

# AKHE

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A JOURNAL FOR LESBIANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT



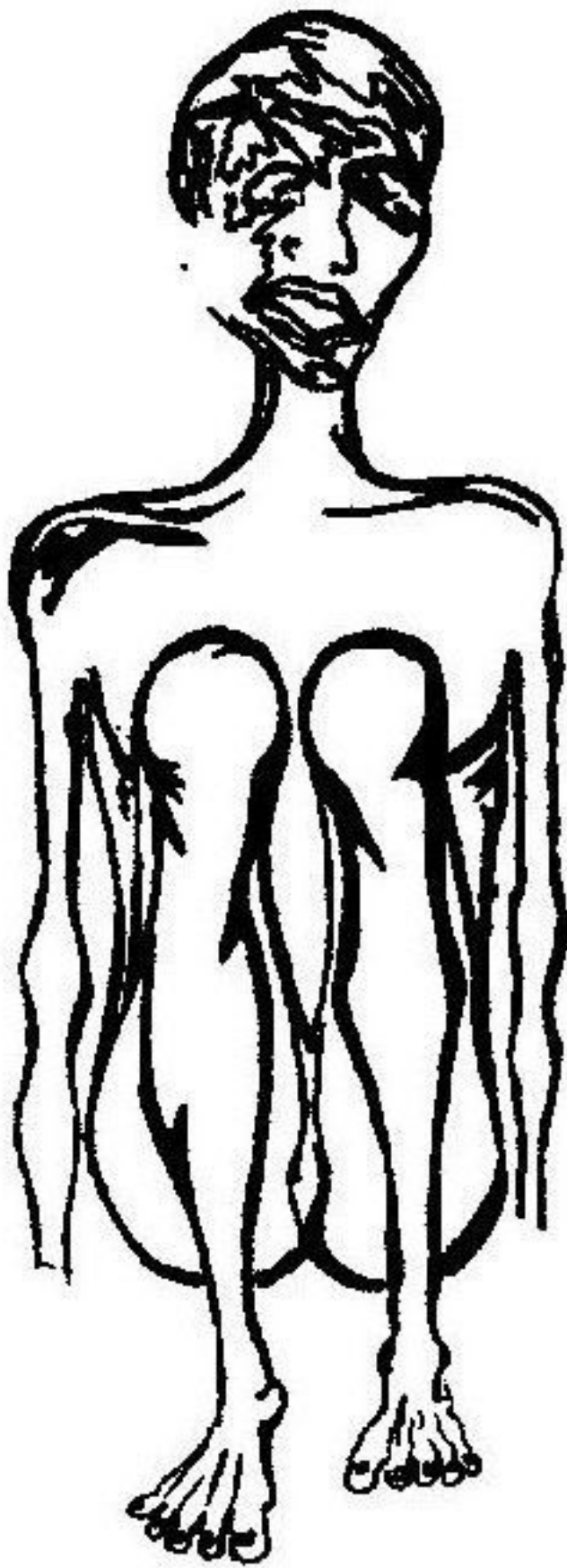
**INSIDE: FEATURED ARTIST: K. MCGILL ▼ INTERVIEW: LINDA VILLAROSA**



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JULY/AUGUST 1992  
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I love me. Recently these three simple words took me weeks to say to myself. I had a difficult time telling myself that I loved me. Like many women, heterosexual and lesbian, I have an ongoing monologue with my body. Often the monologue is critical, telling me what is not right or more accurately, what lacks perfection. So needless to say writing this column has been challenging.

For many loving oneself is a foreign concept. It simply does not occur to us that we need to consciously think about whether or not we love ourselves. If asked this question by a stranger or even a friend, I would automatically answer, 'of course I love myself, what kind of question is that?' At times denial comes so easily.

Yet how we see ourselves directly affects how we feel about who we are. For some the act of rising from bed each day is self loving. For others it may be taking a candlelit bath or eating a good meal. And yet for some standing up for who their rights is an act of self love.

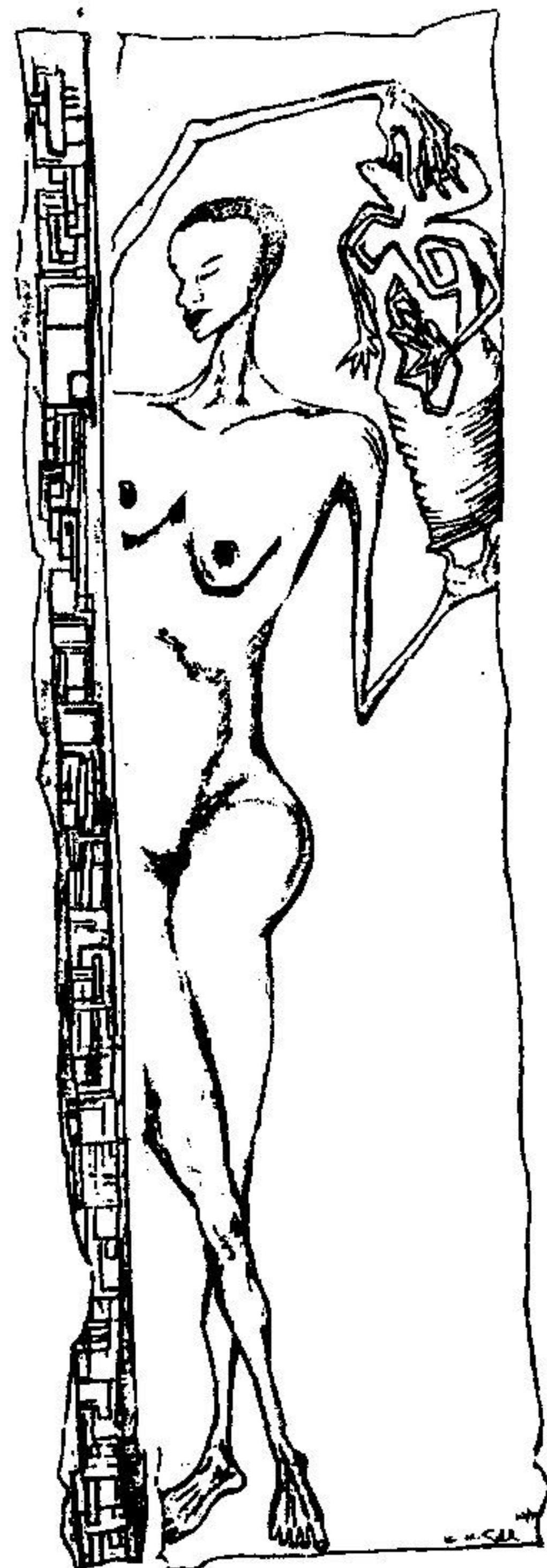
It took tremendous courage on the part of Rodney King to stand up for his human rights before a judge and jury and four white police officers in court. Despite the fact that these men were acquitted of charges they now face charges of violating Rodney King's civil

rights. It took courage on the part of Anita Hill to stand before the Senate Judiciary Committee to state that she had been sexually harassed by now Justice Clarence Thomas.

However, some of us struggle to simply to hold on. Some, give up. On June 7, 1992 at 2:15 am at the corner of Sixth and Harrison in SF, a 23 year old sistah took her own life. She had a gun in her possession and in many ways cried out for help. No one was willing or able to help her. She is one among many lesbians, gay men, people of African descent who are in too much pain. Though suicide has no color, sex or sexual identification attached to it she was one of us.

I want to see us take care of our own. I want to create resources that will meet the needs of our community. We can point the finger at no one. I send a call out to our readers: become involved within your communities about suicide prevention, and how we can go about establishing hotlines and safe places for people of color and report back to Aché. We will publish the responses.

Aché has a new look. We have worked with Zestop Publishing, a woman of color owned company located in San Francisco, to produce this issue. I hope that anyone who picks up a copy of Aché will enjoy our new layout. Readers will note the absence of the Aché calendar. We have decided to provide an insert



calendar which will contain more up-to-date events. With this issue we welcome Mercedes, our new Health Editor.

**Natalie**

*We dedicate this issue to the memory of Kate Fletcher "Jasmin."*



## ACHÉ 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 us 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 the person or persons.

## ACHÉ 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 as well as 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.

## ACHÉ PROJECT PAGE

### FROM THE CHAIR

#### My Sisters, My Sistahs,

Aché is surviving and it is because of all of you reading Aché, donation \$ and equipment, and most of all, donating your time. This and the previous edition of Aché was printed, collated, folded, stapled, and distributed with sistah labor and \$ raised from our committee. The Board would like to send special "Thank You" to our "Printing Angel", to Lydia and Lisbet for organizing the volunteers and to all of the women who continue to come to our rescue month after month. We would not have been in the bookstores without all of you!

These past few months have been good ones. We proudly marched in the Gay Day Parade carrying a beautiful banner made and donated by Jackie H., we hosted our first Open House and recruited several new volunteers and a new editor, Shiela, Eva, and Earthlyn of H.E.R.S. Productions sponsored a benefit dance for Aché and the Dating Game (what fun we had!) was a big success thanks to Veronica, Zoe, alias "Vanna ain't White, and the brave Contestants. Prizes were donated by Geva's Caribbean Restaurant, The Brick Hut, Club Ebony, Brat Pack Productions, H.E.R.S. Productions, Paige & The Box, and Browsed Limousine Service - A new African American lesbian owned business.

On the business side, the Board has submitted three grants for the journal, general operating and an Office Manager position. Unfortunately, the Office Manager grant was not funded. Our Fund Development Committee is very small and we are still learning grant writing and fund raising. If there are any sistahs with grant writing and/or fund development experience, PLEASE GIVE US A CALL! We are also now looking for a volunteer office Manager. The Board members, especially Adalia and Skye for their tireless commitment to Aché.

And to the Aché Editors, you are doing a great job! The journal gets better and better. We hope that all of you will stay on next year!

In closing...Sistahs, please VOTE! Our options are limited, but our voices are many and strong, we can be heard! VOTE!

We also want to send our love to our sister Margarita. AND...I hope to see all of you at NIA on November 20, 21, 22. For more information on NIA, contact (510) 215-2781 or (510) 531-2682.

In Love and Sistah-hood,

Ouida J.

THE  
MEMBERS  
OF THE  
ACHÉ  
PROJECT  
CONSIST OF:  
REBECCA  
HALL  
JOANNE  
JOHNSON  
EARTHLYN  
MANUEL  
JOI RHONE  
OUIDA  
RODRIGUEZ  
ADALIA  
SELKET  
LISBET  
TELLEFSEN  
AND  
SKYE WARD.

### ACHÉ WISH LIST

file cabinets ☐ laserprinter ☐ fax machine ☐ copy machine

We're looking for sisters to volunteer a few hours a month to help fill the following positions: Desktop publisher ☐ Event organizer ☐ fundraiser ☐ Grant Writer ☐ Graphic Artist ☐ Office Manager ☐ Publicist/PR



# LIFESTYLES



By Heather Flewelling

**T**he world continues to change at a frantic pace around us, and there are far too many days I wonder what will happen to any last vestiges of our sanity and safety. Anita Hill, Rodney King, our local brothers and sisters who constantly face injustice and are stripped of their significance in our society. We are faced with the difficult task of affirming ourselves—by ourselves.

In the wake of the forces which rumble their way through our lives, it causes me even more pain when I see or hear of our inability to take care of our own. A sister died by her own hand a couple of weeks ago: her lifestyle cut short by the bite of a bullet through her head. She cried out for help. People heard but no one acted. She claimed to be alone and without connection to her world—our world. While I don't expect people to take responsibility for the actions of another, I do wonder where the "community" we continually allude to was when she needed the understanding only another sistah could provide. Was she abandoned? Did she cut herself off from others who tried to comfort her? Does any of this matter as we throw mother earth over her cold and blueblack body?

I wrestle now with the many issues which tear our "community" of sisters apart: biracial, bisexual, abused, abuser, sex, money, education, profession or trade, dialect, hair, shade, lover... How much do we internalize despite all that we reject? What keeps us from the love of someone we all desperately need love from: our own brown selves? I feel a fist throttling the image I see in the mirror, and recognize it as my own. But I still am... I am here, and I offer thoughts and prayers to



each of us as we struggle with the shadows we dance with in our souls.

So, through this issue of the lifestyles section send a promise that

the pain and desperation of Jaz will not be unembraced. Action and self-love will follow her. May we dance to the music she sang—soulful, sorrowful, sister.



## DAMN...

i read the news today  
and damn  
another sister's loneliness was  
shown  
she was in a bar  
toting a gun  
screaming for help from everyone  
but no one knew just what to say  
nor what to do  
in a situation this new  
so they let her walk around in  
despair  
the gun still in her hand  
her message clear  
they called the cops  
to help protect the others there  
and hope somehow she would  
change her mind  
instead she walked across the road  
promising to blow her head off  
when she reached the other side  
no one conceived this could be true  
how could she do this  
this can't be happening here  
but the sister's message was very  
clear  
she wanted someone to take the  
gun away  
across the road  
in the dark  
sound shot out  
in the air  
silence fell upon the crowd  
they saw her body crumble to the  
ground  
and they began to finally believe  
that desperate souls  
do bleed  
and that some womyn who walk  
through their doors  
may have other plans  
besides drinking and dancing  
the night away  
and next time when someone  
screams  
perhaps the music should stop.

by Nsomeka



## BITCHES N THE HOOD

by Pat Guthrie

*I am an African-American lesbian femme with a Ph. D. in Anthropology. Currently, I serve as Director of Women's Studies at California State University, Hayward. Since 1986 I have been happily married to artist Carolyn Cole. We live in the San Leandro Hills.*

Don't say girl  
The feminists say  
We're grown-up women  
Now 'dress us that way

Yo  
Did you call me ho  
Reatha don't sound like ho

Bitch  
Did you call me bitch  
Do I look like Rin Tin Tin

think I'll call you  
Motherfuck  
How you like that  
Motherfuck

Anger  
Tears  
Pain  
Hurt

Not just the boyz  
Not just the hood

Yo  
understand  
it's a plot  
kill the hood  
run the the town  
the state and the world

Yo  
understand  
noriga and bush  
they're one and the same  
sellin' that shit from afar  
Yo  
Yo  
Please  
Please don't call me  
Bitch  
And I won't ever never call  
you  
Motherfuck



**R**age. Anguish. Grief. The persistent sisters of a decreasing society, everyday bringing new terrors— innocent bystanders mowed down in Oakland; a people's rage enacted in looting and destruction; Bush, Perot, and Clinton are still White, White and White: the choices of a dying system.

So, you plug your Walkman in just a little bit tighter, turn your collar up just a little bit higher; the walk home is paced just a little bit more brisk— gestures of safety in an unfriendly world.

And then, it hits you closer to home.

A sister takes a .22 and puts it to her head. Young black mind splattered in front of a lesbian hot-spot and we are left with questions that may never be answered.

Why didn't...? Who could've...? What...?

And an unsettling world comes a little bit closer; unfriendly fire threatens to burn.

Perhaps it is those questions that cause small acts of defiance. Or perhaps, it is the feeling of "not one more goddamn thing" that gives us the courage to say no.

I live in a peculiar world, two blocks away from the insanity called Haight. My street is used as a toilet. Tourists with Canons and Kodaks grab inebriated street folks and pose under the streetsigns: HAIGHT & ASHBURY.

The streetsign marks the grave of the Summer of Love: ghosts of tie-dyed hippies still haunt the streets. Small tribes of the homeless migrate through the greenery of the Panhandle and Golden Gate Park. Drug trafficking is business as usual.

*Stephanie Henderson is a local writer and performer, and a single mother in recovery. She is best known for her Lesbian Erotica, and will be appearing in a benefit for the Women's Needs Center Outreach Component soon.*

There is a young sister who lives across from me. She is a single mother with a sometime present father; her one son still enjoys the company of his dad. She is similar to me except no father for my son— a single Black lesbian, a father dead of cancer... My son and I do the survival waltz, no different from many other Black females— except I am Lesbian, and for my son there will be no fathers— only significant

dicks in doorways. She speaks to me through cracked white lips. I look for signs of the tell-tale sunken cheekbones, and try not to show that I am uncomfortable.

• My roots belie my rage.

I want to take control; call CPS (Colored Peoples Suicide), confront her— only SHE IS A BLACK WOMAN JUST LIKE YOU!!! This voice of compliance whispers in my head; to confront would be an act of treason.

My anger rumbles louder.

Her child stays at my house for longer periods of time. There is no call of his name for supper, no more questions of his whereabouts. My unspoken war rages. What is my responsibility here? What is my motivation? Is my

anger at my sister, or at my own inability to be able to run away? Or do I buy into the mentality of woman as victim? That drug use is the flip side of murder? I put down the pipe five years ago and the work to remain sober has been a struggle...

She's got a man.

It's her mother's house.

All the arguments and jealousy come to the surface, and are pushed back again by the energy of living— my abdication of my own life is hard enough to live with. I decide to let hers alone.

Besides, I tell myself, I still really don't know.

And then one day I am looking out my window. A few days after a two year old is gunned down in Oakland— I have heard the story of a young sister, a black lesbian's suicide in the city; and the newspaper headlines shrieks of a man beaten to death on 9th and Mission as bystanders look on. I am unemployed, broke, and scared. And then...

The young man I have seen with my sister/neighbor presses her doorbell and walks away. He sees a White Boy coming up my side of the street. My window is open and I

# I Have Been Thinking

By Stephanie Henderson

males I pray touch him in his life. This is the reality I have revealed to him recently.

Oh, yes, and the other significant difference in our lives— five years ago I ended my relationship with crack cocaine. Neighbor/sister has just started on that long, dark road.

It is hard for us both.

My silence confronts my past. I question myself almost daily; "it's not right," I say— "you used to do it." I answer, "I wished someone had stopped me." "You know no one could." I practice denial— maybe she just smokes now and then... Yet there is no now and then in the world of crack cocaine; there is only now, this second— all these seconds goin' up in smoke.

Her son starts spending more time with mine. When I prepare our dinner, a place for him is included. When we are out together, there is a need for him to be noticed— a bid for attention I don't get from my own son, and I am somehow offended by his need. Anger starts to boil in the pit of my evasiveness.

Soon I am told she is sucking



look down at the two, and although mumbled, the words are clear to my ears. He opens his hand underneath where I look down, and there, distinct in the dirt of his palm, the white rocks glisten like contraband gold. The white boy declines with a shake of his head, but tells the brother, "Enjoy."

Then suddenly, I have had enough. Of silence; of waiting on the world to act; of innocent bystanders becoming suddenly "un-innocent;" of babies blown away before their time; of the lie I let grow before me. I know what I must do before I do it. I go to the neighbor's and ring the bell... no answer. Is this a sign from God? That it's none of my business? To leave it alone? No! I look up in the street. She's approaching the brother. His hand is held in that "holdin' crack" position— like a crap-shooter before he mixes the dices. "I need to talk to you," I say to her. There is something in my voice; she knows I mean business. She moves and the brother moves with her. "In private," I say. We slip further away.

"Look," I tell her... I still do not have the words to tell her what I know; to educate her about the path she's on. I know that she knows.

I never speak the words that I know what she's doing. We will keep our task to the brother— the game of not knowing will go on between us.

"Look," I tell her, "I just want to tell you..." I explain the scene which took place under my eyes.

She is lazily surprised. "Oh really? I thought he smoked pot."

I tell her what I saw, and I tell her why I am angry: our little boys live in my window. It could have been them as well as me. Already our children suffer. And although I don't have the courage to confront, in my coward's way I tell her I know.

I leave knowing this I would die for. For my son or hers. For ANY black child not to blow their heads open on a crowded sidewalk, or choose the other suicide of gang life or drugs. These two lives— for that one minute of my life I could control the lives of my son and her own.

I round the corner to return the video. The brother confronts me as I make my way home.

I am not afraid.

I look in his eyes and see his fear, and wonder where mine is hiding. His eyes dart quickly from side to side— the vigilance of the distrusting.

"Why you say I was sellin'?"

"I didn't," I interrupt. I tell him what I saw: where I was. I describe for him the white boy and the scene played out before me.

"But you said I was sellin'."

"I did not," I say adamantly, hoping he gets it; hopin' he knows I mean him no harm.

"How you know it was crack?" he jeers.

"Cause I used to smoke it."

He is caught by surprise and is speechless for a moment. "Well, what business is it of yours...?"

And then I want to embrace him. I take a deep breath. "It ain't none of my business," I say choking back the tears. "But her son and mine both look out the window. I am telling you as a black man from a black woman to your face— those kids see, and what then? Then what do I tell them? I won't let you hurt those kids!"

He blinks and recognition shines through his eyes. He suddenly understands.

"Oh, I get it," he says, small voiced and calm.

I reiterate I am not tryin' to get into his business, and he suddenly seems old and tired. But my courage doesn't leave me as I walk away— grateful that I am alone and not in the presence of my son, who already fears for my safety in this world gone mad.

I wonder if there will be repercussions; I wonder if a bullet will whiz past my house. I dismiss it as reading too many morning papers, and go to gather my son from the park.

I do not buy an afternoon paper. I ask my son if he'd like to go out for pizza. On the way panhandlers chorale for small change.

My son notices I'm moody. "What's wrong?" he asks me as he swallows his meal.

I look into his face, and mumble a lie— no use trying to explain.

When he finishes, we get up to go. I hold his hand tighter as we cross the street for home.

There are children; friends still playing outside as the sky turns dark for night.

Though each day I threaten to move, I know now why I stay. Not in so many words, but in the hue of the sky and in the shape of the clouds as they roll toward indigo; the shadow that fades into oncoming dark.

I am reminded of the lines of a poem, written the day when I asked myself— "why?"

To know that the tree  
grows purposefully  
to fulfill the hunger of  
the eye—

Drops of dew  
Upon the ground  
are enough to feed  
the sparrow...

It is ALL  
for something.





# POEM ON POLICE BRUTALITY

## a plea for retaliation

May 5, 1992

*The country will not change until it  
reexamines itself and discovers what  
it  
really means by freedom. In the  
meantime,  
generations keep being born,  
bitterness  
is increased by incompetence, pride,  
and folly, and the world shrinks  
around us.*

—James Baldwin

Amid a clamor of uncertainty  
the pardon cannot be recognized.  
The weeping will not be heard.  
Not the acrid taste in the heart  
of the nose, or the still blood dried.  
Not the baggage that is loaded  
like wreckage, or the ashed hands  
tied.

\*\*\*\*\*

Before burial waters  
what dreams were like?

The President spoke of  
"civilization,"  
antiquity, but mostly of place.  
What don't they know about  
property?  
We rescued them from damnation,  
he said, from the serpent's lick  
in the jungle; from themselves.  
The women were fed into glass  
shards then. Cat gut was the binding  
tie. Reflect on freedom, he said.

\*\*\*\*\*

We went easy into sleeplessness  
frail between sheets and chaos'  
arms wilding. The fear of dreaming  
haunted heads, framed itself in four  
ovaries, rose into lungs, then bitter  
behind enlarged tongues, fattened  
like rich red bellies, a lunatic  
fullness.  
We call ourselves "folk,"  
and make no sound.

by Dawn Lundy



## Journal Entry

For Alex

September 9, 1978

today my book takes on a new and unexpected purpose. i'm to give it an adress, you might say. to let it be a mailbox. it seems so strange that i can trust a blank book with my deepest secrets, rather than someone who can give to me constantly without taking (or until i choose to give) and one who during these sleepy re-adjustments can hold me close and even closer through the night; someone who vows that they will..., always!

i'm told i have a "pattern" or "selection with a purpose" in choosing my involvements. supposedly—perhaps with some truth—i look for things that i cannot have, cannot do, and more true than the rest, things that i cannot keep. i

allegedly say that i want one thing then do my damndest to develop relations where i won't get it. —Well, personally I admit my guilt in wanting to be the selector. I'm attracted to challenge. My salvation and ration lies in a feeling of wealth within myself. So, I know I couldn't cause much loss or detriment to anyone. Yes, to this fact, I confess. I disclose also that I love very deeply and waste no energy in games and emotionless endeavors. ...and that i love so very deeply ... and that ... just as deeply, i hurt..."

exposition writing, sept. 9, 1978  
mercedes

Mercedes is a Carolina native. I am a proud member of five generations of strong and loving women. My goal has always been and will always be — 'to live for an easy death and to love for life.'



# Chicago 1972 Chicago 1973

By Sauda Burch

Saying Chicago is hot in the summer understates the stifling humidity, swarming mosquitoes, and little escape for poor folks roasting in cement apartment buildings. 10pm and 95 degrees. Streets still full of people trying to escape heat. During the day you find a movie theater, sit through the feature two or three times, basking the air conditioning. At night you are on your own, paper fans whipping back and forth; only hot air.

As I grew up, we would spend late evenings on the porch, slapping away mosquitoes only to find that by the time we thought to slap them away they had had their fill. Bumps rising off the skin, quickly, the interminably scratching into the night. Our mothers found themselves spots on the front or back porch depending on whom they were friends with.

We children would find ourselves running in and out of each others houses, the bang of screen doors interrupted only by our screams as we made up games to play to occupy ourselves.

Some evenings though outside was more the oven. Some relief could be found by sitting directly under a rotating fan. The comforting whirl of the blades, made you think that you were cooler than you really were. On those evenings our mothers would stay inside circling the kitchen table, drinking Budweiser's or Schlitz or Pepsi. Around my kitchen table was always Ms. Nina or Honey as my best friend called her mother.

Our mothers were best friends, we were best friends. He was her brother. Name him. Jerome. Name him. Jeffrey.

Let's play a game. Where do we go? Into my house. All of us in a circle in the very dark on the floor playing a game? What game? I don't remember what game? Do you? Must have been spin the bottle. Why? You were in circle? But since it was dark, how could we have seen where a bottle would have spun? It wasn't that fucking game!

Would you fuck her? Yes. Would you? No, But I would suck her titties. May 1992 (3 twelve year old boys discussing two twelve year old girls on the 72 AC Transit Bus into San Pablo, CA).

I opened the door. She stood there. Her hair was "all over her head" she still had her bike. They were at the school, they had broken up. He wanted to have sex with her. She said no. he said yes. I opened the door. She was wild-eyed, looking as if she could flee at any moment; trying to make up her mind whether to come into the house. Was she in trouble? Would she be blamed? She looked like she wanted to flee. I opened the door. I was twelve years old. I opened the door. I was afraid. I was twelve. I didn't know what rape was. The police. My mother, my father. They told her that it wouldn't go anywhere. Morning after pill. Vomiting. I remember. I was twelve. No one said anything to me and I opened the damn door? Was I a ghost opening the door for her; was it not real. And because Jeffrey kept walking around; he didn't go away, had nothing happened? I didn't understand why he wasn't dead.

So was it my fault a year before or a year later. Shit, I can't fuckin remember when it happened.



I wanted to tell my mother. I did. For one split second, I believed that I had been hurt, tricked, doing something that shouldn't have been doing. But I knew my mother. I would suffer. Better to live with the SIM (Single Incident Molest) and forget it than watch play from the other side of the kitchen window. I would be punished. I would not be able to play outside.

## Xochi:

We often talk about feeling 13 years old. Everytime I feel that thirteen year old, I am remembering being 12 and being thirteen, the summer that my best friend's brother molested me. One time.

20 years after the fact, she pops up, "poof" materializes from nowhere, but imagine a long, torturous sleep, only to find me—still grappling with her place in my herstory. Sometimes she sits complacently in the corner, most times she is invisible. she is angry with me.

I am writing you because with you I feel unearthed, raw, but surprisingly safe.

Remember when I told you that I spoke in tongues at that little Protestant church in Chicago when I was eighteen. I spoke in tongues that day after baptism, draped in white cloth a newly adept, I struggled to find God in the way that I was told—go in this room and wait "tarry". I sat for about a half hour, all around me others — someone began to speak in tongues and then I found myself joining in. I didn't understand what had come over me; I couldn't understand what I was saying, but my lips were moving, sounds were pouring from my mouth. Later I would say that I wanted so badly to belong that I must have made it up. You told me maybe not.

All that to say what? That that one time incidence of sexual abuse, an incident where I felt very much participant — though not willing — I don't want to give it room in my life— but she makes me.

My strongest connection to her is my hair. I have dreamt about my hair being pressed — did you know that it takes about 130 degrees of heat to straighten hair? Dreams that tell me not to cut it.

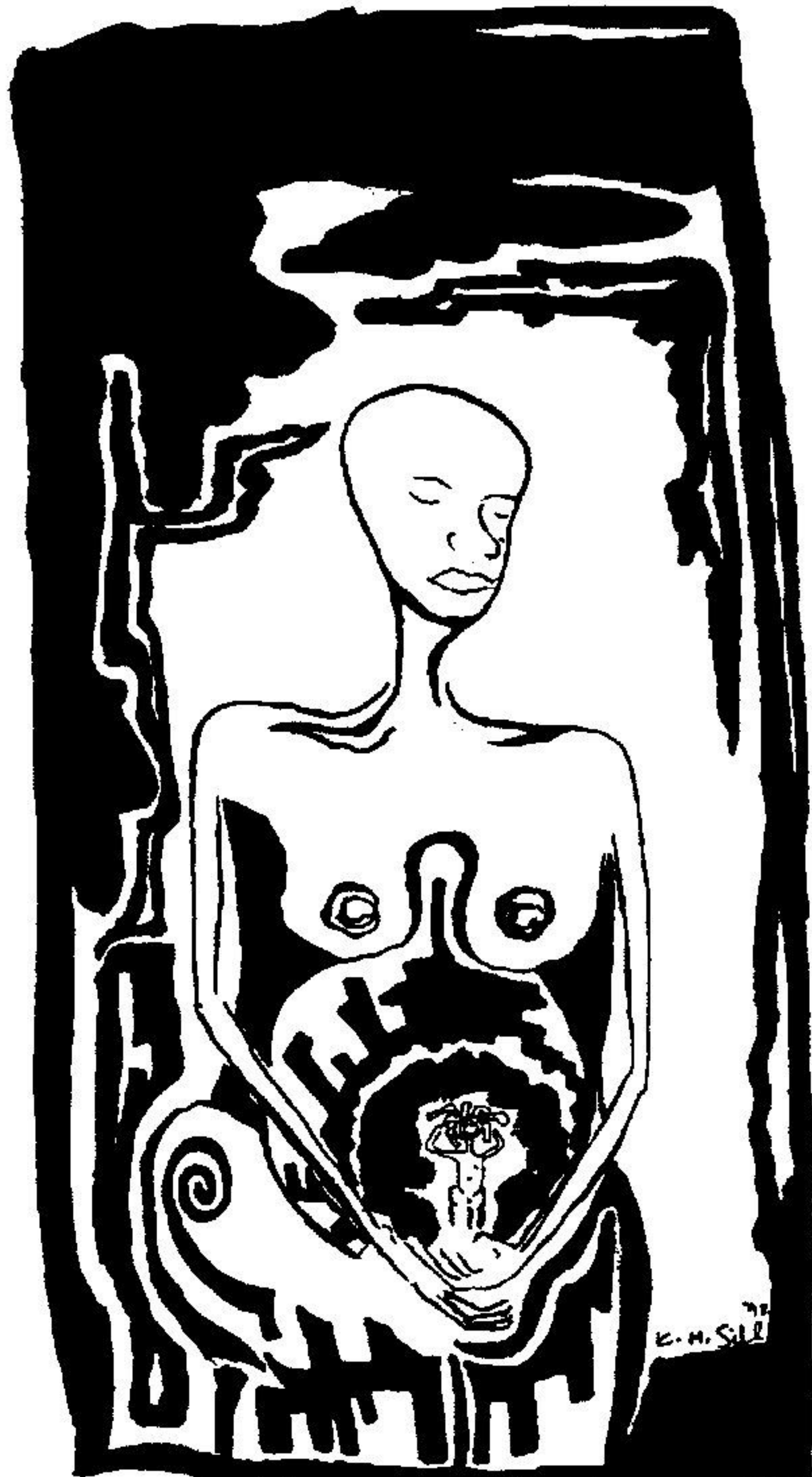
I am writing this letter because I can already feel the distancing that I have from my molest grow as I continue to type.

Remember when we were listening to the tape from the play *Sarafina*? There was a number in the play where somebody's mother had gotten raped. The kids at one

point all wail "Mama, mama, mama, mama, where to?"

You must understand town houses. Your front faces a different set of neighbors than your back. And what always was the case is that you got a long quite a bit better with the people on your back than those on the front. We saved front porch for barbequing though.

When I grew up there was nothing but mothers. No fathers. Few adult men, other than the sons of older mothers hanging around.







## "EIGHTY ONE SECONDS"

What can you do in 81 seconds?

You can kiss someone,  
a quick smack  
that announces your affection  
you can gently stroke a cheek  
letting your fingers follow the  
curve just below the cheekbone

OR

If you are four white men  
filled with bloodlust  
robed in blue  
hiding behind shields  
instead of sheets

If you are four white men  
who speak of black men  
brunting like Gorillas  
you can beat a man 56 times  
with batons

the new improved whip of today

What can you do in 81 seconds?

If you are a black man  
surrounded  
by white cops  
with batons

you can be knocked to your knees  
you can try to rise, to flee,  
to escape  
from the pain  
and the threat of death  
descending on you  
methodically

try to escape

from the hands of  
white cops  
angered at your  
existence  
infuriated because you  
did not stop when ordered  
to

In 81 seconds  
you can watch  
the images of history past  
brought into the present  
and played out in  
prime time  
Technicolor

In 81 seconds  
I can remember  
my first picture  
of a lynching

the first time I  
saw cops brutalize  
somebody black

I can reflect on  
cops and dogs  
and water hoses  
and batons, bright  
shiny batons

reddened with the  
blood  
of one of my  
brothers

In 81 seconds  
you can smash a  
window

try to vent a rage  
so long and deep  
it almost cannot be named  
A RAGE  
As long as the history of this  
country

It takes less than 81 seconds  
to know that racism  
is still alive  
and still deadly  
killing quickly  
and sometimes  
slowly

It takes less than 81 seconds  
to touch  
my rage



Ntombi  
© 1992



# LINDA VILLAROSA

Health Editor for Essence Magazine

Interviewed by Natalie Devora  
Edited by Cara Page

**Ed. note:** Linda Villarosa was interviewed Thursday June 25, 1992 in San Francisco where she was a keynote speaker at the Gay and Lesbian writers in the mainstream, media conference. ND

**Aché:** How long have you been with Essence?

**Linda:** I've been with Essence eight years as a writer and a reporter and a little over three years on staff as a senior editor specializing in health.

**Aché:** Why did you choose the health focus over other focus' or was this subject given to you?

**Linda:** What happened was that I was a college athlete and so when I came to NY in order to get a foot hold into the freelance market as a freelance writer I started doing exercise pieces. And it was right at the beginning of the exercise boom, so I was one of the few women writers who knew anything about fitness or injury. And so I had a lot of business. I did a lot of writing for a lot of magazines including Essence. And so, then I moved from being more sports oriented and fitness to a little more injury

prevention, then a little more health, and then a little more medical. And I made that transition because I liked it. Really I have no background in health or medicine.

**Aché:** Did you come out at the National Black Lesbian Gay Leadership Conference?

**Linda:** Well, I came out in the magazine. In Essence.

**Aché:** When was this?

**Linda:** The May 1991 Issue was the big coming out in print. And then I did a follow up article with my mom in October 1991. And then we came to the conference in February 1992. It was really the first time the two of us had ever spoken in public about ourselves and what had happened to us since the article. It was also a sort of coming around, from where Essence had been a year earlier with turning down the ad for the conference in 1991 and then we ended up being the keynotes for 1992

**Aché:** That must have been a great feeling for you.

**Linda:** Yeah it was.

**Aché:** Tell me about the article that you co-wrote with your mother?

**Linda:** The article was about my coming out and my mother's reaction to it. I came out in college in 1979 where I fell in love with one of my professors. It was a short time from the time I realized I was a lesbian and the time my mother realized I was a lesbian. It was like a couple of months.

**Aché:** That was fast.

**Linda:** I know. Some people are like, "I kept it from my parents for years," and my mother confronted me right away. And so my mother's part of the article started out with her hopes and dreams for me as a little girl. Getting married and being like her. That whole classic trip.

**Aché:** Yeah I know what you mean.

**Linda:** And my part of the article was about feeling different from when I was a little girl all the way through to when I discovered I was a lesbian. And then, the rest of it was about how we came to terms with her losing her dream and me



really finding myself and how we worked it out as mother and daughter.

**Aché:** And so she came to the conference with you.

**Linda:** Yeah, we were the keynotes and she completely stole the show. I thought she was Jesse Jackson, speaking from the pulpit.

**Aché:** This leads me into our focus. We're doing an issue called, 'Loving Ourselves'. Talking about how there are so many things that prevent us from loving ourselves. So my question for you is how do you maintain loving yourself as a black woman, as a black lesbian when society and the media present so many pictures of us that depict that we're not worthy of being loved or respected as individuals and as a People?

**Linda:** I think that I was fortunate, like many of us, to have strong women role models in my family. So that when I see these negative images I think, that has nothing to do with me, these people are wrong. And it's nice to see things like Watergate and the S & L Scandal where you see the mainstream screwing up. So you know that the mainstream is vulnerable and they do things wrong. They present these negative images of us, because the white male power structure doesn't take the time to move away from themselves. And it's too bad for them. I am all of these things: I am black, I have a Spanish surname, I'm a lesbian. I am very proud of all the things that I am. And I feel bad for people who are not those things.

**Aché:** I agree with you. I mean, I don't know how many of us didn't grow up with black female role models because that's pretty much the culture we come from. It's matrilineal! Our mothers, our grandmothers, our aunts, they teach us what we need to learn in order to survive out there. For me that makes a big difference.

**Linda:** I think it's really important working at Essence, because you



Photo by Dwight Carter

can really be boosted. You see Black Women in complete control, in positions of power and in positions of dignity. The women there, even if they are covering lipstick, these women do lipstick for Black Women. And they're on a mission. The fashion people are on it. They want to say, "We want our women to look good, and so this is why we do this, the mascara, the hair... We want our women not to have to struggle with their hair." And so we want to give this information. With me and my health column I really feel that I want to have people be

well. And I really have a mission. I feel like when I'm writing or editing an article it better be good. I want all the information to be there to keep people healthy. And everybody at Essence has that mission.

So being in that environment has really boosted my self esteem as a Black Woman. And it's really nice when you see that you don't have to worry about what white people think because you don't care. The people you're working with aren't white and the people you're serving aren't white. It is a very nice feeling.

**Aché:** That's great. I am envious, being the only person of African descent where I work. So many of us are, one of a few, or the one and only, that your situation makes a big difference.

**Linda:** You know what's interesting, because I'm in this empowering environment for most of my day, white people don't get on my nerves much. They don't bother me. Some white person says something stupid to me and I either tell 'em off if I have to, or calmly explain, or

don't do anything because I don't even care. It's sort of like being a lesbian. Someone was doing an interview from NOW and the interviewer was saying, 'Oh lesbians hate men.' And somebody in NOW said, "It's not the lesbians, or anywhere else, that hate men. Lesbians don't give a shit about men. We don't care about men so we don't muster up any energy to hate them." And so, for me, since most of my day is spent not caring about white people I really don't care what white people think. They

*Continued on page 18*



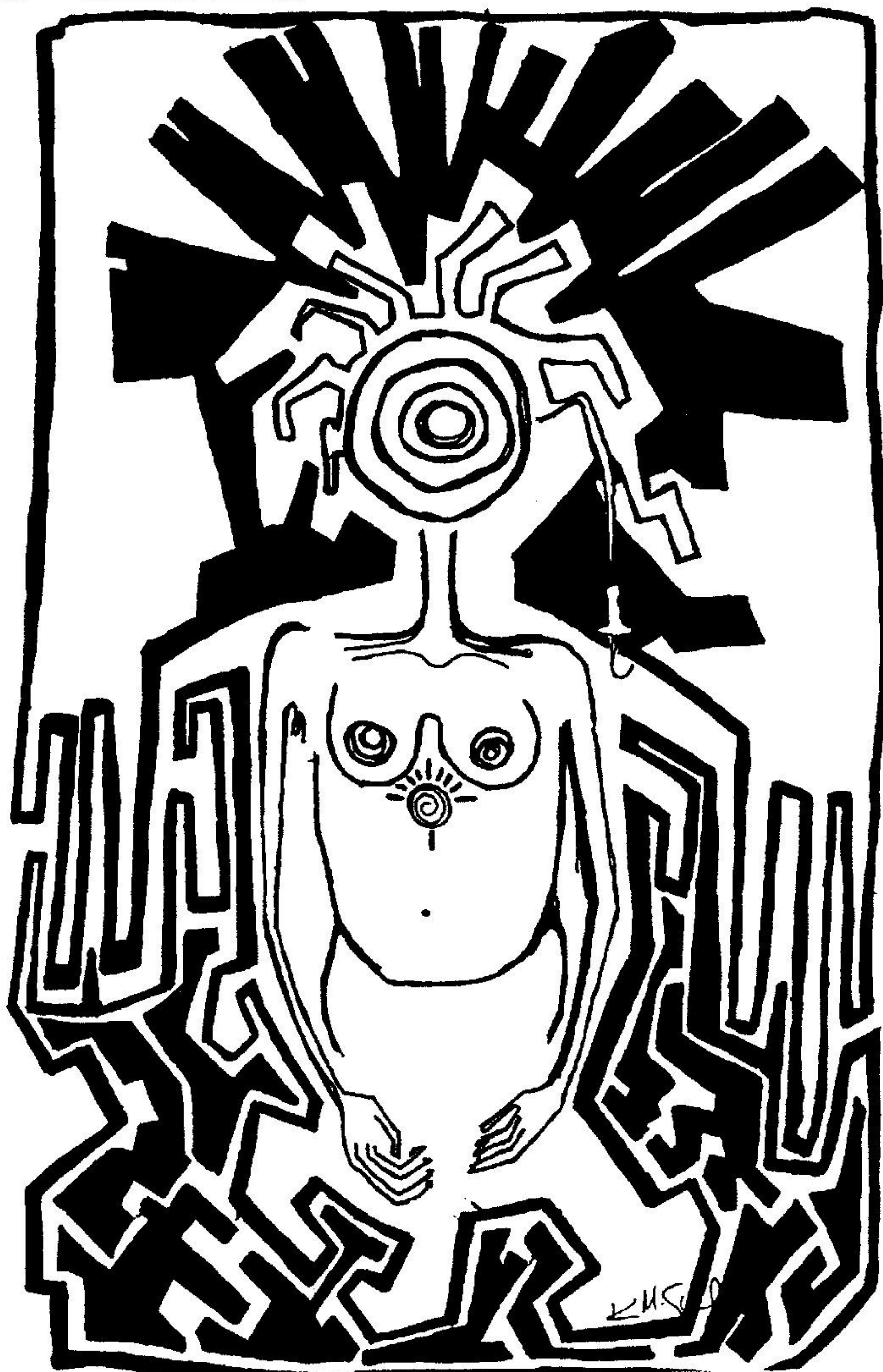
# FEATURED ARTIST: KAY MCGILL



Hi! My name is Kay. I'm a 23 year old visual artist/ musician trying to find my way in this crazy life. I began doing visual art because of my need to express myself in a way that I couldn't with words. I feel that each of the women I create is a piece of myself. They are like my guardian angels. They give me strength when I am weak and bring me joy when I am sad. They tell me stories about myself that I don't even remember.

Creating my women is the greatest gift I have given myself. They keep me relatively sane and let me know I will be alright. What's most important is that I love them dearly, and in each of them is a piece of me.







## VILLAROSA ...

*Continued from page 15*

*I am  
black, I  
have a  
Spanish  
surname,  
I'm a  
lesbian. I  
am very  
proud of  
all the  
things  
that I  
am. And  
I feel bad  
for people  
who are  
not those  
things.*

don't have any power to dent my own self worth.

**Aché:** So how has it been for you at Essence since coming out in print? How has it affected you as a writer, how has it affected your being on staff?

**Linda:** I think that it made a difference, a positive difference in both my being at Essence and my being a writer. Even though I'd be busy interviewing people about medical writing and other medical things I always like I had a secret in my life that I couldn't get out. So I wasn't that good of an interviewer because I was too uptight. Even though it had no bearing on what I was doing, there was just this wall around me. And I think once I let go of the secret and let it out I didn't have that wall around me.

And at work it's been really nice because it's the same thing. Everyone was comfortable with each other because we're all black women there, but then I wasn't comfortable because I felt I was different. So I was just always trying to fit in. Yet I was not really being myself by keeping things a secret. And so now I'm very comfortable.

I had a few breakthroughs this year. I brought my lover to the Essence Awards\*. I mean, I've done that before but this year was really special because we went to the party after and people came up and wanted to meet her, and I was really open about it. The year before I had brought my mother.

**Aché:** So, you felt much more comfortable this year?

**Linda:** Yeah, I felt really comfortable. And also, there was a wedding at work, of someone who worked at Essence. My girlfriend had been invited like she was my spouse, and it was really nice.

**Aché:** A lot of our focus has been on

Rodney King. Where were you when you learned the verdict and how did you feel about the verdict?

**Linda:** I'm not sure where I was, but I think that I was at work. Somebody had a radio, and people started talking about it. Maybe we were working late. I just remember that everyone was just shocked. The place almost shut down for awhile because people were so freaked out. We had an emergency meeting to talk about how we all felt. And it came to a point where the talking wasn't getting us anywhere.

On that Friday, after the verdict, people were really afraid that New York was really going to riot. So, we had pulled some stories in order to fit in peoples responses to Rodney King. We were trying to get everybody from rappers, to Jesse Jackson, to Anita Hill on the phone to hear what they thought. And then they shut down our building. We were made to leave the building because security were really afraid of rioting. And it just seemed really ironic that here we were black people afraid of other Black people. We stopped our work around this issue to move away in fear. And then of course nothing happened in New York. It was all just rumors really.

Then we were talking about the issue again and people were so upset and in pain. I am a very action oriented person, and I started getting angry. Because I remembered when the same thing happened with the Thomas/Hill scandal where were all sitting around saying, "Oh my god this makes us feel so bad. How could this happen? You know it's a black man against a black woman. All these issues are coming out. It's so painful, why are they doing this to her? Why is this happening? Why isn't anyone believing her?" But we weren't moving forward.

And that's how I felt about the Rodney King thing. We can't just sit here and talk about how bad it feels and why is this



happening. We have to do something. And for us [at Essence] doing something was the article.

I think that so often that these things are so shocking and we feel so lost and we don't know how to connect to each other that we don't know what action to take. It's like being shell shocked. We have to figure out that even if its one small thing, like deciding we're going to collect our money and send it to a person in LA to rebuild their store, we've got to do something. We have to take some kind of action and not just talk about it.

**Aché:** So since then have you moved toward taking further action either globally or personally?

**Linda:** I think that I am very lucky at the magazine, because a lot of the stuff I do is very action oriented. I can ask the readers to do things and to not just sit there. No matter what the issue is.

There are two things I'm most proud of at the magazine. I do the 'Essentials' column which is a news page where I do a profile of a program somewhere in the country that is doing good and it tells the readers how they can do a program like that. The other thing I do is 'Watch' which is a column that tells you what's going on, and what you can do to change it. The last one I did was voter registration. We've done a lot of different issues, where we say write a letter, get a group together, give money, or do something. Don't just sit.

**Aché:** Who is Linda Villarosa outside of Essence?

**Linda:** Well, I guess it never gets out in these articles but I'm like a major obsessive crazed jock. I'm really competitive. I run in a lot of races. I play basketball and I play in a soccer league.

My family is very important to me. Besides my mother who I speak to on the phone a few times a week and she comes to visit several times

*I guess it never gets out in these articles but I'm like a major obsessive crazed jock. I'm really competitive. I run in a lot of races. I play basketball and I play in a soccer league.*

a year, there's my father. My father and I are going on vacation together, fishing, to Vancouver. My sister and I are very close. She lives about a mile from me. So I'm very family oriented.

I'm also very community oriented. I'm fairly active in the gay community in New York. I'm really involved in the journalist group in New York, The National Association of Gay and Lesbian Journalists. My lover is also very interested in the music scene. So we go to a lot of events, concerts, performance arts, readings, stuff like that.

**Aché:** Are you involved with

lesbians of African descent in New York?

**Linda:** Well, I'm not really involved with groups that are directly for lesbians of African descent. The group of people I hang out with is more multicultural. So I'm not really involved with the black lesbian/gay community there. I've probably done more talks and readings here and in places other than New York to

Black groups outside of New York than in New York. In fact many of the Black lesbians live in Fort Green, so I'm going to speak to the Fort Green dykes in two weeks. And I'm really interested to become more involved.

**Aché:** You have a Spanish surname. Is that in your lineage?

**Linda:** Yeah, my father's father was Mexican and my grandmother was Native American. So my

father is like a real mixed bag, but he defines himself as Black.

I used to play down the fact that I had the Spanish surname because I didn't want other Black people to think that I was doing some strange thing to be less Black in any way. So I was really careful not to make a big deal of being mixed. I would even sometimes deny it when somebody asked if I was mixed. But now I've come to a place where I'm very comfortable with everything that I am. And now I don't have to scream it out. These things are just a part of who I am.



## FOR ONO

Who will speak for you when you stand naked  
before the Elders?

When the drumbeat stops

tha dum            tha dum            tha dum

your heart the Papa drum, speaking

sounding loud in our ears.

tha dum            tha dum            tha dum

Feet shuffle and the dance begins

You teach

Dancing steps of our Forefathers with your own  
brand of Jersey pride.

tha dum            tha dum            tha dum

Teach drum,

dance rings around those who disdain, "When one  
cannot dance they will say the drum is bad"

tha dum            tha dum            tha dum

Speak drum, till the dancers fall and there is no  
shame in loving.

tha dum            tha dum            tha dum

Speak drum, till your lessons are learned and  
we no longer fear the dance.

Speak drum,

tha dum            tha dum            tha dum

till you dance your way to the Ancestors.

Who will speak for you?

I will.

**Jackie Warren-Moore**

*Jackie Warren-Moore a playwright and poet has had her work published in numerous small publications. She was the recipient of the 1989 National Organization on Women, Unsung Heroine Award in Feminist writing. She is married and the mother of four daughters. She was claimed by AIDS.*







5/92

K. McSill

## BODY PARTS

### a theoretical perspective

To see the center.  
The black dot,  
the sweet kitchen,  
capital letter,  
my birth  
bead-eyed and glaring,  
the source from which rings  
subvert the other and then  
the other, underneath and around  
exacting an artist's rendition  
from a thrown stone.

What concentration!  
Bleach-pungent on the lips  
and the whining after-taste,  
resounding purple.

\*\*\*\*\*

The curve of her thin back  
like the heat of a closed hand.

It took until Utah where the  
landscape  
turned into glass—My throat sensed  
it,  
closed into an acorn-knot. Turned  
shoe.

There should have been that "baby-  
I'm-bout-ta-take-it-You-better-be-  
glad-  
you-seen-me-comin'" kinda feeling.  
Not

the imminence. Not the victim.  
We slept back to buttocks, buttocks  
to thigh, while the bus turned

what seemed upside-down  
in the midst of our seizing,  
even the fragrant air, like men.

\*\*\*\*\*

The winds never broke  
only bent until panels  
flexed and bounced  
off unsuspecting subjects.  
Then, she appeared  
chanting recipes  
that went bald  
when they left her.  
I must have been in her  
somewhere, the mirror  
music, as she stood  
unaffected—  
unmoved; like distance—  
like light.

Dawn Lundy



# On drums, dance and love: The eye of a hurricane

By Donna Allegra

And now see into the eye of this  
hurricane  
we dress in beads and cowrie shells  
silver and leather lower east side  
chic  
Bloomingdale's funk  
high African queens  
all of us wearing love  
Our rhythms pull a mighty  
machine  
from still life to motion  
the miles pulsating by the hour  
stroke to women dancing  
We were holding  
each other  
and hugging  
each other  
and loving  
each other  
We recognize the Goddesses  
by the best we have to offer  
something holy is churning this  
storm  
it be wider than the sky  
the sisters be powerful  
and they own you completely  
free yourself, and dance  
The spirits worked over  
the Baptist girl from Brooklyn  
Goddesses came to visit  
and stayed  
We are Africans  
Give the drummers everything  
and the dancers even more  
the water is sweat pouring  
wear it like pride  
it scents a woman dancing  
this holy rainfall rinses pure  
through to joy  
women are the first power  
Africans all

Courage is erupting  
as we build a nation  
hard work coming  
and we be the strong  
Together we make it stand  
together we bind our wounds  
and ourselves  
together  
We be Africans  
cleansed in the heat of our flesh  
we have women call up our  
rhythms  
their hands twin geniuses  
we mate with each other and breed  
our own strain  
we dance our world into being  
my hand your thigh her shoulder  
her lap your head  
all our hands together  
the ring and cry of cowbell  
urging the undeniable  
the drums calling the time  
the dance mapping the way  
speaking a language from our  
higher selves  
that translates to action later  
Tonight we clean, heal, get strong  
love, connect into a woman family  
this sister world of Africans  
we be Africans:  
a British civilized Caribbean girl  
who bares her breasts to  
California dream queen dancing all  
her Africa  
a third degree professor howling  
for the moon to fill her cup  
the Puerto Rican cowgirl with  
Indian  
dressing an ancient young face  
the good woman, Barbados prim  
and proper

and our very young ones:  
nine years old and perfect  
Africans, Africans all  
the drum, the dance, the love  
some buried world is rising  
the waters swell to the curve of our  
hips  
our breasts, our behinds, our faces  
As we dance continents tremble  
our breasts pointed, we step to our  
future  
we turn around and touch ground  
to our mothers  
We belong here  
our mighty force is nature  
the spirits of the sisters  
will keep us clean  
as we all come home tonight  
Look well into the eye of this  
hurricane  
always named for a woman  
and understand who starts the rain  
a Goddess is heaving for us  
giving birth in mighty strokes  
her daughters will inherit  
each time the love grows stronger  
the women: my friends and loves  
their voices sing through me  
we choose to be family  
we dance it all out  
we dance and let each other know  
our love  
we dance and the sky applauds us  
we feed and carry one another  
women pregnant with sisters  
the first fruits planting deep  
the harvest is our selves  
we dance, earthshaking Africans  
world turning, spirit burning  
we dance, thundering Africans  
Africans, Africans all;  
we dance.



## THE PROPHECY

My mother's husbands are dead.  
 She has moved from the grass hut  
 into a house of stone  
 where she grooms her daughters for  
 womanhood.  
 She tells us:  
 hunt your own food  
 slay your own dragons  
 beware of wolves  
 they surround you  
 crouching in doorways  
 blocking your paths  
 they sniff you relentlessly  
 break you like dried crackers  
 lick your sweetness like honey

from a spoon  
 consume you.

Your steel wool hair  
 will scratch their entrails.  
 Your blackness will sicken their  
 stomachs.  
 In seven days  
 they will vomit you up  
 bitter bile  
 then  
 you will live.

**Ekua Omosupe**  
 ©1990





# 21st CENTURY SURVIVAL

by Mercedes

**Health:** the condition of being sound in mind and body; freedom from physical disease or pain.

**Fitness:** adaptation to a design by nature or art; recondition to an environment so as to be capable of surviving.

Where do I begin? I could go back to that wonderful evening my high school senior year when I received the Most Outstanding Female Athlete award. Better yet, let's revisit just two years ago. I looked into the mirror at 200+ lbs of somebody I was ashamed to see. I felt out of control, and that is scary—and in the 90s that is also dangerous. I wanted my freedom back. I wanted my pride back. That meant not transferring control to Jenny or Richard, or being dependent on some powdered or packaged plan. That is not freedom. I wanted to depend on me, the person who would be there when all the money for all the fast-slimming hype was gone. So I started reading, walking, and most of all, I started praying.

A truth I love sharing is that "the best thing you can give another person is a good example." Today, I am a living example of how, through the art of fitness, one can reach and maintain health. I welcome the task of Health Editor so I can share information more valuable than any known commodity. You get one body. Miraculously resilient, yet simply irreplaceable. The medical profession paves the way with good intentions, but they cannot give guarantees except that they will practice—not perform—medicine. I don't know about you, but I want to avoid scenarios





where my comfort and life rests on practicing. Besides, an unhealthy patient makes any treatment more risky.

By definition health is considered a freedom. Freedom from the clutches of a disease, which by the way is derived from dis + ease, or without ease, uneasiness. Freedom from pain is comfort. Comfort is the first-order sensation. It is automatic. At birth we sense a change in comfort. Hunger, too cold, too wet, too loud, too much light—the response is to kick, scream, and cry until comfort is restored. If I'm going to live, I want it to be comfortably. Freedom costs, and in this case the price is dedication to a fitness routine. By nature humans are designed to practice simple eating and recreational habits. These habits let us exist in this earthly environment in comfort and with increased survivability.

Fitness is popular. Gyms are full and more are "opening soon" throughout the Bay Area. Corporations have included recreational paths and in-house workout facilities because productivity is a direct function of fitness. Healthy employees are less likely to call in sick or exhaust medical benefits. Health in the workplace helps reduce unhealthy stress and stressful interactions. It is no wonder that businesses are unlikely to employ and insure unfit people.

Obesity is but one form of unhealthiness and lives on the discrimination block. Besides the day-to-day discomforts I experienced when I was overweight, I felt humiliation from "fat jokes." I felt shame when I could not find a big enough space to wedge myself into on a crowded bus. Let's not even talk about shopping or finding variety in my own closet. I feared other health problems associated with obesity, like heart disease. It is a fact that if more than 30% of our body weight is fat, we are considered unhealthy and a cancer risk.

Career opportunities can be affected by weight and health. Professional athletes have been told to lose weight or ride the bench or

be traded. Many sports have weight classes. Many jobs have weight restrictions.

The obese are usually focused on because they are easy to pick out. However, I repeat it is but one form of unfitness. Today, with so many hidden killers like diabetes, high cholesterol, cancer, and the big one HIV+, it is critical that fitness be a constant concern. In the dating arena you don't even want to look sick.

My column will give facts about the many aspects of surviving. Some of these may not be "easy to swallow". Suggested reading will accompany the various topics.

Comments and requests are welcome. Perhaps you have some thoughts or examples you would like to have featured in Aché. We are about to enter into year 2000. How much do you know about the poisons in meats, the healing qualities of chlorophyll, food combining, sprouts, fasting, alcohol, yoga, iridology, juicing, aerobic and anaerobic training, sleep, shiatsu, and the programming of happiness? In other words, given the design of the human body—our bodies—what is a good, better, and best fitness plan?

Stay tuned to Aché's health section and find out.

## What is wheatgrass and why would I ever need to take it?

I am going out on a limb and making a prediction. I predict that by the year 2000 wheatgrass will be included in the diets of over half of our nation's homes. I drink wheatgrass juice three times a week. I have to call the store and reserve a 3 oz. container. It is hard to get and as far as I know, Living Liquids, a small juice company in Emeryville, is the only bay area supplier.

Wheatgrass is the grassy 7 to 10-inch growth from wheatherberries. The grass is cut and pressed for its powerful juice. Our bodies are composed of cells. Three undesirable things happen to cells. They can become unbalanced, they become damaged, and they age. Wheatgrass contains extraordinary nutrients, identified by G. O. Kohler as "the grass juice factor", which is found only in grasses. Studies show that the prescription to correct, repair, and rejuvenate grows right under our feet. There are many books about wheatgrass.

In them are fascinating personal testimonies, little known facts, and scientific documentation.

In the next issue of Aché I will introduce you to the wonders of wheatgrass. Meanwhile, pick up or check out a copy of *The Wheatgrass Book*, by Ann Wigmore. Ann Wigmore is the founder of the Hippocrates Health Institutes located in Boston and Puerto Rico. She applied the sweet green juice to human health over forty years ago. Awareness of its role in a healthful lifestyle has caused increased popularity.

Wheatgrass and its effect on cells is a "fitting" beginning. The cellular level is where the biologists and geneticists probe for answers and then remedies. Control a illness on the cellular level and order is completely rebuilt. Start thinking of health and fitness on a cellular level. From the smallest part to the total you.



**E**FFIE JAMES is a spry 83 year old great grand mother and great aunt. SHE has lived in Augusta, Georgia all her life, and considers herself fortunate enough to have been able to travel a few times in her lifetime to New York City and to Chicago to see the sights. She is beginning to have trouble getting around because of arthritis. SHE can't stand being dependent on anybody, and so she fights to stay as mobile as she can. Although SHE is very highly thought of, EFFIE has been known to

# MIZ EFFIE GOES PUBLIC

BY JAYE AUSTIN-WILLIAMS

get into many an argument with people around town who have a hard time accepting EFFIE's progressive way of thinking — people who are “tiny-minded,” as EFFIE calls them. You know, they used to call us black folks “spooks.” That's right, “spooks.” And you wanna know why they did that? Cause they was scared of us. Still are. No good reason I can think of, except we was darker skinned and some of us known to kind of have “the shining,” and....shoot, I don't know...well, a lot of us got a feel for loving folks real good and deep and all. So they start to making up all of these stories about us. How our men got bigger “to-duments” than theirs got, and all that kind of thing.





Then next thing you know, here come this child singing on the radio talking about "Strange Fruit." That child knew what she was talking about cause I'll tell you, I done seen a lotta that in my time, hanging right off of these trees around here, and rall back in those woods over there too. Child, I'm telling you, it make you so sick, seeing them beautiful black children falling down off them trees, their necks broke, privates cut off.

So anyway, what start to happen? Well, a lot of years goes by, and now our children be getting into their schools and everything. So naturally, they start to getting mixed up with them white people. Problem is, them folks don't know how we do. They be schooled different than our children. I'm talking about all them numbers and calculating and things,

cause Lord knows they ain't never intend for us to learn none of that staff too good! No, I'm talking about what our children done learned in their homes about that real good deep down kind of loving. Now I ain't saying always, but a lot of the time it seem like they got different kind of hearts than we got. I mean, it seem like sometimes white folks be born with . . . like a . . . thingermajig. You know them things what you use to change the temperature up and down? Well you know, it seems to me white folks be born with them things sewed up right into their tickers. Mm-hmm! When an emotional situation don't suit them no more, they be done turned that thing down so chilly, you don't know what's happening. That's right!

Let me tell you what happened to this grand niece of mine. Now, I done been around a few bends in the road, if you know what I mean. Don't nothing truly shock me no more. Especially not what white folks do. And see, our young people think they know everything now cause they going to the white folks' schools, you understand? But you see, that natural black folks common sense that we all suckled on from time my daddy's momma and daddy was strung up and brought here done got squeezed out our children in these white schools. Of they teach them things, sure, then they get out there in the world and find they ain't got no opportunity to use them things they been taught. You see, they rob our children of the kind of surviving skills that black folks be needing as bad these days as they was needing back when they was hanging us up on trees all the time.

Oh, hell, I done run all off the track now. Oh. My grand niece. Well, see, she took a liking to women. I mean, you know. To be with them how women most times be with a man. Now I reckon I can understand this. I mean it don't bother me none, really. Shoot, I can think back on many a time I done had me some soft, different kind of feelings for women folk that was friends of mine. But see we come up in a time when you had to stand by your men folks. My daddy and momma made a solid family with us kids



and they didn't have all this modern day kind of thinking on women keeping company with women. Well now, that don't mean it ain't been going on a long time, cause I know it have. I wasn't lying about them bends in the road, you know.

Anyway, the child took a deep kind of liking to this white woman. Loooord! Well, first off, the woman some twelve years older than the girl on top of being married. And got two kids about grown. Now, they ain't no real super big time white folks, you understand, but they be doing just fine with the money. The husband some hot shot scientist or something. He teach up there in one of them schools. Well, my grand niece all crazy about this here white woman, who all the while seem like she may possibly be feeling the same thing about my grand niece. Mmm mmm mmm. I tell you, sometimes young people can't see they nose in front they face, for all the fog clouding up they common sense. The fact is, this white woman ain't getting up off of nothing she got in the way of security, even though she be itching to find out what this here women's thing is all about. Don't look so surprised, child! Not all us old people just sitting around down here rocking in the breeze, you know.

So I figure this white woman figure if her good thing gonna work out the way she want it, she got to find herself somebody strong and what can't get hurt by nobody so she free to walk in and walk out when and how she want to. But my grand niece gone and got too soft on the woman so. . . that was that. She cause

when she start asking the woman for more time, what the woman tell her? She say she don't want to spend no more time with her on account she didn't want to feel nothing more than what she already be feeling. Yeah, I got lost behind that too. At first. Then I figured it out. See, it's that thingermajig I was telling you about before! You see, it kinda turns the little "feeling" dial up and down so folks can feel exactly what they want when they want and no more. Hmm! Now if you ask me, there's something pretty spooky about folks that can do that!

Well, my grand niece come down here crying to me about how come these white folks got these kinda controls on their feelings, while we be so busy feeling so hard for everybody but ourself. First I told her, "Girl, black women been suffering from that a long time. It's what I call 'the Black women's affliction'." I told her the bad news about that thingermajig white folks sometimes be born with and that I thought that white woman she be so sweet on probably had one of them. She wasn't too happy. And you know, sometimes I get to feeling sorry I ever told her about it cause lately she running around acting like she got one of them, herself. But I don't be worrying myself too much with it, cause that kinda thing ain't never set too good on Black folks. She'll get back to being herself soon enough.

I wish she had come down here and talked to me about this before it got so bad. From what she tells me, that white lady still setting pretty up there in her house with her husband, kids, and get this. . . a married girlfriend on the side, Looord! See? She got that thingermajig set just where she want it. Now, I ain't making like I know much about this woman thing, but you can bet I told my grand niece right quick she'll be a lot better off without that woman. Hell, if she's all that big on being a meter reader, she can do it for the utility company. They pay you for your time! Shoot. But hell, I ain't one of them "I told you so" old people. We got one of them live down the road a ways. Drive everybody crazy! Well, look here, I got to go catch me a nap. I done give myself heartburn talking about all this mess. I reckon I'll go on sleep it off a while.

JAYE AUSTIN-WILLIAMS IS AN ACTRESS, PLAYWRIGHT, ESSAYIST, SHORT STORY WRITER AND AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) ADVISOR AND EVALUATOR. SHE HAS READ HER WORK AT BENEFITS FOR CONDITIONS MAGAZINE, AND AT VARIOUS READING SERIES AROUND NEW YORK CITY, INCLUDING "WOMEN WRITING," "IN OUR WRITE," THE STATIONS COLLECTIVE'S "DIVAS AND DESIRE," AND HAS APPEARED NUMEROUS TIMES AT THE KNITTING FACTORY, THE WEST END CAFE, THE SAVACOU GALLERY, AND THE NUYORICAN POETS' CAFE. AS AN ASL ADVISOR, SHE HAS WORKED ON AND OFF BROADWAY FOR INTERPRETED PRODUCTIONS OF SHOWS INCLUDING "FENCES," "AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'," "BLACK AND BLUE," "THE PIANO LESSON" AND THE NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL. JAYE IS ALSO A STUDENT AND TEACHER OF AIKIDO.



# TRAVEL, WITH AN AFRICAN EYE

by Paris Williams

Everywhere you look in world history, ancient and modern, Black people have played an important part. What is common knowledge in many countries, is completely unknown in the United States. The Black Madonnas of Europe along with their saints, popes, knights, adventurers and royal family members are carefully concealed. Black people of Asia sounds like a contradiction in terms. Yet there are more black people in India (160 million) than in any other country in the world. Central and South America are also home to millions of people who can trace their ancestry and cultural traditions to Africa.

African Americans, more than many of our people around the world, have great opportunity for travel. Often when we travel, we look for a destination that will give us a chance to explore our history and heritage. Because of the distortion of our history we often limit our choices to Africa and/or the Caribbean. Because the Caribbean is generally less expensive than Africa, many of us go there year after year and dream of "visiting the Motherland someday." With this perspective, other travel destinations seem irrelevant to learning more about ourselves.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Whoever coined the phrase "global village" was perhaps more accurate than they imagined. The people of Africa were the first explorers. As we found our way out of Africa we populated the rest of the earth. Descendants of these early explorers still live in communities, large and small, around the world. Later travelers left Africa in search of trade, military conquest, adventure, political alliance and cultural exchange. These journeys took black people



ANATOLIA TURKEY, ICE AGE, BC

throughout Europe, Asia and even the Americas long before the ascendancy of modern Europe and the transAtlantic slave trade. This too is our history and heritage.

During 1992, the governments of Spain and the United States have been promoting the cele-





VERA CRUZ, MEXICO

bration of the 500 year anniversary of Columbus' "discovery of America." If you find the idea of celebrating slavery and genocide less than what you hoped for, there are alternatives.

December 21, 1992 through January 4, 1993 I will be leading an archeological study tour to Mexico to examine the African presence in ancient America. This tour will visit Mexico city, Vera Cruz, Villa Hermosa/ Palenque and points in between. We will visit museums, cultural institutes and archeological sites relevant to African explorations and contributions to Mexico, before and after Columbus' so-called discovery. We will travel by air, van, canoe and horseback in order to reach some of the more remote sites. Group size is limited to seven participants who have an interest in history and want to see a side of Mexico that is very different from the

*Mexico is a treasure trove of ancient American civilizations ... The pyramids, temples and ancient cities of the Olmec and the Maya are breathtaking examples of advanced civilizations, efficient technology and profound beauty.*

standard tour. The price, which includes round trip airfare, hotels and travel and excursions within Mexico, from San Francisco is \$1600. For more information call Estelle at Mahogany Travel (800) 543-5368.

Mexico is a treasure trove of ancient American civilizations and can provide visitors with a completely different version of American history. The pyramids, temples and ancient cities of the Olmec and the Maya are breathtaking examples of advanced civilizations, efficient technology and profound beauty. This is particularly enlightening for those of us who have been told that American history began in 1492.

An important part of this tour, and any other countries you may visit, will be to look at African relationships with Native Americans. Despite all of the discussions about multiculturalism and Afrocentrism, very little has been said about relations between People of Color. This is especially true of relationships that are not mediated by an oppressor. Truly, it is here that we may be able to find more successful models for managing diversity.

The decision to travel, in and of itself, provides a sort of freedom. I wish to add to that freedom by returning to you the entire world. Good luck and good travels.



## SUPPORT GROUPS

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

**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 Derethia 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.

**The Birthing Project:** A nine month program for prospective lesbian, gay and bisexual parents of color. The Birthing Project is conceptually based on a woman's pregnancy. This program is aimed at serving lesbian, gay, and bisexual people of color regardless of economic background. Offering educational workshops, opportunities to explore in depth issues around creating families, panels comprised of gay parents of color sharing their experiences and advice as well as access to Lyon Martin's services. For further information and to register contact Cynthia Chan at the Parenting Program at Lyon Martin Health Services 415-565-7674. This program begins October 13th.

**Choosing Children Series:** November 7-8th 9:30am-4:30pm at the Womens Building. A weekend workshop for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people considering parenthood. Topics include: parenting and birthing options, pregnancy, adoption, legal issues, HIV prevention/safer sex practices, co-parenting issues. For further information call the Parenting Program at Lyon Martin Health Services 415-565-7674.

**SISTAH SISTAH:** A 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 Thursdays, 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....

**Racially-diverse lesbian** writer's group open to new members. Call Cristina (415)

All listings with the exception of **SERVICE and JOB LISTINGS** are free of charge to lesbians of African descent.

**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.

**FLYER INSERTS:** To insert a flyer for mailing with the Aché journal, \$25-100 donation to help cover postage. For more information contact Adalia at (510) 601-6844 between 6-8pm.

626-0475.

## ORGANIZATIONS

**LGADDA**, Lesbians and Gays of African Descent for Democratic Action is a new independent organization dedicated to the political empowerment of African American lesbians and gays. Annual membership \$20/\$10 fixed income. Our general membership meetings are held from 7:30-9pm on every third Thursday of the month at 507B Divisadero St. in San Francisco. Come join us for some serious discussions and lively debates!! For more information contact LGADDA, 584 Castro St., Suite 130, San Francisco, CA 94114-2588.

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

**The Clearinghouse on Femicide** is seeking to expand its newly formed steering committee. Great opportunity to meet brilliant, energetic women and contribute your skills and expertise. Attend monthly meetings, familiarize yourself with our many projects. Young women and women of color encouraged to call. Chris, 845-7005 or Bj, 527-4582.

**Gay & Lesbian Sierra Club** — We carpool to easy day hikes, brunches, camping, bike riding, tide pooling, moonlight walks, ski trips, some are women-only, all are friendly. Call recording at (510) 653-5012 or send \$12 for a year membership of six newsletters. GLS/Bay Chapter, 5237 College Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

## NOTICES

**ULOAH** (United Lesbians of African Heritage) presents The Second Annual "SISTAHFEST" from October 2-4, 1992 in Malibu Canyon, California. SISTAHFEST is a weekend of self-discovery and celebration,

where Lesbians of African heritage will gather to share our experiences and explore our commonalities. Lodging consists of group cabins (dormitory-style) and five meals will be provided during the weekend. Unfortunately no child care can be provided. Registration: \$80 (for ULOAH members by 9/25/92); \$95 (for non-members by 9/25/92); \$110 (for everyone after 9/25/92.) Make money order or cashier's check payable to ULOAH (do not send cash.) Mail name, address, day & eve, phone with payment to ULOAH, 1626 No. Wilcox Ave. #190, Los Angeles, CA 90028. Also indicate whether any special arrangements are required. For more information call (213) 960-5051.

## WANNA MEDITATE?

We would like to organize a posse of sisters interested in going to a free, one day meditation retreat for people of color. September 13, 9-5pm at the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre (30 minutes from SF.) Advance registration required. Interested? Call Vega or Tobe at (415) 668-5126.

**We are a mostly** lesbian of color percussion band playing Afro-Caribbean, Brazilian music. We've played at Gay Pride, Pro-Choice and anti-war events. We're committed to unlearning racism work. We're looking for new members, if you're interested call Kay, (510) 654-3360 or Adalia (510) 601-6844 between 6-8pm. Deadline October 5th, 1992.

**For Colored Girls Who Dare To Create Drama!!** Sapphire Theatre Co. is offering acting workshops (for beginners especially.) The classes are designed to create a firm foundation of acting skills, improvisation, voice, and physical skills will be developed. Workshops are \$5 each. For information call (510) 653-4945 and leave your name and number.

**Producers Wanted!!!** Aché is looking for black women with experience in producing events who are interested in working on Aché fundraising events. If you'd like to get involved please send your name, phone number, and production interests/experience to Events, 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.

## PUBLICATIONS

**BLK:** a national black lesbian and gay news-magazine 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. Its 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. 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 \$25 yr. Asungi Productions, 3661 No. Campbell Ave., Suite 108, Tucson, AZ 85719-1524.

**ULOAH** - A Publication of United Lesbians of African Heritage. To become a member of ULOAH and receive the quarterly newsletter mail your name and address with check/money order for \$10 annual membership payable to ULOAH, 1626 No. Wilcox Ave. #190, Los Angeles, CA 90028.

## SERVICES

**Psychic Astrologer** - Astrological readings, analysis of strengths, weaknesses, and the child within... Call Clea (415) 292-7267.

**Saundra Lebby, 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

**"My sister died...my brother died..."**

A feminist anthology for those who still need to grieve. Submissions needed, all works of expression honored. For more information

send SASE to: Nsomeka Gomes, 3471 - 19th St., San Francisco, CA 94110

**Call for papers** on NEGOTIATING LESBIAN/HOMOSOCIAL IDENTITY IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE - we are organizing a session devoted to lesbianism cross-culturally for the 1993 International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (ICAES) in Mexico City, July 28-August 5, 1993. We hope to bring together a number of scholars and community activists worldwide to discuss the meanings, commonalities and diversities of lesbian relations. We are seeking papers that analyze the ways these relations reflect or counter the socio-historically specific form of gender ideology that prevails in a particular cultural setting. We are also interested in papers that explore the ways women negotiate a lesbian/homosocial identity or relationship within the context of their dominant culture.

Other issues to be considered include the relevance of terms such as "homosocial" or "lesbian" for International Studies, and the impact of the gay liberation movement on lesbians both in the South and the North. For more information contact: Evelyn Blackwood, Institute of Culture and Communication, East-West Center, 1777 East-West Road, Honolulu, HI 96848, USA. Tel: (808) 944-7817 or Saskia Wierings, Institute of Social Studies, P.O. Box 90733, 2509 LS The Hague, The Netherlands. Abstracts of 250 words must be received by November 15, 1992.

**Multi-cultural Lesbian Relationships** Anthology. First-person writings, cassettes of dialogues O.K. Can request interview. Some topics of interest: racism within and outside relationship; having/raising children; socializing/friendships; language differences, etc. Contact: Rene Dawson & Terri Jewell, co-editors, P.O. Box 23154, Lansing, MI 48909. SASE required with all correspondence.

**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.

Manuscripts 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. 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 with SASE 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

**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 sheroes, 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.

**Calling All Bisexual Women**—a call for written and visual work for the first anthology published in Canada by and about bisexual women. At least half of this anthology will be written and produced by women of color. We are excited and honored that it will be published by SISTER VISION PRESS, a Black Women and Women of Colour Press. Send a SASE to Bisexual Women's Anthology, c/o Sister Vision Press, P.O. Box No. 217, Stn. E, Toronto, Ontario M6H 4E2.

**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.

**Submissions needed** for Anthology on Mixed Race Women. Send stories, poetry, interviews, photographs, essays, graphics, journalism, oral stories, letters... to Mixed Race Anthology, Sister Vision Press, P.O. Box 217, Station E, Toronto, Ontario, M6H 4E2. Deadline: October 31, 1992. Please insure that your piece specifies your bi- or multi-racial heritage.

**Call for materials** for an anthology on Lesbian Erotic Fantasies "Graphic Details". This will be a mixed media collection of visual art, fiction, poetry, Haiku, creative non-fiction, performance art, interviews, recipes. The anthology will explore the different way that women of colour create, think, and act on Erotic Fantasies. Writings should be typed, double spaced. Do not send originals as we cannot guarantee their return. Deadline: September 30, 1992. Send queries on works to: Graphic Detail, Attn: Makeda Silvera or Leleti Tamu, Sister Vision Press, P.O. Box 217, Station E, Toronto, Ontario, M6H 4E2.

**Featherston and Associates** seek submissions from women of color for an anthology. Elena Featherston writer/filmmaker is compiling an anthology on "colorism" and "cross racial hostility" titled: SKIN DEEP: Colorism in America. Submissions sought on a wide spectrum of subjects including: cultural, economic, racial, religious and sexual perspectives. Submissions may be of any length and take the form of poetry, essays, stories, personal experiences, political analysis as well as graphic arts and photos. Include a statement that gives permission for publishing. Send to: 4104 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114 Tel. 415-821-0126 FAX. 415-285-3518. Deadline September 15, 1992.



"Ach  a Journal for Lesbian of African Descent." Ach , vol. 4, no. 3, July-August 1992. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/HOOPNO505540022/AHSI?u=umuser&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=13020eb6](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/HOOPNO505540022/AHSI?u=umuser&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=13020eb6). Accessed 8 Dec. 2022.