

ONYX

BLACK LESBIAN NEWSLETTER

Bay Area 80¢

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DECEMBER/JANUARY 84

ONYX

BLACK LESBIAN NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 No. 6

Staff

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HELP!

We need new members with skills or interest in working with us in the following areas: writing, editing, graphics, distribution, outreach, law, fundraising, advertisements, typing, bookkeeping. Let's hear from you now! Call us at (415) 540-0671.

Donations

We now have nonprofit 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.

We welcome any and all written and graphic work by black lesbians. Our format includes news, reviews, personal perspectives, political commentaries, interviews, poetry, letters, ads, announcements, humor, and journal entries.

Fictitious names or pseudonyms are standard literary practice and should be used if the contributing artist fears too much visibility. Give us a call if you have an idea that you want to talk about.

Outlets

The Old Mole
1942 University Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94704
(415) 540-6077

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

Options for Women Over 40
San Francisco Women's Building
3543 18th Street/Valencia
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 431-6405

Good Vibrations
3416 22nd St.
San Francisco, CA 94110

A Room of One's Own
317 West Johnson St.
Madison, Wis. 53703
(608) 257-7888

Oakland Natural Foods
2710 Park Blvd.
Oakland, CA 94606
(415) 839-8074.

Bookshop Santa Cruz
1547 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA
(408) 423-0900

Sisterhood Books
1351 Westwood Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(213) 477-7300

Dear Readers:

YOU TOOK A CHANCE ON US: A LOOK BACK--A LOOK AHEAD

In May of 1982 three Black Lesbians came together and decided to start a publication that would act as a vehicle for the ideas and concerns of the Black lesbians in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. That publication was given the name the Black Lesbian Newsletter.

We ushered in the New Year by changing the name to ONYX (Black Lesbian Newsletter.) At that same time, we went from a monthly to a bimonthly format and made the decision to become a national publication. To our knowledge, we are the only exclusively Black lesbian publication in the nation.

In our frenzy in putting out the June-July Newsletter, we failed to acknowledge the Newsletter's first anniversary. By doing so now, we want to thank you for sticking with us and helping us gradually grow. Over a period of time the staff of ONYX (BLN) has changed, but those changes have never threatened the continuity of the Newsletter.

We know all too well how the media ignores Black women, especially the Black lesbian, that is why it continues to be important to us to maintain this constant voice of Black lesbians. Not only will we voice our concerns and speak of our lives, we will stand up for what we believe to be right. We will continue to fight against the "isms" that prevent us from living better lives...racism, sexism, capitalism, as well as homophobia.

This past year has opened our eyes wider than we thought they would have to be opened. We have seen the overwhelming racism in almost every aspect of the women's/lesbian/gay community (for some reason we thought it would be safer in this community).

A year ago when we exposed a racist incident in a women's bar in Oakland, CA, an attempt was made to discredit both our paper and the individual Black women involved. We were attacked for documenting just one of a long line of racist occurrences in this community. We were somehow naive enough to expect support. Instead of support, we have witnessed the lack of integrity and ethics in the women's/lesbian/gay press and the community at large.

We as Black lesbians are concerned about the state of our lives and our world. The invasion of Grenada, the enslavement of the Black people of South Africa, the war in El Salvador and other Central American countries, the war in Lebanon, the continued proliferation of nuclear arms, and all other forms of oppression are our concerns, too.

ONYX (BLN) is your voice, we encourage you to use it. You took a chance on us, we appreciate your support over this past year and a half. We will continue to honor ourselves via this forum.

The Editors



A WOMAN'S PLACE bookstore and information center

children's area • bulletin boards • lounge • library
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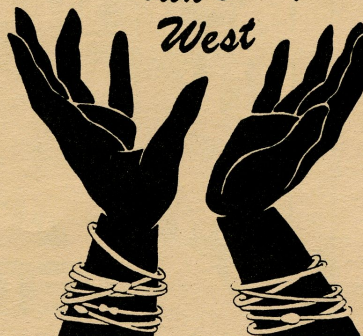
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National Third World People Of Color Conference Postponed

Having made a serious commitment to have a significant visible presence and involvement of Native Americans, Asians and Latins, the National Third World/People of Color Conference has been postponed until June 21st through June 23rd of 1984--Lesbian/Gay Pride Week.

The TW/PC planning committee members felt that there was too much of a Black focus emerging and therefore more time was needed to devote to doing outreach in communities and organizations of Asians, Native Americans, and Latins. However, all other developments for the National Third World/People of Color Conference are firm.

The theme of the TW/PC is "claiming our identities" which was inspired by Michelle Cliff's book, Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise. Workshops, caucuses, speakers, and cultural events will be highlighted at the national conference which is expected to attract up to 600 participants from throughout the United States as well as Latin America, Canada, and the Caribbean.

To date two speakers have been confirmed: Merle Woo of Radical Women in San Francisco, and James S. Tinney of Faith Temple in Washington, D.C. Conference planners are hoping to have representative speakers of several diverse political philosophies as well as reflecting cultural and racial/ethnic diversity.

Tax-deductible donations can be earmarked for the Conference by making such donations payable to "American Friends Service Committee". Pre-registration is \$15 and should be made payable to TW/PC Conference." Donations and pre-registrations should be sent to 584 Castro Street, Suite 227, San Francisco, CA 94114.

Persons of color living in the San Francisco Bay Area are encouraged to become a part of the Conference Planning Committee. Meetings are held every first and third Sunday throughout the Bay Area. For location of meetings, call Billy at (415) 621-8078 or Midgett at (415) 864-0876.

- mental health services for lesbians & gay men
- special interest rap groups
- gay switchboard 841-6224



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JOIN US in supporting our local artists and musicians. These are just a few of the many talented women in our community: Mary Watkins, Casselberry and Dupree, Linda Tillery, Sarita Johnson, Belen Keller, Sharon Page Ritchie, Vicki Randall, Avotcja and Pat Parker.

KWANZAA

In late October, early November, as the first sprinklings of red, white and green make their ways to storefront windows, we become aware of the ominous holiday season. With the commercialization of Christmas plus the strain most lesbians endure for traditional family gatherings, the holidays bring more depression than joy. For Black lesbians, this time of year can be even more isolating for our lack of a commonly rooted culture.

Between Christmas and New Year's however, there exists an age-old set of rituals called Kwanzaa. Designed to celebrate all Black people and our achievements, Kwanzaa can provide Black lesbians support and warm an otherwise dismal winter.

Kwanzaa (first fruit) originated in East Africa where the people celebrated themselves after a good harvest. The festivities stretch across a full week from December 26 to January 1. The holiday, as it is celebrated in the United States, was adapted in 1966 by Ron Karenga, a Black Studies professor at Cal State Dominguez Hills.

The seven days of Kwanzaa correspond to seven principles (Nguzo Saba) by which a Kwanzaa observer tries to live her life. Embellishing the celebration are seven symbols usually arranged on a low table. The first of these symbols is the mkeka, a mat that represents our traditions.

The mazao, tropical fruits, nuts and vegetables in a handsome basket, symbolizes the successful harvest of our political labors. Mazao also represents the coming together of Black people.

A candleholder of seven candles, the kinara, symbolizes our common ancestry and our responsibility to care for one another. Each candle stands for one of the Nguzo Saba. A Black candle is placed in the middle, with red ones to the left and green ones to the right. Each night a new candle is lit, usually by the youngest member of a family.

Vibunzi, in the form of ears of corn, are placed on the table to represent each child in a family. Kwanzaa strongly emphasizes positive bonding amongst family members. Lesbians, for whom Kwanzaa was not specifically designed, might find it hard to celebrate honestly with parents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Nevertheless, the African assumption that all Black people are family, encourages us to choose our "family" amongst our friends.

Gifts, or zawadi, are given to the children who've tried to incorporate the Nguzo Saba into their lives during the passing year.

Finally, an empty cup, not to be filled until the sixth day, is placed on the table, it is known as the Kikumbi Cha Umoja (unity cup), and symbolizes our common struggle as Black people.

The first five days of Kwanzaa are usually celebrated quietly with visiting friends and extended family members. Warm greetings are exchanged and the theme of the day is discussed. On the sixth day, parties are held. The seventh day is a calm day for reviewing the week.

Umoja, or unity, is the theme for the first day of Kwanzaa. "To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race." Divide-and-Conquer is our white oppressor's middle name, so it is obvious to us as Black lesbians that we can not allow ourselves to fall prey to such manipulation.

The second day of Kwanzaa is devoted to Kugichagulia, self determination. "To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves, instead of being defined, named, created for and spoken for by others." To come out as a Black lesbian is to continually shatter the assumptions that color is of no importance and that there's no such thing as a Black lesbian.

On the third day, thoughts are directed toward Ujima, collective work and responsibility. "To build and maintain our community together, to make our (Brothers' and) Sisters' problems our problems and solve them together." In this country most of us learn at an early age that to distrust everything that breathes is a national way of life. Unfortunately our closest recipients of this distrust are each other. Once we reshift our sites to a common and deserving target, we can build positive, helpful bonds with each other.

Cooperative economics or Ujamaa, is the theme of the fourth day of Kwanzaa. "To build and maintain our stores, shops and other businesses and to profit together from them." Because our fight for money is the key to our survival, our jobs can become scenes for tension and unfriendly competition. To support the purpose of our job (and not solely for the monetary carrot) and to feel at ease with the division of money amongst our co-workers would be a marvelous change.

The principle honored on the fifth day is Nia, meaning purpose. Since most employers usurp over half our waking hours, many of us barely have time to restore ourselves after a long working day, much less restoring a nation! But to work, if only for ten minutes each day, for a cause beneficial to our people, can give us a genuine self worth which is something most daily jobs obliterate.

Cont. pg. 6

Kwanzaa con't

Kuumba, or creativity, marks the sixth day of Kwanzaa. "To do as much as we can in the way that we can to leave our community more beautiful and more beneficial than when we inherited it." This day celebrates our people's tradition of excelling in all arts, from opera to weaving. This day also honors the generations of Black womyn who, with remarkable ingenuity and the barest means, have had to reconstruct items they were unable to buy.

The feast, or Karamu, is held on the sixth day. Friends enjoy each other amongst music, dancing and good eating. An mzee, elder womon, together with a young womon, share their remembrances of the year and the previous five days of Kwanzaa. A guest speaker then gives her opinions concerning how far we've come and what she feels are our next steps toward freedom.

After praising our ancestors, the mzee pours wine or grape juice into the kikumbi cha umoja, drinks from it and passes it to the next oldest, and so on until the cup reaches the youngest celebrant. At this point, the mzee initiates the Kwanzaa shout "Harambe", which is always said in rounds of seven. "Harambe" means, "let's all pull together".

The theme for the final day of Kwanzaa is Imani, faith. "To believe with all our hearts in our people and the righteousness and victory in the struggle." Celebrated quietly in one's own home, this day's purpose is to foster the belief that when Black people act in unison we do have the strength to lead our lives according to our collective decisions. For the Kwanzaa observer, this seventh day is a time for recalling the events of the holiday. It is also a time for planning ways to incorporate the Nguzo Saba into her life for the new year.

Despite my attempt to describe the Kwanzaa holiday, some womyn may find it hard to give up the Christmas tree, cards and gifts. Fortunately, Kwanzaa is a non-denominational celebration. Whether you be witch or fundamental baptist, if you believe in Black people's fight for liberation, you are welcome to participate in this unique holiday of our own!

To get information on a Kwanzaa celebration in the San Francisco-Bay Area, call Marlene (415) 540-0671.

*Quotes are from the Nguzo Saba by Ron Karenga.

@1983 Sarita Johnson

GLOBAL LESBIANISM 2

Make connections with
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Connexions #10, the second
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women's quarterly, 4228 Telegraph
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Connexions

THE ABOLITIONIST, 9979 (for my sisters)

i want to free your minds
from centuries of slime
semantic disenfranchisement
and semen.
from seeing yourselves as others do
free you from the prisons of the
penis people.
i want to loosen the chains
of pettiness, pretense, & distorted
perceptions.

i need to see you free.
see you running
thinking
flying
being

so i will have
some company.

from its like this, poems
by doris davenport, @ 1980

Letters to the Editor...

I have just completed the October/November issue and was surprised by the omission of one of the workshops in your report of the Lesbian of Color Conference. That workshop addressed some of the issues around which you have expressed interest in starting discussion groups, particularly self-hatred and Black women. It also addressed the barriers to trust we experience in our relationships with each other. That workshop was the reading and discussion of an essay written by Audre Lorde, EYE TO EYE: Black Women Hatred and Anger. It was one of the most well attended at the conference, even though scheduled on less than an hour's notice when we learned Michelle Cliff's workshop was cancelled. Of the fifty or so women who attended, at least 43 were Black. The workshop was not closed to other women of color, but the discussion that took place after the reading was just among Black women. Our request that discussion take place within racial/ethnic lines was respected by all the women. There were many concerns, feelings and issues put out by the Black women and some strides, however tentative, were made. We agreed that we needed to go further with the discussion than four hours in Section A on Friday, Sept. 9 at Cottontail Ranch could allow. Copies of "EYE TO EYE" were requested by and sent to women to continue the dialogue with other Black women and to continue to look within ourselves in the safety of home.

My assessment of the conference is that it provided a place for lesbians of color to be together socially, many for the first time. For 200-300 women of color (much less lesbians of color) to be together in the same place at the same time is in itself a political act.

I think it is imperative that we be clear about our expectations of any conference and that we be prepared to make that conference into what we want and need if our expectations are not being met. There were definitely mistakes made at the LOC conference, and I think each of us has a responsibility to point those mistakes out and to offer viable suggestions to the organizers for improvement. If organizing is to begin for an Afrikan American Lesbian Conference or another LOC conference, we must look at the first LOC and try not to make the same mistakes.

I am glad to see ONYX taking on the task of getting some discussion on the issues started. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance to you in this effort.

Virginia Harris, SF, CA

When I subscribed for the first time to the Black Lesbian Newsletter in June of 1982, I was eager to pay double the subscription rate--from my own hunger, to support, in appreciation of the monumental undertaking, this means of survival!

I have watched your/our effort with growing pride and affirmation, rifled by moments of violent reaction--usually upon encountering myself in some truthful and repulsive light. Before one can change or create change one must perceive the need--in solitary moments of inspirational clarity and conviction, or some times, in print through the dedicated efforts and intelligence of those devoted to keeping the best of consciousness alive.

In October, 1983, I am eager to contribute better than triple the new subscription rate as I realize money is to the continuing operation of ONYX as bread is to a starving child.

Thank you for your will to excellence!

Gale Golden, SF, CA

We reserve the right to edit for length, space, clarity or potentially libelous remarks.

FEMINARY

The FEMINARY collective is looking for lesbians to take over the magazine. We are particularly interested in a multi-cultural/racial/class group. We have grant money, a subscription list and other materials that we can pass on to help make the next issue possible.

FEMINARY has existed as a publication since 1969. It has gone through many changes and has been able to survive them and grow. If you are interested in continuing the magazine, contact us at:

FEMINARY
P.O. Box 11648
Durham, N.C. 27503

If we don't hear from you by January 21, 1984, FEMINARY will end. We hope to hear from you soon.

Calendar

Tuesdays

Belly Dance as Women's Ritual: taught by Sharon Page Ritchie. Learn Middle Eastern/North African-based dance technique with special attention to breathing, body alignment and developing awareness of energy in movement. Wear comfortable clothing and bring a scarf or belt for your hips. 7-9 p.m. Spring/Fall Studio, 2547 Eighth St. (between Dwight Way and Parker), Berkeley. \$5 per class; \$25 for 6 classes. For more info, call (415) 839-1256.

Wednesdays

Women of Color Health Clinic in South Berkeley - for information, call (415) 843-6204.

Lesbians of Color/Third World Lesbians Support Group/Drop-in Group. Pacific Center 7:45-9:30 p.m. For more info., call Gloria Rodrigues (415) 548-8283.

Fridays

Lesbians Meeting Lesbians. Music, entertainment, food and exciting fun. Call Midgett for info. (415) 864-0876.

Sundays (1st & 3rd)

Third World/People of Color planning committee meetings. For location and time of meetings, call Billy (415) 621-8078 or Midgett (415) 864-0876.

Sundays (2nd & 4th)

Bay Area Black Lesbians and Gays (BAYBLAG) business meeting (2nd Sun.) and "soul Food" potluck gatherings (4th Sun.) 6-9 p.m. Call Midgett for location. (415) 864-0876.

Wednesday December 7th

Pat Norman, SF Board of Supervisors candidate, is having a party at Maud's. Theme, "Old Friends...New Friends." 8:30-10:30 p.m. 937 Cole St., SF. For more info, (415) 641-8781.

Saturday December 10th

Lesbian of Color/Third World Lesbian Gathering--Potluck, poetry and dancing. This is a social/cultural event so that we may continue meeting each other, networking and celebrating ourselves! Bring food to share. This is an alcohol/drug free space. CC provided. Please call 48 hours in adv. WC/A. Pacific Center. For more information, contact Gloria Rodrigues (415) 548-8283.

Women's Resource Health Fair-- South Berkeley Community Church, 1802 Fairview, Berkeley, 12 noon-4 p.m. Booths, films, health checks. For more info. call (415) 843-6204.

Sunday December 25

Lesbian Christmas potluck dinner, all children welcome. 2-6 p.m. (dinner 3 p.m.) RSVP Midgett (415) 864-0876.

Friday December 30

Lesbian Pre-New Year's Eve Party. Come share your hugs and kisses. RSVP only. Midgett (415) 864-0876.

Saturday December 31

Share information on New Year's parties. Call ONYX (415) 540-0671.

Friday January 13th

Lesbian Soul Food Party. Come on and "get down" with soul music and good food. RSVP only. Midgett (415) 864-0876.



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For classified ads, enclose \$1 per line (\$2 minimum per ad). There are 30 characters per line. Each letter, punctuation mark or space between words counts as a character. We reserve the right to use our discretion in the selection of advertisements.

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Classifieds

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PERSONALS

DISLIKE THE BAR SCENE? Want to meet
and socialize with other Black
lesbians in a relaxed,
nonthreatening setting? If so,
call ONYX and leave a message.
(415) 540-0671.

BECOMING INTIMATE. No need to
experience the Holiday Blues. Learn
how to initiate & enjoy intimate
relationships. Enhance an existing
relationship. Individuals/groups
ongoing. Phone 13th Step Study
(415) 540-6900.

COUNSELING & THERAPY

Black Lesbian Therapist serving
Women of Color and Lesbian parents,
their children, and partners.
Andrea R. Canaan, M.S.W.
(415) 653-3386.

Pacific Center now has Third World
counselors and groups available.
Volunteers are needed. Sliding
scale. Call switchboard, 841-6224
for information and appointments.

Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology,
edited by Barbara Smith and published by
Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press has
just been published. We cannot encourage
you enough to read this herstoric
collecton of Black feminist writings with
the decided emphasis on Black lesbians'
lives. Look for our review in the next
issue of ONYX (BLN). But don't wait for
the review, get a copy now!

CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

WALLFLOWER ORDER DANCE COLLECTIVE
starting classes & wkshps in Jan.
'84. Gift certificates available
for holidays!

HELP WANTED

Display Ad Sales Rep. needed for
ONYX (BLN). Commission. Call (415)
540-0671.

GROUPS

In the Oct./Nov. issue of ONYX, we
asked Afrikan American lesbians
interested in participating in a
discussion group to give us a call.
The response was very gratifying.
We have met as a group several times
and have decided to meet on a
regular basis. If interested in
joining this group or being part of
another such group, please contact:
Marlene c/o ONYX, (415) 540-0671.

Lesbian of Color/Third World
Lesbians Support group/Drop-in group
every Wednesday 7:45-9:30 p.m.
Pacific Center. For more info.,
call Gloria Rodrigues (415) 548-8283.

Subscribe!

I have enclosed \$6.00 for a one-year
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(Institutional rate \$10.00.)

Name _____

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Please send subscriptions, ads, corres-
pondence, or donations to:

ONYX (BLN)
1442A Walnut St., #307
Berkeley, CA 94709
(415) 540-0671

Strength in Diversity: A Black Feminist Conference

A Black Feminist Conference is being proposed for the weekend of July 4, 1984 in Portland, Oregon. This conference was conceived during a weekend workshop held in late January, 1983 in Eugene, Oregon. The workshop participants, who described themselves as 18 black women from diverse backgrounds (heterosexuals, bisexuals, lesbians, students, prostitutes, professionals, welfare mothers, construction workers, professors, ex-prisoners, poets, employed and unemployed) discussed the need for Black women to talk with one another about issues affecting our lives.

The following is taken from their statement of purpose:

"We believe that the time has come to discuss issues relevant to Black women and to discuss and define Black Feminism as a viable force for affecting change. We want to address on local, regional, national, and international levels, the divisions that exist among Black women in order to work towards the goal of unification and to better enable us to have the power to effectively organize"

If you can help, want to be on their mailing list, know of resources, phone: Kathleen (503) 281-3935 (Portland), Renee (206) 325-6038 (Seattle), or write: Enough Tomorrows: Black Women on the Move, P. O. Box 12026, Portland, Oregon 97212.

COUNSELING

Pacific Center Groups - see ad for address

Pacific Center has three closed groups (not drop-in):

1. Lesbian drug and alcohol recovery group
2. Lesbians overcoming violence
3. Lesbian incest survivors group

For information about these groups, call (415) 841-6224.

Lesbian Mother's Support Group: Drop-in group for lesbian mothers and co-mothers every Tuesday; 6:30-8 p.m.; \$2 donation.

Women with Physical Differences or Disabilities: Drop-in support group; for women only; every Tuesday; 8-9:45 p.m.; \$2 donation.

Lesbian Support Group: Drop-in group; every Tuesday; 8-9:45 p.m.; \$2 donation.

Under 21 Lesbian Rap Group: Drop-in support group for lesbians under 21 only; every Friday; 4-6 p.m.; \$2 donation.

NOTICES

The Black Lesbian Theatre Ensemble is currently seeking new members. We are also looking for scripts (plays, 1-3 acts, skits, etc.). All interested actors and writers, please contact us c/o ONYX, 1442A Walnut St., #307, Berkeley, CA 94709 or (415) 540-0671.

Women Do Fight Back! The Success Story Project seeks true, firstperson accounts from Black women/women of color who resisted a verbal/physical attack, for 1985 anthology. Send neatly handwritten, typed, or taped accounts to: Women Who Resist, P. O. Box 7320, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. If you can't write, call (408) 427-0176, (408) 429-1074.

LESBIAN CONNECTION--is the FREE nationwide newsletter and forum for all lesbians. Lesbians can get their free subscription (mailed discreetly) by simply sending their name, address & zip code to Ambitious Amazons, P. O. Box 811, East Lansing, MI 48823.

LBS---BLACK WOMEN is the new newsletter for all Black women--Lesbian, Bisexual and Straight. 6 issues/yr \$10. Send to: LBS---BLACK WOMEN, 1134 Crane St., #F6, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Visit the West Coast Lesbian Collections, Sundays noon to 4 and Wednesdays 6 to 9 pm. Call us at (415) 465-8080, or write P. O. Box 23753, Oakland, CA 94623.

DEADLINES FOR CLASSIFIED ADS, DISPLAY ADS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

January 14th for the Feb./March issue; March 12th for the April/May issue. (415) 540-0671.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Jan. 5th for the Feb./March issue; March 5th for the April/May issue. (415) 540-0671

FOR INFORMATION regarding display or classified ads, contact Pandoura at (415) 540-0671