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BLACK LESBIAN NEWSLETTER

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AUGUST 1982

submissions

We welcome any and all written and graphic work by local black lesbians. Our format includes news, reviews, personal perspectives, political commentaries, interviews, poetry, letters, ads, announcements and journal entries. Fictitious names or pseudonyms are standard literary practice and should be used if the contributing artist fears "too much visibility." The deadlines for the next two issues are August 1st, for the September issue and September 1st for the October issue. Give us a call if you have an idea that you want to talk about.

staff box

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Tell Me if I'm Wrong

Some of my "lesbian identified" friends have told me that they thought our June issue's article "Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual?" was narrow-minded. The BLN wanted to make known our philosophy and to point out that we feel the Lesbian definition is the one we choose to live by.

I want to make a personal point; and I want you to think about this.

There is this Gay Plague (Kaposi's Sarcoma) affecting a considerable percentage of the American homosexual male population. The disease's complete origin is supposedly a mystery but several hypothesis have been offered.

When I first read about Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS), it had been reported that a few hundred (mostly gay) males had been infected and only 1 straight female had been diagnosed as having KS. Now, July 15th's San Francisco Chronicle page 2 states, "The illness is nicknamed 'gay plague' because the first outbreaks took place in homosexual men. But now it is hitting heterosexual males as well as women, ..."

"... as well as women, ..."

The article did not go into detail about the sexual preference of these women, but the lesbian identified women I have talked to about their bi-sexuality, have told me that the men they have been sexually relating to are gay.

My concern is that these "lesbian identified" women may bring this Kaposi's Sarcoma into the lesbian community. Granted, little is known about the transmittal of this disease, but it has been stated that it is transmitted sexually, and I don't know if one woman can give it to another, but I sure as hell don't want to find out.

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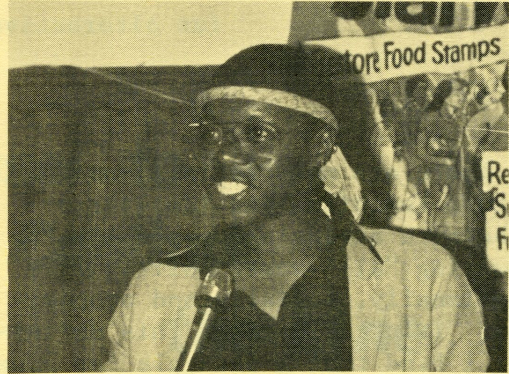
How to Fight Back

Gwendolyn Rogers, coordinator of the Lesbian and Gay Focus of the All Peoples Congress, spoke at the Women's Building on July 1, 1982. the theme of her speech was "Reaganism is Racism - How We Can Fight Back." She dedicated her speech to the people of South Africa in remembrance of the 16th anniversary of Soweto.

Rogers pointed out that all peoples' movements are under attack with the present Reagan administration. She reminded us that it is no accident: that New Jersey just passed the death penalty; that there is an increase in arson for profit; that the KKK is on the rise all over the country, including Richmond and Sacramento; and that the ERA was just recently "put to bed. All of these are the results of Reagan's "war mongering anti-people machine." Our very quality of life is threatened with needed human services funds going into an already bloated Pentagon budget."

Looking at the Reagan programs that propound to replace missing human services, Rogers notes the built-in failure mechanisms: Enterprise Zones- Gives tax breaks to businesses to open slave labor camps in poor communities. These jobs provide no health care benefits, pay minimum wage and forbid the organizing of unions; Workfare- Puts welfare mothers in demeaning, dead-end jobs in order to work for their welfare checks. These jobs provide no day care and require these mothers to leave their children at home unattended; and Project Jobs- A mass campaign to round up Third World undocumented workers.

Rogers' solution to "How to Fight Back" is broad based coalition building. "We must do organizing that goes directly to the people, because our only hope is to encourage development of leaders from the ranks of the people. All oppressors work



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to keep the people divided by creating diversions: Such as "Do you want your child taught by a gay teacher?" when the real issue is the actual quality of education that the children are receiving."

Rogers concluded by stating that, "All oppressed people have the power to say no to racism, sexism and anti-lesbian and gay forces. We want no concessions, no piece of the pie. Hell, the apples were rotten to begin with. We are going totally turn this system around."

Gwendolyn Rogers lives in New York and can be contacted through:
All Peoples Congress
2718 - 24th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 821-6545 \

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DONATIONS

We now have non-profit status through the sponsorship of the San Francisco Women's Centers. Therefore all donations are tax deductible. Checks should be made out to the San Francisco Women's Centers/ Black Lesbian Newsletter in order to benefit from this status.

The Need for a Black Lesbian Front

(an alternative to the Feminist movement)

There are many definitions for the term Feminism, the idealistic one being a struggle for equality by empowering "all" women politically, educationally, socially and economically. Ironically given this definition, I find that a struggle for power exists within the Feminist movement itself, making the ideological definition incongruous.

Incidents that have taken place during the inception of the Feminist movement clearly indicate a definite lack of willingness, by our white counterparts, to share and develop a power structure with Black women equally.

When the movement first started, there seemed to be total denial that there were any Black women active in this struggle for equal rights, which perpetuated this "savior syndrome" on the parts of white women. The resistance to working equally and intelligently with Black women intensified when our white sisters found out that Black women didn't need to be "saved." There seemed to have been this stereotypic mentality that Black women needed saving-from what? Or is it the white women's fear of how strong Black women really are.

When they discovered that we refused to be "saved" they decided to "use" us. They had us fill their quotas, do their outreach (of course to show how liberal they were) with the end result being a knife in the back compounded with lies.

We see through their racism and continue to be strong. This fact not only threatens the status-quo, but also challenges the racist attitudes of white women.

The reality is that the Feminist movement, as it stands now, is just another racist and oppressive mechanism of this racist society. The thought

of empowering a Black woman is frightening to most whites because once she gains knowledge she can't be controlled and that is the real issue. POWER = CONTROL !!!

We as Black lesbians need to take control of our lives by creating a strong political front that directly addresses our needs as Black lesbians. We cannot afford to be shadowed or blocked out, we must stand and be heard. As soon as we solidify our home base, the rest will be easy.

We must change the face of the Feminist movement. By using our knowledge and strength, the movement can be a strong force again. Make the true meaning of Feminism a reality - I will. Especially since the white contingent will not look out for my needs and that has been proven already.

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HELP!!!

If you have skills or interests in any of the following areas and would like to work on the Newsletter, please give us a call at (415) 548-6661.

Distribution
Typing
Subscriptions
Law
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Outreach
Bookkeeping
Writing
Advertisements



A Vessel to Continue the Line

Wrapped in her cloth
the young girl walks toward the women she knows
made naked
she lies on the straw mat
legs open
held down
several hands holding her legs
down and wide apart
holding down her shoulders
holding down her hips
on the straw mat
under the hot sun

Seized between a thumb and two fingers
her clitoris
is hacked away
like raw meat from a chicken bone
a small dull blade, the saw
that brings the searing pain
and bloodies the place between her legs

Gut-stunned
she rises as the hands release her
fumbles her cloth around her
and walks away
fire burning between her legs

The young girl just come of age
does not cry out
she will bear the loss of blood
prolonged pain, infections
bring a high bride price to her father
bear many children to her husband
through her scar-hardened opening.

This is excision
Infibulation practised on younger girls
is worse.

Super Sapphire Mom

... Somehow it touched my super sapphire nerve. Black women are strong, competent, more assured (behaving) women. Though there is historical background to support this contention, there is also a great, and greatly debilitating (to Black women) myth around this very issue. This is what I call the super sapphire myth.

Because Black women subscribe to and suffer from this syndrome, we carry the guilt for each and every Black failure. Because our communities, in addition to the dominant culture, subscribes to the notion that Black women are so strong, so capable, and so adept at improvising, we suffer immense emotional abandonment and abuse.

We are taken for granted. We are raped, beaten, brutalized and treated with the vilest of insensitivities, in part, because we are viewed as strong, and full of stamina da da da da ...

It is true that we are strong. The myth is that our strength is immeasurable and insurmountable. We have character and stamina and substance. The myth is that they are incontrovertibly intrinsic and equally applicable qualities.

We are skillful improvisors. Not because, as the myth presumes, that we are emasculating, manipulating matriarchs, who want to pull the entire load alone. But, rather, because abject poverty, coupled with spiritual impoverishment and motivational deprivation are miserably oppressive, stifling to the human spirit and in need of addressing.

We, more than anyone else, have a right to criticize Black men. Historically, we've babied our male children because we knew their lives were in constant jeopardy. During times of slavery and immediately thereafter, Black women had greater mobility. This ought not be misconstrued to believe that Black women in any way had a higher social status during this period, or any other period of American history. The opposite of this is true.

Black women were viewed as being so low and powerless as not to pose much of a threat.

Anyway, Black women had greater mobility, and were, in general considered less of a physical threat. If a Black male "stepped out of line, death was a real possibility, and an ugly gruesome death was a real probability. So we trained our male children to be seemingly passive, to shuffle and jive, to say what was expected but to do little or nothing. We raised our female children to be family, personally and communally responsible.

What was then situationally appropriate is now non-germane and no longer applicable. Yet we still raise our daughters to be responsible caretakers, while we spoonfeed our sons, and ask nothing in return.

We've every right to criticize, to ask and demand that they explore, examine and modify inappropriate culturally-defined behavior. We, as Black women, need to seriously evaluate and adjust our childrearing patterns.

We make bums of our sons, then hate them because of it!

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georgia

on my mind

green plum bushes
the railroad track
bare
brown feet,
red dirt

© 1981 doris davenport

CLASSIFIED ADS

SERVICES

Housecleaning, reasonable rates - Ann 652-3258 aft. 6 ,

Need to be reminded of important dates and occasions? Need an answering service that is low cost and personalized? If you said 'yes' to the above then call "BUZZ" Answering/Reminder service - Ann 652-3258

MISCELLANEOUS

Would you like to make money selling ads for the Black Lesbian Newsletter? If so give us a call at 548-6661

Deadline for Classified Ads
August 12th for September issue
September 16th for October issue

PERSONALS

Attractive 33 yr. old seeks new friends to share life's pleasures. - Nita May, 1442A Walnut St., #351, Brk. 94709

Articulate, warm, easy-going, over-achiever woman seeks another woman who is particular about whom she calls "friend." Let's share growth and an inner glow of love. Call Ann 547-0158

Enclose \$1.00 per line (\$2.00 minimum per ad). There are 22 spaces per line. Each letter, punctuation mark or space between words counts as a space. Please hyphenate words properly. For classified information call 548-6661.

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

* We reserve the right to use our discretion in the selection of advertisements. No ads which are objectionable or inconsistent with our policies will be run.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mid-August

Interested in a beach party?

Sun! Fun! and Black women!

For more info call 548-9364 eves

August 22

Casselberry-Dupree - La Pena

8:00 p.m. \$5 Nancy Vogel

& Suzanne Shanbaum

August 26

Linda Tillery & Kick, Casselberry-Dupree, and Orchestra Sabrosita -

Great American Music Hall

Sponsored by KPFA

September 1

Release of Mary Watkins' second album - 'Winds of Change' on the

Palo Alto label

September 5

Bass & Broussard presents the First Annual Labor Day Picnic.

Suggestions and ideas welcome!

For more info call 835-8710

Deadline for Announcements

August 12 for September issue

September 16 for October issue

outlets

A Woman's Place

4015 Broadway

Oakland, CA 94609

(415) 547-9920

Old Wives Tales

1009 Valencia

San Francisco, CA 94110

(415) 821-4679

Modern Times Bookstore

968 Valencia

San Francisco, CA 94110

(415) 282-9246

Rags

Carol Cole
Deborah Steele

3789 24th Street. San Francisco, Ca. 94114

Specializing in Woman's and Men's Fashion Classics
from the 40's, 50's, and 60's

(415) 285-6509

SUBSCRIPTIONS

I have enclosed a payment of \$8.50 for a one year subscription to the Black Lesbian Newsletter which entitles me to 12 issues.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone: _____
(optional)

Yes, I would like to be placed on the permanent mailing list.

I have also enclosed a donation towards the Newsletter's basic operating costs.

Please send all correspondence, subscriptions, ads or donations to:

The Black Lesbian Newsletter

P.O. Box 11643

San Francisco, CA 94101

(415) 548-6661

some people say
"live each moment as it comes."
but the moments come
and come
and come

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