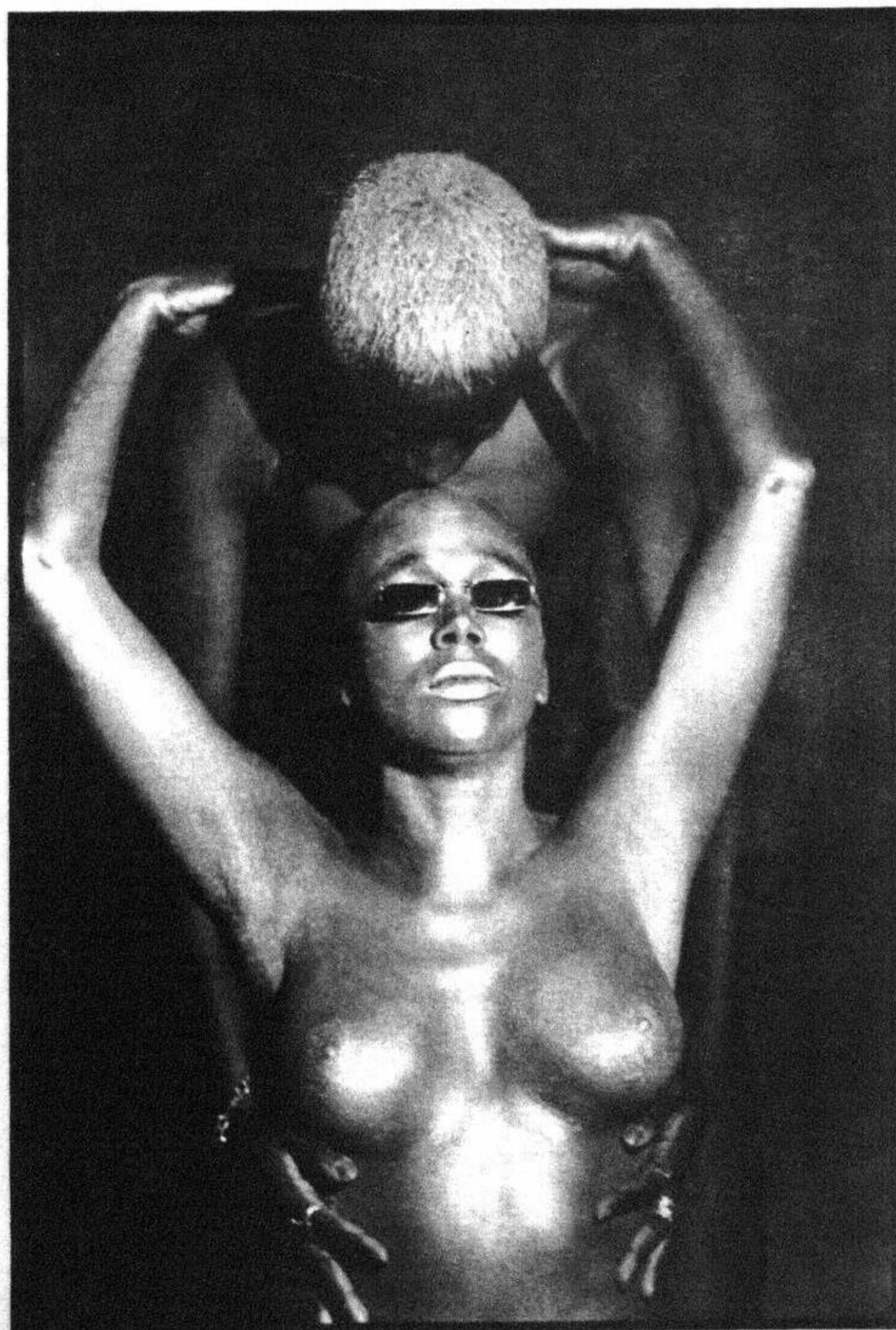


# AKHÉ

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1992 VOL. 4, NO. 1 \$4 A JOURNAL FOR LESBIANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT



"LES FEMMES: BOA & ZOE." PHOTO BY GALE BEASLEY. FOR MORE ON "LES FEMMES" SEE BACK COVER.



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## **A CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

*Aché is a journal consisting of writings & artwork submitted by you, our readers. Over the past two years, we've published the work of over 175 lesbians of African descent from around the world. If we haven't yet heard from you, now's your chance to add your voice. You don't have to be a "writer," all you have to do is put your thoughts on paper. Aché belongs to all of us as a place where our voices can be heard, our opinions expressed and our stories shared. We especially encourage women who have never before been published. We're looking for.*

**ARTWORK/GRAPHICS  
REGIONAL REPORTS  
JOURNAL ENTRIES  
SHORT STORIES  
POETRY  
ESSAYS  
LETTERS  
PROFILES  
INTERVIEWS  
CONFERENCE REPORTS  
FICTION/NON-FICTION  
BOOK/FILM/MUSIC REVIEWS  
YOUR OPINIONS ON CURRENT EVENTS**



## **CALL FOR STAFF WRITERS**

*We are looking for women around the country (& the world) who are willing to be "on call" to write for the journal on particular topics. Your name will be placed on a list of available writers that the editorial committee can pull from when needed. We ask that you list the topics that you're interested in along with your name, address, and phone number and send it to: The Editor, c/o Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706.*

**SEE "FROM THE EDITOR" FOR  
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES...**

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*Lisbet*

## SENIOR EDITOR

*DeeAnne Davis*

## EDITORS

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**Arts & Culture**• *Paula Ross*

**Bulletin Board**• *Heather Flewelling*

**Calendar**• *Blake C. Aarens*

**Features**• *Natalie Devora*

**Fiction**• *Paula Ross*

**Healing & Spirituality**• *Akiba*

**Health**• *Imani Ajaniku*

**Poetry**• *Ekua Omosupe*

**Voices**• *DeeAnne Davis,*  
*Winn Gilmore*

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*Janet Wallace*

## LAY-OUT

*Janet Wallace, Akiba, Lisbet*

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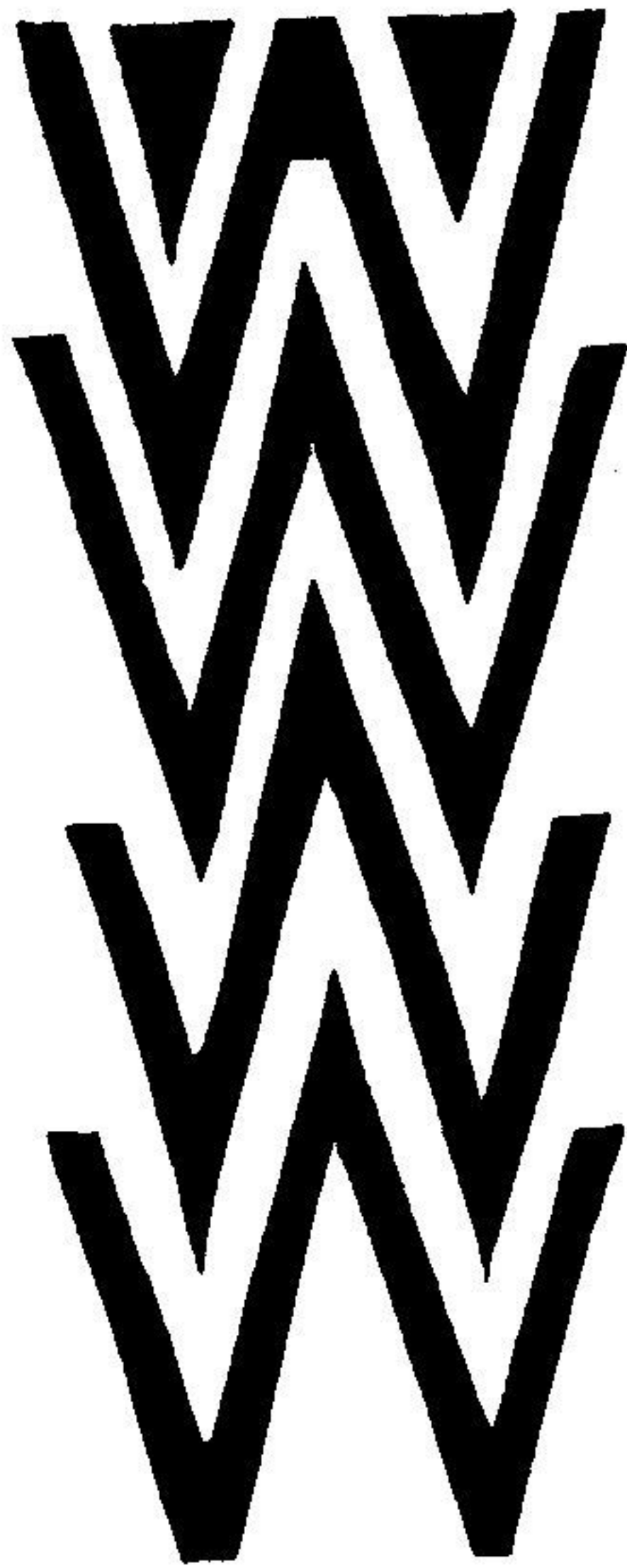
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## FROM THE EDITOR



On behalf of the Aché Project, I would like to welcome the 1992 National Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Conference and all of its attendants to Oakland. The Aché Project is serving as the host of the Women's Institute, which is a day of events specifically addressing wimmin's issues. The schedule for the Institute, Friday, February 14, is listed in the Conference Report.

February also marks the 3rd Anniversary of *Aché: A Journal for Lesbians of African Descent*. And in this 3rd year, we have much to report. But first, let's review some of our history.

### **The Journal**

*Aché* began as a journal back in '89 when founders Lisbet and Pippa got the wild idea to pull together a gossip sheet or newsletter for the local Bay Area Black lesbian community. In the last three years, this venture has expanded from a local, free, 2-person generated, 11"x17" folded-over publication into a full and vital journal with submissions published from around the country and world.

What's more, in the last year, ten wimmin took the incredible responsibility of the Journal out of the hands of Lisbet, who was determined that it should not die, and expanded on her dream. We established 11 sections and splashed the pages with an increasing number of graphics and photographs. The Journal has subscribers in 29 states and 8 foreign countries. This is *not* a local publication anymore.

### **The Organization**

*Aché* is no longer *only* a Journal. Through an untold number of brunches, brainstorming sessions and committee meetings, *Aché* has finally become an incorporated non-profit organization, fondly called **The Aché Project**. Thanks should go out to Rebecca for all of her hardwork and legal expertise in making the Project a reality. We are four committees: Fundraising, Outreach, Events & Volunteers, and the Journal. The organization meets on the first Monday of every month at 6:30 pm at the office, 3122B Woolsey Street & Shattuck in Berkeley.

The Aché Project has recently appointed its Board of Directors, 11 diverse and dynamic sisters: Brenda Crawford, Gwenn Craig, Melanie DeMore, Rebecca Hall, Joanne Johnson, Earthlyn Manuel, Joi Rhone, Ouida Cooper-Rodriguez, Cheryl Spear, Lisbet Tellefsen, and Skye Ward. The Board will be largely responsible for keeping the Project financially afloat. With the addition of Advisory Council members Sandra Davis and Margo Okzawa-Rey, the Board and Council will be instrumental in developing structures for the organization's growth.



## **Moving On: More on the Journal**

The Journal will metamorphosize beginning with the April/May issue with a new editorial group, led by senior editor Natalie Devora, the '91 feature editor. Other editors from this team who will be staying on are Imani Ajaniku, Ekua Omosupe and Winn Gilmore.

So far, six new editors have come forth. They are Sauda Burch, Heather Flewelling, Dawn Lundy, Dawn Rudd, Stephanie Smith and Lydia. Welcome all of you. There's still room for more editors. If you're interested, leave a message for Natalie at the office. Anyone interested in editing from another city or state should give Natalie a call too. We're cooking up all kinds of ideas to encourage wimmin from around the country/world to submit their work. Maybe we need to have editors on location....Give us a call or write.

One of the goals for this coming year is to shape the Journal so that it more adequately includes information about the work of the Project. Beyond that, this new group of women will find their way and carve a unique path out of the road paved by Lisbet and Pippa and the '91 team.

I'd like to thank all of the wimmin who have been a support to me. I don't think I have recognized the other eight editors enough, but I want to say that they have enriched my life immensely. I'm sure we will have other opportunities to risk and tell our truths together in the future.

For those of you who have been reading this year, please don't forget to give these wimmin strokes for the fine work they have done on their sections: Blake Aarens, calendar; Imani Ajaniku, health; Natalie Devora, features; Winn Gilmore, lifestyles; Amana Johnson, art; Ekua Omosupe, poetry; Paula Ross, fiction and arts & culture; Akiba Tiamaya, healing & spirituality. Heather Flewelling took over the bulletin board for the last two issues, and I've been pulling together the conference report and local/

international issues. Janet Wallace is our creative director and has designed the layout. Adalia Selket has been handling distribution.

I'd like to repeat the editorial statement and how to submit your work, published in mousetype in the table of contents of every issue. I encourage anyone who fits the description of submitters to get your words or artwork in here. If you don't have a subscription, send in your \$15 for a full year of hearing what we all got to say.

### **Editorial Statement**

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

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

### **Submission Policy**

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 phone number on all submissions and a biographical statement no longer than 20 words. Please specify if you would not like your full name reproduced in *Aché*. Please do not submit originals, we do not have the resources to return them.

Blessings & *Aché*,

DeeAnne



### **Building Ties in South Africa**

Myesha Jenkins, a friend of mine over at Global Exchange, recently returned from South Africa and brought with her four names of sisters who would like to receive subscriptions to Aché. We sent back issues to these women in the suitcases of folks traveling since Myesha's return, but on-going postage is too expensive for us to absorb.

I'd like to ask the readers of Aché to consider donating \$20-\$30 for a year's subscription for each of these sisters. Send in your donation with a note earmarking the money for the South African subscriptions.

Thank you.

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Dept. of Criminology  
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South Africa

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Laurie Adams  
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Johannesburg 2000  
South Africa

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### **Editorial Notes: October/November Issue Corrections**

The cover artist was Aché art editor Amana Johnson, who will be exhibiting her linoleum block prints in a new show "Inner Passages to Flight" at the Rasmussen Art Gallery, Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA (707) 965-7362. The opening reception is 7-9 pm, February 15. The exhibit continues through March 15. Gallery hours: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday & Sunday, 1-5 pm.

The conference report, "Weaving the Future: 1992 National Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Conference" by Skye Ward was reprinted from the San Francisco Sphere.

The poem "Sister" [author unknown] is by Cadee Hubbard, a student at Princeton University.



## Letters to Aché

Dear Aché,

Congratulations! I am honored to announce that Aché is the recipient of the 1992 National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum's Harriet Tubman Award. This award is given annually to the organization who by providing service to the gay and lesbian community has made significant contributions to the welfare of black lesbians and gays. Aché follows in a great line of noteworthy organizations who have over the years provided beneficial service to the black lesbian and gay community.

The award will be presented at the 5th Annual National Black Gay and Lesbian Conference at the Clarion Hotel in Oakland, California. The award presentation will be an integral part of the banquet which is scheduled for Saturday, Friday 15, 1992, at 8 pm in the Clarion Hotel. Again, congratulations. I look forward to seeing you at the conference where I anticipate a gathering filled with discovery, bonding, and growth.

Sincerely,  
Jonathan Poullard  
Chair, Awards Committee

Dear Sisters,

Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand wishes to thank you for your

message of support [to the members of G.L.O.W.] for the 2nd Annual Lesbian and Gay Pride March 1991. The March went very well and was a great success not only in regard to the issue of Lesbian and Gay Rights but also in terms of the struggle for all Human Rights in South Africa. A sister brought two of your magazines over. Could we have an organizational subscription fee? Please let us know. Congratulations on a stunning journal.

Yours in Gay and Lesbian solidarity,  
G.L.O.W.

*Sent by fax October 10, 1991:*

*The members of Aché, an organization of lesbians of African descent based in Oakland, California, would like to extend our support for the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand as they march in the 2nd Annual Gay and Lesbian Pride March in Johannesburg. We celebrate your determination to join in the struggle to end discrimination against people based upon their sexual preference worldwide. Your actions are applauded and we link arms with you across the continents as you begin your day Saturday, October 12, 1991.*

*In solidarity, Aché*

To Tell Mama,

I was glad to see your non-committal answer

about SM. SM means many different things; each woman has to make up her own mind what it means to her. I think you mixed up two different books in your recommended reading: *Coming to Power*, edited by members of Samois, published by Alyson Press; and *Sapphisty, the Book of Lesbian Sexuality*, by Pat Califia, published by Naiad Press. *Sapphisty* has a chapter on SM, as well as chapters on fantasy, disability and other issues. Both books date back to the early 1980s and both are still in print. Thanks Mama.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Ripley

Dear Editors and Readers,

We, the undersigned members of the staff of *Sacred River*, a Women's Peace Journal, would like to apologize to Rainbeau, Gwen Avery, the Black Women's Resource Center, SFWAR, NADJA and the many people who generously worked toward and tried to attend and create a benefit event on November 16th, in Berkeley.

As we piece together the details surrounding the cancellation of the gathering, we sadly find the need to warn other community groups against trusting the word and professionalism of Viviane Lerner, who organized and cancelled this

event. Briefly, here is what happened: In late summer 1991, Viviane presented herself to the group as an experienced professional fundraiser and offered to produce a series of benefits in exchange for a percentage of the proceeds. This sounded like a wonderful idea to our small collective, as we were struggling to find time and energy to put our monthly newspaper together as well as keep up with our regular jobs, families and everyday problems. During the organizing process, there were severe communication problems, misunderstandings, resentments and unresolved conflicts. However, Viviane did find the women to work with her, and they put a lot of time into planning what promised to be an energizing and creative evening. On the morning of November 16th, Vicki Noble, who was one of the scheduled performers, had to withdraw due to illness. That afternoon, Viviane decided to cancel the entire event even though Rainbeau, Gwen Avery and hundreds of other people were still expecting and willing to pull the show together at the last minute. Instead, Viviane disregarded alternatives and had a "Cancelled" sign put on the door of the hall with no explanation.

We did not decide easily or lightly on the need for this letter. We sincerely are sorry for the inconvenience and insult that our internal struggles have caused you.

For those of you who don't know us yet, *Sacred River* is an open forum for all women, produced monthly by an entirely volunteer collective; the newspaper is available free in the East Bay and San Francisco at libraries, bookstores and cafes. We invite letters, articles, announcements, poems stories and artwork on any subject from any woman. For more information, call 658-2182 or write to, P.O. Box 5131, Berkeley, CA 94705.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Sincerely,  
Penny Leff, Becky Taber,  
Carla Kandinsky and  
Kathryn Woods

Hi-

Thank you for all your help in my past book projects. Both the Black Lesbian anthology of fiction & poetry (still untitled!) and *Dread Woman/Lock Sister* will be done by 12/31/91. The California women have responded well, providing some excellent work. Thank again!

Ya'll keep on doin' it!  
Warmly,  
Terri L. Jewell

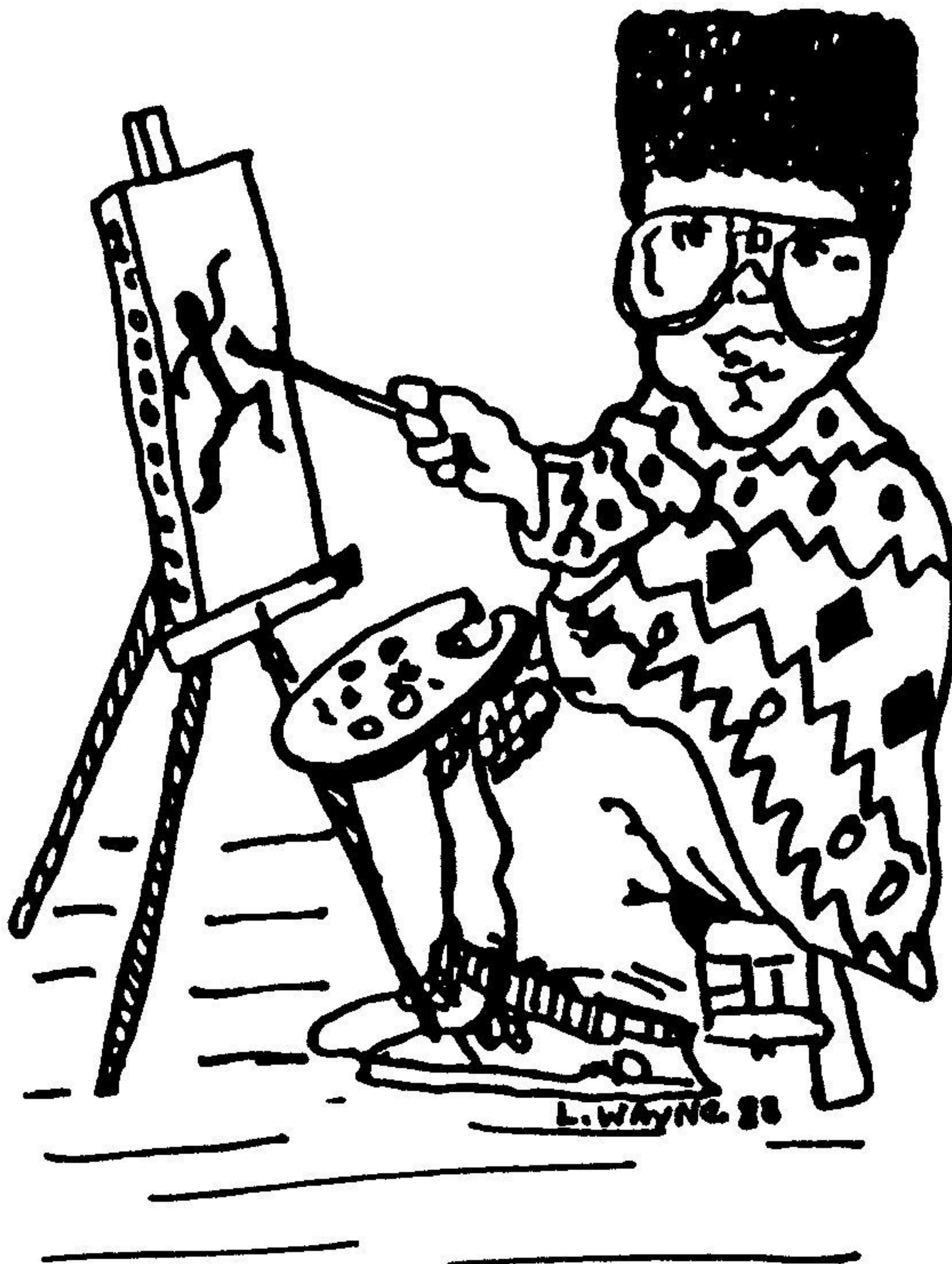


## Aché's Featured Artist

Laura Irene Wayne

Laura is a painter, printmaker, graphic artist, poet, writer and illustrator of children's books. For the past twelve years she has exhibited locally, nationally and internationally. Her work has adorned the covers of magazines, books and newspapers. Currently the staff artist for *Hot Wire*, a woman's music and culture magazine out of Chicago, she also owns and operates *Womyn Work*, a fine art company in San Diego, CA.

Laura's artwork reflects the heritage, culture and experience of her people and their environment. Some of the images she creates are portrayed with no facial features to avoid perpetuating stereotypes and to cultivate sisterhood. Most recently Laura won The Pat Parker Memorial Poetry Contest. Her poem "A Sister Gone" was chosen as the winner.





# Local/International

## Letter from Berlin

by Ina Roder

Berlin, October 10, 1991

Dear Skye,

....

The last weeks here in Germany were determined by racist violence and attacks against Black people and people of color. No day passes by without Black people being attacked, persecuted and also murdered. It is war in the streets. War against us people of color. It started to become so massive with the 3rd of October. The 3rd of October was the first anniversary of East and West Germany's reunion. This is celebrated as a holiday here. But it's a celebration only for white German non-Jewish people. For us people of color and Jewish people it is a day of expulsion and racism. That day the German (neo-) fascists take occasion to demonstrate for a new big Germany (as it existed before World War II). They shout slogans like "Germany for the Germans" and "foreigners out." Skinheads set fires and smash windows at the hostels where immigrants and refugees stay and they beat up the inmates. This is happening every night all over the country now. It is quite dangerous to be in the streets at this time. Specially for those of us who don't have a car and are forced to go by subway. This took a lot of my energy during the last weeks.

Two weeks ago there was a congress for women of color and Jewish women here in Berlin. In that congress we started to build a network between women of color throughout the country. We have planned various actions against racist violence. For the first time there will be such a big network of women of color here in Germany which will continue to work together for a longer period of time. From now on every Monday we will make manifestations [demonstrations] in all bigger cities with the motto: "Immigrants, Blacks and Jewish women and lesbians AGAINST fascist violence!"

We want to call attention to the daily violence and protest against it. In our speeches we'll shout out our anger and power, we'll make a call to fight; and with noise and street theatre, we'll urge the people not to look away anymore.

If you want to support us, sisters, send your regards, poems or short texts/speeches. We will read them out. WE MUST SPIN OUR NET ALL OVER THE WORLD.

....

Be embraced.

Your sister, INA.

—translation by Adalia Selket

.....  
Skye Ward has been involved in a cultural and political exchange with Afro-German lesbians in Berlin. She will be travelling to Berlin this year to continue her organizing and discussions. In the meantime, our sistahs need our support, prayers, and statements of solidarity.

Here is how you can help:

1. Read this excerpt from Ina's (Afro-German Lesbian activist) letter at your gatherings.
2. Mention what's going on in Berlin in your conversations, discussions, lectures etc.
3. Send postcards, poems, letters of support to the courageous women who are organizing in Berlin.  
Ina Roder/Berlin Women in Struggle  
c/o Skye Ward  
P.O. Box 4718  
Berkeley, CA 94704-0718
4. SEND POSITIVE HEALING VIBRATIONS TO OUR SISTAHS IN STRUGGLE.





## **The Struggle Continues...**

by Yvonne

Berlin den 29. 11. 91 18. 30 abends.

hallo skye, ich bin gerade nachhause gekoommen...

and i know, you know...how i feel after this! it happened to me at the u-bahnstation before i got home...

yvonne standing at the station, tired, quiet, sooo tired.

wearing the long black coat, wiped out from the day standing out  
in the cold.

no business, totally frustrated;

next to me, an older guy, white.

he is looking at me, staring...sending me real bad energies.

i think to myself...okay i'm here...and i stay here...should i

move? no, why should i? i am only waiting for the u-bahn

like everybody else down here...

then

he starts to attack me verbally, like...what are you doing here?!

you are not supposed to be here, in our country...!!!!

i listen, don't look at him, recognize every movement on his side.

he is about 8 feet away from me,

yelling at me...you dirty cunt, you dirty cunt, whore...

bla blablablalaaaaaaaaaaaa

i change my body position

standing now strong, very grounded on both feet.

he is coming closer and closer,

i am ready to kick his white fuckin racist ass now now

he tries to come right into my face, one hand up to hit me...

???????????????

i go for him, push him away from me away

by then i'm ready for a real fight you asked for it!!!

within a second i open up my coat, throw my backpack down...

ready to kick ass,

something very unusual happens,

another white guy comes up to the other guy, holds him back for me to go,

the u-bahn is coming

i pick up my backpack, enter the door, the guy starts yelling

at me again like before

i'm standing in the door looking around me...yesss that's the right

wagon!! two african brothers, and a few sisters next to me.

now i start yelling back standing in the door.

the doors close, i start shakin all over.

the sisters and brothers smile at me and applaud....

i feel cold, smile back, tears in my eyes.

berlin life berlin life berlinlife.

Yvonne

*is blue*



## **Senate Judiciary Thugs and the LA Police Thugs: The Beatings Continue**

by Lydia Sims

The public and policymakers are up in arms about the judicial confirmation process. Men and women alike should be equally alarmed about the systematic process of abusing and silencing women.

The pathetic display of party politics and indifference shown toward Anita Hill by our congressional leaders is all too familiar when a woman alleges to be victimized by a man. The thugs on the Senate Judiciary Committee attacked the character of Professor Hill in the same manner the thugs in the Los Angeles Police Department attacked Rodney King, without warrant, without provocation, and with indifference.

The United States criminal justice system silences women who are emotionally, physically or sexually abused by men in this society by failing to prosecute suspects, debasing the character of the accuser, and blaming the victim for being the recipient of the inadequacies and emotional defects of some men.

The Senate Judiciary followed suit by ignoring the allegations that were pressured out of Professor Hill, labeled her as mentally unstable, and castigated her for aggressively pursuing her career. The similarities between the Senate Judiciary Committee and the United States judicial system are more than coincidental, both serve to silence women and enable men.

I, too, am a victim of sexual harassment. I successfully sued my former employer, the California Legislature, for its role in failing to exercise moral and legal protections for me from my supervisor. If given a choice, I too would have remained in my chosen profession. I did not immediately side with either Thomas or Hill as our incredibly biased Senators did, however. I weighed the evidence presented which was difficult at best

with the skewed questioning and character debasing by the Senate members. Two of several factors for my believing Professor Hill were the testimony of credible witnesses who corroborated her story and the explanations about her behavior in handling the emotional abuse. Her thought process during that time as a victim was very consistent with my own as a victim. Not even Yale Law School teaches you how to respond to the emotional damage you suffer from such abuse.

It is unfortunate that the Senators chose to discredit Professor Hill for this thought process rather than listen to the psychological experts and victims who attempted to educate them that Hill's behavior patterns were consistent with other women who are victims of such abuse. As powerful, affluent white men, they are forever protected from having to personally face these emotions. The women and men of this society deserve leaders who will improve life for all individuals, not persons who lead society away from the process of giving women and men equal footing in life.

It is ironic that Judge Thomas used "the right to privacy" as a means of not answering questions that could have led to our knowing more facts about the allegations and to our having a first hand assessment of the content of his character. Will he allow women the same "right to privacy" when he confronts the abortion issue as a member of the highest court!?!▽



# Conference Report

## Nia Gathering:

### Empowering Ourselves and Each Other

The Nia\* Collective was created by and for lesbians of African descent during the Black caucus at the 1987 Lesbian of Color conference in San Francisco. The Collective was formed to establish a forum where lesbians of African descent could gather exclusively to reflect on our lives and circumstances. The Collective chose to hold a Gathering each year to serve as this forum, creating a time and a place where lesbians of African descent could begin to build community.

The Nia Gathering was established to fulfill the following:

- Reaffirm Black lesbian existence
- Create a safe atmosphere for growth and empowerment
- Nurture an environment of continual solidarity and warmth in the community of Black lesbians

Here are some of the reactions, taken from evaluation forms and breakfast table dialogue, from women who attended the Gathering held November 22-24, 1991, at the Headlands Institute in Sausalito, CA.

*"This is my 2nd year. I missed it last year because of fear. But renewing the experience of being with 150 Black lesbians in a totally safe and supportive and nonjudgemental environment was pure magic. That's community. It's really a beautiful thing. The Gathering affirms [community] in a way that we don't get often enough. I want to send blessings to the women who worked so hard to make this happen for all of us."*

*"It was nice to be in a safe place, to be among Black lesbians for a whole weekend and have nothing horrible happen."*

*"Keep that D.J. [Claudette, the Sexy] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."*

*"The environment was so healing. It woke me up. There's so much of my life that I spend sleepwalking. At the Gathering I was stretching every single sense of myself to the max: my sexuality, creativity. My feelings of celebration and joy, fear and sorrow were able to make themselves seen and known. And it was okay."*

*"I loved the place, the beach, dancing naked under the moonlight! I felt like I was one with the earth."*

*"Nia, I wish to thank you for my first Gathering. You have inspired, enriched and moved me. I am humble. May you always have what you need to continue the work you do."*

*"The cabaret was great! And the "Girl's Play" workshop was the best!!!"*

*"Since this was my first Nia Gathering, I was a little apprehensive about being a stranger in the land of sisterhood. But once I stepped on the grounds, I was greeted with open arms. It is important to be empowered from within and from external sources. Nia provided both for me."*

*"I loved the cabaret and the dance. The sharing of creative expression and the sharing and celebration of ourselves in dance and music was sublime."*

*"I was surprised that this is not local. There were women there from St. Louis, Houston, Seattle, New Mexico,... For a lot of women this was their first time being in a gathering of Black lesbians. One woman from St. Louis said that she was happy to be taking all of this home with her. She said, 'This is the first time I've ever really felt loved.'"*

*"There were some fine, fine, fine, fine women there."▽*

Next year, the 5th Anniversary Gathering will be held in November 1992. The current collective consists of 13 lesbians of African descent and opens twice a year for new members. For women who would like to become involved, the next new member's meeting will be held in March.

For more information about this meeting or general Nia info, write Nia Collective, P.O. Box 20835, Oakland, CA 94620.

\*The word "nia" means "purpose" in Swahili or "to live with purpose, to restore our people to their ancient greatness." [Black Americans know the word as the fifth principle of Kwanzaa, a winter harvest celebration, similar to those held in Africa.]



# **The Aché Project Hosts Women's Institute National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Conference**

by Skye Ward

The Aché Project is an organization operated by lesbians of African descent for the benefit of all women of African descent. Recipient of this year's Harriet Tubman award for excellence in organizing and contribution to the Black lesbian community, the Aché Project has continued in its tradition of bringing Black lesbian activists together to share, heal, and develop strategies for action by hosting the Women's Institute for the NBGLLF '92. The development of a Black feminist consciousness, self-determination through group leadership and institution-building are Aché cornerstone principles that have been carried over to the NBGLLF '92 Women's Institute planning process. The Institute ad hoc committee, spearheaded by Aché leadership, seek to address the marginalization and invisibility that characterizes the historical discourse of Black lesbians. Indeed, the Institute's theme "Weaving the Future: Taking Control of our Lives in the 21st Century" is closely aligned with Aché's mission statement. As aptly stated here:

*"Lesbians in general, and more specifically Black lesbians, have for far too long been isolated and invisible within the dominant culture of this country. When we sought to become politically active in the Civil Rights Movement, we were forced to remain "closeted," finding little support, interest, or understanding for gays and lesbians among the leadership of the Movement. When we tried to enter the Women's Movement, we were met with a sea of white, mostly middle-class faces. Most of the time, we found even less support, interest or understanding of the critical issues that emerge when "blessed" with the triple oppression of being Black, female, and lesbian.... It is through such contemporary cultural warriors as Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith that Black lesbians have begun to reclaim our voices.*

*Through the acceptance and celebration of our differences—as women, as Black women, and as Black lesbians, we have also been able to examine our sources of strength and support and to recognize our common social, cultural, emotional, and political interests. We have achieved a level of empowerment that compels us to act. Toward that end, the leadership of Aché has begun a more systematic organizing strategy."*

The Women's Institute will provide an overview in each of four topic areas: Grassroots Organizing; Electoral Politics; Physical Health; and Emotional Health. As many conference participants will not arrive in time for the Friday Institutes, the focus of the Women's Institute will be on disseminating information and networking. Due to time constraints, each 90-minute workshop is intended as an overview to each particular topic with other related workshops being developed for the larger conference when attendance will be maximized.

The overall objective of the Institute is to bring together activists, educators, and other members of the Black lesbian community to begin to develop a national Black lesbian feminist agenda. We will examine effective organizing strategies, develop and coordinate the existing lesbian leadership, discuss viable options to facilitate activism, visibility, communication, and networking via various vehicles (i.e. media, lobbying and building alliances). In addition, the Women's Institute Committee will help to promote and coordinate women's activities throughout the conference. ▽

**The Women's Institute will be held on Friday, February 14, 1992, 9am to 5pm, at the Oakland Airport Hilton Hotel, #1 Hegenberger Rd. in Oakland.**

## **Women's Institute Schedule**

**9-9:45am**  
OPENING  
(orientation by  
Skye Ward, Aché)

**10-11:30am**  
WORKSHOPS  
(Physical Health  
& Grassroots  
Organizing)

**11:45-1:15pm**  
LUNCHEON  
(keynote speaker  
Sandra Lowe, Esq.)

**1:30-3pm**  
WORKSHOPS  
(Emotional Health  
& Electoral Politics)

**3:15-3:45pm**  
CLOSING  
(plenary speaker  
Dr. Marjorie Hill)

**3:45-until**  
RECEPTION  
(live music with  
India Cooke, violin,  
and Mary Watkins,  
piano)



# Health

## Tell Mama

by Imani Ajaniku

**Q: How do you find a fine womyn?  
Looking**

Dear Looking,

Look in the mirror. The first step in having a successful relationship is to love yourself. A very wise womyn (my mom) told me once: "If you want an angel, be an angel." After much contemplation and trial and error, I finally got it. The saying that opposites attract doesn't hold true when it comes to affairs of the heart. Take notice of conversations you have with various women, sparks don't have to fly immediately. Did you enjoy the conversation? Make a mental note and follow through to do things you enjoy. Pull out that list of activities you've always wanted to do but... Go alone or take someone whose company you enjoy. But *do it*. You can't sit at home and expect to meet someone. You've got to get some motion going. Happy looking and be prepared to find your treasure.

**Q: Mama, how can I let my lover know that I want her to talk to me during sex? Is that okay?**

Hot for Words

Dear Hot,

You may try reading sexy dialogue to her and let her know these words turn you on. Or, you might try watching videos for sound effects. Check your local women's bookstore for references. There is always teaching by

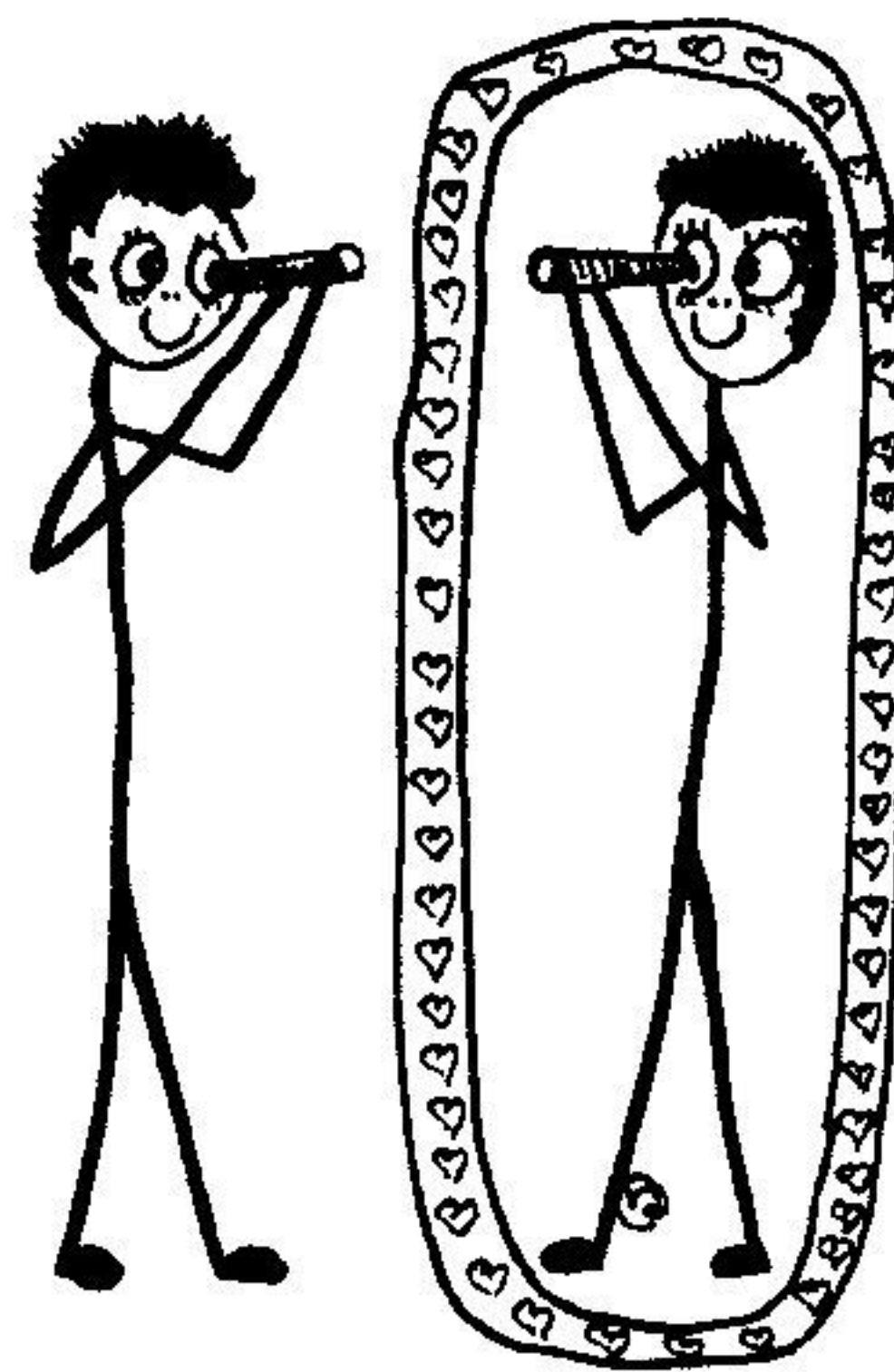
example. Say the things to her just like you want to hear them said. And, yes, sex talk is definitely okay!!

**Q: I'm an incest survivor and have stayed in relationships where I feel safe, but have avoided the healing I need to do. Now I'm single and scared to death. I have problems distinguishing between affection and sex. What do I need to pay attention to when dating?**

Single and Scared to Death

Dear Single,

I applaud you for your courageous efforts. Most incest survivors have certain patterns of behavior stemming from their abuse.



Some of these patterns are helpful in helping you feel a sense of safety and security. It's good that you are able to recognize your own patterns. The safety and security boundaries you have may at times seem to interfere with your ability to develop close relationships and cause much inner confusion. If you are not already doing so, find a therapist or counselor to help you sort out your feelings.





With a trained person knowledgeable in incest survivor issues and in a safe environment, you can learn to set boundaries that allow you to have relationships that are equal, honest and trusting.

*Courage to Heal* and *The Workbook* are excellent tools. It is easier to know and feel what is okay for you when you are feeling secure in yourself and empowered.

Dating can be fun and exciting. Dating is a wonderful way to meet people and converse, but make sure you and your date are "talking the same talk." Be clear across the board. Is it dinner and a movie or

dinner, movie and...? Distinguishing between sex and affection can be difficult for most of us. As you learn to recognize and trust your feelings more, the distinction will be clearer. Going from having safe relationships and to being single, in and of itself, can be scary. Be patient and be kind and loving to you. Feel your own power. Continue working. You are on the path to your own enlightenment.

**Q: What is the difference between a transsexual and a cross dresser? Is a transsexual also homosexual or is a transsexual a person who has had or is contemplating a sex change?**

Confused

Dear Confused,  
Simply put, a cross dresser is a transvestite. It is the preference for the clothes that is the turn-on. No, they are not all homosexuals. As a matter of fact, most cross dressers are heterosexuals. Transsexuals are people who mentally feel that they are in the wrong "body." It is the impetus to right that wrong that cause people to seek hormone injections and gender surgery.

Educational TV Channel (ETVC) at P.O. Box 426486, San Francisco, CA 94142, (415)549-2665, is an excellent organizational resource for cross dressers, transvestites, transsexuals, transgenderists, family, friends, significant others and professionals.

## DEAR SAPPHA II

by Terri Jewell

I am sixteen and my mother just found out I am gay she threatened to throw me out and disown me if I do not stop I cannot make it on my own and I hate hurting her what do I do?

Dear homegirl it sounds to me you have already made your decision after your mother read that diary letter gay newsletter heard you talking on the phone in your sleep to yourself saw you in the pride parade french kiss that woman read that novel with the obvious title you must appear to meet your mother's wishes I would advise you to seek out a support group in secret snag a boyfriend your mother would not want you to be with wear patent leather Mary Janes and spandex miniskirt ask for birth control and an appointment with the VD and AIDS counselor switch churches to help you to sort out your feelings be more careful around your mother.



## Arts & Culture

# Claiming Our Desires, Naming Our Pain:

A Conversation with  
Jewelle Gomez

Two issues ago, we published an excerpt from *The Gilda Stories*, a first novel by writer, critic and arts administrator Jewelle Gomez.

At that time, we'd also expected to run an interview with Gomez which I conducted in May, 1991. Someone broke into my house, however, and took the tape recorder containing the tape of that meeting. Back in town last October, Gomez graciously agreed to a second interview. We spent two hours in the parlor of a wonderful bed and breakfast in San Francisco laughing and talking and being girls together. These are only highlights of that delightful conversation. Thank you, Jewelle!

Paula Ross, Editor  
Arts and Culture

*Aché: One of the things we talked about last time was how we as Black lesbians discover who we really are, know our own desires. In the last five years or so there's been more discussion about issues like butch/femme, women talking more openly about what it is that they want and like sexually, whereas for a long time that was considered not important or "inappropriate."*

*Gomez: It's interesting to me how the kinds of leaps, or if you could call them skips rather than leaps that we make culturally or politically, frequently come from attempts at oppression or frequently grow out of surprising sources. And so for me one of the interesting things and important things was the whole debate about pornography and its position in women's culture and the violent and oppressive nature of pornography in this society. And while I have problems with the manner in which the discussion was mounted, and I take issue with the methods, I think that the discussion as a whole, of course, is key to where women are going to go with their own ideas about sexuality. But out of that discussion, which to me did not encompass the real pornography enough [television and magazine ads], came a response, and specifically from lesbians, for the most part, (because we were clever enough to see that we were going to be the first ones endangered, remembering the women's movement of the 70s in which lesbians were purged, for fear of bringing down the wrath of heterosexuals). Lesbians' response to the discussions about pornography and anti-pornography were to create a whole series of lesbian erotica. Which I think*

*is just great! I mean who would have suspected that as soon as Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon [vociferous voices in the anti-pornography movement] jumped up on their high horse, lesbians would come out with *On Our Backs!**

*Aché: On Our Backs! (simultaneous laughter)*

*JG: ...and a large number of other erotic anthologies, and I think that's incredibly wonderful! It was us saying, "Well the feminist movement told us we couldn't talk about sex because that was the area where we were oppressed, so let's just like ignore sex because we've been abused so badly; let's just talk about sisterhood. Well, that was wonderful, but, the next step is how to reclaim that desire. And I think it has been very healthy for Black women particularly, because of how so much of our identity in this country has turned on our use as sexual beings. I think it's true of all women, but it's even more true for Black women since our lives had a monetary value, and that value, I mean literal monetary value, was based in part on our sexual capabilities. So I feel like there's this leap, or maybe as I said a skip forward that Black women have made in reclaiming an idea of ourselves as having legitimate sexual desire that is grounded within ourselves and not in other people's desire for us.*

*Aché: How do you see the more, I guess, public discussion about things like butch/femme fitting into this whole picture?*

*JG: Ummm! Well, I see public discussion of*



butch/femme as a concept as very exciting because I think it *begins* to look at, one, historically, how we as women have identified ourselves, how we have survived, what kind of social patterns we've created to give ourselves a cultural context, and I think that's very valuable. I also think it's important because it does give us a context in which to discuss sexuality. It's not that I think that all couples break down into butch/femme couples in any visibly identifiable way, but that butch/femme represents an inclination in human beings to express themselves with people who are somewhere else on the spectrum of behavior. So, to me, I could say butch/femme, to me, I could say *yin/yang*. To me, the concept butch/femme took on in this society a specific manifestation that appeared to be male and female because that's where we are in our society and it sort of addresses a particular style of desires or styles of desire. But to *me* [it] is more of a natural inclination that could manifest itself in *other* completely *different* ways of dressing and has evolved into certainly more *expansive* ideas about *behavior* than the kind of narrow concepts of what is a butch and what is a femme from the 50s. So that no longer is it a role one retreats *into* but is how one can identify oneself, and again, the roles are not the thing, it's the identification, because the role, it seems like a box. And I think that people are afraid of being put into boxes, and rightfully so. So, I think there's a lot to be explored there because I think one of the keys to finding or discussing our sexuality as Black women is *looking* at how we relate to other Black women, not just as sisters, but as sexual beings. And it's very problematical because of all of the issues around sex for Black women in this culture. And I think butch/femme in working class Black women was a very helpful way to focus sexuality in a place where people were saying you shouldn't have any at all. And that for us today it can be a helpful place to look at desire—what is it in another woman that's sparks desire? You know, I've gone out

with "butch" women who would die if you called them a butch. And like, "Excuse me? (simultaneous laughter) You know, what would you like me to say about you?" And would actually try to challenge me, you know, like show up in a dress and see if I get shocked. And like, "Yeah, you look great!" (laughter and simultaneously) "But you're still a butch!"

*Aché: They hate it when you do that!*

JG: Yeah, they do hate it when you do that! (laughter) Oh, God! You know, and I think there's this other, this political aspect that's frightening because it's generally butch women who put up the biggest struggle against that identity because they're afraid of being identified with the patriarchy, and well, I can understand that. But in lesbian culture, it was always the butch woman who was the revolutionary character because that was the one woman who was identifiable as a lesbian, unequivocally, so was the heroic figure.

*Aché: She was like the lightning rod.*

JG: Right! So 30 years later for women to try to deny that, to say that it's "politically incorrect" I find very upsetting. 'Cause like, you know, you don't know what you're talkin' about. These are the women who got beat up in the streets, you know, makin' the way for *us* to be lesbians.

*Aché: Right, right.*

JG: For women, for lesbians to accept an identity which seems based, as butch does, on sexual aggressiveness, or power, 'cause that's ostensibly what it stands for, is very scary. To say that I accept that this is a legitimate place to be, to say I am taking a certain kind of power and control over my sexuality, over sexual desire, is a scary thing for women. And, it's very much a middle-class concept that you *shouldn't* take that kind of control, you know, that kind of idea of "Well, I'm too genteel!" (laughter) It's very interesting, I mean the whole issues around class, what happens to us when we become "successful" and what we [then] think is



appropriate and inappropriate sort of can change, you know?

**On Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas:**

*Aché: One of the things that I was very struck by about Anita Hill is that at least from what I've read about her, she doesn't seem to have a particular identification as a woman, or didn't before.*

JG: Umm. Yeah.

*Aché: That she wanted to succeed, you know in the Big Boys World, and essentially in the White World. And she played by the rules, but...*

JG: Darling...

*Aché: ... as soon, you know, it's like...*

J.G.: Uh-huh! You played with them, that's what you wanted. I am not surprised. I know that you are surprised, but you know...

*Aché: You, Anita?*

JG: You, Anita, are surprised, because you were believing in this American Dream bullshit, you know, and you thought it was connected to you. Well, the you is a Black woman. Remember that. So that was, that was, you know, a woman of that ilk supporting Bork? [Rejected as U.S. Supreme Court justice in 1987, largely due to the pressures exerted by a coalition of people of color, feminist and progressive political groups.] I mean, she clearly disassociated from herself as a woman and identified with the power, in a certain kind of way. So to me, it was not at all odd that she would keep calling Clarence Thomas. He was clearly a man on his way up, she does not want to offend him. And if she has been in this awkward, unpleasant, embarrassing, painful situation, of course she would keep calling him, because she's got to smooth it over. She does not want him, five years from then when she gets an opportunity to advance, to have him be in a position to say, "No, I don't think Anita is appropriate." And he doesn't have to say anything more than that. So, of course she would try to be smoothing things over with him.

The thing to me that was really interesting, I mean of many things that were interesting about this debacle, was that for all Clarence Thomas' talk, about we don't need affirmative action because I've pulled myself up by my bootstraps, look where I came from my poor little old log cabin, wit' my poor Black folks, to where I am today, him saying he doesn't feel Black people can any longer rely on the history of oppression as their crutch, and blah, blah, blah, blah, what was the first thing he did when he felt threatened? "Oh, poor me, Black man, I'm victimized!"

*Aché: Hi-tech lynching.*

JG: "Ya'll are lynchin' me." And it was like, I would have expected him to jump down to his knees and start singin' "Mammy!" I was so—, it was like, you fuckin' jerk! And I happened to be watching at that very time, and I was doing Nordic Trak, 'cause I'm in my middle age tryin' to get back in shape! And I was watchin him, I'm doing my little Nordic Trak, workin' up a little sweat. Watchin' him, I was getting so enraged, I had to get off the Nordic Trak; I was afraid I was going to have a heart attack. I was so mad! Because it was so hypocritical!

*Aché: Yeah, yeah.*

JG: Hypocritical. You know, any man, any man who is a jurist in this country who says he has never discussed Roe versus Wade, is a liar. Is a liar!

*Aché: And if he's not a liar...*

JG: ... if he's not a liar, then he has no business...

*Aché: ... no business being a judge.*

JG: Yeah, yeah. ▽



# Healing & Spirituality

## JUST GIVE IT TO ME BABY... I LOVE YOU! by Akiba

For this month's issue "The Diversity of Sexual Expression" I thought I'd grab the opportunity to write the hottest erotic piece ever...and share it. That certainly would have been empowering for me. Instead, what I'm drawn to speak on are issues of emotional and spiritual responsibility in our sexual interactions, and how sexual abuse impacts our use of sexual power.

What I see occurring among wimin now, is a kind of sexual revolution. Many of us, for the first time, are coming out of the closet with our sexuality, not just in terms of same sex relationships, but exploring together: how we gonna do it, taking giant risks, talking about our sexual abuse and exploits (en mass), and even considering ways to practice safer sex.

The reality that wimin, and especially wimin of color, have often been the most sexually abused beings outside of children (and all of us were children at one time or another) means that we have a lot of healing to do before we can come from a place of right-use of power in terms of our sexuality. The fact that many of our African wimin ancestors were raped and bred during times of "legalized" slavery makes a huge statement about the depth of guilt, shame and rage regarding our sexuality we may carry within our psyches.

Everyday on TV, billboards, in the newspaper and movies you will see the woman's body being used as the object. Even much of the music now is about the conquest of the pussy! "Just give it to me baby...I love you." On any given day walking down the street you may be harassed and/or assaulted, as a matter of course, just because of your femaleness. This type of abuse day after day with or without protection has taken a serious toll and been inter-

nalized — we do not live in a vacuum. This "matter of course" abuse does not take into account that every 60 seconds a woman is raped or that 2 out of 5 girls will be sexually assaulted by the time she is 13 and between the ages of 13 and 18 the statistics are even higher. How many of us are survivors of incest? Who amongst us has been spared and where are we stuffing our emotions?

What about our own "safe" Two Spirited (Lesbian) community? I've certainly been sexually harassed many times by wimin — in public places, in private places, on the job, in front of my lover and theirs. I've also done the same thing at one time or another. I even know wimin who have bragged about raping other wimin. Because this type of abuse is usually equated with maleness, often I find that denial kicks in when I'm being sexualized by a woman, and my disbelief and pain gets in the way of my clarity. If I can't trust my sisters who *know* then who can I trust?

Sexual abuse is the abuse of power with the intent to control. With the type of historical and present day sexual violence that we have been victims of, it seems imperative that we give close examination to the play of power within our sexual interactions. What are the intentions that we bring to the bed, to our flirtations and to our encounters? Are we clear in the signals we send? Were you coming on to her or just being friendly? What sense of responsibility or no responsibility do we bring to our sexual acts? This is **not** about being *in love*, but this is **about** love...this is **about** respect — love and respect of ourselves and, therefore, the love and respect of others. This is about power — the acknowledgement of it and the responsibility for it — whether it be from a so-called *passive* or so-called *aggressive* stance, it is still power. This is about



control. Often, unfortunately, our way of feeling powerful is to be the one in control of the situation even if it's at the expense of another. What about just being in control of ourselves and not focusing on controlling anyone else?

People speak a lot today about SAFER sex but it's mostly from a physical perspective. Shouldn't we be equally concerned with emotional safety, not merely from the perspective of **I am a survivor** — we're all survivors. How are we surviving? Rarely do we speak of sexuality and power together unless it's defined as "S/M" — the latest thing. Well it's always been here but now separated from the whole of our sexual experience and called S/M, it is blatantly teaching us about dynamics of power which we don't really talk about — except on the level of top and bottom or dominant and submissive. Within the sexual act we all have power and we all use it — no matter which role or roles we are playing we are getting something from it and making choices — that "something" is our power. It's important to examine the choices we make to expedite healing of the fragmented places within ourselves.

Quite often we act like we're powerless while wielding our power through the projection of our pain, frustration, rage and guilt onto whomever we lay with — as though we're the only victims in town. Internalized sexual abuse is rampant. The most obvious as a survivor of sexual assault assaulting someone else. More subtle forms can be: putting your lover in the position of always having to be the one to ask you for sex, because you feel guilt or shame in relationship to your sexual needs; blaming your partner for not knowing what you want and for your not having an orgasm. The way

you feel about your body gets played out too. Maybe you're the withholder, then again perhaps you're obsessed with how often you cum — better still how often she cums.

And what do we want from those that we lay with? It could be any number of things. She might be "the finest 'thang' you've ever seen...today" and you've just got to have her. How many of your sisters did you step on or over to get her? I know — she's the butch you're going to conquer or the mystery that you need to unfold. Maybe you just want to do-it-to-her and don't want to be done, or visa versa. You might not even like her — you just want to fuck her. I wonder how much any of those reasons have to do with balance/giving and receiving? Probably not much. It's empowering to give just as it is empowering to receive. Perhaps you only want to experience one and not the other, which by the way, probably has very little to do with your position in the bed, but more about your position of vulnerability to the person you are laying with — not your mother, your father or last lovers.

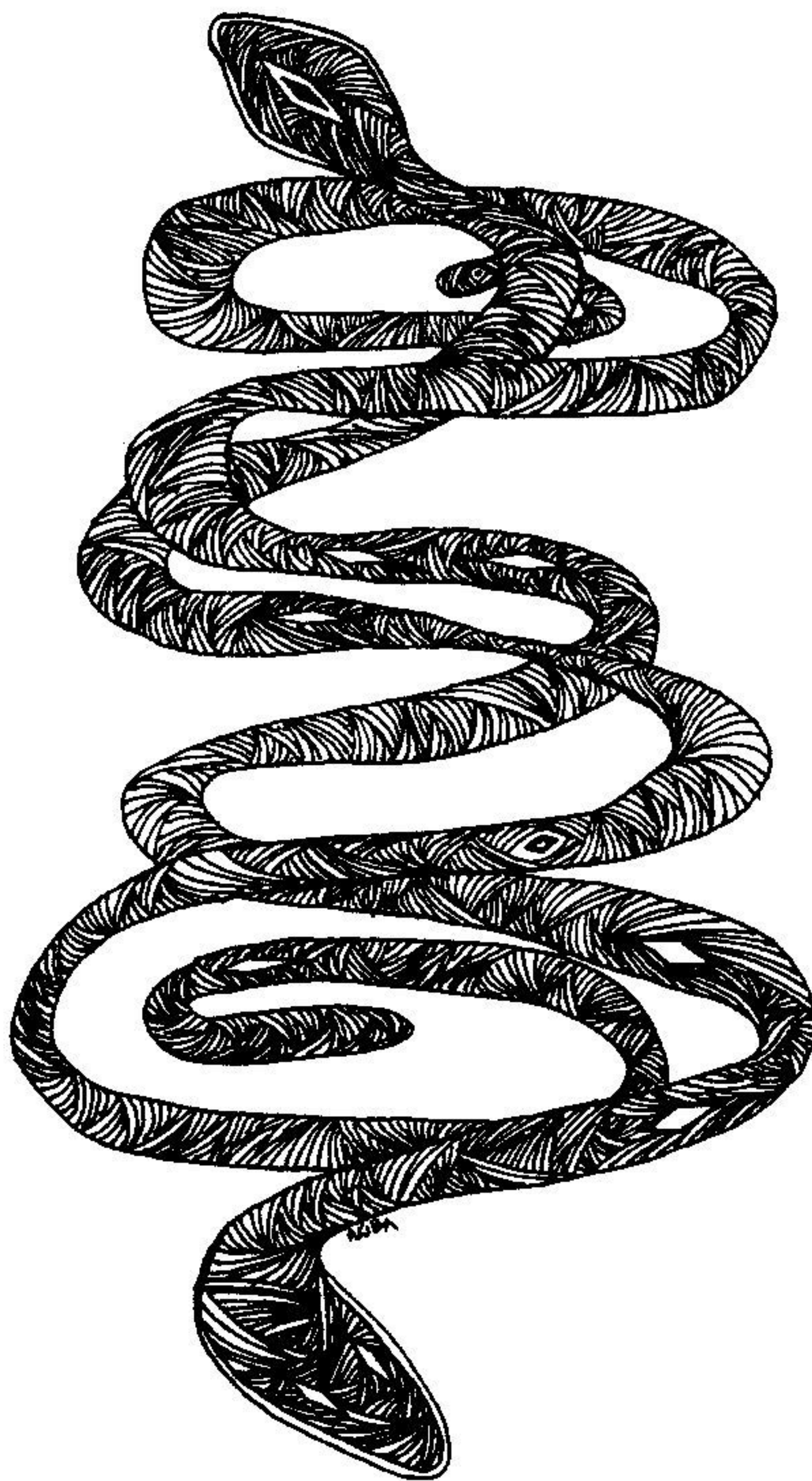
What about the relationship to spirit in all of this? Female sexuality is extremely powerful because the energy of it is so connected to creation, our intuition, our psyche, our magic and ultimately Spirit. Within our wombs lie the ability to nurture, support and bring forth life. Anyone who has ever been to a woman's gathering has probably experienced that aliveness of spirit, the raw, uncensored, spontaneous energy, the kind that comes when we dance to the drum — that **hotness**. Wimin's menstrual cycles even change when we come together. Some of us "see" more than others (have developed more personal power — able to conjure-up some magic), some of us are in



college and others of us are still in high school, what do we do with that charisma? Do we try to blow the other one's mind? Are we interested in a mutually empowering experience? Are we willing to give it up like we want to get it — no matter what role or roles we play? Do we tell the truth of our intentions — do we say why we are there? Once again, are we there to honestly give and receive or is it merely to get — to expand our egos...at someone else's expense?

Although sex is a word, the act is loaded with emotional, spiritual and psychic power, and even if we don't want it to be it is an extremely intimate experience — be we present or not! In our new found explorations — while we're discovering, feeling freer and pointing fingers — shouldn't we, *each and every one of us*, carefully clean out our own pots remembering to scrutinize closely the integrity of the ingredients we mix in the stew? One day it may be the only food we have to eat!

*This being my last issue with Aché I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the members of Aché for allowing me to have had the opportunity to be one of the team of editors. I would also like to extend that same thank you to the Aché readers for your continual support of our efforts and the many wimin's voices expressed through the Journal. ACHÉ.*





## Soft...

by Caru Thompson

We talk into dawn  
filter flung  
through mini-blinds  
and earthen flowered curtains.  
Your calling scent like  
Springtime rain forests  
hunger-wet in Brazil  
pulling me, pulling me in.

You smile...  
Your softness calls upon  
a sensual touch...  
I reach for you gently  
as I do flowers.  
My hand leaves a breath  
imprint on your leg.  
Your exhale entices me for more  
...Soft

I am a sensual way  
re-learning ancient touch that  
smell, sight, taste arouses.  
You are a dream open for shaping  
open with allowance  
open to know my touch.  
Fill my need/your need  
born of remembrances  
sensuality awakens.

Here in this place  
I want you to lie with me.  
I hesitate to ask...my thoughts  
leaping from the now  
to the hundred fold future  
possibilities.

I stop...  
Breathe...

I AM HERE...NOW

Lie with me...I say.  
I want to hold you/hold me.  
And...  
As you slide between  
the sheets  
your nude newness  
forming...spoon-like...into me  
songs rise in the flutter  
of your hand.  
We breathe in tangent  
in rhythm  
in the present of now.

*Leo, a number 7, New Yorker, musician, writer,  
career educator seeking balance in this Life.*





**Weekend With Yofreakka**

by Stephanie J. Smith

Pancakes, Miracle Whip  
Wonder bread, Kool-aid  
I spent the weekend in Cleveland  
with my hair in a poofy braid.

I went to meet her family,  
my girlfriend fresh and new,  
she took me to a drag show,  
the Yofreakka Daiikka Revue.

The costumes were divine,  
the lip-synching even more,  
but I could have done without  
Madonna's musical score.

My spirits slightly wilting,  
I continued watching the revue,  
I found the movements stunning,  
the voguing was true blue.

The gals behind Yofreakka,  
the ones who dance and sway,  
they're called the back-up bunnies  
and are happier that way.

Midway through the second set,  
the crowd went into shock,  
when one frisky little bunny,  
proceeded to remove her frock.

Stripped to panties and garters,  
it's gender quite apparent,  
the tragic hare did indeed,  
remind me of a ferret.

She quickly surveyed the audience,  
picking a victim from the crowd,  
and then she ran right towards me,  
size thirteen heels clanking loud.

Horrified at the site,  
of this drag queen on the loose,  
my self protective instincts led me  
to douse her with my juice.

Just then Yofreakka,  
grand diva of them all,  
got testy and pursued  
the bad bunny throughout the hall.

She caught the errant hare,  
now running for the door,  
and as Yofreakka approached,  
the crowd let out a roar.

She grabbed the screaming bunny,  
by girdle, bra and fall,  
stopping only when her defeated prey,  
lay cowering against the wall.

Meanwhile on the stage,  
two bunnies did persist,  
never acknowledging for a moment,  
that something was amiss.

The words that passed between them,  
neither diva nor bunny will ever say,  
and what happened next I must confess,  
confounds me to this day.

Scurrying through the audience,  
as the song was winding down,  
the tortured little hare,  
slinked back into her gown.

Following her was Yofreakka,  
her temper still quite hot,  
who finished the song in perfect time,  
and triumphantly reclaimed her spot.



**Sandra**  
**(for Karen H.)**  
by Shahara Godfrey

I watch you move  
the total  
way you move  
with your hands  
with your mouth

I watch the way  
you walk  
especially the way  
your  
hips  
move  
swaying  
slowly

They are so full.  
When I watch the expressions  
on your face,  
your eyes  
on mine.  
I catch  
my  
breath.

You blush.  
I love  
to compliment you.  
I watch your hands.  
I love  
to feel  
the softness  
of your skin.  
so smooth  
when you  
touch me  
with your hands.

I love  
the shape  
of your fingers  
especially  
what your fingers  
do  
to me.

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*Shahara Godfrey lives and works in the Bay Area.*



# The Bridge of Our Bonding

by SDiane Bogus

"I don't participate in skin privilege," you say, almost shyly as our hands lock and intertwine mid-air like the word bridges we are building...We lie on our backs in a near dawn room.

"I know you can't be serious, white girl," my mind says. I feel, unexpectedly, the waters of my turmoil begin to settle.

"I have identified so long with women of color that I can't relate to other white people, especially when they speak with me as a member of "our club." You search my face, eyes blue, pained, looking for understanding.

I'm not sure if this is a line you give your Black lovers; I'm not even sure I understand what you mean. I hate how politics have found their way into this bed. I divert the quandary. I kiss your face, your brows, your thin lips only to discover—I am racist about their difference—so short on distance and juice. I don't say this thing. Instead, I inhale your body...You are musky like Black women. I like it. I tell you.

You smile, your face contorted oddly, half the disability, half bemusement.

"You like that," I accuse suddenly, "being like a Black woman?" You take offense.

"It'd be an insult to both of us if I tried," you say, shifting so that you cradle my head in the crook of your arm; my nose slips just under the hollow.

I suspect a power play. But again, I inhale you, letting my nose and lips brush the curve of your cool, pale breast, its nipples tip, a shy pink, unlike my well-sprouted, raisins. I am made silent by their prejudice; safe only in my desire...

You say, "It's hard when I don't know where

you stand," your hand large and artistic, falling away from my own to trace the rise of my own breasts and belly. I know this hand has touched others: men, and women, some Black. I allow myself to experience the confrontation. It disconnects me, connects me. Oddly, I do not condemn.

I listen to your dream for us—a love unparalleled, one which will move through barriers and withholds with relentless integrity, irrevocable responsibility. I want to embrace the possibility, but the memory of my recent lost love—a member of your "club"—prevents me. I become a cold, brown stone in your arms.

You caress my face, my shoulders, my arms, hips, as if sculpting something new of my pain. With each of these caresses, you speak of the gifts we could give—united—to the world. I begin to melt; the grief, the anger, and the withheld trust become enemies of any future we might have.

I allow my consciousness to follow the broadening path of your hands. You touch me preciously now as if I am Japanese silk. I remember the touch of my lost love, her fingerprints on my skin, invisible holes in my flesh; you cannot know that you are sticking your fingers into my wounds. Tears that I do not explain flood my eyes, drip along the slope of my face.

"I understand your pain," you comfort, wiping my tears away with your flat palm and placing the same hand between my breasts where my heart lies fallow.

"I'm not ready," I say, "to have a relationship," I say. And you turn to me fully, face to face, "Stop talking shit," you say, "we're already relating." And I must grin at my schizophrenia. I notice the contrast between



your slim, soft flesh and my own taut meatiness.

"I mean, I'm not ready to do more than this, not ready to give my heart again, not ready for commitment," and I notice, too, how my own arms embrace you, how I like the tender intimacy of our touching bellies, the secret electricity between our brushing pubic hair.

"I'm not asking for more," you say, "than this," you say, putting those reedy lips to my tubular ones and the wonder of white and Black strikes me anew...

"I want to say how it was to love her, how sweet, how dangerous, how deep, but it seems a sacrilege. "I feel like a fool to be here," I say, knowing that to love you would be a repetitious heresy.

You study my eyes, seeing my irresolution, my pride, my conspicuous soul. You kiss the lids, then, scrunch my nappy hair between your diplomatic finger, and laugh, as comfortable with heresy as Joan of Arc, as brave, as unapologetic.

I laugh weakly, growing comfortable with your comfort. I reach between your legs, living the challenge and the confusion—too many emotions, too many taboos to speak of—I find myself loving the sweet fear and joy; I find myself defying even my own taboos. I part your legs, shifting upward to accommodate my intention. Secretly, I marvel still at my lesbian claim to the right.

You say, "I'm capable of unconditional love."

I say, "Don't talk," giving myself in to the privilege of entry, closing my eyes, seeking, in the same motion, the lips on your face. "I only want *now* to be the condition of our love," I whisper.

You rise, ready, holy, hot to meet me.

We move then from one moment to the next, From one stroke and reverberation to the next, From this bridge of our bonding to the next. The dawn is breaking outside. ▽

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**Untitled**  
by Ekua Omosupe

my heart  
has legs and arms  
when I come near you  
it reaches out and  
draws you into  
its full embrace

if I do not  
see you for days  
and taste your mouth  
of wonder full kisses  
my heart attacks me  
and I seek you out

woman

love

life

© 7/25/91



## **WOMYN'S DANCE**

by laura irene wayne

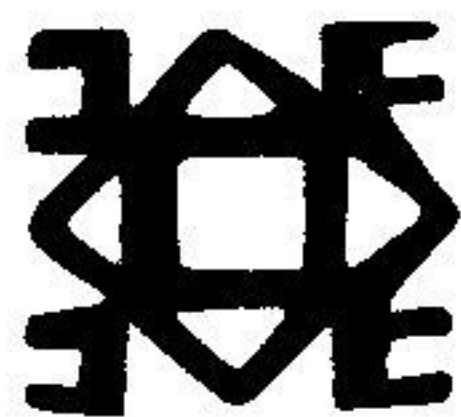
When the womyn dance  
they dance  
with the moon  
amongst the stars  
in the darkness of nights  
in the brightness of days  
arms out-stretched  
heads held high  
encompassing all  
hands, head, feet move swiftly  
in the rich brown earth  
dancing to the winds  
amplification of natures tunes in stereo  
in celebration  
the womyn dance  
with their sisters, lovers, daughters,  
mothers, ancestors, and friends  
their bodies flowing like rivers, streams  
through vast green valleys  
returning home  
reaching for more  
that closeness  
with one  
wanting only to dance  
with the moon  
amongst the stars  
in the darkness of nights  
in the brightness of days  
when womyn dance  
they dance



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## Features



# Diversity of Sexual Expression

## Questionnaire: Your responses

By Blake Aarens and  
Natalie Devora

We are a diverse and vocal community. We speak about our political, social, economic, and even religious diversity with some freedom. But for a group of women who are often defined solely by whom we choose to sleep, speaking about the diversity of our sexual expression is still more or less taboo. The whole point of doing this issue on the diversity of our sexual expression is to boldly go where few lesbians have gone before.

Let's face it, sex is important to us. So, too, is the feeling of belonging we get from being in this community. Many of us can remember the first time we met another lesbian of African descent. All of a sudden we were no longer alone in the world. There was someone whose experiences were a lot like our own. Someone who we didn't have to explain everything to or translate for; so much was understood. It was a deeply healing experience. We, the editors of *Aché*, created this questionnaire. Our hope was to provide a similar sort of healing. That which comes when we share the secrets of our sexuality in a safe place and find that we're not alone. Because for everything that we have survived, been taught, done, watched, or even thought about, the fact remains that at least one other sistah has been there too. We offered you complete confidentiality and asked you to tell us about your background, your sexual practices, and your feelings about what you do. Here is some of what you had to say.

A total of 56 women completed the survey. Many did so at the fourth annual NIA Gathering last November. Others requested the survey be sent to them. We thank all the women who took the time to share this special part of themselves with us.

We live primarily on the West Coast either in the Bay Area or southern California. We come from Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts in the east, Atlanta and Texas in the south, Chicago, St. Louis and Arkansas, California, the Caribbean, Puerto Rico and many places in between.

We identify as lesbian and bisexual, butch, femme, androgynous, queer, gay, as well as not labeling ourselves at all. We are women living with disabilities ranging from Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS), mental illness, visual impairments and spinal cord injury.

Our ages range from 22 to 55 with the majority of us (27) being 30-39. We have been out for as little as 4 months to as long as 35 years. We are in new relationships, 14 days, and established ones. Of those currently involved one-third have relationships less than 6 months old. While the remaining two-thirds have been with their lovers between 1 and 2.5 years, 25 women reported that they are single.

Ten women have children. More than half of us (35) disclosed that we were sexually molested as children.

Four women have or are currently experiencing menopause and 3 have either had a mastectomy or hysterectomy and/or estrogen replacement therapy.

Approximately half who responded practice some form of safe sex. We use everything from condoms for our dildos to gloves, dental dams and/or saran wrap. Some women practice safe sex by abstaining from oral sex or having no sex period. Others felt that having one partner only was a form of safe sex. Some have made the decision not to practice safe sex at all.



No one who answered has tested positive for the HIV virus. Only one woman reported that she has been sexual with a woman who tested HIV positive.

#### **WHAT WE DO**

##### ***Are you celibate?***

We stand corrected. In response to this question, one sister wrote, "Celibacy is always by choice; it is different than not having sex." Nevertheless, of the 43 womyn that answered the question, 33 said no and 10 said yes. Of the 10 that said yes, 7 said they are celibate by choice.

##### ***How often do you think about sex? How often do you have sex?***

While the reach of our imaginations exceeds our grasps, "lesbian bed death" doesn't seem to have hit our community too hard. More than half of the 56 respondents said that they think about sex often. Twenty-five said that they are having sex at least once a week.

##### ***How easily do you become sexually aroused?***

The vast majority of us said that we become aroused either quickly and easily (15) or fairly quickly (20). There seemed to be a slight relationship between celibacy and ease of sexual arousal, with 5 of the womyn who listed themselves as celibate also saying that they become aroused only after a great deal of stimulation. Three serious sisters wrote that their rate of arousal depends on who is doing the touching.

##### ***Do you have orgasms?***

We seem to be a healthy group in that regard. None of the respondents answered no to that question.

##### ***Do you masturbate?***

Self-loving is alive and well in our community. Some 40 respondents answered yes to this question. And most if not all of us reach orgasm when we touch ourselves. One sister went so far as to say, "Yes, I have orgasms when I masturbate, or else why do it?"

##### ***Have you ever had sex with a man?***

Some 40 women said yes. But for the most part, once we found pleasure in the arms of our sisters, we do not go back to having sex with men. 27 womyn said no as opposed to 17 who said that they have had sex with men since being with womyn. Of those 17, 3 had sex with men for the purpose of getting pregnant and 5 said sex with men happened during the early stages of their coming out process.

##### ***Which sexual practices do you indulge in?***

It seems good old-fashioned kissing and cunnilingus are alive and well with 45 respondents each. Finger touching and rubbing/body touching both had 43, sucking breasts 41, booty rubbing 33, sucking toes 22, spanking 17, anal sex 15, fisting 10, and toe fucking 8. It seems for every practice, our questionnaire found practitioners.

##### ***How do you set the mood?***

Soft music, candles and sexy talk rate the highest, with 14 responses each. And the way to a lesbian's crotch may also be through her stomach with 12 womyn listing some type of food as a mood setter. Baths (9) and massage (7) also rated highly. One woman wrote simply, "The mood sets itself."

##### ***Who initiates?***

Of the 39 women who responded to this question, 17 said it was split equally between the partners, 12 said the partner initiated more often and 10 said that they were the initiators. One sister put it all in perspective when she wrote, "I don't know. I'm not paying attention (to who gets us started) at the time."

##### ***How much time do you spend?***

Because of this question's placement at the top of a new page, several people were confused as to what we were referring to. But one woman not only understood the question, but gave the consummate answer. "Until one of us is exhausted."

##### ***Do you tell your partner your likes and dislikes?***

There seems to be a consensus on this



question for no one answered no to this.

***Where is the most exotic place you've had sex?***

Hot tubs are the most common of the exotic places with 5 responses. But we got busy in a wide variety of places: from an empty classroom to the patio of a 52nd floor apartment, from the kitchen table to a golf course and a massage room. We got it on in a sauna, on the beach, and even on top of a washing machine during the spin cycle. We rolled around in Tilden and Golden Gate parks, did the nasty on the stairs, and several women admitted to having sex at the NIA Gathering where the majority of the questionnaires were filled out. We are an uninhibited bunch.

***Have you ever had group sex?***

This seems to be a popular practice, with 25 respondents saying that they have done it in a group. The majority of them (17) were all-womyn affairs.

***Do you have sex during your period?***

Of the 45 womyn who responded to this question, 28 said yes. Several of them made distinctions between masturbation and partnered sex. In the initial question, 17 gave flat no answers for reasons ranging from physical discomfort to being unaware that their partner would enjoy it. The safer sex message has obviously gotten through to some of us. Several womyn commented on the dangers of contact with another woman's blood in this age of AIDS. One woman wrote, "Nowadays, blood can be toxic."

***Have you ever had phone sex?***

Thirty-two said that they'd had phone sex with a lover, 10 with men, and only two womyn wrote that they'd had anonymous phone sex, shoring up the belief that lesbians rarely use the commercial sex lines for getting their pleasure.

***Do you read erotica or watch erotic movies?***

Thirty-eight womyn said yes, 7 said no. From the responses, we tend to use erotica both for our own pleasure, 23, and for those

times when we're with a partner, 29. One woman spoke of her dissatisfaction with what's currently available: "I have yet to find any erotica that isn't rationalized porn."

***Do you practice voyeurism? exhibitionism?***

As a group, we seem to take pleasure in watching and being watched. 18 womyn called themselves voyeurs, while 15 admitted to being exhibitionists. There was only a small group of womyn, 6, who said yes to both.

***Have you ever asked a lover to urinate on you? To defecate?***

Only 2 womyn wrote for a preference of golden showers. And although the vast majority do not indulge in these practices, there was little in the way of judgement for their existence.

***Do you practice S/M? B & D?***

Only 5 womyn answered yes to the question of Sadism/Masochism, while 8 said they go in for a little Bondage and Discipline.

***Do you use sex toys?***

Vibrators are used by 27 of the respondents, oils/lubes 26, dildos 24, food 20, restraints 16, blindfolds 15, harnesses 10, feathers and mirrors 8 each, butt plugs 6, whips, crops and clamps 3 each, and ben wa balls 2. This was the most chatty of the questions on sexual practices. Many womyn expressed their curiosity in things they hadn't done but would be interested in trying.

**HOW WE FEEL**

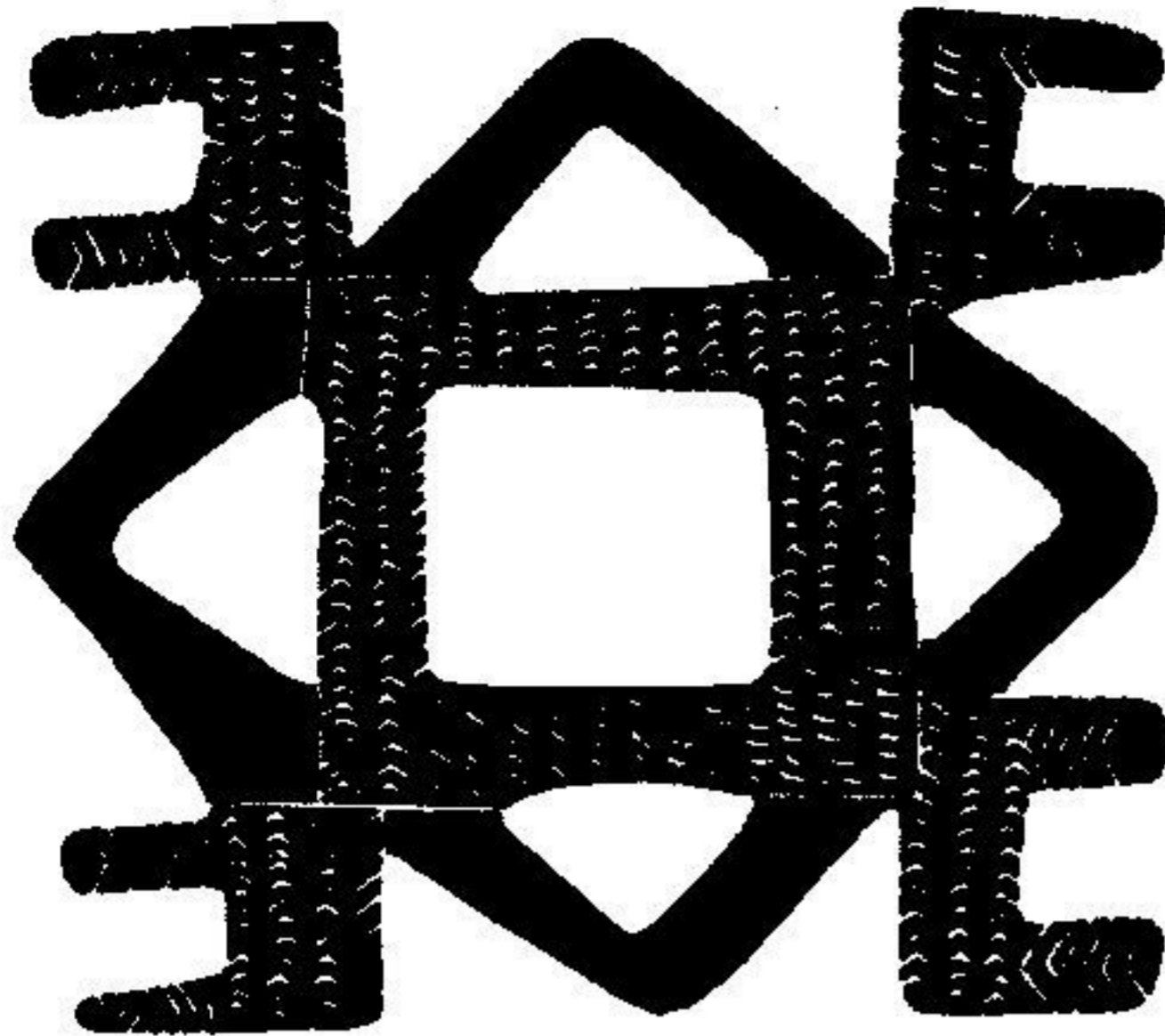
***Are you completely sure of your sexual orientation?***

We all seem to be absolutely certain of our decision to be either lesbian or bisexual; everyone said yes to this question.

***Do you get enough sex and how important is it to you to have an orgasm?***

Twenty-three women stated that they are having enough sex, while 28 women said they are not getting it on as much as they'd like to. Reasons ranged from, "My partner is





too tired" to "how often we have sex is solely up to my partner." A few women said that they weren't getting any, because they don't have a girlfriend. More than 40 women said that having an orgasm is not very important to them, while 10 stated that having an orgasm is very important. One woman had this to say, "I must remember always that I am responsible for my own orgasm. No one else can make me come unless I am open to coming."

*Do you regard yourself as sexually attractive and do you feel that others see you as such?*

Most of us regard ourselves as desirable women and feel that other women see us as such for 44 and 45 of us said so respectively. Others aren't sure, 3, and at least 6 women felt that others do not view them as sexually attractive.

*Which part of your body do you like to have stimulated?*

We are very clear about how we like to be touched and where. We like to have our breasts, necks, and clits stimulated first, then we prefer to have our inner thighs, shoulders, toes, faces and lips stroked, rubbed licked and kissed. Some of us want to be rubbed all over and then be "soundly fucked," and as one woman put it, "What-

ever works is fine with me."

*Have you ever had sex with a friend? and are you still friends?*

Many of you said that you'd been physically intimate with a friend, 33, with 30 of you being able to keep the friendship intact. One woman said that as a result of having sex with her friend, the friendship had become more complicated. Another woman said that most of her relationships began with friendship and the intimacy grew from there. Four friendships came to an end. Of the 19 women who said no to this question one had this to say, "I could not cross boundaries in that way."

\* \* \*

We felt that it was important to be inclusive of women who define themselves as bisexual, for we realize that for some, bisexuality is a choice. In knowing this we'd like to share one woman's perspective:

I feel completely capable of total commitment to a lesbian woman. I am comfortable about being out "queer" and gay related, but I rarely tell potential lovers or friends I am bi-sexual. I am not addicted to dick and do not need a man. I am monogamous in relationships with women. The potential for me to be with a man sexually exists only when I am not in a relationship with a woman. I don't believe my love of penetration is related to my bi-sexual identity (lot's of lesbians like penetration). I am very anxious, unhappy about this. I feel I have no true community. I will always be outside. I must distort myself to be accepted. I align myself with gay people. I respond as an out gay person when straight people voice their homophobic shit. I am queer. I belong with the queers of the world. I regret the lies and silence I give to lesbians in order to belong.

...QUOTES

"Because of my health and frustration about people lying, I have been celibate for the last four years, and I don't see myself

*continued on page 31*



## WinnSome Words

by Winn Gilmore

### Diversity. . .Cuntroversy

Ladies, ladies, ladies! What will y'all come up with next? I was talking with my friendgirl Marty the other day, and she told me you Negro gay ladies were devoting this issue of your prestigious organ to diversity of sexual expression. Well, I had to pull out my earring so as to press the phone closer to my unbelieving ear, plop down on my couch, and ready myself for I knew not what.

Now, don't get me wrong—I know as much as the next person does about the missionary position, the Kama Sutra, and all that. "But..." I stuttered to my friendgirl as I warmed up for a juicy conversation about just what it is we...I mean, y'all...do. "Surely, Marty," I asked uncertainly as my hand stole up to caress my neck, "surely there isn't enough so-called diversity to warrant a whole issue on the subject!"

"Chile, you just don't know," Marty insisted, chuckling low in her throat. I knew then this was some hot topic. "Hold on a minute. I've got another call. It's probably the toy store," she added confidentially. "My new harness is due in today."

Well, you could've knocked me over with a feather. (Although, from the sound of it, Marty could've thought of something much more interesting to do with said feather.) You see, friendgirl is a Negro gay lady, but she's always seemed so...well, hum-drum when I tried to get her to shed a little sisterly light on sex: the thinking of it, the stalking for it, the getting it. She'd always been so enigmatic with me, and here she was virtually showering me goldenly with nuggets of information. In one conversation, she'd hinted at undreamable sexual pleasures and confided in me about her sexual proclititties...I mean, proclivities.

Anyway, intrepid investigative journalist that I am (snoop, some say), the following

day found me sauntering over to one of y'all's bookstores to peruse (purely for professional purposes, of course) some of your rags.

Which reminds me—y'all are some of the readingest people! Mercy! I daresay that if the general population spent more time like you do with its collective head in a book searching for self and enlightenment instead of with its collective nose sniffing all up in your business trying to destroy the love y'all have for one another, there would be less hating, murdering, raping, and stealing.

For instance, it seems if y'all Negro gay ladies aren't writing, yourselves, you're reading. If you're not reading, you're at a reading. If you're not at a reading, you're planning one. If the general population followed suit, they wouldn't have time, much less inclination, to destroy the beauty that lives.

Anyway, back to the subject. Solely in the cause of research, I picked up copies of about 20 gay lady monthly and bimonthly publications. What better place for finding out about this supposed sexual diversity your community is experiencing? I paid for my purchase and left the bookstore.

As I boarded the bus home, I package cloaked my issue of *On Our Backs* inside *The Watchtower* that some Jehovah-shouter had thrust at me unceremoniously as she stepped over a sprawled drunk to get to me. I opened *OOB* to the Personals section. I expected it to read relatively tame... maybe a few requests for "quiet, fireside-loving lady sought by gentle, reclusive professional woman." Instead, this headline jumped out at me:

#### **SPANK ME, DADDY**

I gasped, then slammed the magazine shut. The passenger across the aisle looked



circumspectly at me. She grabbed the lapel of her tattered coat closer about her neck and slid closer to the window. I could almost read her mind: "What," she was wondering, "could she find so startling in a fucking *Watchtower!*"

Well, Negro gay ladies, if she'd seen the magazine within, she would've had little reason to wonder.

Anyway, a reporter can never relent, no matter how shocking the subject she's researching. So, reluctantly, I returned to the Personals section. This time, another headline leapt lustily from the page:

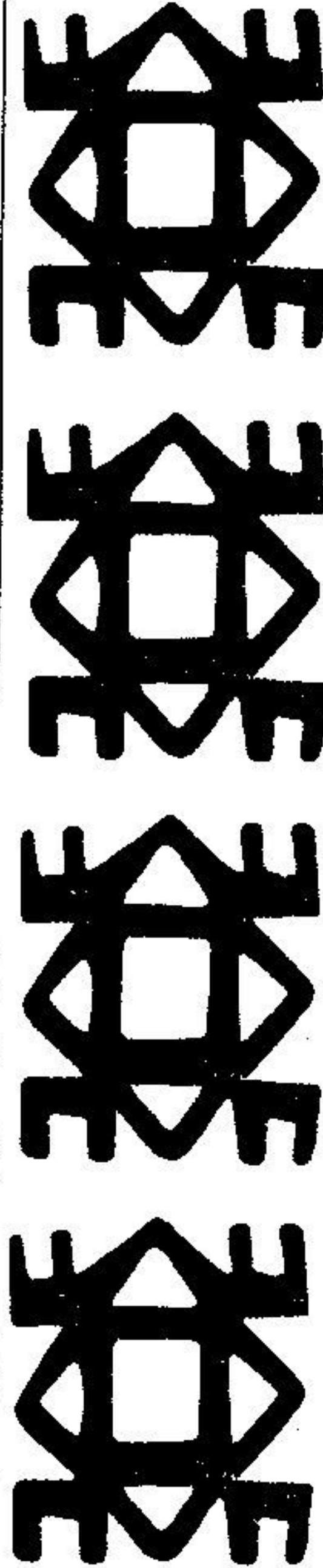
#### AFRO-AMERICAN BOY-GIRL DYKE SEEKS LOST DAUGHTER

Well, I thought, closing the magazine again. *I guess Marty has a point there.* Who could've guessed that, in one publication, in the space of a quarter of an inch, you'd find one gay lady searching for her lost daddy-girl-butch (now, it's not that I know about such terminology personally. I've just heard it bantered about by friends) and the next seeking her missing mistress-baby girl?

I guess I'd better devote a bit more research to this incredible diversity before my report back to y'all. You see, just when I thought I had it all figured out, I saw this ad in another publication—this time, a Negro gay lady said:

#### BLACK GENDER-BENDING TECHNO-BUTCH SEEKS BLACK BOOT-LICKING GOLDEN SHOWER-GIRL

Now, that's diverse, wouldn't y'all say? Let's see. Out of professional curiosity (and to better serve you, my audience) I'll have to give this lady a call...merely to interview her, of course. ▽



### Questionnaire

(continued from page 27)

becoming active in the near future."

"For years I employed unconscious self-suppression of my lesbian sexuality. After coming out I still don't feel safe enough at most times to give full vent to my sexuality. Some of this continued suppression has to do with habit but also not being with a woman in an "appropriate circumstance" is a factor."

"Many satisfactions with my current relationship account for why I remain in it although it's essentially asexual: emotional satisfaction, social support, involvement with her family, stability, companionship, accommodation for health issues, and loving her."

"I feel it's a constant struggle to shake off the sexual taboos that I was raised with. It was a long time before I realized that these taboos were inhibiting me from expressing myself sexually. Loving a woman has liberated me in many ways. I feel so different, so good. I have a lot of support and love. I feel so strong."

"Sex is what happened to me when I was molested. My sexual expressions are primarily expressed to another through soft touching, cuddling and special eye contact. Rarely do I equate sex with romantic feelings. I would actually prefer to just be with a woman and be close "physically" and not then have "sex" with her. At times my desire to have "sex" or be "sexual" was due to my desire to be close or "intimate" with a woman. Due to my incest at such an early age I have frequently mistaken sexual behavior with my need and desire to have support from or be close to a woman." ▽



# LESBIAN WEEK in Berlin

by Yvonne Kettels  
Berlin, Germany

*Yvonne Kettels is an Afro-German lesbian activist and visual artist from Berlin. She recently moved to the Bay Area.*

...The "Lesbian Week" started and the women of color had a long breakfast in the morning (8 of us)...not that many, eh...but this time we have our own week, workshops and stuff [during the general (white) week]. First time! that they have to deal with a women of color only space...very interesting how reactions are. Again and again I think Germans have a *big, big problem* to see and accept differences, priorities...After that we all went to a panel discussion about sexuality....

Sexuality is the major issue of this Lesbian Week. Ridiculous!! Unbelievable...Inside this paper the organizers of the week gave out, not one workshop, speech or something in a political context. Can you believe it?!! There is a big miss! [Void]. We all agreed to at least speak up at the panel discussion. Wow!! Felt good and also sad that we had to do it, make ourselves visible again, [but] otherwise they would just step over us. Wonder how they can still go on with their racist attitudes.

So before the discussion started, we made up this little theatre scene. All [8] of us spread out in the crowd of 300 women. When the panel discussion started, three of us walked up on stage with a big transparent [banner] "SCHWARZE LESBENWOCHE IS HERE ALSO, AND WE TALK ABOUT A LOT MORE THAN JUST SEX!" Sex, sex, sex...You understand what I mean, right! It's not that we don't like to talk about sex, but!!!

The [women in the audience] and the women on the panel got irritated...One of us started [the theatre scene] yelling names like..."Yara are you here?!" Yara stood up, then Yara yelled, "Ajoke are you here?!" Ajoke stood up. "Yvonne are you here?!" "Yes!" "Dominka are you here?" "Ja, Kim are you here?!" "Ja, Peppa are you here?!" "Tina are you here?!" "Ja, Kerstin are you here?!"

"Ina are you here?!" ..So we all got up together. Together, strong vibes, sisterhood!!! Fighting!

The white women stared, got quiet—the huge quiet all over. Then we all walked out, said that we go to a demonstration *now* against racist attacks. (Which will be every Monday between 1,700-1,800 at the Kndamm business district centre.) If anybody wants to come with us they should come *now!* We said we would come back later, to listen to what they have to say about sex....That's that.

Two hours later we got back to the discussion. I couldn't believe what was going on there. Six women on the panel, trying to talk about sex...not getting down to the basics...not talking about themselves, talking about how difficult it is to talk about "it"??? How can they sit up there if they don't know what their point of view is? How? Nobody in the [audience] seemed to be satisfied, but nobody said something, not a thing!

Though about the USA, how much further the movement is there...seems like there is at least 20 years time difference on issues like sex, racism, difference....What a trip. So, during this discussion I had to stand up and say things...there was this microphone there. At first I was very excited, felt my heartbeat in my throat, but then I was going to confront the "sexperts." Did they react? No, not really...they got quiet, more quiet.

I said things like sex has to do with [desire] and if I had to hear somebody talk about sex I want to hear the [desire] in their words. It's not a head thing. I want to feel free in my language. [I'm] not willing to take out certain words for example, "fucking." "I like to be fucked!" And I say that it feels good. They all had these issues—like how a real dyke is supposed to act, talk, be. It was amazing for me and frightening how sex really is for many women here...Other women said things after I spoke. Voices... ▽



# AXIS OF DESIRE: REDEFINING HOMO

by Aya deLeón

**homo-pref.** *Same: homophone.* [Gk. *homo-* *mos.*] (*American Heritage Dictionary*, Dell Publishing Co.: New York, 1983. p.333.)

The idea of sexual/affectional preference has traditionally been drawn along gender lines:

Q: Who do you prefer to be emotionally and sexually intimate with, women or men?

A: For me as a woman, if the answer is women, I'm homo; if the answer is men, I'm hetero; and if the answer is both, I'm bi.

That's simple. Yet it doesn't even begin to get at my experience of attraction. I am finding that my axis of desire falls along racial rather than gender lines. I think people of African descent are fabulous. I love our skin, bodies, hair and features. I yearn to be in the company of African spirits—be we African-American, Afro-Latin, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-European, Afro-Asian, Interracial or straight off the Continent. I desire Black people. And, yes, this includes boys too.

I want to clarify that this is not a question of *ideology*. It is a question of *experience*; it's not about what I *think*, it's how I *feel*. I am simply not attracted to white women, and white men are completely out of the question. I find that the difference between Black women and men is much smaller than the difference between people of color and white people. This is not to minimize the differences between women and men in the Black community. No, I am painfully aware every day of the severe limitations and afflictions of my Brethren as well as the general differences between women and men, Black or otherwise. Sexism is a reality, as is phallo-centrism, as is gyne-phobia. But I also see how much we, Black women and men, share:

*I like me some full  
lips*

*I wanna get next to  
brown skin in all kind  
of hues*

*I need to touch up on  
some nappy hair*

*My love life has a  
gravitational pull  
toward*

*The Motherland.  
I wanna feel her  
rivers in my lover's  
behind*

*See her night sky in  
my lover's eyes  
Hear her drums in  
my lover's voice*

*My love life has a  
gravitational pull  
toward*

*The Motherland.  
Why fight it?*

geographically, culturally, politically and spiritually. This is not advocacy for Black men and how great they are; this is an act of self-definition. I am affirming my experience and I am speaking my truth as best I know how.

And I do not insist that everyone must truly, in their heart of hearts, be the same way (although I suspect I may be able to get a witness or two). I am certain that there are plenty of women who experience their sexual/affectional preference as being specifically toward women and not just women of the same race. And that's fine. But that's not how I experience my sexuality.

The identity that feels right to me is: homo-racial/woman-identified.

A term like bisexual may be somewhat useful for purposes of description, but it doesn't really express what is true for me. It has, however, been helpful to learn more about bisexuality, especially breaking down myths about it. This gives me another reference point to work with in locating myself.

I know some of my Sisters get upset when we start dragging men into lesbian space and discourse, but this is not really about men. This is about articulating my experience as an Afro-Latina woman and struggling with my identity.

I am providing a freeze-frame of my sexuality and my process—and how I feel at this moment. Because I know that sexuality is like spirituality, it is always emerging, always becoming. ▽



## ***After the Thaw***

by Paula Ross

### **I. Soundings**

A card sent through the mail:

*The week-end comes slowly.*

*I hope to hear you scream.*

And you did.

### **II. Thresholds**

We were due at the museum in half an hour. Instead, you fucked me in the bedroom doorway, just out of sight of the French bitch next door who'd seen us kissing in the kitchen window the night before.

You leaned against the door frame. I climbed your legs. The silence of the house broke with the ragged sounds of our breathing. We consumed the air as greedily as our mouths consumed each other.

"Girl," I said. "Oh, girl."

### **III. Interval**

In your absence, I bank the fires. Still, you hold the match.

In our half-empty beds, we are stripped down to bone's desire.

The days crawl by; the wanting does not fade. I hold my passion close.

### **IV. Butch's Beauty**

I gave an elaborate shrug. As if on cue, the lace strap of my nightgown slithered down my left shoulder.

I reached out and cupped your chin in my hand, pulling you towards me. I kissed you hard on the mouth.

"Oh, God!" you shouted, your voice flying out the open window. "You femmes are all alike!"

"Shut up," I said and pushed you away from me. You toppled easily onto the bed. "Just shut up."



My voice broke with wanting you. "We're going for a little ride," I said. "And this time, I'll do the driving."

### **V. Q & A**

"Did you make love to yourself last night, like I told you?"

"Did you wonder?" I asked, breathing in your breath, your face only inches from mine.

"Yes," you answered reluctantly, half intrigued, half furious.

"Good," I said, and traced the edge of your mouth with a single finger.

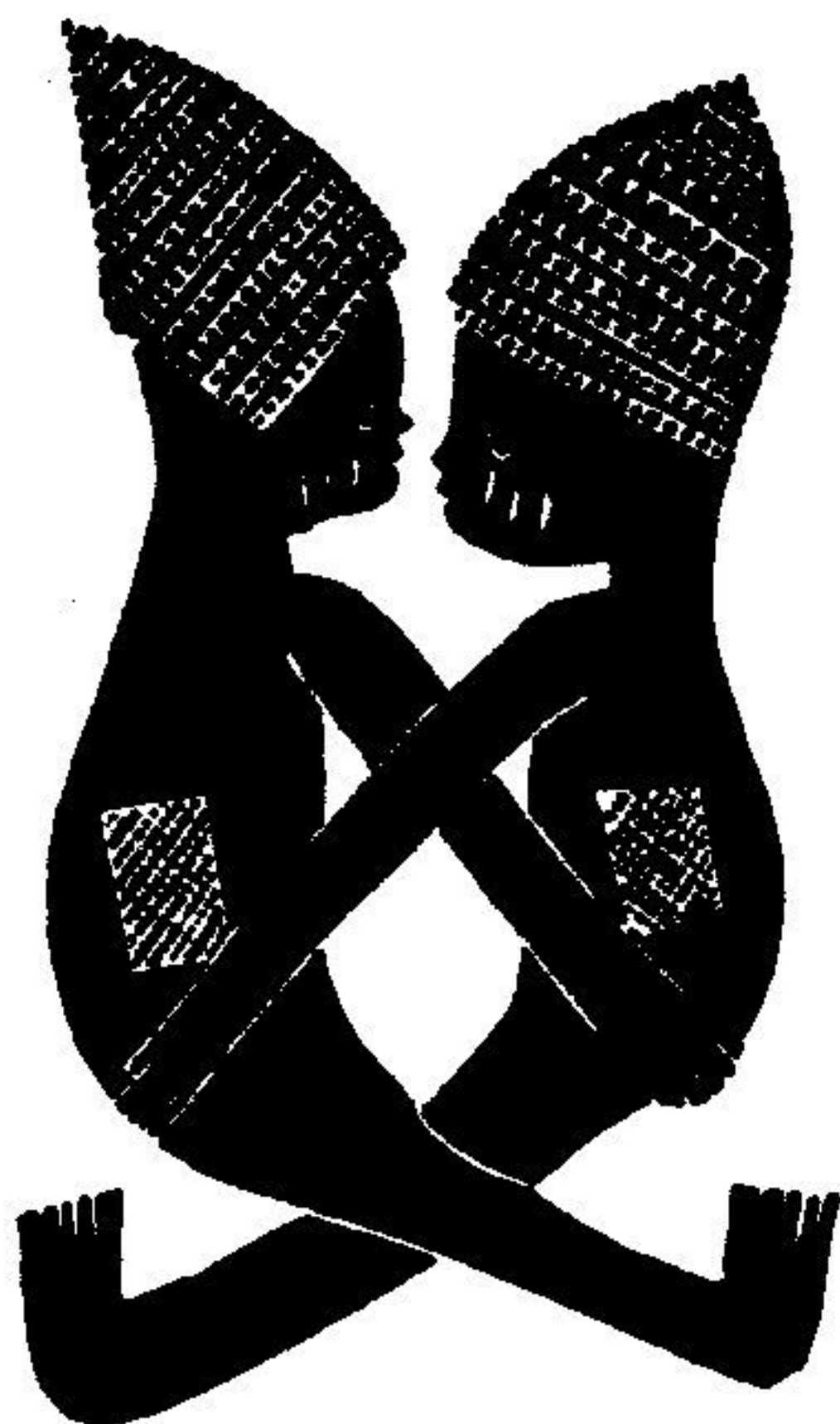
"Bitch," you murmured softly, "bitch," your hand already between my legs.

"Yes," I said. "Oh, yes." ▽



# I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU

by Blake C. Aarens



I hadn't planned to wear the double dildo to the Valentine's Day Dance. It was just that I got so turned on wearing it inside my jeans earlier that day. Standing at the mirror, I liked the way I looked and I liked the way I felt. But I wasn't so sure Beverly would share my enthusiasm. She constantly complained about the "outrageous baby dykes" like myself. She was 39 to my 23.

"All right," I'd said to the contrived bulge in my jeans, "I'll introduce you to Beverly next weekend, I promise."

We'd been looking forward to tonight for almost a year, having gotten together six weeks after last year's Lesbian Love Dance. I'd reserved my rental tux over a month ago, and she'd been sewing herself a red silk dress, a project she absolutely refused to let me see beforehand. I didn't want anything to ruin our evening, but I didn't want to sell it short either.

Now, standing in my living room, I undid the buttons on my 501s and slid them down to my ankles; my panties followed suit. I was scheduled to pick Beverly up in 45 minutes. With both hands, I grabbed the end of the jet black dildo that was protruding from my chocolate brown body. Slowly I pulled on it, my hips rolling forward and then pulling back as the tip left my cunt with a wet, sucking sound. I shuddered.

"Go get in the shower," I said in a weak voice. With my pants down around my ankles, I waddled into the bathroom.

\* \* \* \* \*

I pulled up in front of Beverly's house two minutes ahead of schedule and retrieved my tuxedo jacket from the back seat where I'd draped it to keep the tails from getting crushed. Cradling a dozen roses in my left arm, eleven of them long-stemmed and wrapped in tissue paper, the twelfth fashioned into a wrist corsage, I walked up the front steps. If I knew anything at all about Beverly Carter, M.D., her dress would either be low cut or completely off the shoulder, with little room to even pin a petal, much less a whole flower.

I rang the doorbell and tried to blow my sweaty palms dry. Beverly opened the door, and I lost my voice at the sight of her. She was loveliness itself: her short natural hair glistening, the few strands of gray soft around her face, her breasts practically spilling out of the top of her dress which was, as I'd predicted, off the shoulder. It was also very short. She wore a crinoline underneath which lifted the full skirt away from her round, brown body. Her ample thighs were encased in black hose. My palms were sweating again.



"You like?" Beverly asked, smiling, her mouth as red and moist as the cherries you get with *pina coladas*. I wanted to bite into it. Instead I nodded eagerly and gave her a peck on the cheek and an A-frame hug that kept my pelvis well away from hers. She looked at me puzzled, but I handed her the roses before she could say anything.

\* \* \* \* \*

We made one hell of an entrance at the dance, classic butch and femme. Several people told us they'd thought we were the other way around. We switched up not just to keep people guessing, but to keep each other interested.

We drank and talked and the d.j., a wild woman in red satin pajamas, the top of which she hadn't bothered to button, kept us jamming on the dance floor.

Every so often Beverly would spin away from me and her dress would rise up as she twirled. I could see the tops of her stockings and the garters that held them up. She watched me watching her.

"You like?" she asked again, coming close to whisper in my ear.

"Yes. I like."

She threw her head back like she does when she comes and laughed out loud. Then she twirled away and danced with her back to me. That meant I could look at her body without having to contend with the demands of her eyes. And I did just that, thinking all the while of what I'd like to do. Liberate her breasts from inside that dress. Run my face along her stockinged legs. Suck on that cherry red mouth. Share my new toy with her.

Why didn't I?

Because I was afraid. Afraid she'd be disgusted at the notion of dykes with dildos. Afraid she'd give me a lecture on the political incorrectness of lesbians using anything remotely resembling a penis during sex. Or worst of all, afraid she'd accuse me of

wanting to be a man; or wanting her to be.

But I really wanted to take her hand and say, Dr. Beverly? Do you realize that I'm wearing half a double dildo inside my body, and the other half I'm saving for you?

"What's the matter?" she asked me, interrupting my thoughts with a touch on the cheek and a worried look on her face.

"Nothing," I said.

The d.j. picked that moment to play the first slow song of the evening. I panicked, dropped Beverly's hand and headed for the table we'd claimed when we first entered the hall.

"What is the matter with you," she said, standing in front of the table with her hands on her hips. "Don't you want to dance with me?"

"Of course I do, just not to this song." I caught myself with my hands crossed over my lap and I forced them to rest lightly on the tabletop.

"To what song, then?"

"I just don't feel like slow dancing."

"It's Valentine's Day," Beverly said, in clipped tones. "That's what it's for."

Just then, my ex-lover, heretofore known only as the "wicked bitch of the West" came up to the table. Her jeri curl was dripping onto her collar. Ignoring me, she held her hand out to Beverly. "You look marvelous. Would you like to dance?"

Looking directly into my eyes, Beverly responded, "I'd love to." She disappeared onto the dance floor.

I gave myself a good talking to. "Look," I said, "you have one of two choices: either go into the bathroom and take that damn thing out of your pants, or go onto the dance floor as you are and show the woman you love what you really got her for Valentine's Day."

"Excuse me," I said, tapping my ex on the shoulder, "but you're dancing with my woman." My ex departed coolly.

I took a deep breath, wrapped my arms



around Beverly, and pulled her to me. I felt her body tense up as our thighs met. Then she started moving to the music.

"Oooh. You're bad," she whispered into my ear.

"I try to be."

"Is this for me?"

"It's for both of us, a new friend."

"And just when did you plan to introduce me," Beverly asked, leaning her shoulders away to look into my face.

"After the dance. I couldn't get up the courage to do it before then."

"Baby," Beverly stopped moving to the music, "as far as I'm concerned, the dance is over." She took me by the hand and led me off the dance floor. Breezing past the table with me in tow, she picked up her wrap and purse. Out in the parking lot, she pressed me up against the car, kissed me full on the mouth, dropped her keys into my hand and said, "Take me home and fuck me."

I didn't have to be told twice.

I couldn't look at her the whole drive home. I was afraid I'd wreck the car if I did. When I pulled into her driveway and took the key out of the ignition, she was all over me: her mouth on mine, her hands on my breasts, squeezing my nipples through the fabric of my shirt. She started undoing the buttons.

"I'm going to freeze if you undress me out here," I said.

"So come inside." She jumped out of the car and ran into the house.

I followed a trail of clothes to her bedroom. First the wrap, then her shoes, then the red dress. I picked it up off the floor; it was still warm. It smelled like her. When I appeared in the doorway holding it, she laughed.

"Why hold the dress when you can hold the woman?" Sitting on the bed, she was wearing only a merry widow, her skin

showing through the white lace. Her stockinged legs were crossed. She motioned for me to come in.

I dropped the dress and went to her. She made me stand perfectly still while she slowly undressed me. First the jacket which she carefully hung over the chair at the foot of her bed. Then the cuff links and buttons which she laid in a neat pile on her dresser. She took my shirt off; I wasn't wearing a bra. She kissed me. My mouth. My throat. The points of both shoulders. My nipples. I lifted my feet out of the shoes; she slid my pants and panties down my legs and off. She grabbed my ass and pulled me to her, ground her thighs into mine until the dildo was smashed between us.

"You are so bad," she said again. I nodded in agreement as she undid the harness that had held the dildo. She grabbed the end that was sticking out of my body and began to pull on it. I closed my eyes and groaned. She stopped pulling.

"Oh no," she said, "you have to look at me."

With effort, I opened my eyes, matched her gaze. Slowly, she drew the dildo out of my body, then just as slowly put it back where it had come from. I couldn't control the shaking in my legs.

Beverly bent her knees and teased herself with the free end of the dildo, letting it poke between her legs or just enter her cunt before she'd pull away.

"Work it Dr. Beverly, work it."

"I intend to."

Then she whispered my name and let the dildo enter her a little more. "Alice." More. Finally, we were belly to belly. She clenched her pubic muscles and made the dildo jerk inside me. I sucked in air through clenched teeth. She parted my teeth with her tongue and kissed me.

"Happy Valentine's Day, baby," she said.

© Blake C. Aarens



# Calendar (February/March)

**Want to get your event listed in the Aché calendar?**

deadline for next issue:  
**March 20, 1992**  
(For April, May & June events)

The March 20th deadline is for calendar listings only.

## **Mondays**

Gay comedy open mike. 8pm, \$4. Performers sign up by phone by 7pm. Josie's Cabaret, 3583 - 16th St., S.F. Info/Reservations: (415) 861-7933.

## **Wednesday-Sunday • thru February 16**

**"Re-membering Aunt Jemima: An Act of Magic"** written by Glenda Dickerson & Breana Clarke. This is a bold new work, shattering myths and stereotypes about African-American women. Lorraine Hansberry Theater, 620 Sutter St., S.F. (415) 346-5509.

## **Wednesday-Sunday • thru March 8**

**"Dark Fruit,"** a new show by **Pomo Afro Homos**, continues to explore the contradictions of Black gay life. Tickets: \$10. Josie's Cabaret & Juice Joint, 16th St. at Market in S.F. For reservations/info: (415) 861-7933.

## **Tuesday-Sunday • February 11-16**

Vocalist **Patti Austin** will be performing at Kimball's East, 5800 Shellmound in Emeryville. Showtimes are 8 & 10pm weeknights (\$15), 9 & 11pm Friday & Saturday (\$18). Info/Reservations: (510) 658-2555.

## **Thursday-Monday • February 13-17**

**"Black Lesbians and Gays Weaving The Future"** The 5th Annual Black Gay & Lesbian Conference will be held at the Oakland Airport Hilton Hotel, #1 Hegenberger Rd. in Oakland. Featuring dozens of workshops, cultural events, speakers, and several day-long institutes, this promises to be the largest and most exciting gathering of Black lesbians & gay men from around the country. For information call (510) 635-5000.

## **Friday • February 14**

**"Tongues On Fire: An Evening of Black Lesbian & Gay Erotica"** featuring **Blackberri, SDiane Bogus, Wayne Corblitt, Jewelle Gomez, Stephanie Henderson**. Emcee: KGB, 7:30pm. Donation \$5-10 SS. Women's Building, 3543 -

18th St., S.F. This event is a benefit for Woman in the Moon Publications and Modern Times; Expansion Fund.

## **Tuesday • February 18**

Erotic Reading Circle at Good Vibrations. Women of all preferences and proclivities are invited to this informal monthly gathering. Bring any erotic writing, published or unpublished, poetry or prose, smutty or sublime, yours or someone else's, and share it with the group. 7-9pm, punctuality appreciated. 1210 Valencia St., S.F. For info & date of March gathering call (415) 550-7399.

## **Wednesday-Sunday • February 19-23**

**The Dance Theater of Harlem** will be performing at Zellerbach Auditorium on the U.C. Berkeley campus. Tix: \$14-\$30. For reservations call (510) 642-9988.

## **Thursday • February 20**

**"Alice Walker: Visions of the Spirit."** Filmmaker **Elena Featherston** will be present for discussion and to answer your questions. 8pm. \$3-10 (no one turned away for lack of funds.) Old Wives Tales, 1009 Valencia St., S.F. Info: (415) 821-4675.

**TELEVISION - "Joan Armatrading: The Concert"** Her performance, taped live at London's Hammersmith Odeon is her final concert from the world tour which promotes her 13th album, "The Shouting Stage." 12am. channel 9, KQED.

## **Sunday • February 23 & March 29**

**The Toybox West** (a monthly entertainment extravaganza for womyn.) We begin the evening with card and board games, then feature a special performance by **Ms. Teri**, who will introduce you to the fine art of tasteful and sensuous strip-tease, followed by hours of dancing to the popular music of our female d.j. 6pm-11:30pm. Admission: \$9. Taverna Athena, 201 Broadway in Oakland. For info, directions, or to be placed on the Toybox mailing list call (510) 235-9346.

## **Wednesday-Sunday • March 5-April 11**

**"Twice Over"** a play written by black British playwright Jackie Kay. This tender humorous play asks the question "Was Grandma gay?" The answer cuts across racial and generational lines. The cast includes **Blake C. Aarens** and **Belinda Sullivan**. Tickets \$11-17. Theatre Rhinoceros, 2926 - 16th St. in S.F. For information: (415) 861-5079.

## **Thursday • March 5**

Book Party/Reading for the new lesbian of color anthology: **Piece of My Heart**, featuring Bay Area contributors. 8pm. Modern Times Bookstore, 968 Valencia St., S.F.

## **Thursday • March 12**

**La Red Latino Americano!** Report back by **Cherrie Moraga** and others on the recent first coordinating council meeting in Managua, Nicaragua for the newly formed coalition of



Latin American gay and lesbian activists. 8pm. Modern Times Bookstore, 968 Valencia St., S.F.

**Good Vibrations 15th Anniversary Bash!** Yes, Good Vibrations is 15 years old and in that time it's evolved from Joani Blank's tiny, one-woman vibrator store into a booming mail order and retail empire employing 16 worker-owners. They couldn't have done it without you, their customers, so please join them for this celebration. **Susie Bright** will emcee, fashion show courtesy of Stormy Leather. 7-10pm. 1210 Valencia St., S.F. Info: (415) 550-7399.

### **Sunday • March 22**

**"Les Femmes;" a Women's Jazz Club** with hostess Boa. Attend the grand opening and enjoy live performances by a women's jazz ensemble and performance artist **Edris Cooper**. 9pm-1am. \$10. Rassela's, 2801 California at Divisadero in S.F. For info contact Brat Pack Hotline: (415) 621-6318.

### **Tuesday-Sunday • March 24-29**

After more than 35 years, **Nancy Wilson** still retains her distinctly smooth, sophisticated, full-flavored sound. See this living legend perform selections from her new album and more, backed up by her trio. Kimball's East, 5800 Shellmound, Emeryville. Shows are 8 & 10pm weeknights (\$18), 9 & 11pm Friday and Saturday (\$20). Info/Reservations (510) 658-2555.

### **Wednesday • March 25**

**The Aché Series** returns: with a screening of the film **"Sisters In The Struggle"** which explores the diversity, vision and impetus of the contemporary Black women's movement in Canada. 7:30 pm. Donation. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave. at Woolsey St. in Berkeley. (2 blks. east of Ashby BART.) No one is ever turned away for lack of funds.

### **Sunday • March 29**

**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 dj. Admission: \$9. 200 beautiful sistahs on the last Sunday of each month. For information on the new location, directions, or to be placed on the mailing list, call (510) 235-9346. Put your best face forward, because in The Toybox...The Toys R Us!

### **Tuesday • March 31**

**"Living On The Edge,"** an 11-piece all-woman ensemble featuring India Cooke, violin, and Angela Wellman, trombone, will bring you an electrifying evening of music at 8 & 10pm at Yoshi's, 6030 Claremont Ave. in Oakland. For information call (510) 653-0822.

# The Aché Series returns...

Showcasing Black, Lesbian/Gay, Women's culture, the Aché series brings you an evening of entertainment featuring film & video screenings, live performances, an eclectic crowd & a stimulating environment. Held the last Wednesday of every month beginning in March...

## **March 25th, 7:30pm**

A screening of "Sisters in the Struggle," a unique film exploring the diversity, vision and impetus of the contemporary Black women's movement in Canada. Donation.

## **La Peña Cultural Center**

3105 Shattuck Ave.,  
at Woolsey St. in Berkeley  
(2 blks. east of Ashby BART)



# Bulletin Board

## Aché Ad Rates

BULLETIN BOARD: Service & Job Listings—25 words or less costs \$20 per issue. Any message over 25 words will cost an additional \$20. Listings should not exceed 50 words. All other bulletin board announcements are free of charge to lesbians of African descent.

To insert your flyer for mailing with the Aché journal we ask \$25-\$100 donation to help cover mailing costs. For more information on inserts contact Adalia at (510) 601-6844.

## Conferences/ Festivals

The 16th annual Conference of the Southeastern Women's Studies Association will be held March 12-15, 1992 at the University of South Florida, Tampa. The theme for the conference is "Celebrating Feminisms and the Diversity of Women." For registration info please contact Laura Ellenburg, USF Division of Conferences and Institutes, 4202 East Fowler Ave., HMS 413, Tampa, Florida, 33620-8350. (813)974-2403.

WEST COAST LESBIANS' FESTIVAL: will be held June 5-7, 1992 in a comfortable wooded camp in Malibu. It will be a Lesbian pride celebration with a special emphasis on creating a multicultural Lesbian event. Lillian Allen, Karen Williams, Sue Fin, Alix Dobkin and many more comedians, singers, artists, dancers, etc. For info call/write Particular Productions, 279 Lester Ave. #3, Oakland, CA 94606 (510) 763-9228.

EAST COAST LESBIANS' FESTIVAL will be held on June 18-21, 1992 at their site on the NY/PA border. Full program of music, art, comedy, workshops, readings, panels will be presented. Lesbian Healers planning conference will be held, and ASL intensives (pre and during festival) will be held. Performers include Lillian Allen, Rashida Oji, Karen Williams, India Cooke,

and others, with a special appearance by Margie Adam. For more info: Particular Productions, 279 Lester Ave. #3, Oakland, CA 94606 (510) 763-9228.

The 14th National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference & 10th Annual AIDS/HIV Forum: July 8-12, 1992, Los Angeles CA. Making Helath Care Human: The Impact of Age, Gender and Race. Special Emphasis: Strategis for Inclusion- Responding to the Changing Face of AIDS. Write now for registration and preliminary program: NLGHF Registration, c/o The George Washington University Medical Center, Office of Continuing Education, 2300 K St. NW, Washington, DC 20037.

CARIBBEAN WOMEN WRITERS CONFERENCE: Curacao, July 28-31, 1992. The conference intends to build a strong platform for women writers, to meet in order to further define and enact their commitment to the future. Themes include The Caribbean and female vision for the 21st century. Conference includes panels on subjects like the multi-cultural prism and the indigenizing process, the internalization of class, color, colonial and gender oppression in the writing of Caribbean women writers, theater as an educational tool for building national consciousness and women's pride, and the single mother and her experience. For info write Drs. Joceline Clemencia, Chairperson of the Third International Caribb-

ean Women Writers Conference, Buro of Language Affairs, Sede di Papiamentu, Scharlooweg 29, Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, phone (5999)616471. Act now—paper deadlines have past and space is filling up.

## Groups

Black Lesbian Support Group for women in multicultural relationships. Meets 1st Sunday of month in Oakland. Info: (510) 839-3302/653-5732

BAYBLAG (Bay Area Black Lesbians and Gays) meet to network, socialize, educate, do political work, have fun. Info: Midgett (415) 648-3658

Black Woman's Support Group for Rape and Incest Survivors: Give and get validation; share feelings and similar experiences; understand how the hurt still affects you; develop sisterhood. Led by Dere-thia C. Dual, MFCC with 15 years experience as an individual and couples therapist. Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:30; Future Worlds Foundation Center, 4171 Piedmont Ave, Oakland (across from Piedmont Theatre). For more info call (510) 652-9918

SISTAH SISTAH: The new lesbian/bisexual women of color support/social/rap group at UC Berkeley. Meets weekly. For more info call the Women's Resource Center at (510) 642-4786.

Lesbians of Color/Third World Lesbian Support Group: meets Thurs, 6:30-8pm; \$3 donation (no one turned away); Pacific Center, Telegraph and Derby, Berk. For info call Camille Barber, (510) 548-8283.

Multi-Cultural Bisexual Lesbian Gay Alliance: UC Berkeley. Women's social group every Thurs. 8-10pm. Women's



Resource Center Library (Golden Bear Bldg. 2nd floor). All women invited for film nights, conversation, community sensuality, debates, play, and more...

United Colors of Queer Nation: Direct action group for queers of color to bring common issues to the foreground and increase visibility. For info on mtgs and actions call John, (415) 821-6108/985-7141

Old Lesbians Organizing Committee: The OLOC is a national steering committee of Old Lesbians, 60 and over. It is committed to networking with Old Lesbians everywhere in order to: confront ageism within our own community; explore who we are and name our oppression; analyze the experiences of ageism, which has been so little defined; develop and disseminate educational material; facilitate formation of new groups and stimulate existing groups to confront ageism; make our presence a visible force in the women's movement. OLOC is asking for donations for the publication of the "Facilitator's Handbook On Confronting Ageism for Lesbians 60 and Over." For more info on donations and contact people in your area write to: OLOC PO Box 980422, Houston, TX 77098

## Job Listings

OLD WIVES TALES: is looking for a fourth woman to join its collective. They're looking for someone to pitch in with experience, commitment, and enthusiasm. This is a full time plus position, as one of four equal partners responsible for every aspect of operating a 15-year-old small business open seven days a week. Salary: \$19,000 (negotiable, depending on experience) plus Med, dent. and life insurance and vacation after six months. Ex-

perience: small business, retail, and bookstore background a plus. Women of color and lesbians encouraged to apply. 1000 Valencia St., SF, CA. (415) 821-4675.

OLD WIVES TALES: Responsibilities: general sales, logging in and shelving, assisting with author appearances. Hours: Thursday: 6-10pm, Friday: 11am-7pm. Saturday: 11am-7pm. Salary: \$6/hr. Experience: small business, retail, bookstore. (415) 821-4675.

The Modern Times Bookstore Collective is seeking to expand and diversify. We're looking for a motivated person with capacity for detail work, love of books, progressive politics, ability to work in collective situation & relate to the public. Bookstore and promotional experience. Spanish language skills strongly desirable. 4 or 5 days/week, \$17K FTE to start. People of color urged to apply. Send resume and cover letter describing why you want this job by March 15th to Modern Times, 968 Valencia St. in S.F., 94110.

POLITICAL PUBLISHING AT THE SOUTH END PRESS: The South End Press collective is a non-profit publisher of over 150 nonfiction books of progressive politics. The list gives particular attention to the interreaction of race, gender, economics, and political power. They are currently seeking another activist/editor to join them as a full-time collective member. The position involves all aspects of manuscript solicitation and editing, computerized book production, and business management. Members must make a two year commitment. Knowledge of and commitment to progressive ideas and activism is essential. Salary is currently \$22,000 with additional childcare for parents. Benefits include 4wks. vacation, full health and dental insurance, and a year-long sabbatical at the end of five years. Please send resume and letter describing

your political and publishing experience. People of color encouraged to apply. South End Press, 116 St. Botolph St., Boston, MA 02115. (610) 266-0629.

## Notices

PRODUCERS WANTED!!! Aché is looking for black women with experience in producing events who are interested in working on The Aché Series and other upcoming Aché fundraisers. If you'd like to get involved please send your name, phone number, and production experience to Lisbet, Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706.

BRAINY, ARTSY GALS - A monthly art salon for lesbians only. Come share a light potluck, socializing, and the sharing and appreciation of art by Bay Area lesbians. Anyone interested in participating, please contact Leslie at (415) 824-4401.

MULTI-ETHNIC /CULTURAL LESBIAN SOCCER TEAM now forming in the South Bay. Going to the Gay Games. If you are in shape and excited about playing soccer come out and play. Call (408) 279-0974.

Bay Area Lesbian Co Housing Group is meeting to build a cluster of private homes around a common house. Call (510) 527-4582 or (415) 883-6016.

Baker New Place, San Francisco: is a 90 day co-ed residential treatment program designed to help service and facilitate HIV+ substance abuse clients. Based on a 12 step recovery program with special emphasis on social rehabilitation and other therapy toward change in lifestyle. Baker New Place has openings for HIV+ clients. For more info call (415) 346-6193.

Old Wives' Tales Discount Card Pro-



gram-- Become an OWT Supporter-- for \$25 you'll receive a 10% discount on all books purchased for an entire year. For more info call OWT (415) 821-4675 or write: 1009 Valencia St., SF, CA, 94110.

**ANKH ENTERPRISES:** African Clothiers. Handmade African Clothing with an American Flair by mail order. For a catalogue write ANKH ENTERPRISES, PO Box 46085, Los Angeles, CA 90046. (213)850-7203

Artists of Color Open Mike Night at Ohama Cultural Ctr. Every 2nd and 4th Thurs of month, 7pm, \$5. 4345 Telegraph Ave, Oakland. Info: (510) 658-1868

## Publications

**Aché:** A Journal For Lesbians of African Descent is a bi-monthly publication by, for, and about black lesbian diversity. We accept submissions which explore the lives, opinions, herstory, and culture of our communities across the globe. Single issue: \$4. Subscription: \$18-25 yr. Aché, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706. Phone: (510) 849-2819.

**BLK:** a national black lesbian and gay newsmagazine featuring profiles & interviews, excellent coverage of current events, and a comprehensive media watch. Single issue: \$2. Subscription: \$18/yr./\$30/2 yrs. BLK, Box 83912, Los Angeles, CA 90083-0912. Phone: (213) 410-0808.

**Black Lace,** an erotic quarterly from BLK publications. Crossing over the threshold of the politically correct to another, more intimate kind of sisterhood. "Let's celebrate," says editor Alycee Lane. "Let us share our fantasies frankly, honestly even brutally...to hell with what we've taught ourselves to think. Pledge allegiance to

your entire black woman selves." Single copy: \$6. Subscription: \$20 yr./\$36-2 yrs. Black Lace, Box 83912, Los Angeles, CA 90083-0912. Phone: (213) 410-0808/fax (213) 410-9250.

**KUUMBA** is a new literary magazine for lesbians and gay African Americans. The quarterly features poetry from across the country and from Africa as well. It's name comes from one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa, meaning "creativity." Single issue: \$4.50. Subscription: \$15 yr./\$28-2 yrs. KUUMBA, Box 83912, Los Angeles, CA 90083-0912.

**MAMARROOTS: AJAMAJEBI** - an Afragoddess spiritual and cultural network. Join our innovative and international sistahood! Our quarterly publication is dedicated to Afrikan Matristic Spirituality, Mythology, Herstory, Culture, & Politics. We welcome \$\$ contributions and submissions in the form of articles, reviews, images, short stories, rituals, events, correspondence, and resources. Membership/subscription \$18-25 yr. Asungi Productions, 3661 No. Campbell Ave., Suite 108. Tucson, AZ 85719-1524. Phone: (602) 327-0987.

## Services

**Saundra Lebbly, MSW,** psychotherapist--interested in working with clients of color. Micaela Lovett, supervisor. License MFC 23665. Sliding Scale. (510) 534-5006

**COUNSELING FOR WOMEN** — "Let's break the bonds of the emotions of oppression and fly with the sun in our hearts" Simbwala, (510) 531-5103

**GWEN AVERY FOR HAIR** — Precision haircuts, styles, colors and perms. For appt. call (415) 550-7666.

## Submissions Wanted

**THE LESBIAN WRITERS FUND** annually awards five emerging lesbian writers \$11,000 each (3 in fiction, 2 in poetry.) The Lesbian Writer's Fund of the Astraea Foundation is now accepting entries for the 1992 cycle. The deadline is March 13, 1992. Applicants must have published at least one piece of work in a magazine, literary journal, or anthology. A completed application form and writing sample must be submitted by March 13, 1992 to be considered for a grant in 1992. For guidelines, eligibility criteria and application form, write to Lesbian Writers Fund, Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation, 666 Broadway, Suite 520, New York, NY 10012.

**AT THE CROSSROADS** is a brand new visual, performing and literary arts journal for women artists of African descent! Arising from the virtual absence of documentation of Black Canadian women's art, and the apparent need for a cultural and political magazine encompassing a wide range of issues, ATC aims to become a creative outlet for artists here and abroad. Manuscript of poetry, short stories, journal entries, experimental writing, radio plays, theatre, interviews, screen plays, transcribed performance pieces, and all other forms of creative writing are welcome. Also welcome are submissions of visual art-- line drawings, mixed media, painting, quilts, sculpture, beadwork, photographs, etc. At the Crossroads is especially interested in receiving submissions from women in the Maratimes region who have not yet been published. Accompany your work with a brief bio and any other relevant info. Please send photographs or photocopies of art work-- no originals. All work not sent in self-addressed, stamped envelope will not be



returned. All photographs will be returned. Send to: At the Crossroads: A Journal for Women of African Descent c/o Karen Augustine, PO Box 317, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S8, Canada

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**PAT PARKER MEMORIAL POETRY AWARD:** Women In The Moon Publications is a Black-owned, Women-owned California poetry and reference book publisher. WIM announces the yearly poetry competition for African-American feminist poets in memory of Black Feminist poet, Pat Parker, who died in June 1989. The \$250.00 award is given annually to the winner of the competition. This year's winner, Laura Irene Wayne, is featured in the Feb./March *Aché*. Poets or organizations interested in submitting work to be considered for the 1992 award may write or call WIM Publication for the rules of submission. Submission season is between March 1 and May 31 each year. For info contact WIM Publications, Box 137 2215-R Market St., San Francisco, CA 94114. (408) 253-3329.

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**MIXED-RACE/ LIGHT SKINNED?** Autobiographical contributions, text and visuals, for book by mixed-race/ light skinned Black lesbians. For further info contact SS, c/o BM 4390, London WC1N 3XX, England.

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**EATING OUR HEARTS OUT:** Women and Food, edited by Leslea Newman to be published by Crossing Press seeks first person non-fiction narratives by women about eating and food. Will consider some fiction and poetry. Maximum: ten pages. Include 50 word bio. Send SASE and stamped envelope to: PO Box 815, Northampton, MA 01061. Deadline: June 15, 1992.

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**HOW DO I LOVE ME? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS:** Writings by Women On Self-Love seeks love poems

by women to themselves for anthology. Will also consider short prose (500 word max). Include 50 word bio. Send SASE plus stamped business-sized envelope to: Leslea Newman, PO Box 815, Northampton, MA 01061. Deadline: June 15, 1992.

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**BLACK LESBIAN CULTURE BOOK** being compiled. Seeking past and present photographs, names, organizations, anecdotes and rumors, song titles and lyrics, publications, notes on personal style, lovemaking tips, recipes, black and white artwork, references, herstory and heroes, conferences, ANYTHING by, about, for Black Lesbians. Also need fund-raising ideas! Contact Terri Jewell, PO Box 23154, Lansing, MI 48909, or call (517) 485-3500 anytime.

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**TAKE BACK THE NIGHT:** a multi-cultural lunar calendar is seeking women visual artists and women writers to contribute to the 1993 calendar. Please write to Full Womoon Productions, PO Box 1205, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 for guidelines.

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**BLOODLINES: WRITINGS BY LESBIAN SISTERS:** Is accepting submissions for anthology to be published by gynergy books, a lesbian-owned feminist press in Charlottetown, PEI. Send us prose, photos, letters, and journal entries written either individually or collectively with your lesbian sister(s). We are interested in the relationships between lesbian sisters, family or origin stories, coming out stories and place in the wider lesbian community. We hope to receive submissions which reflect the diverse experiences of lesbian sisters with respect to locale, race, ability, age, culture, class and religion. Submissions will be considered from all interested sisters, but preference will be given to Canadian work. Payment upon publication. Include SASE (international Reply Coupons). Deadline is January 31, 1992.

Write to Jan and Lynn Andrews, Editors, PO Box 4273, Stn. E, Ottawa, ONT., Canada K1S 5B3.

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**FROM NOW ON** will be the first anthology to showcase and give voice to the younger generation of lesbians and gay men. Submit if you were born in 1966 or later: were 3 or younger at the time of Stonewall, and 14 or younger at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. This age group represents a new generation of lesbians and gay men. Those born in the late 60's or early 70's have taken for granted the existence of gay rights lobbying organizations, openly-gay politicians, entertainers and writers, and expressly gay publications. Because of these and other experiences this generation tells very different stories from our predecessors. Send submissions and SASE and short bio by January 31, 1992 to: Michael Lowenthal, PO Box A-164, Hanover, NH 03755.

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**SIXTEENTH SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY FILM FESTIVAL-- CALL FOR ENTRIES:** Frameline is now accepting entries for the festival to be held June 19-28, 1992. Frameline, a non-profit lesbian and gay media arts organization is accepting entries in the following formats: 35mm, 16mm, super-8, 3/4" and 1/2" (NTSC). The deadline for entries is March 1, 1992. There is no entry fee, but return postage must accompany all entries. The Festival is committed to representing the diversity of lesbian and gay communities, and particularly welcome work by women and people of color. Entries are encouraged in any genre or form: documentaries, fiction, experimental, animation, shorts and features. For more info and entry forms contact Frameline, PO Box 14792, San Francisco, CA 94114. (415) 861-5245.



Aché is looking for submissions from lesbians of African descent around the world!! Please send us your:

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LETTERS  
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CONFERENCE REPORTS  
FICTION/NON-FICTION  
BOOK/FILM/MUSIC REVIEWS**

**& YOUR OPINIONS ON THE  
ISSUES & CURRENT EVENTS  
AFFECTING YOUR LIVES**

Let us hear from you  
today!!

Aché,  
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Albany, CA 94706

(See pg. 3 for  
submission guidelines)

# Aché



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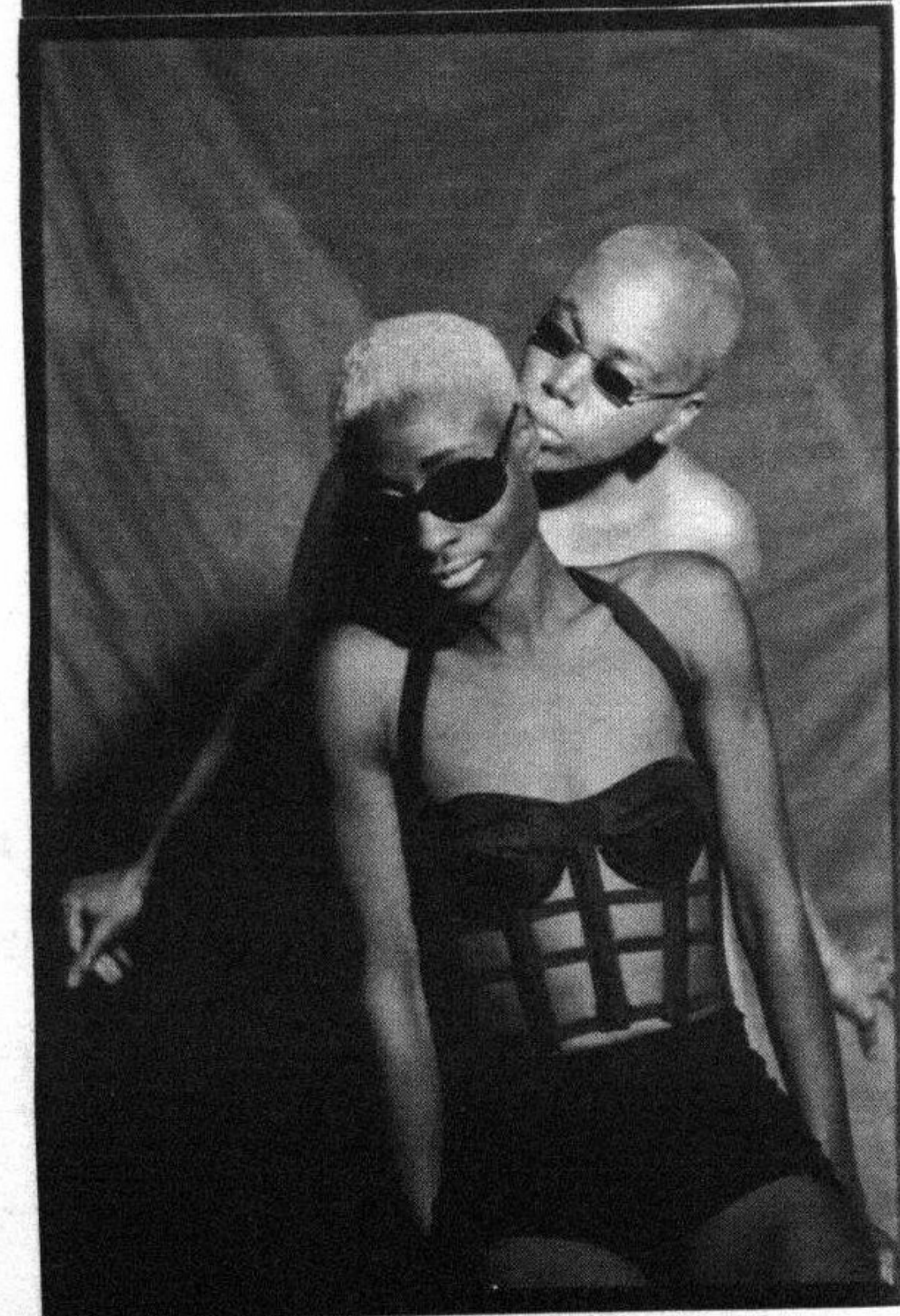
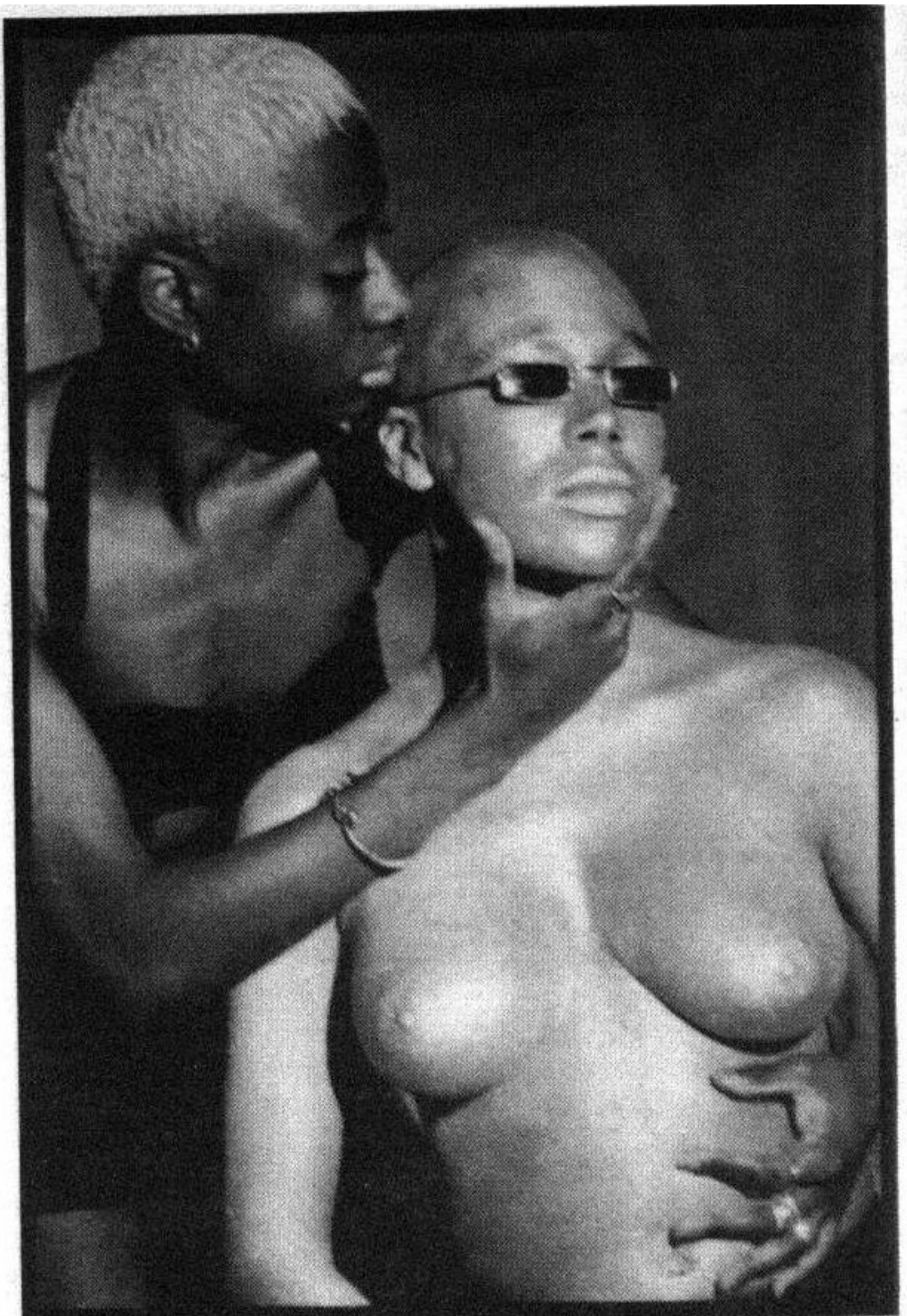
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