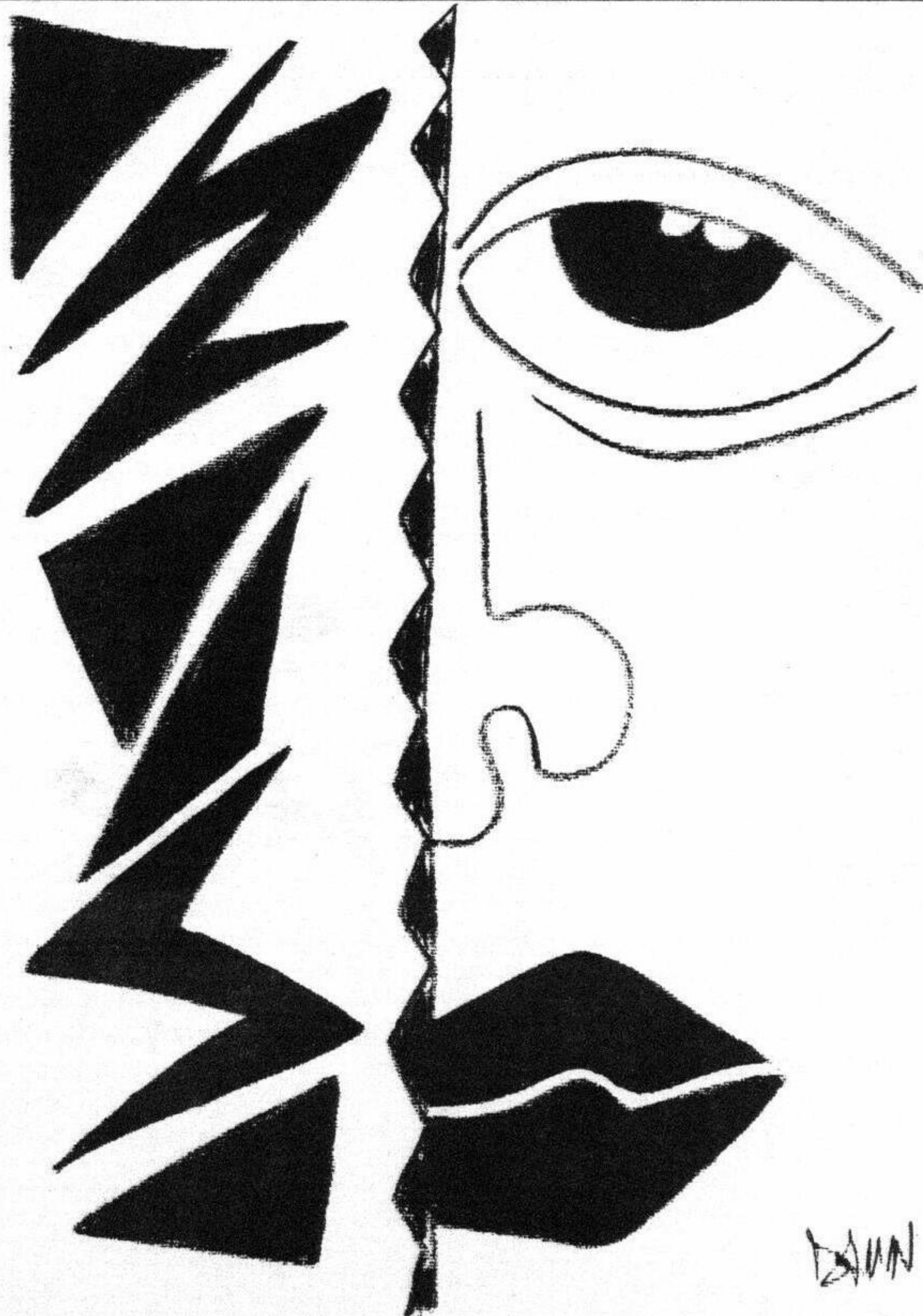


ACHÉ

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1991 VOL. 3, NO. 4 \$3 A JOURNAL FOR LESBIANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT



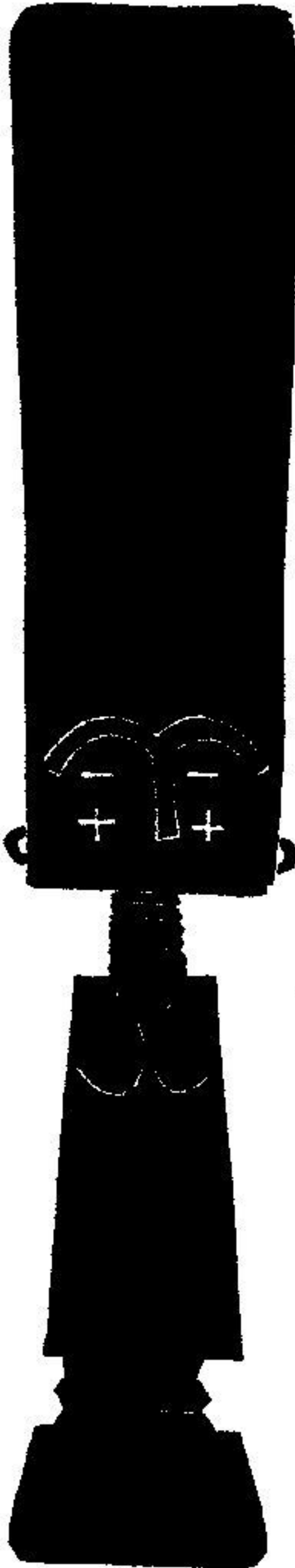
DAUNTA

From the Editor

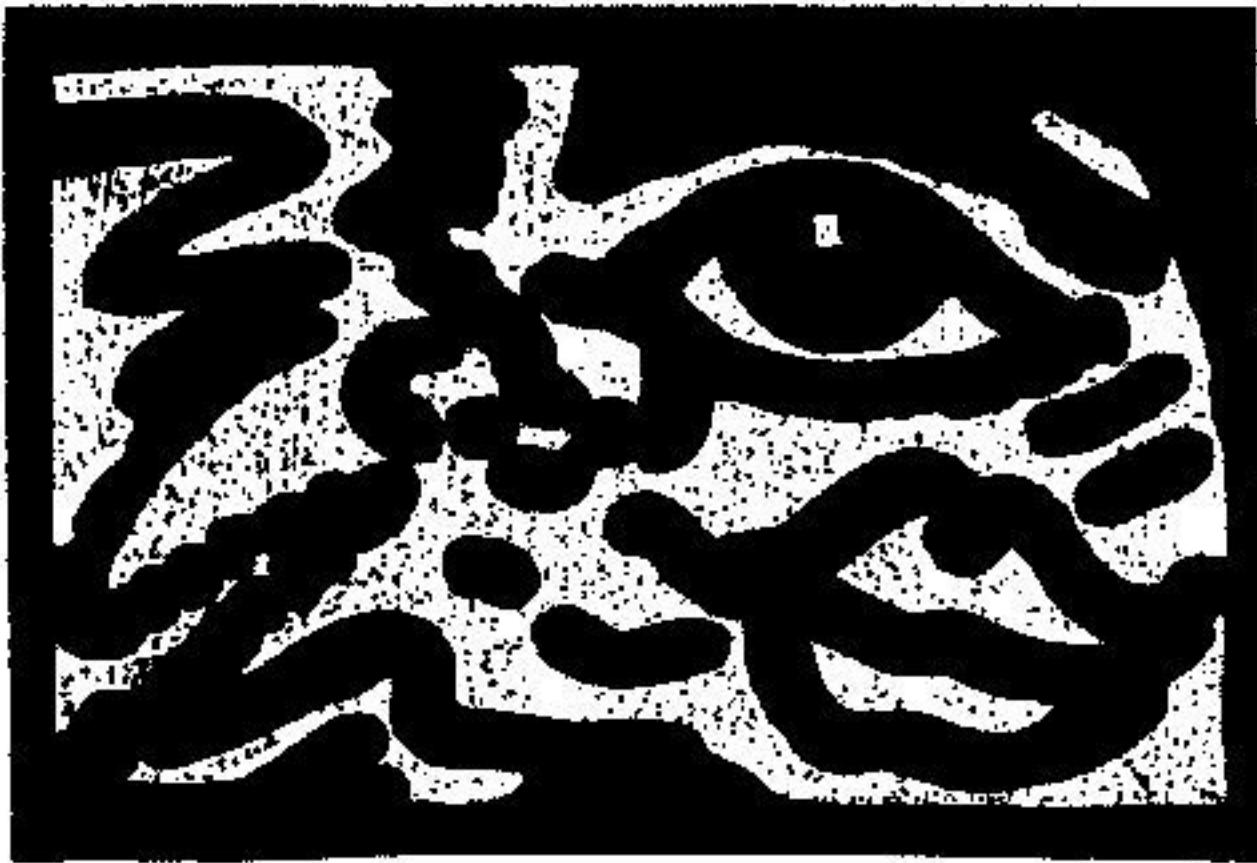
The pages of *Aché* have made a lot of space for healing words and therapeutic writing. We will continue to publish those pieces in which women are exploring their experiences and sharing the pain and the healing. As senior editor, I want to open more space for writing that articulates, in other ways, what it means for us to be women of African descent. I'd like *Aché* to be more "political" — but then our lives are political, aren't they? And this is exactly what I mean. Women of African descent are healing and taking advantage of support groups or therapy today, but we've also never had the luxury to drop everything — our jobs, our organizational or community work, our childrearing, our relationships — to get through this pain. So what are the other facets of our lives?

I went to a performance titled "Explorations and Inventions" by Karolyn van Putten, a local vocal artist. She used her voice and many different African and Asian instruments to embellish upon the theme of inventing and exploring. Karolyn is stretching what we have known as music and voice and instrument, maintaining the pentatonic scales developed within particular cultures and improvising with them. For instance, she sang African-American spirituals to the Chinese-derived musical scale, playing an ancient Chinese stringed instrument. Karolyn exuded such a centered and calm assurance about this path that she's on that the audience was made to feel as energized and excited about her journey as I believe she is. This kind of power — Karolyn brought a spirit into that performance space that moved all of us, together, to a higher place — is what I think many women of African descent are capable of.

Let's look at a few examples of our sisters' direction and scope: a black Puerto Rican sister who works at NASA has invented a machine that mechanizes the breathing technique of yoga to regulate the functions of the cardio-vascular system in zero gravity; a sister in Los Angeles is researching the literature and literary traditions of black women in Australia and India; my girlfriend, Paris Williams, has traveled around the world to document the impact of Africans and African cultures on the world's peoples and to analyze how their ancient civilizations could influence modern society; *Aché* art editor Amana Johnson is an administrator, teacher, painter, jewelry designer, mother of two sons, and quickly becoming a renown sculptor.



Fanti wooden fertility doll, Ghana.



DANN 90

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Aché Business: *if your friends aren't getting their Aché, it's probably because their subscription has lapsed. Please give them your subscription form in this issue so they can re-subscribe. We don't have the money to do a mailing and we've been sending out RENEWAL subscription forms in soon-to-end subscriber's issues, but I think the form is getting lost in the shuffle of inserts. Keep an eye out for yours and re-subscribe early.*

Due to lack of money we won't be publishing the Dec/Jan issue. We will be using that time to work hand-in-hand with a new set of editors and women interested in joining the journal committee. (Feb/March is the last issue with the current set of editors.) There is a meeting August 18 for anyone interested in getting an early start. Give DeeAnne a call at (415)444-2840 for meeting details.

When we are allowed to follow our own inspiration, our brilliance shines through. How do we look at the world? How do we do what we do? What drives us and makes us uniquely who we are? We are not white women/white feminists/white lesbian feminists/white dyke separatist feminists/... We are not Asian or Latinas or Native to the soil we live on. We are women of African descent with a history that is unmatched by other women in the world. And though many of us suffer and don't have what we need, there is a resilience and optimism we share that keeps us moving towards the answers to our *own* questions.

I'm interested in discovering how *our* history has shaped who *we* are today. Aché is the perfect vehicle to record those differences, even amongst ourselves, to proudly claim the contributions we are making every day — in our inimitable style.

The theme for this issue is "Who We Are and Who We Love," a theme that has always been on the pages of Aché and will only get broader as we grow. In the same breath, I'm worried about the rhetoric some of us have adopted that comes out of the white feminist and/or lesbian separatist movements that I don't think truly represents who we are and who we love. Maybe some of us really do identify with these movements, but I'd guess that it is not the majority. I think that if we get real honest and clear and look deep down within ourselves that we'll be saying some things that sound very different from the prevailing women's movements. Aché has already made a dent in getting beyond the rhetoric. Let's keep digging.

Aché,

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 celebrates 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.

Aché office: (415) 849-2819

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Letters

To the Womn of Aché,

I would like to express my appreciation and joy over one of your back issues on biracial identities. I accidentally or incidentally stumbled across this issue in A Different Light Bookstore while looking for a card. This issue has helped me tremendously to validate my own identity. It has been so hard to feel "ok" about all the parts of myself. Though I was raised in a middle class Black family. I was adopted and my biological mother was white and my biological father was Black. I have struggled with this secretly for all of my life. After reading this issue, I am able to "come out of the closet," so to speak. I have shared "Discussion: On Being Biracial" with several womn, including my

therapist and pastor. I believe my therapist and pastor and others for the first time could (just a little) understand better the emotions and feelings that womn like us have experienced. I am a freer and healthier Lesbian having read these articles.

I plan to now write openly and freely my deepest emotions about my identity. I realize that it is our responsibility to, in the face of so many hundreds of years of pain between white and Black, to begin the healing. And that means digging deep within our soul force and pulling out these painful yet precious stones.

Thank you all for all your time and fortitude and unrelenting gifts to the Black Lesbian community.

Brightest moments,
C.J., Los Angeles

Aché Editors,

I come to you with a special plea.

I have worked on an anthology of poetry and prose by Black Lesbians for the past 2-1/2 years. Stephanie Byrd was formerly an editor; however, she must devote all her energy toward her Masters thesis now. You have been very helpful to this project by running a call for submissions in several issues of Aché. Thank you very much for this.

Nancy Bereano of Firebrand Books is currently looking at the manuscript of over 300 pages. She suggested I continue to look for PROSE — specifically from those writers at Aché. She has been following your development and feels the writing has steadily increased in its sophistication and merit. I agree wholeheartedly.

So this is what I'm asking: I would like to invite each woman who has had a piece of *unpublished fiction* printed in Aché to submit her prose for this anthology. This fiction is to somehow illuminate Black Lesbian life. I ask that there be **NO MORE STORIES** on lovemaking with men, dating men, or being sexually attracted to men. This is a Black *Lesbian* anthology.

I would also like to extend this invitation to the readers of Aché who are writers of fiction but who have not yet been published there. Here are the details:

BLACK LESBIAN FICTION wanted for anthology currently being considered by a publisher. Need unpublished work of 25 pages or less, typewritten, double-spaced, with name and address on **EACH** page. Send submissions with

return postage and/or inquiries to Terri Jewell, 211 W. Saginaw, #2, Lansing, MI 48933. No work about sex with or sexual attraction to men, please.

Thank you for your assistance. There will be no other book like it! I am excited to see it happening — **AT LAST!**

Be well,

Terri Jewell

Conference Report

National Black Lesbian and Gay Conference Report

by Joann Johnson,
Publicity Co-Chair of Unity

'As most people have (hopefully) heard, the fifth annual National Black Lesbian and Gay Conference will be held in Oakland in 1992. The conference will be co-sponsored by Unity and the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum (NBLGLF). While the conference is officially scheduled for Presidents' Weekend (February 14-17), members of Unity are discovering that putting on the conference is a year-long workshop in leadership skills. Lesbians and Gay men are working together and learning about each other's needs and sensitivities. Members of both sexes find themselves rethinking preconceived ideas about each other. We strive together, usually amicably, sometimes fractiously, to develop positions and strategies for promoting and conducting the conference.

Before we get too far along, I hear many of you asking: "What is Unity?" Unity is a Bay Area-based

coalition of Black Lesbian and Gay organizations and individuals. The organizations comprising Unity include: Aché, Black Men's Xchange, Black Gay Men Unite, Black Gay Men's Rap Group, Black Men's Alliance, BWMT/National Task Force on AIDS Prevention, Community in Action, Harvey Milk Black Caucus, and Nia. There are also several individual members of Unity who are interested in the effort to bring the conference to the Bay Area but aren't normally joiners.

While the NBLGLF has "National" in its title, it admits to being a local Los Angeles organization with big ideas. NBLGLF members recognize the need for a national organization but thus far have not established the groundwork necessary for such growth. This is one of the active foci of its board. The Leadership Conference is the carefully nurtured creation of NBLGLF and they retain control over it, a fact which has sparked some

controversies over the past few months. However, NBLGLF has been quite open to Unity input on the conference, dampening most of these controversies.

One example of compromise between the two groups is the naming of the conference. Due to a temporary communication gap, both groups independently came up with themes for the conference. Unity's choice was **Weaving the Future: Black Lesbian and Gay Partnership for the 90's**. Weaving is an ancient

us from the elements—and visually and sensually stimulates us. This theme presented the Bay Area co-sponsors with numerous marketing possibilities.

The NBLGLF, however, working on comments they'd heard at the last conference regarding the need for the sisters and brothers to be more together, came up with its own theme: **Black Lesbians and Gays United**.

We discussed both themes in an April meeting between Unity members and board reps from

Members of Unity are discovering that putting on the conference is a year-long workshop in leadership skills. Lesbians and Gay men are working together and learning about each other's needs and sensitivities.

craft, practiced by both women and men, which continues to be pursued today. It's creative and tactile. One image the word evoked for the co-sponsors was a pattern of bodies, male and female and in differing hues, woven together. Weaving denotes strength: one thread is easily broken, but many threads woven together bind into a cloth not so easily torn. The finished product protects

the NBLGLF and they agreed to re-open the issue at their board meeting. The result was a theme meeting both areas' needs:

Weaving the Future: Black Lesbians and Gays United.

Leadership here involved seeing contrasting visions and negotiating an acceptable compromise.

Although the members of Unity recognize that NBLGLF, as the creators and founders of the Leadership Conference, have a right to maintain control of their "baby," we also expect, as co-hosts, to provide fundamental input into the process of building the coming conference. We expect to be able to mark this conference as unique from previous conferences by our participation. NBLGLF in LA, while reserving the right to make final decisions, has been very amenable to listening to Unity's ideas and also has agreed, in principle, to having two representatives from Unity attend the LA board meetings. Since Unity is on a shoestring budget and can't afford to send anyone down yet, this offer has not been followed up on.

There is much work to be done, both locally and nationally, to shape and promote the February conference. Among the local events thus far have been a dance in April, the second annual Unity pre-parade gala, sponsorship of a contingent in the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day Parade and staffing an information booth at the Civic Center at the end of the parade. (The San Fran-

cisco parade was chosen over the Oakland parade for focus because it is the largest parade in the country, providing us with the largest audience for our message.) All of these events have been well attended and more are being planned for the coming months, including a Tea Dance co-sponsored by Unity and Hot Colors on July 28. There will be a bi-monthly review of conference related activities published by Aché in the future.

Unity welcomes your suggestions and criticisms for strengthening the process of hosting the conference. We especially welcome those comments with bodies attached. Promoting the conference has proven to be a time-consuming but growth-producing activity. Anyone interested in improving their skills in leadership, negotiation, and organization, to name a few, come be apart of an excellent hands-on workshop with Unity. For more information, contact: Tolanda McKinney, co-chair, (916)429-6208 or Anthony Farmer, co-chair, (415)824-3387. ▽

Unity Sponsors Gay Day Cultural and Dance Fest

by Hagar

The night before Gay Day, June 29, Unity hosted its 2nd annual Cultural and Dance Fest. Held at the Merritt-Peralta Health Center in Oakland, the event drew over 200 attendees.

Although the performances began abysmally late, they proved to be well worth the wait. Singer/songwriter Cleo King started things off with two of her compositions. Then the room temperature rose several degrees as Ntombi and Ernest Andrews presented a call-and-response poem titled "We Are" that struck an emotional chord in both women and men. Ntombi, widely known for her lesbian erotica, was performing for the first time with a male co-reader. The readings, with Peter Barclay providing subtle background music, proved to be electric — this trio deserves more attention. Each read individually as well, with

Ernest reading a sensitive remembrance of a farewell to a lover dying of AIDS.

In addition to playing background music, Peter honored the audience with three of his songs, which are scheduled for release on his upcoming album. Two were accompanied by a faulty sound system but there was certainly no fault in his singing.

MC Lisa nearly stole the show with her wise-cracking, keep it moving attitude.

The final performance by Michael Sydnor was overlong, considering the length of the show. He is an intense performer and should be on a solo bill.

The evening was capped by a jamming dance groove, courtesy of Dennis Brown. ▽

Local and International Issues

A War Against Our Children

by Dawn Lundy & Kathleen Shakira Washington

Many years ago the solution to the "problem" of people of color was to destroy and deny their diverse histories. It was through the lack of education and the annihilation of many of our cultures that those in power chose to keep our communities in social, political and economic slavery. And still, after centuries of struggle and the loss of many of our greatest leaders, those in power are once again waging an old, yet familiar war against our communities.

This war is to poison our children's minds. As they are fast becoming an endangered species, victimized by poverty, drug abuse, early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, suicide and illiteracy, the children are continuously forced to fight a battle which is rarely won. In Soweto, South Africa, a little more than a decade ago, hundreds of students were killed as they protested the educational norm of learning in the language of the oppressor. Now in this country, in the year 1991, in what has been propagated as the most progressive area in the country, students and parents alike are standing up and speaking out against a parallel in oppressive teachings. Over 40 community groups around the Bay Area are taking action by fighting against the adoption of a series of social studies/history textbooks published by Houghton Mifflin.

While these books contain more images and descriptions of the histories of various peoples of color, the depictions continue to be biased. They are sexist, racist, homophobic, and typically Eurocentric. While everyone recognizes the extreme need for new books in the K-8 classrooms (there has not been a new series developed since the 60's), to adopt a book simply because it is "less racist" is a pathetic settlement for mediocrity. These texts include grave omissions, misrepresentations, distortions, and they are historically inaccurate.

Equally as important are the assertions made by activists that there is a direct correlation between the mis-education of our children and the devastating results that constrain their lives. What we are saying is that it is not a coincidence that the government seems to be able to build enough prisons to hold us in — once we have grown hopeless and desperate in a system that shows children few positive images of themselves. Group leaders cite the initiation of the textbooks as corrupt and evidence of a premeditated attack against people of color.

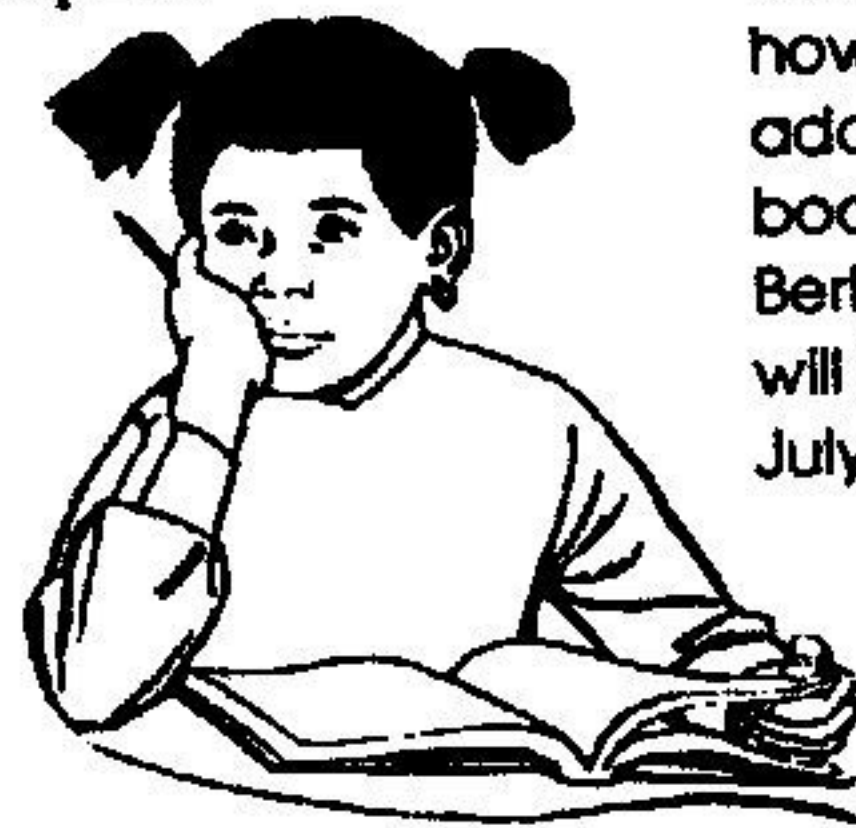
Gary Nash, the textbook author, and the Houghton Mifflin Publishing House were two of the very few who knew the recommendations of the newly revised textbook guidelines for public school materials. Apparently, some government officials from the hand-picked Bush administration were covertly operating right here within the educational system. The California State Department of Education accepted the texts in the fall of 1990, despite the reeling controversy. They ignored the insidious circumstances under which they were produced and have placed the district boards in a Catch-22, leaving them with *no other alternative* but adoption.

For many years we have recognized the importance of our histories. We realize that we cannot know the possibilities of the future if we do not know the reality of our past and the struggles that have been waged. It is imperative that each one of us take a firm

stand against the continued emotional and educational genocide of our children. We urge you to write to your local school boards and to the State Department of Education to express just how strongly you reject racism, homophobia and sexism.

For more information call: (415)465-4480.

UPDATE: At the time of this writing, the Oakland and Hayward school boards have rejected the K-8 books after an outcry from the community. San Francisco, however, has adopted the books, and the Berkeley board will be voting on July 17.



The Mirror Image Artist

jeté by Debra K. Floyd



Love of self and how we as Black women perceive this type of love is intriguing. We are women who come in a vast array of beautiful colors, shapes, sizes and feelings, yet often we look at love as if it comes from the outside. Love of self is some of the hardest "lovin'" to do, it can also be the most rewarding kind of love; it is what makes our world whole. It helps to find a vehicle that can guide us through the process of self-recognition and help us focus on the "mirror image" we are likely to avoid. This is where being an artist and tapping into the well of creativity comes in most handy.

The painful side of life's treasures are particularly difficult to perform... It is not always easy to predict how an audience will respond, the artist just knows she has to get out there and take her chances.

Performing artists are known for taking their "stuff" to the stage, putting it out there not just for all to see but for all to hear, feel and experience. Artists want us to laugh with them, cry with them, get angry, be happy or sad with them, and when it is all said and done, they have taken us through a healing process. Artists want to take us out there and bring us back in a totally different direction from what we expect or have come accustomed to traveling. They carry us with them thru the highs and lows of any given situation enabling us to take what we need from the performance experience. There are those artists that can extract anything from life and turn it into a "performance piece." One might go so far as to name it "therapeutic staging," since so much of the performance work we attend today is from the artists' wells of personal history, past events

and experiences, worked on in the present to move them into the future.

There are portions of performance art that are quite identifiable, easy to relate to and understand. We join in with comments such as "Yes, girl." "I know, I know what you are talking about." Or simply, "Uh-huh," because we are right there with them every step of the way. And it feels good to the artists to have the audience respond in a knowing fashion to their work. Each side supporting, understanding and healing together. Yes, yes.

It's not always easy for the artist to take material from life and express it in a way that is understood by an audience. The painful side of life's treasures are particularly difficult to perform: to remain true to the pain and not turn off the audience. It is not always easy to predict how an audience will respond, the artist just knows she has to get out there and take her chances. She learns what works and what doesn't and how to make changes in order for it to work better the next time around. (Now isn't that just the way in life?) The love of self and performance keeps her going. If her work touches one somebody, she is reassured that this is what she must do. She realizes that the sharing of her life, and the depths that she had to explore to be able to portray those levels of herself, has not only brought her a long way, but has brought about new realizations and healing for others as well.

The Mirror Image Artist can give us a great deal to think about. Ways to look at ourselves, and even laugh, as we travel down our individual life paths, learning to love ourselves. The Mirror Image Artist definitely lets us know...we are not alone. ▽

The Issue is Racism

In hopes of a better understanding

by Lillie Robinson

For 2-1/2 years, Lillie was the bassist and a composer with the Blazing Redheads, a women's musical group based in the Bay Area. Currently she is a free-lance artist working with groups in the Bay Area, including Black Onyx. She is also writing a musical entitled "I Can't Hear You When You Talk Like That."

A boycott of the Blazing Redheads was called by supporters of anti-racism. As a former member of the Redheads, it was called on my behalf, but more importantly, in response to the Blazing Redheads' inability/unwillingness to respond to the assertions of racism and exploitation with any degree of integrity. What the members of the group continue to convey is their fear, shame and ignorance by refusing to openly address the racial conflict that existed in the band. These women have assimilated into some of the most malignant and destructive ideals of white supremacy I have ever seen for people who don't wear white sheets at night or shave their heads.

I am angry and hurt by their racist actions, reactions and inactions. Though the outcome of this conflict has been painful for me, I am sure that they too walk with their own pain. I say this to show that everyday racism is just as damaging as hate crimes perpetrated by white supremacist groups. Both are products of ignorance and fear. Both are devastating physically and spiritually. Along with my feelings of anger and pain, there also exist difficult and conflicting feelings of compassion. Because these women were like family to me. They *were* family to me. I despise what they have done, I fear what they have become, and I grieve daily for the death of a **VERY LARGE PART OF MY EXISTENCE FOR THE PAST 2-1/2 YEARS**, not only professionally but emotionally.

For me, a Black lesbian woman, racism is a real and debilitating part of my everyday existence. Because I responded to

what was in the interest of my emotional survival as a human being, they have decided that they don't want to deal with me anymore. I did not choose this battle, nor do I run from it. My silence on this issue would only say that this is acceptable, and it is certainly not acceptable. I cannot avoid it (as they would have me do) because it is a consequence of my being alive.

The Blazing Redheads, whose music is solely based on music by people of color: Afro-Cuban, Latin, jazz, R&B, and funk, exemplify the pervasive racism that exists in the music industry today — the Elvis Theory in practice. They say that they are "drawn to this music by a long held love and respect for the traditions..."* but what of the respect and sensitivity for the people who embody those traditions. By their actions, I have been reduced to a fired non-partner who has never been compensated for her work.

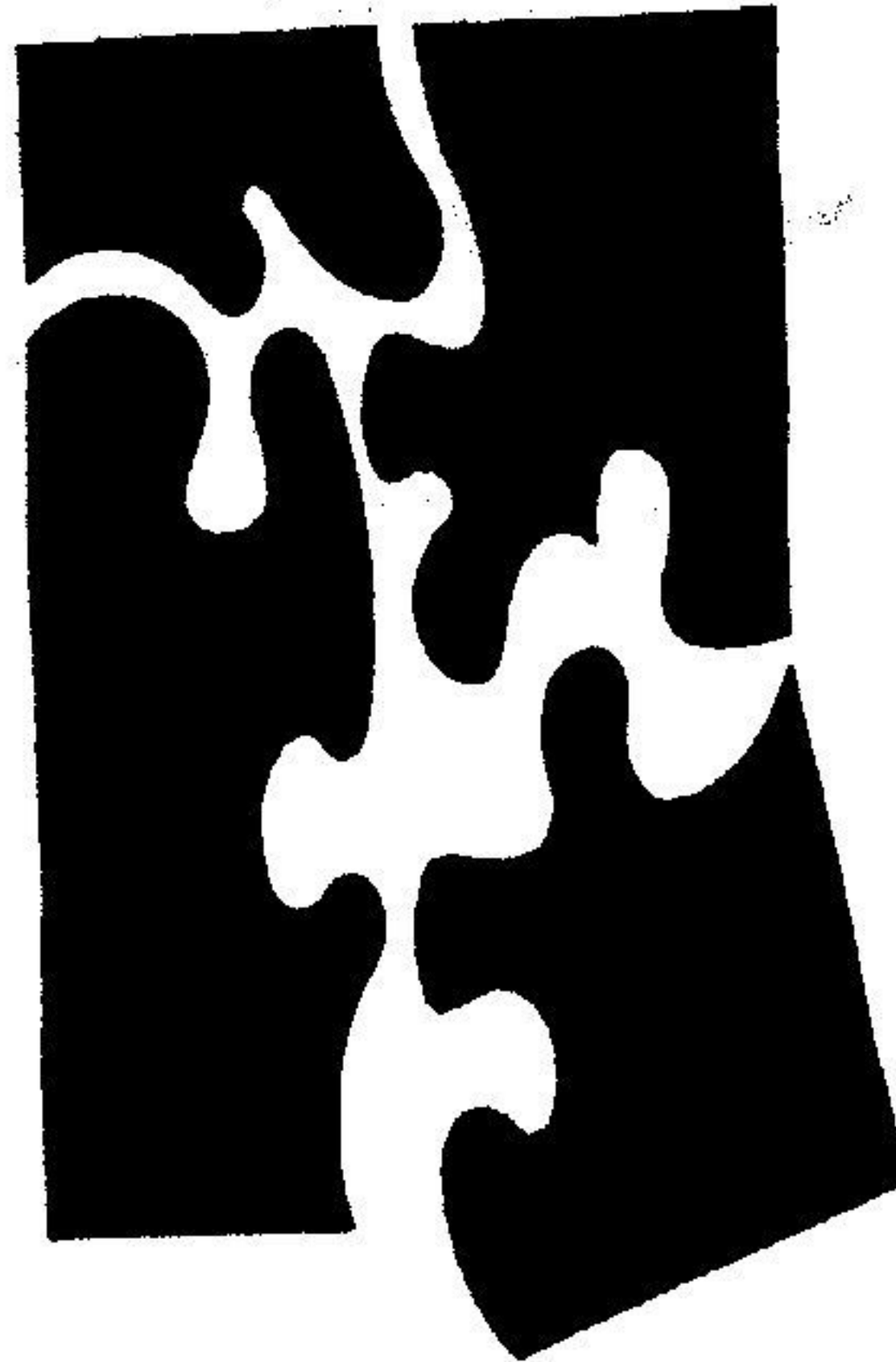
Economically, I have participated as an equal part of a collective, sharing all debts and responsibilities equally. A "partnership," I believe it was called. The professional dividends of years of work, struggle and commitment have been denied me.

Because I am a part of what we created, they cannot extract my influence without destroying the music. In the creative process there will always be as many perspectives as there are participants. We *collectively* made the Blazing Redheads' sound what it is today, and thus brought the band to the recording contract. It is almost inconceivable that the remaining members of the Blazing Redheads can make a statement denying my input on the upcoming album, when they

know that the entire sound of the band changed with the addition of myself and the former keyboardist (who is a woman of color). She also left the band just prior to the record project and expressed discontent and the feeling that she had been exploited. They state: "Lillie felt her contributions were not being taken seriously." What is more accurate is that my contributions were simply taken.

These women attempt to depict me as violent and angry. I offer no excuse for losing my composure when Producer Frank Dorritie, a six foot, 200 pound white man stepped into my face, blocked the door of my studio, separated me from other band members, and insulted me — standing within inches of my body. **All of the Blazing Redheads stood by as this happened and did nothing.** Despite his repeated confrontational behavior towards me, these women chose only to see my response and not his actions. As for their accusations of "repeated and seriously threatening band members with physical violence," my so-called threats consisted of angry phone messages to individuals who refused to speak to me concerning my rights in this situation — denying my right to be angry in an oppressive and racist situation. Racism is a tool of destruction and these women along with Mr. Dorritie have used his access to power to punish and exploit me.

The Blazing Redheads have, along with Susan Roth, the manager of the band, criminally denied me access to financial records and have refused to enter into dialogue concerning my right to perform on the album. In regards to my request for a mediation process, *they decided* to turn down my offer. And because they were uncomfortable with my terms, they made a deci-



sion that has directly affected my career. They claim: "We do not support racism and are constantly struggling to unlearn it." Yet they participate actively in denying me a voice and equity in what is ours.

So where do we go from here? I am willing to engage in open discussion with guards down, when they are willing to admit to their role as oppressors and challenge the belief systems they presently cling to. Not until they are ready to redefine their privileged reality to include the valid assertions of women of color can real dialogue replace oppressive and discounting rhetoric. In closing, I say to Donna, Michealle, Dannielle, Klaudia and Susan — as you continue to "struggle to unlearn racism," remember this: Closing eyes when it means seeing the truth, closing minds when it means learning about racism is what racist people do. They do not confront themselves. They perpetuate racism as you have done in your determination not to see what you are doing to me, to yourselves and to the Blazing Redheads. ▽

Editor's Note: There is an on-going boycott of the Blazing Redheads until they are willing to fulfill their legal obligations to Lillie and take personal responsibility for their actions.

**All quotes were taken from the letter written by the remaining members of the Blazing Redheads, Aché, May, 1991.*

Colors of Contribution: The Women's Building Honors Lesbians of Color for Shaping the Vision

Event and Concert Review

by Cara Vaughn

An anniversary to celebrate. A Saturday night Casselberry and Duprée C&D concert. This was perfect, even if it meant going to Mission High School in San Francisco. (The principal's office never adds to the ambience.)

I've liked C&D since I first saw them 10+ years ago at the Julia Morgan in Berkeley (opening act: Whoopi Goldberg). So off we went, my sweetie and I, to celebrate our 12th anniversary with an evening of music. Well, we didn't exactly get an evening of music, it was closer to an hour and ten minutes. But then, it wasn't exactly a concert either.

The Women's Building (TWB) planned this event to honor Carmen Vázquez, who has worked long and hard on behalf of the Women's Building and lesbians in general. That was a fine idea and Carmen deserved this recognition; we need to honor our own. The planners fell down, however, by poorly describing the event. The publicity I saw advertised the evening as a concert of Casselberry and DuPreé with Nerida Rojas and Annette A. Aguilar. On the tickets — other than the performers, time, location and cost — the information read "Colors of Contribution, The Women's Building Honors Lesbians of Color for Shaping the Vision." Now that sounds like an evening honoring lots of people! The actual event was something quite different.

Part I The Fete

Carmen Vázquez was the focus of the evening's first half, which began with a pre-concert reception for her at the Building. At

the concert site, the reception was followed with a 20-25 minute speech by Carmen and almost an hour of tributes to her. Carmen herself was funny and fiery, entertaining and enlightening as she spoke of leaving her Puerto Rican, working class, alcoholic family

in Harlem and becoming involved with the building and, as she put it, "racism and classism, landlords, tenants, confusion, anger, dishevelment — sometimes chaos — and long, long meetings."

Her background helped her see the pain in others. Her own struggle led to her strong belief that "everyone needs a safe place to nurture a vision of a multiracial, progressive, women's organization. An organization especially for poor women, lesbians and lesbians of color, for international solidarity, economic justice, racial equality, for a progressive women's movement which does not exist." She said of this movement: "We will find you. We will lead you. We will bring you ourselves and the best of our ancestors, courage, passion, peace and our version of a new world."

After a standing ovation, Vázquez was accorded further honors from the San Francisco Board of Commissioners, the Women's Building Board and staff and the San Francisco Mayor's Office (which provided a lengthy proclamation declaring May 25th "Carmen Vázquez Day").

Even though Carmen is a fantastic speaker, there were some unhappy people in the audience, perhaps feeling misled about what their \$15-20 tickets had purchased. Those who were bored with the speeches, though, had plenty to look at. The night was a celebration of Black women's hair. There were long braids, short dreads, shiny and wavy old fashioned "good" hair, neatly permed and wildly bushy hair, finger-popping-short naturals, hair pulled back, hair pushed up, hats, wraps and things I don't even know the name of. It was just wonderful.

Part II The Concert

The program moved into the concert without an intermission and early on in the evening's second half, someone shouted, "You all are looking good." And they were. In their dreads, yellow-brown-green print outfits (which nicely matched Casselberry's brown and yellow electric guitar), bare feet and booming voices, Judith Casselberry and Jaqué DuPreé (with Nerida Rojas and Annette A. Aguilar) came to sing, make music and have a good

The night was a celebration of Black women's hair. There were long braids, short dreads, shiny and wavy old fashioned "good" hair, neatly permed and wildly bushy hair, finger-popping-short naturals, hair pulled back, hats, wraps...

time. They started slow with "Nothing Lights a Fire Like a Dream Deferred," then moved to Casselberry's song about peace, justice, faith and love called "Let There Be Peace." On Billy Taylor's "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel

To Be Free," C&D required "congregational behavior" and the audience of over 1000, mostly black women, gave it to them with unison clapping as sharp as cracking thunder.

Highlights included a deliciously intense love song written by Toshi Reagon, and a blues number with great lyrics about girl oppression:

*Black patent leather slippers, vaseline face,
Sunday go-to-meeting dress on.
Get up off the ground with that spinning top.
Girls don't wear pants.
Leave them no good boys alone.*

Casselberry and Dupréé ended the song with very funny mother-daughter banter:

"Oh Mama!"

"Girl, don't you look at me in that tone."

We were lucky to make out these words because at least half of the evening's lyrics were unintelligible, obscured by a mushy sound system and/or poor enunciation. And I hope the sound problem was the only reason I didn't hear any overt references to women loving women. C+D cover a wide range of topics and I would hate to think they cater to nudge-and-a-wink lesbianism.

For most people, the music seemed enough. Casselberry hit the low notes and Dupréé covered the high spots in fine tight harmony sometimes reminiscent of Joan Armatrading. Despite the fact that they had just flown in from Albuquerque (having performed at the only festival they know of begun by a woman of color), and then run around the Bay Area visiting with their many friends, Judith and Jaqué were in very good voice and exuded energy. The music was rock and reggae with some blues and, though a lot of the songs sounded similar, each number was well arranged and well presented.

Casselberry and Dupréé sang a lot about the colored experience, freedom and oppression. And Christianity was a running theme. Dupréé cracked up the audience comparing her shouting,

holy roller church to Casselberry's cross yourself, on your knees religion. They sang about Lucifer

and the archangel's fall, and about holding onto our African culture because, "We're not the King James Version." Casselberry played excellent, saucy rhythm guitar while Dupréé added spice with a bit of guitar and a half dozen hand-held percussion instruments.

The real standout on percussion was Aguilar, who roamed over a large assortment of congas, bongos, drums and cymbals. She was excellent (except for a few moments of suspect timing) working intertwining, complex rhythms. I liked it best when she played congas and drum kit at the same time, one hand attending to each: no mean feat. Rojas was Bass Player Cool in her four-color tights, black boots, shades and a guitar as long as she was tall. Her solid backup vocals and good bass lines meshed well with the others and formed a strong foundation for the lead singers.

These four women put out a very full sound, but despite Casselberry's encouragement, few people got up and danced. The handful who did were mostly male and White.

Kudos to Brynn Fillers for a good lighting scheme and for resisting any urge to do a light show with the concert. Kudos also to ASL signers LaTanya Johnson and Debbie Green. Demerits to the program writer for not providing any information on the performers and for abuse of typography.

The concert ended with ovations, encores and finally, a plea to send prayers and healing energy to Audre Lorde, who was hospitalized in May, another marker in her ongoing struggle with cancer. ▽

**Don't
worry!**
Tell Mama
**will return
in the next
issue.**

AIDS and Abortion

Think they have nothing in common? Think again.

by Veneita Porter



The recent Supreme Court decision upholding the 1988 Title X gag rule (see side bar) has major implications for the AIDS movement on the issues of censorship and access to health care.

Unfortunately, people tend to get activated by single-issue agendas, and the most obvious issue behind the Title X decision is access to abortion and abortion information. In fact, the decision will make it very difficult, if not impossible, for some women to get abortions.

Because of this, most of the press about the Supreme Court ruling has focused on abortion, and the activist response to the decision has also been specifically about abortion, since that's the fastest way to get people involved.

For lesbians and bisexual women, the abortion issue is fucking scary. It's not just about those millions of poor and working-class heterosexual women who may need abortion as their choice. It's also about us, our acquaintances who on occasion sleep with men, or our lovers who have been raped. But for many gay and bisexual men, access to abortion and abortion information seems pretty far removed from their needs, in terms of health care, or their list of demands, in terms of activism. The reality is, however, that no policy is made in isolation, and the Title X ruling has cleared the path for other reprehensible decisions in related fields, particularly AIDS education and care. For the success of both movements, it is imperative that we are able to recognize that

the agendas around AIDS and women's reproductive rights are closely interconnected.

In part, the Title X regulations are about two-tiered health care, which, as AIDS activists, we've been avoiding for a long time. We've been opposing mandatory HIV testing because of the fear that it would create two classes of people — positive and negative — and result in a caste system in terms of access to health care. With the Title X ruling, we're already looking at such a caste system. Women who have money and women who don't will get radically different information about their health-care options. Many women will get no information about the option of abortion because they happen to fall into a class of people that has access to federal funds. Basically, the Title X regulations say: "If you can pay for it, you can get the information. But if we pay for it, as the feds, you can't get the information because we don't want you to know, because we don't think abortion is an acceptable option."

So with Title X, we are creating a health-care system that is indeed ready to separate people into classes and to deal with them in two completely different ways. This can easily lead to similar situations, such as, say, a decision that working-poor people dependent on federal health-care money who happen to be substance-users and HIV-positive have rights to only certain kinds of information and certain kinds of drug trials. Of course, if people can *pay* for it, maybe they have rights to more.

The Supreme Court, with its Title X ruling, has shown it will support the federal government making certain freedoms — like the freedom of speech between doctor and patient — dependent on a citizen's ability to pay for it. And the government has clearly shown its interest in using restrictions on federal funds as a way to force the lifestyle and personal decision-making preferences of those in power onto economically and politically marginalized communities.

Because of his repulsion over some little AIDS-education comic book, Senator Jesse Helms, with a provision he attached to a fiscal-year 1988 appropriations bill, single-handedly made it impossible to use federal money for any printed material about homosexuality or homosexual acts. That is a

very clear parallel to the Title X restrictions making it impossible to use federal funds for even *talking* about abortion. So what will be the next level of restriction on AIDS information? I think more censorship is definitely down the line, and not that far down the line, either.

So, AIDS activists need to pay very close attention to what happens with the Title X restriction and how it gets enforced. Because if it's federally enforceable, it's going to be very scary. If you can go and check on family planning clinics to make sure they're not giving out any information about abortions, imagine what kinds of constraints you could put on AIDS organizations about what kinds of information they give out — especially when we're talking about needle exchange or any kind of graphic sexual information.

I think abortion and AIDS workers and activists have to be much more closely aligned. Because what affects women is the testing ground, often, for what is going to affect AIDS and health policy. I would like to see more men, more AIDS activists, actively involved in at least being able to see the parallels.

And the parallels don't stop there. We finally got Sullivan to lift the ban on foreigners with HIV entering the U.S. — a ban with a basis in prejudice and politics, not in national health concerns — but the Bush administration has said it will "temporarily" shelve the plan. Bush has also said he will veto any civil rights bill that looks like a quota. And Bush has said he will veto any Congressional overturn of the Title X ruling. All these issues have to do with people who are marginalized — women, people of color, and people who are infected with HIV.

What is Title X?

Title X is a federal family-planning program, approved by Congress in 1970, that serves low-income women. In 1988, in response to lawsuits challenging the way Title X did not disallow abortion counseling to be done using federal funds, and in keeping with the Reagan administration's anti-abortion agenda, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) promulgated new regulations that would prohibit *any mention* of abortion as a legal option at facilities receiving *any portion* of their funding through the Title X program. These rules are not yet in effect, as the issue has been in litigation since '88. However, a U.S. Supreme Court decision in May upheld the DHHS regulations. Barring federal legislative intervention, the rules will go into effect within 90 days of the ruling. Bills designed to overrule the Supreme Court have been introduced in Congress. For information on how you can help make sure these bills pass, contact: California Abortions Rights Action League, 300 Brannan, Ste. 501, SF, 94107 or call (415)546-7211.

There has been a very clear message, this year, that marginalized populations don't have a song in hell to get any legislation benefiting them through the political system.

Civil rights, AIDS rights, and women's rights could be a very, very powerful triangle, yet I don't see a whole lot of mixture or support among that triangle. I think that's dangerous. Not to be goody-two-shoes-global, but the more we're divided, the more we have to lose. Our political agendas are enriched by our involvement with others.

I know it's very hard. When you've got HIV and you've got a limited amount of time and energy, you're going to fight for what's on your plate. But for those of us who are healthy and those of us who have the ability to see the wider picture, it's very important to share those agendas.

This doesn't mean you have to devote your life to somebody else's cause, but it does mean you have to show up to other people's picket lines or other people's rallies, or offer to help in another cause, whether it's by stuffing envelopes or giving out buttons, or by publicly making a statement like, "I'm another man who supports a woman's right to have an abortion." That's as simple as it gets.

San Francisco got thousands and

If you can go and check on family planning clinics to make sure they're not giving out any information about abortions, imagine what kinds of constraints you could put on AIDS organizations about what kinds of information they give out — especially when we're talking about needle exchange or any kind of graphic sexual information.

thousands of people out against the war. We had the biggest demonstrations anywhere in the nation. It's very important that demonstrations and activity of that size and that passion be seen in reaction to the Title X ruling. I want people to be on the phone to their congresspeople and their representatives saying this is not OK and demanding to know what California is going to do about it. It's what we would do if they decided they were going to test everybody in California. Does our lack of ability to make these connections mean we have to wait until we see AIDS obits on one side and illegal abortion obits on the other? ▽

Reprinted from The San Francisco Sphere, a new gay/lesbian/bisexual multicultural monthly newspaper, with permission from Veneita Porter. For more information write to: SPHERE, P.O. Box 191831, San Francisco, CA 94119.

STATEMENT

by S. R. Head

I am an artist in creation. I'm a teacher being taught. I am a healer being healed. I'm a priestess in initiation. I am an African woman born in America.



I'm the first born of the second generation of humble, kind, hard working people who migrated from Louisiana to California fifty-one years ago. I'm the eldest grandchild of Adjie Willis and the late Georgia Mae Willis.

I'm self-sufficient, venerable, sensitive and strong. I'm rhythmic and sensual

with an orgasmic sense of taste, smell and sound.

I'm yang and yin.

I'm a hot southern breeze and other times a cool north wind.

I'm sweet nectar on the tip of your tongue and the sting of a summer wasp.

I'm the fullness of a cancer moon and a ray of African sun.

I'm an ancestor born in a new form with old knowledge and new experiences.

I'm a visionary in the dream time.

I'm an activist for peace, community, and unity of all African people.

I'm a cultural separatist who believes in tolerance and understanding of all cultures gay and straight.

I'm many things at different times, I'm a child of the universe free to be whom ever I choose to be.

I LOVE LIFE and all things of it. ▽

**From Good
Girl to Gay
Girl**

by Shéree Slaughter



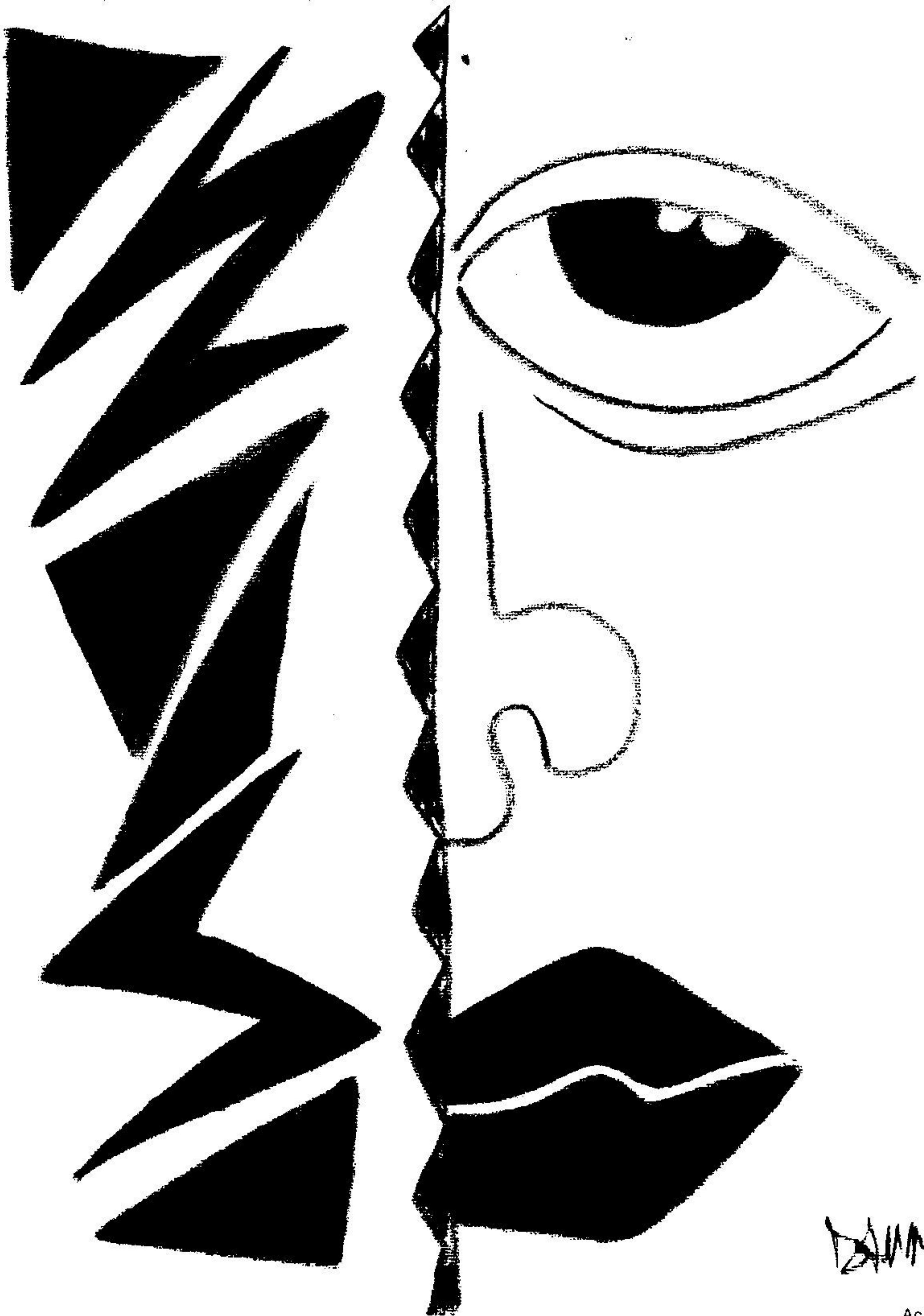
20 years ago Momma said "Men are no good"
So, when sex came up, I said I never would
I had a boyfriend and we used to play
When he said "Let's do it" I'd say "No way"
After a kiss and grind I'd say "No more"
"You want the real thing, walk out the door"
He was a nice guy he never tried to force me
He had respect for my mom and my whole family

But, momma took us to the clinic every weekend
To see who was giving it up, or who held it within
I dreaded these visits, I never wanted to go
The doctor, his fingers, I hated it so
Out of the five he'd say "just one"
The other four are having big fun
I thought I was the only virgin in the world
And, momma would call me her good girl

My first year in high school is when it began
There I was approached by a female friend
She said "I like you Shéree," "You drive me crazy"
Curious about two women, but I knew we couldn't make a baby
So, with that in mind I jumped in bed
And let her slip between my legs
Guys they say can be very rough
But, a woman is so soft to touch
Women are my preference, women are my life
I don't want a husband, I want a wife

Shéree Slaughter's poems have been printed in the Chicago Defender, Nightlines, Chicago Parent Newsmagazine, The Live Wire (American Spring and Wire Newsletter) and the Planet Roc (Wholesome Roc Gallery, Museum & Café newsletter). Shéree has performed at The Green Mill, The Bop Shop, Paris Dance, The Wholesome Roc, Estelles and the Borderline.

Through her poetry she hopes to bring people closer together in love and respect for one another. She hopes to curb the violence of gangs and drugs. She hopes to bring joy to a face of sorrow; she hopes to give hope for a better tomorrow. And, she hopes to be understood.



DAVID

Family biology
is not always family
by Darlene Angela women
men
sisters
brothers
genes
do not guarantee support
nurturance
unconditional love
looking beyond
blood relations
saves sanity
and
prolongs life
the only true family
is found in those
who genuinely give respect
care
and emotional sustenance
all else is only
a cheap imitation

**Going Down
on Myself**

by Aya de Leon

I am no contortionist
But I see now
that I let the physical constraints
get in the way of
my every woman's need
to taste myself
with no artificial flavors or colors

Because loving myself sexually
is the most subversive act of Lesbianism
that I can commit

I am not talking about masturbation,
I am talking about celebration

I defy labels
I locate myself
And I love her

Boston, MA 1991

It Pains Me

by Jae

It pains me not to be able to share
the depth of the sweetness between us
with the world —

It pains me not to be able to tell
just how much and in how many ways
you have enriched my existence —

It pains me and tears at my insides
when I acknowledge the reality
of what sharing such things would mean
in my life. . .and yours —

It pains me to masquerade the fact that
you are my friend *and* lover;
that your kisses are more delicious
than any I've known;
that your softness arouses me,
and makes me seek to lay my body down
next to yours —

It pains me that my spirit is
not at peace in loving this way —

It pains me so
sometimes I want to scream!
Sometimes. . .
I want to die —

I am not sure how much longer I can
"maintain"
I am wrestling like Jacob with God
and myself

And it pains me.

What If I Told You

by Jae

What if I told you...
you could

stretch your woman-ness over me
head to toe
"sips" touching
lips pressing
thighs melding
tiger-lily softness dripping

What if I told you...
you could

wrap your length and breadth around me
front to back
side to side
neck caressing
nipple nibbling
navel tasting

What if I told you that?

Would you?

Well,

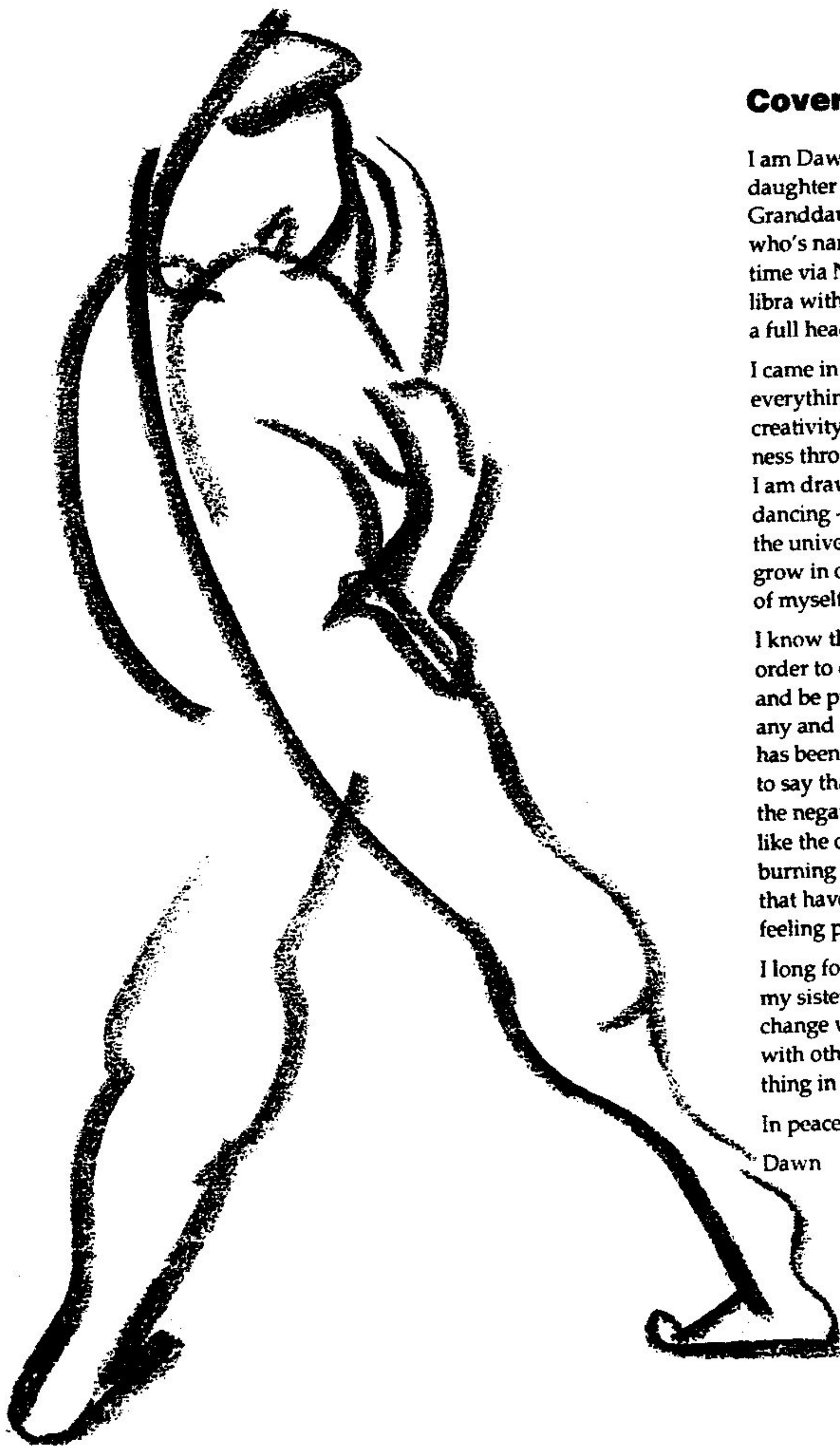
would you?

I am a lesbian-in-process. That is to say, I am not out. I have, in fact, only been exploring this dimension of my Self over the past eight or nine months. I love to write and have used my writing to document my journey, process my feeling/struggles, and articulate the passion I have developed for a very special woman in my life. I choose to identify myself as Jae who lives and works in the Bay Area.

Untitled

by Dawn Rudd

feel my flow
woman feel the warm
cream of inspiration
caress your tongue and fingers
rest your head on these
fine brown thighs thick and secure
while this love licks
at your eyes and ears
saliva rich and sweet wet
born of desire
smell my warmth my depth
breathe in my woman musk warm
and intoxicating smell
the grass trees and rain that live
inside my womb woman
feel me flow rich red rust
flow of rite of passage
ritual blood shed monthly
from this cavernous earth
dip in and let it slide
down through and between
until you understand until
you know woman
that you are safe between
these arms safe
within my walls
safe woman within my waterfall
of creamy libations and
red rust brown ritual blood



Cover artist: Dawn Rudd

I am Dawn, daughter of Arlene, Granddaughter of Leora and Daisey, Great Granddaughter of Queenie and a woman who's name I do not know. I came in this time via New Haven, Connecticut, 1962, a libra with big dark eyes, round cheeks and a full head of hair.

I came in with the power to love and create, everything I do is an expression of love and creativity. My spirit expresses its uniqueness through my creative process. Whether I am drawing, painting, writing, singing or dancing — LOVE — the guiding hand of the universe, demands that I open and grow in order to accomodate the vastness of myself.

I know that I have much work to do and in order to do it I must embrace all that is me and be prepared to stand up in the face of any and all obstacles. My greatest obstacle has been the issue of self love. I am proud to say that I am finally letting go of some of the negativity I have walked with. I feel like the clouds are opening and the sun is burning away the shame, doubt and fear that have lurked beneath my surface. I am feeling powerful and vibrant these days.

I long for and work for the day when all of my sisters will feel their power. I work for change within myself so that I can work with others. As I change, so does everything in my path.

In peace and power,

Dawn

White Chocolate

by Natalie Devora

Have you ever tasted
White Chocolate?
Soft and sensual
A delight to the tongue
Sweeter than the ripest strawberry
Juicier than the peach that drips
into your mouth on a hot day
Downright tasty.

Have you ever dipped your fingers
into the creamy sensation
White Chocolate?
Felt it cling
Teasingly
Causing those fingers to proceed
Directly to your mouth
Just for a little taste
Really.

Don't you want to taste,
Dip your fingers into
Surround your tongue with
Wrap your lips around some
White Chocolate?

Come on
You truly might like it
Might not ever want to stop
I know you've shied away before
Feast upon me
White Chocolate.

Speech for Disability and Sexuality Panel OUT/WRITE Conference 1991

by Natalie Devora

The piece "White Chocolate" emerged one evening out of my need to define my identity as an African American Albino lesbian. I needed to show my sisters with luscious brown skin that I too was/am chocolate, not of brown hue, yet chocolate nonetheless. I was frustrated by hearing poems that spoke of the richness of pigmented skin, brown, caramel, sepia, coffee, honey-color I did not have. I felt inferior because of my white skin. I felt less Black. I felt invisible.

I want to talk about invisibility. I am here at this conference and still I am invisible. How many of you know that I cannot see detail from more than ten feet away? How many of you would even understand that this conference is a disability nightmare for me? I mean there are nearly two thousand people here. Unless I happen to be directly in your face I am not going to see you. Yet do I appear to look disabled. I do not carry any definable instrument, white cane or guide dog, to define myself. I am not totally blind. I fall into the nebulous category of being legally blind. A title that doesn't really define anything.

Last night, I was here for the keynote speakers. I had to ask about accessible seating reserved for people with disabilities. I could see none. I had to yet one more time assert myself in order to be able to see. I later learned from Lisa Hall, one of the conference organizers, that she had reserved seats in the front row for disabled people. I was angry because I felt that nondisabled people had taken seating made available to

me and others with disabilities. I was angry because yet again ablism prevented someone with a disability from having access. I want to ask that when we have our conferences and gatherings that we create seating for people with disabilities automatically. I also want to state that accessibility does not end with wheelchairs and interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing. I am asking that we look beyond the visible disability to recognize the invisible.

I have seen no images of myself in lesbian erotica nor have I seen myself depicted in writings of/about/on disability. I have become my own spokesperson. I stand before you today tired of speaking out for myself. Yet I continue to speak out because I hope that just maybe by my risk-taking to write my story another Albino child ten years from now will have something to read and won't have to forge the way.

I began writing erotica nearly three years ago. I began to write because I was bored with most of the lesbian erotica that I did encounter. I wanted to read about more than women stroking other women's honey pots and women's wetness. I wanted to read about pussies and cunts. I wanted to read more than five paragraphs in 200 pages about women making love. I wanted to read about women fucking. I am not saying that to write about soft and gentle lovemaking is not to be done. I am saying that I wanted and needed more from the erotica that was being published.

I was forced then to put my fantasies down on paper. For me this did not mean that my words were to be heard by other women, not at that point. Before I was to ever read my erotica publicly or submit any short story for publication, I had to overcome a few hurdles. I had to do a lot of healing. Being an incest survivor caused me to hate my body. I hated my body for being violated. I hated my body for responding to my perpetrator's touch. I hated my body for betraying me. I had to learn that I was beautiful. For me beauty was associated with color. This association was ingrained in my brain by my mother who never ceased to compare me to my lovely sister who had beautiful light brown skin. This ingrained

I wanted to read about more than women stroking other women's honey pots and women's wetness. I wanted to read about pussies and cunts.

association was what caused me to dye my hair from the time I was thirteen until I left home at eighteen because my mother believed that this would give me greater acceptance.

I had to discover that I liked sex. That may sound strange but I carried a tremendous amount of guilt for enjoying the sensations that my body gave me. So I became a closet Eroticist. I bought and read everything I could get my hands on that was erotic. Be the material good or bad I read it. I was even forced to read mainstream erotica. It wasn't until three and a half years ago, when I fell in love with a gorgeous Black woman, that I began to write erotica. This

woman taught me about romance. She taught me that I was capable of being loved. With her I danced my very first slow dance. With her my Blackness was an accepted fact, a natural part of my identity. With her I had incredible, extremely satisfying sex.

I wrote a short story entitled *The Tryst*. She was the inspiration for that piece. For she was my first and finest mistress. *The Tryst* is a fine piece of writing, one that will leave the reader with wet underwear but what *The Tryst* fails to mention is that both characters are disabled women. The story doesn't talk about having sex with a woman who uses a wheelchair nor does the story tell of a woman who has never seen her own cunt. The characters remain able-bodied.

I did not feel comfortable writing about disability and sexuality. I felt too vulnerable and exposed. For me it has been easier to simply write about women being spanked. It has been easier to write about my muscled soft butch lover sitting atop my cock, not dildo but cock. I can focus on what is seemingly easier while avoiding the more personal.

When I did begin to think about how my disability related to my sexuality I thought about all the things that I'd never done because of my Albinism. Those things include:

- I have never gone cruising in a bar.
- I have never picked up or been picked up by anyone in a bar.
- I have never openly flirted in a crowd.
- I have never gazed longingly at my lover across a crowded room.
- I have never seen the intricacies of my pussy.

I have never seen the true color of my eyes.

I have never done anything naked in the sun.

I have never driven a car.

I then began to think of the things I have done because of my Albinism:

I have come to appreciate the goodness of the sun despite my sensitivity to it.

I have been an ophthalmological guinea pig.

I dyed my hair and passed for white.

I have been subject to ignorant ridicule and stereotypes.

I have been assumed asexual.

I have been teased for looking different.

I have had restaurant menus read to me because they were listed on a wall.

I have learned to memorize my lover's body through touch.

These things are all important because they are a part of my personal makeup. They are a part of my history.

I don't think about all of these things on a day-to-day basis. If I did I would continually be depressed because I was/am oppressed. However, I am continually reminded each time I leave the sanctuary of my apartment of my differentness. I am subject to racism. I get it from the people that I work with for being the only African American person at the company because most of them don't bother or want to let my

ethnicity penetrate their brains. I feel the ostracism from other Blacks, gay and straight, because I make them uncomfortable, either for being a lesbian or for being a white-skinned Black woman in this society. I exist caught, oftentimes, between worlds, on a fence with no name. I straddle it hungering for acceptance. I long to be embraced by my people.

Today I am asking all of you to examine your shortcomings. How many times have you looked away from a Black woman or man because of their color? How many times have you crossed to the other side of the street out of fear? How many times have you turned away in embarrassment at the sight of a severely disabled person? How many of you have been physically attracted to a person with a disability? Who amongst you has had a sexual encounter or relationship with a disabled person? How many of you are guilty for holding community events in an inaccessible location? We are all guilty of these transgressions. I am no exception. I am asking that we all begin to bridge a gap. I am asking that we all take a risk. ▽

From the book Riding Desire, edited by Tee A. Corrine, Banned Books, June 1991.

Healing and Spirituality

I Am
by Akiba

I was thrown up
From the pits of a belly
From the bowels of a gut
I was saturated in
Slime and honey
Cow dung sweet grass
Black eyed peas
Green clover and cassava
No one knew what
To do with me
This queen
This priestess
This daughter of Oya
This Poccahanas
This Druid child

My arms grew long
My cheekbones high
My mouth opened wide
My lips grew full
"Your nose is too wide"
Girl "Let's straighten that nappy hair"
Plait it up
Take that chil' to church
Rape her beat her
Teach her bout God
Then she'll know her place
No room for Goddesses
Here on this Earth

I was thrown up Black
From the Nile River
In the Louisiana swamp
I lived in the jungle
I was a head hunter
A scalper
My name is Sequoia
I am an ancient
I came out of the mist
From the fairy people
A nation raped my mother
And I was born
A light on this path



My arms grew long
To open wide
I've saved many lives
Drowning in piss
Squatted in the gutter
My skirt above my head
My guts on the concrete
My teeth in the grass
I've been dissected
Ripped apart
Put myself back together
Perfect

My ancestors are everywhere
In the skies
In the middle earth
They roam Mt. Kilimanjaro
Arizona Ireland Tibet
They sing Lullaby of Birdland
While they shit
They dance to the drum
While they pray
They take the trees to bed
They make love
They call on all seven directions
They created
The mystery of life

I was vomited out
In red and black slime
In green and yellow piss
I opened my legs
And a rainbow was born
You don't see me but
I love you everyday
I made love to you
On the planet Mars while
Saturn and Venus watched
It was so good
And you got so scared
You pushed me out the Universe
So I created another one

I was sculptured out of stone
The ants sleep in me
They make their home
In my black belly
In my rich earth
Everybody wants me
Anybody can have me
I'm unappreciated
I'm Chinese
I'm African
I'm Indian
I'm Arab
I'm a woman

I gave birth
To the Phoenix
I am alone
The whole Infinite
Is my lover
I eat crystals
I fuck snakes
I sleep with the panther
My baby is an elephant
I ride on the hurricane
I am Copper Woman
I have medicine
I made it with my toes
My eyes are stars
My words are prayers
I can heal you
I have healed you

A Child Is Born

by Karen Hill

Karen Hill is a Black channel, spiritual consultant and writer with a private practice in Berkeley. Her clients are primarily women and children of color. "My dream is to assist as many beings as I can, through connecting with Spirit, in awakening to the truth about who we really are. It is time for us to own our truth, to claim our power, and to walk the planet in love and honor as the chosen ones we are and have always been."

Sitting on my bed, legs crossed lotus-style, I stare beyond the hazy film of the cedar smudge stick and lavender incense burning gently on my altar. As I breathe in the sweet, smokey fragrance, my stare calms into a gaze. I realize that I am transfixed, beckoned by a vision my inner eye seems compelled to unfold before me. The cotton fabric of my curtained window fades and dissolves as the shudders of my mind fall open and the daylight of a new life spills into my view.

A child is born.

She welcomes the world into her heart with a startled cry realizing with her first breath, everything about this journey is going to be big. Larger than her memory, two familiar strangers claim her, cuddle her and woo her into love. Sweet swills of milk stain her tongue and warm her belly as she sucks the life force from her mother's breasts.

A promising array of misty eyes, smiling faces, soft fingers and rocking arms assure her of the synchronicity of need and want; her sheer dependency is inexorably bound to the dependability of the tall familiar strangers she now loves.

Heaven bound she grows, inch by inch, as if the very place from which she came is stretching her to its height so that she can see her way back home. Meanwhile, earth-bound and short by comparison, she employs her heart as her compass, trusting it to guide her in the direction of love — the centerpiece of her universe. The constancy of love, once so plentiful and rich as the milk she drank, feels elusive and scarce over the inches and years of her childhood. The familiar strangers are no longer strange; she

calls them her familiars now. She listens, responds, reacts and watches the patterns they weave out of the fabric of their lives. She knows them well; they know her less. In truth, she has become the stranger.

She longs to learn more about love. They feel obligated to teach her about life, separating the two into fragments, unaware that the growth of life depends on its relationship to love. She constantly falls between the cracks of misunderstanding caused by their lack of awareness. Her feelings become bruised and battered. Her heart, so open and soft, becomes veiled and stiff. She senses that life's roughness is like a child expressing its sorrow over being separated from its mother. Their lives cry out for love — and so does she.

Staring out the kitchen window or down at her shoeless feet, the stranger ponders her predicament. Dimming her light and diminishing her height, she tries to shrink and fade, to escape through the window into the welcoming arms of Father Sky or sink into the warm soft comfort of Mother Earth. She loves her familiars, but their love seems to fall short of the distance never touching the far reaches of her heart where she knows love has to go. She is frustrated and angry over the obvious lack of compatibility in this situation. Was there some error in the planning of this journey? Did she, perhaps, arrive at the wrong time or in the wrong place? The lingering memory of another place called "home" envelops her as she weeps silent tears, holding her heart tight against the pain of abandonment that always trails her dreams. If love did not reach through the darkness and claim her heart soon, there would be no welcoming light to greet it when it arrived.

Young years are long ones, filled with

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repetition. Stranger wanders through her life carried along by the blind will of her familiars. She comes to understand that you can get used to anything if you do it too many times, so she becomes fragmented in order to survive her life. She acts like her familiars now, sometimes seeming to agreeably participate in their expression of life. Other times, she withdraws inside to a secret place in her heart where love flickers like a waning candle. She creates her own version of life and plays it for an audience of one. When she is calm and resigned, she is labeled pensive and quiet. When she becomes anxious, fretting and fuming over the emptiness and pain of repression and denial, her familiars lash back. Cowering her with reminders of food on the table and clothes on her back, they point out how little she deserves of either, for showing off such a bad attitude. She is then ordered to take her dramatic and high-strung self — with her sullen and stubborn ways — out of their sight until she can behave. Stranger often wonders whether their discomfort over her anxiety about love comes from them remembering the loss of something special they once had, but can not find again.

The planet turns on its axis like a slowing roulette wheel, pulling stranger up in its circular motion and delivering her out into the world. Her readiness is measured by a chronological gauge unrelated to her emotional capacity to perform in this vast arena. Venturing out to school, church, stores, movies or to visit a friend was always made safe by the insistent and firm tug of the invisible umbilical cord that delivered her back home to her familiars. The cord, unceremoniously cut, withers and falls away as her freedom draws her to it like a magnet clinging to its opposite. Scared, but excited, she leaps beyond the reach of her

familiars into the waiting arms of anyone who can see her flickering light and love it into flames.

Reluctant, but intoxicated by its promise, she sways to the music of romance when it pulses around her heart, sending butterflies to dance on the floor of her belly. Her longing is deep and wounded. Her casual smile and easy laughter are merely accessories to her burning desire to draw someone in, to be awakened, to be healed. "This could be the one" is all their names. In truth, it does not matter who it is, since the true object of her desire is love. They all try, but no one ever reaches the place in her heart where the light is. What if it's her? What if she really can't be touched? What if the sleepwalking fed by the denial of love had progressed into a coma from which she would never awaken?

Shock followed by inertia and despair are the arms into which stranger falls. She is unprepared to face the discoveries that invade her story about who she really is. Her familiars used to tell her: if you play with bad kids you become one, no matter how good you try to be. What they failed to mention in their litany of parental wisdom was if you grow up under the guidance of people who hide their hearts you'll do the same, no matter how open you try to be — even after you leave. It horrifies her to think that the very thing she hated as a child was what she had become now that she had grown up. Panic and fear rise up with bitter sharpness releasing bile that violently heaves her insides and catches in her throat.

Her mind races ahead, envisioning a future filled with repeat performances of the past. Death appears with open arms and soothing whispers offering safe passage out of her nightmare. But somewhere, in the

depth of her being, the little light starts beating with a mighty fierceness. It pulls and shakes her from the contemplation of death and draws her, kicking and screaming, back into the meaning of life. Somewhere, somehow, something cared enough about her to save her from slipping away into the darkness. A quick flash of pictures in motion stir in her memory the love she felt when she was a baby; the endless stream of nurturing elixir flowing down from the heavens straight into her heart — after that, the pictures began to blur and fade. She had gone beyond the end only to arrive back at the beginning — maybe she wasn't in a coma; the word that springs clearly to her mind is amnesia.

Stranger begins to realize that time is a curious ally. Rarely showing up ready when you think you are, time always arrives just in the nick, with a plan in hand in case you forgot yours. The best laid plans pale by comparison to the adventures time takes you on. The perfect people, places and things offer themselves up as remedies to heal your impatience and transform your dilemmas, convincing you in the process that the need is absolutely mutual. Love and time are very close working companions. Love depends on time to deliver it, at a moment's notice, anywhere or to anyone when a personal appearance is in order. One personal visit was all it took for stranger. Still filled with doubts, she stretches herself to open to the possibility that there is another side to the story of her life she has yet to experience. She sees clearly that her time has come to awaken to the truth about love. To explore the depths in order to reach the heights — where its beauty is breathtaking and profound.

Stranger dances her love dance, day and

Rarely showing up ready when you think you are, time always arrives just in the nick, with a plan in hand in case you forgot yours... Love depends on time to deliver it, at a moment's notice, anywhere or to anyone when a personal appearance is in order.

night, as she prays for the rain of truth to pour down and drench her with its clarity. She asks, she wails, she moans and then she demands to know, "Who is the keeper of my flame? Who is responsible for feeding the fire of my burning need for love?"

Somewhere in the stillness, as her breath flows inward, the first drop of truth falls and taps her on the head. A sound follows the tap, extending outward into words. A voice connects the words and delivers the expression: "I have come to teach you about love. My name is Chakra." Silence. Stillness. A few more drops and then the voice: "First, you must forgive your familiars, for they loved you as much and as deeply as they were capable of. Then, revisit your relationships and see how well they served you by putting you back on yourself, since they could not give you what you needed." More silence. And then, "You are not strange. Indeed, you are one of my familiars and I have come to guide you home to yourself. The love you have been searching for has always been inside of you. Self-love, your own unconditional acceptance and honoring of yourself, is the doorway out of the maze. Your bigness will astound you. Your beauty will enrapture you. Your power will amaze you. Your love will transform you. I will take your hand and walk with you every step of the way until you are there." Stranger responds with welcoming sobs of relief. For she knows, now, the rains of truth have come.

I am called back to my room by the sound of my doorbell ringing in the distance. The lingering smells of smudge stick and incense cushion my return. As I stand and stretch my wobbly legs, I realize that I travelled way beyond my intended meditation, back into the story of my own life. I open the door on the second ring, ushering my expected client into my bedroom to begin our first session. I briefly recall our phone conversation when she revealed to me her painful feelings about love and how she always felt strange and different somehow. I smile to myself as I enter the room. She is one of my familiars and I will take her hand and walk with her every step of the way until she is there. ▽

The Long Roads

by Trina Williams

We take the long roads too
as you did when you
were a girl.
We heard it through the vines,
the gossiping faces in the grapes.
So hungry are we
for news, we eat Bell telephones.
So hungry are we
for news of you,
we wrap the cord around
our throats and we pull.

You had to cross the tracks
to get to Bourbon Street
Bourbon Street was where
you blew your horn,
to suck from the air
the false statements about
your life,
and to stop the lies
from prancing up the street
at Mardi Gras.

You travelled
in the safety of boys,
gathering at Jackson Square
to swap pickup lines and wet dreams.

You travelled in the safety of boys
to get to the love of girls.

Sometimes you sat alone
on a bench,
burning fear in cigarettes,
the buds collecting
at your feet
as a barricade or fence.

Nobody knew you
or got any nearer
than your own lost shadow.
And nobody knew you less
than those boys.

Then one summer
you went away.
They had turned on you,
your friends, the boys.
Drunk from beer and
funny cigarettes,
they mistook you for a girl,
and abandoned you
in the cool, summer night
to be discovered
as a girl.

Why did you blow your horn
on the moonlit corners of Bourbon Street?

To travel with the boys
to get to the girls?

You cried a river
far and wide for us to cross
in search of you.

But we have learned
to travel with the girls
to get to the girls.

No more long roads
No
more
long
roads

Fiction

Of Blood and Vision: An Excerpt from Jewelle Gomez'

The Gilda Stories

by Paula Ross

*With typical human impatience, and a vision shaped by lifetimes typically ending long before birthday 100, admirers of writer Jewelle Gomez have been anxiously awaiting her first novel, *The Gilda Stories*. Gilda is a vampire. Gilda measures her life in centuries. Gilda took some seven years to write; to her and the other inhabitants of her world, a mere eye blink.*

Director of the Literature Program for the New York State Council on the Arts, Gomez' literary career has been wide-ranging and full. Beginning as a writer and production assistant for WGBH-TV in Boston in 1968, she moved on to become a script editor for WNEW-TV, New York in

1971. As an instructor in creative writing at NYC's The Loft Film and Theatre Center, she taught classes on the documentary film script from 1972 to 1976.

*Gomez' own work has appeared in a vast array of journals, anthologies, magazines and newspapers, including *Home Girls* (Barbara Smith, ed., Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983), *The Black Scholar*, *Lambda Book Report*, *Trivia #12*, *Hot Wire Magazine*, an anthology of lesbian erotic writing, *Serious Pleasure* (Sue O'Sullivan, ed., Sheba Publishers, London, 1989) and *Reading Black*, *Reading Feminist* (Henry L. Gates, Jr., ed, New American Library, 1990).*



Photo of Jewelle Gomez by Ann Chapman

*I first became aware of Gomez in the early 80s when she was a member of the editorial collective for the literary journal, *Conditions*. My first piece of fiction was published in *Conditions*: *Nine* and Gomez wrote me a wonderful note along with the official acceptance letter. I continued to follow her writing, primarily her reviews and essays in *Black/Out*, *Belle Lettres*, *The**

New York Times, *The Village Voice* and *The Women's Review of Books*. Our paths crossed occasionally, a few times at the home of mutual friends in the Bay Area, once at a phenomenal conference in East Lansing, Michigan, in 1987 — "*The Black Woman Writer and the Disapora*." In fact, it was at a reading at that conference (one of the hottest I've ever attended!) that I first heard

*rumors of *The Gilda Stories*.*

I am not an Anne Rice fan. Vampires have never interested me. But I was intrigued by the idea that Gomez, with her bright intelligence, wonderful humor and clear commitment to developing her own art and imagination and exploring and showcasing that of other artists and writers, particularly those of color, particularly women,

An Excerpt from *The Gilda Stories: A Novel*

by Jewelle Gomez

*particularly lesbians, and particularly Black lesbians, would devote so many years to a book about them. For those of you familiar with and drawn to the classic tales of neck-piercing and blood-drawing, *The Gilda Stories* will surprise you. For those, like me, who normally wouldn't give a vampire story the time of day, trust Gomez. She delivers.*

*Speaking of delivering, I had hoped to deliver an interview with Gomez, along with this excerpt from *The Gilda Stories*. We taped an incredible conversation during her visit to San Francisco in May. The tape was stolen from my house along with my cassette recorder. I can only hope that Gilda has taken note and will deal with the thief appropriately.*

Louisiana: 1850

The Girl looked at Gilda's face, the skin drawn tightly across the tiny bones, her eyes glistening with flecks of orange. She wanted to comfort this woman who'd lifted her out of her nightmares.

"You must want to stay. You must need to live. Will you trust me?"

"I never thought to leave you or the house. My home is here as long as you'll have me," the Girl said in a clear voice.

"What I ask is not an easy thing. You may feel you have nothing to go back to, but sooner or later we all want to go back to something. Usually some inconsequential thing to which we've never given much thought before. But it will loom there in our past entreating us cruelly because there is no way to ever go back. In asking this of you, and in the future should you ask it of others, you must be certain that you — that others — are strong enough to withstand the complete loss of those intangibles that make the past so alluring."

The Girl said nothing, not really certain what Gilda meant. She felt a change in the room — the air was taut with energy.

"There are only inadequate words to speak for who we are. The language is crude, the history false. You must look to me and know who I am and if the life I offer is the life you choose. In choosing you must pledge yourself to pursue only life, never bitterness or cruelty."

The Girl peered deeply into the swirling brown and flickering orange of Gilda's eyes, feeling herself opening to ideas and sensations she had never fully admitted before. She drew back, startled at the weight of time she saw behind those eyes.

"Don't be frightened by the idea of death; it is part of life in all things. It will only become worrisome when you decide that its time has come. Power is the frightening thing, not death. And the blood, it is a shared thing. Something we must all learn to share or simply spill onto battlefields." Gilda stopped, feeling the weight of all she wanted to say, knowing it would be too much at once. She would leave the rest to Bird.

The Girl listened to the words. She tried to look again into the world behind Gilda's eyes and understand what was being asked of her. What she saw was open space, no barriers. She saw a dusty road and heard the silence of determination as she felt the tribe close around her as it had closed around Gilda, the child. She saw forests spanning a distance of green too remote for even Gilda to remember.

"My dream was to see the world, over time. The real dream is to make a world — to see the people and still want to make a world."

"I haven't seen much, but what I've seen doesn't give me much appetite," the

Girl said, remembering the chill she felt from Bernice's words about the war's aftermath.

"But what of the people?" Gilda's voice rose slightly. "Put aside the faces of those who've hunted you, who've hurt you. What of the people you've loved? Those you could love tomorrow?"

The Girl drew back from the fire in Gilda's voice. Her mother's hands reaching down to pull the cloth up to her chin as she lay on the mattress filled her vision. Her mother's darkened knuckles had loomed large and solid, something she had not articulated her love for. She remembered hearing Bird's voice for the first time below her in the house announcing the entertainment. The deep resonance sent a thrill through her body. Minta's soft warning was all but forgotten, but her tender concern which showed in the bend of her body filled the Girl with joy. The wary, protective way Bernice had watched her grow, their evenings alone in the kitchen telling about the ways of the world — these things of value. She opened her eyes and looked into Gilda's. She found love there, too. And exhaustion beyond exploration. She could see no future in them although this was what Gilda wanted to promise her.

Reading the thoughts that Gilda tried to communicate, the Girl picked her way through. "You're offerin' me time that's not really time? Time that's gonna leave me by myself?"

"I've seen this world moving on many different paths. I've walked each road with curiosity, anxious to see what we would make of our world. In Europe and to the south of us here have been much the same.

"There are only inadequate words to speak for who we are. The language is crude, the history false. You must look to me and know who I am and if the life I offer is the life you choose. In choosing you must pledge yourself to pursue only life, never bitterness or cruelty."

When I came here the world was much larger, and the trip I had to make into the new world was as fearful as the one you've made. I was a girl, too, much too young to even be afraid.

"Each time I thought taking a stand, fighting a war would bring the solution to the demons that haunted us. Each time I thought slavery or fanaticism could be banished from the earth with a law or a battle. Each time I've been wrong. I've run out of that youthful caring, and I know we must believe in possibilities in order to go on. I no longer believe. At least for myself."

"But the war is important. People have got to be free to live."

"Yes, and that will no doubt be accomplished. But for men to need war to make freedom...I have never understood. Now I am tired of trying to understand. There are simply murderers. They have no special need; they are rabid children. In our life, we who live by sharing the life blood of others have no need to kill. It is through our connection with life, not death, that we live."

Both women were silent. The Girl was uncertain what questions she might even ask. It was like learning a new language. When she looked again into Gilda's eyes she felt the pulsing of blood beneath the skin. She also sensed a rising excitement that was unfamiliar to her.

"There is a joy to the exchange we make. We draw life into ourselves, yet we give life as well. We give what's needed — energy, dreams, ideas. It's a fair exchange in a world full of cheaters. And when we feel it is right, when the need is great on both sides, we can re-create others like ourselves to share life with us. It is not a bad life," Gilda said.

The Girl heard the edge in Gilda's voice but was fascinated by the pulsing blood and the swirling colors in Gilda's eyes.

"I am on the road I've chosen, the one that is right for me. You must choose your path again just as you did when you ran from the plantation in Mississippi. Death or worse might have met you on that road, but you knew it was the one you had to take. Will you trust me?" Gilda closed her eyes and drew back a little, freeing the Girl from her hypnotic gaze.

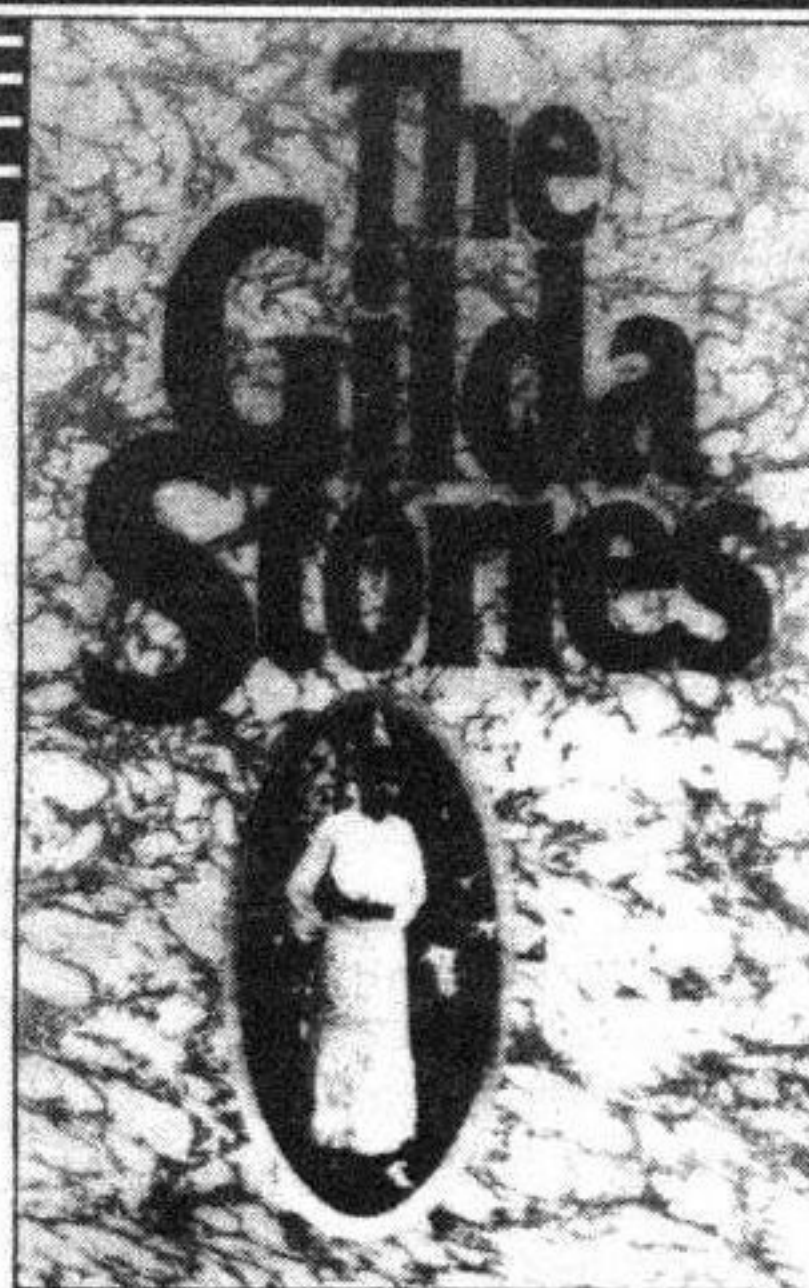
The Girl felt a chill, as if Gilda's lowered lids had shut off the sun, and for a moment she was afraid. The room was all shadows and

unnatural silence as Gilda disappeared behind her closed eyes. Finally, confusion lifted from the Girl who was intent on listening to more

than the words: the highs and lows, the pitch, the rhythm were all molded by a kind of faith the Girl hoped she would reach. It was larger than simply a

long life. It was a grand adventure for which her flight into freedom had only begun to prepare her.

"Yes," the Girl whispered. ▽



THE GILDA STORIES A Novel by Jewelle Gomez

Jewelle Gomez's long-awaited novel, *The Gilda Stories*, is a very American odyssey, a romantic adventure.

As her Black heroine strides across time, listening to the sounds of the world and trying to add her own voice, she learns that immortality is not simple. History offers grand-scale cataclysms and everyday horrors, and Gilda's longing for community, for the bonding of kindred spirits, puts her at particular risk.

The Gilda Stories takes us from Southern slavery to Northern racism, from San Francisco at the end of the 19th century to South America at the turn of the 21st. It's a broad, colorful tapestry, full of loud laughter and subtle terror, punctuated by the author's political acumen.

Jewelle Gomez has written an elegant, sensual, and naturalistic fantasy — a Black vampire story.

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Bulletin Board

ACHÉ AD RATES

Aché has decided to begin charging for some of our advertising services. We need the financial support. We also want to remain flexible and available as an inexpensive or free community outreach publication. So, we've decided to charge for two sections of the Bulletin Board, services provided and job openings, and to formally establish a sliding scale rate for flyer inserts.

BULLETIN BOARD: Service & Job Announcements. A message of 25 words or less costs only \$20. Any message over 25 words will cost an additional \$20. Announcements should not exceed 50 words or \$40. Please submit your typewritten announcement to **Aché Classifieds: P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706.**

In addition, Aché will continue to insert your event flyers for a charge of \$25-\$100, sliding scale. Please call Adalia Selket, (415)601-6844 for information or to drop off flyers & payment.

All checks should be payable to Aché.

GROUPS

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

MUJERO, 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

1992 Nia Gathering
The Nia Collective is looking forward to continuing our series of special weekends where we come together and do something for ourselves. In its 4th year of sponsoring "The Gathering," however, the Nia Collective will unfortunately have to raise the price of registration to cover our increased costs. The registration fee covers food, lodging, and all program workshops and entertainment. We are offering an **EARLY REGISTRATION** — to help us and you — at the same price offered at the 1st Gathering.

The fee schedule is as follows:

Until August 14, registration fees will be: **\$75**

From August 15-October 15: **\$95**
Late registration, October 16-November 8: **\$115**

Please, register early. Early registration assists us in planning the program and preparing the site well in advance of the program dates. For more information contact Rocksan (415)530-3343 or Kay (415)652-9653.

Community United Against Violence
Training for Counselors on CUAV's 24-hour crisis line. Work with survivors of anti-Hesbian/gay violence and gay domestic violence. No previous counseling experience needed. Women and people of color strongly encouraged to volunteer. Call CUAV at 864-3112 for more information.

The Rafiki Services Project
Can you be an emotional or practical support volunteer or sponsor a Rafiki Services Project staff person to speak to your organization? The Project exists to: recruit and screen volunteers interested in providing services to African American People with AIDS (PWAs) and people with HIV-related illnesses; provide comprehensive and culturally-sensitive trainings for emotional and practical support volunteers; effectively match trained volunteers with African

American PWAs in need of direct services; establish regular support group meetings for volunteers providing services to African American PWAs; develop a care network of churches, civic organizations, professional associations and businesses in the African American community. For more information, call (415)553-8806.

AIDS Practice Manual Third Edition

The National Lawyers Guild AIDS Network's completely updated and revised, authoritative 600-page legal and educational AIDS manual provides practical assistance as well as clear, comprehensive treatment of key issues. Appropriate for both the legal community and AIDS organizations, as well as for individuals affected by AIDS who wish to learn more about the legal and policy aspects of HIV. \$95, including shipping and handling. \$60 for community-based AIDS groups. California residents add tax. 10-day trial offer. Orders with payment may be sent to: National Lawyers Guild AIDS Network, 558 Capp Street, San Francisco, CA 94110. (415)824-8880.

FAT WOMEN UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE. Join Fat Lip Readers Theatre. We are opening our company to new members. Prior experience in performing, writing, singing and dancing is welcome, but not necessary. We want non-dieting fat

women who are interested in expanding their own skills and talents as well as revealing the often horrific, sometimes hilarious aspects of our day to day lives. We are looking for fat women of all ages and backgrounds who are committed to political theatre, feminist analysis, and fat liberation. Send a letter of interest to P.O. Box 29963, Oakland, CA 94604. Deadline September 1, 1991.

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.

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 Voodoo. I am looking for African-American healers, Conjure women, Santeria practitioners, Voodoo 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. Week-

end 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 AFRA-GODDESS SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL NETWORK: Join our innovative International Sista-hood! Sista-membership includes a free subscription to the quarterly: MAMA-ROOTS: AJAMAJEBI dedicated to Afrikan 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. Cambell Ave. Suite 108, Tucson, AZ 85719-1524. (602) 327-0987

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

Donate your paperback books to women in jail!!! Especially in demand is poetry, lesbian erotica & fiction, and books by and about people of color. To donate materials contact Amy or Catherine at

Alameda County Library Extension Services, (415) 745-1477.

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.

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

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

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

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. # MXD 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. 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

Planet Roc: An Alternative Arts Journal, published, edited and distributed by Simone Bouyer (Aché artist, April/May) and Shéree

A. Slaughter (Aché contributing poet, this issue) publishes work by anyone brave enough to send in their stuff. Planet Roc is always looking for art, literature, reviews on anything, and poetry. This is your chance to get your works seen, read and admired by all your friends, so don't despair, send your (include a SASE if you want it back) best stuff to: Planet Roc, P.O. Box 476996, Chicago, IL 60647-6996. Or to receive the *Planet Roc* through the mail six times a year, just send a subscription fee of \$5 or more to the above address.

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, Aché, 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.

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 Margaine 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.

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.

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. Women must be willing to work from 2 to 5 hours per issue. Typists must have access to a Macintosh computer and knowledge of MS Word. Coordinator will do no typing, but needs to have a car to pick up and deliver typing. We also need a design/layout person to take over for 1992. This person must have access to a Macintosh computer, and know desktop publishing. 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.

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.

Calendar

COMEDY

MONDAYS

Gay comedy open mike with Emcee Karen Ripley. 8pm, \$4. Performers sign up by phone by 7pm. Josie's Cabaret, 3583 16th Street at Market, SF. Info/reservations: 861-7933.

SATURDAYS

Gay Comedy Night. 10pm, \$8. Josie's Cabaret, 3583 16th Street at Market, SF. Info/reservations: 861-7933.

DANCE

Thursday, August 1 and Friday, August 2

ANNE BLUETHENTHAL & DANCERS: Summertime Dance Project, Theater Artaud, 450 Florida St., SF. 8pm, 621-7797 \$12

DANCE WORKSHOPS

Saturday, August 31

MODERN DANCESHOP with ANNE BLUETHENTHAL Anne is a fine modern dance instructor/performer. She is also the director and choreographer of Anne Bluethenthal and Dancers, a modern dance company in San Francisco.

Saturday, September 14

VOICE, SOUND, AND MOVEMENT-SHOP with Carolyn van Putten, Ralph Eaglefeather, and Debra K. Floyd. These three artists will give you the opportunity to experiment, play, and just have fun with your voice, instruments, and self-inspired movements. This danceshop is not just for those taking dance classes. Anyone with interest in using their voice (in singing or acting) and music-making with instruments are welcomed. No formal training required.

Saturday, September 28

ASPECTS OF MIME with Iris Landsberg. Come and join us in a fun-filled afternoon of learning detailed aspects of this intriguing art form. No prior knowledge needed.

All of the Saturday Summer Shops are from 2-4 on the dates given above and the cost is \$9 each. If you have any questions, contact: Debra K. Floyd 548-2143.

EVENTS

Sunday, August 25: Donna Terry and September 29: Sapphire Theater

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!

Friday, November 22 - Sunday, November 24

THE GATHERING (an annual weekend retreat for Lesbians of African descent sponsored by the Nia Collective.) The purpose of the Gathering is to: reaffirm our existence, create a safe atmosphere for

growth and empowerment, and nurture an environment of continual solidarity and warmth in our community of Lesbians of African descent. Networking, workshops, information exchange, and recreation at the Headlands Institute in Sausalito, CA. The registration fee, (which includes the gathering, all lodging and meals) is as follows:

Now through August 14: \$ 75.
August 15-October 15: \$ 95.
October 16-November 8: \$115.

For more information and a registration form contact: Nia Collective, PO Box 20835, Oakland, CA 94620. Or call: (415) 530-3343.

MUSIC

Sunday August 18 and September 15

GWEN AVERY IN CONCERT at Josie's Cabaret: Afternoon of r&b, soul, gospel, &

powerhouse piano. 4-6pm, \$6. 3583 16th Street at Market, SF. Info/reservations: 861-7933.

PERFORMANCE

WEDNESDAY thru SUNDAY, August 14-25

POMO AFRO HOMOS (Bernard Branner, Brian Freeman, & Eric Gupton) present "Fierce Love", a performance piece about the lives of Black gay men. Uses performance, dance, music, and the spoken word to present a "photo album of determination, difference, and dish," capturing the unique perspectives of Black gay life, exploring the disputed alliances Black gay men often confront in defining their community and sexuality, and finding their way home. Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, 8pm, \$10. Friday, 8 & 10pm, \$10. Josie's Cabaret, 3583 16th Street at Market, SF. Info/reservations: 861-7933.

Subscribe to Aché

Subscriptions are \$10-\$25 per year and donations are always welcome.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State, Zip _____

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



The Aché Series

August/September events

Wednesday, August 28th
7:30pm, \$5-8

an evening with filmmaker

Aarin Burch

Though you may only know her as Club Q's "video girl," her films are being featured in festivals all across the country. Come join us as we screen 10 of her short films & meet the woman behind the camera.

coming
Sept. 25th

an African
**Lady People's
Production**

featuring Donna Terry & special guests

The Aché Series is held the last Wednesday of every month at

La Peña Cultural Center
3105 Shattuck (nr. Ashby), Berk.

All Aché events are wheelchair accessible/
& no one is ever turned away for lack of funds

"Ach ." Ach , vol. 3, no. 4, August-September 1991. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, link.gale.com/apps/doc/FBNAMS209101436/AHSI?u=umuser&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=6183c165. Accessed 8 Dec. 2022.