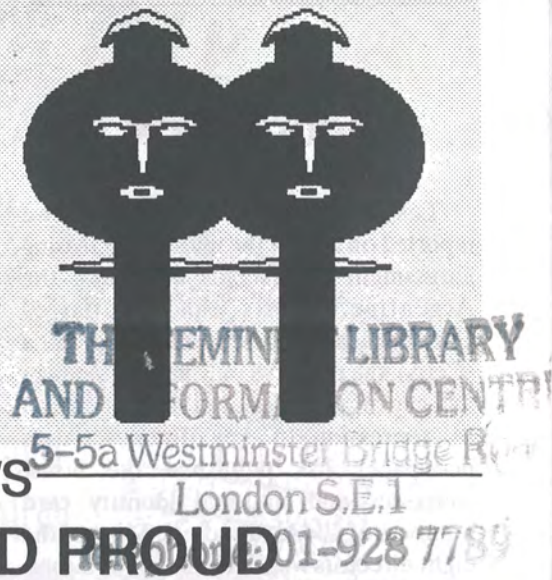


# Black Lesbian & Gay Centre Project

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Newsletter: December / January 1991



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### SOUTH AFRICA : OUT AND PROUD



PHOTO: IDAF

October 13th is now a new date in the World's calendar, as this year witnessed South Africa's first Gay Pride march.

Over 1,000 lesbians and gays from all over the country marched through the streets of Johannesburg to a rally in the city's central Peter Roors park.

Co-ordinated by GLOW (the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Witwatersrand), the day followed months of negotiations between GLOW, city magistrates and traffic police who had originally rejected the application outright.

Black activist Niezhaam Sampon, a member of the Organisation for Lesbian

and Gay Action from Capetown, said "I feel we've achieved something, we've shown that lesbians and gay men are part of the struggle."

International messages of support had been pouring into GLOW all week and were posted up at the final rally for all marchers to read.

The South African press covered the day's events, as well as GLOW's calls for the abolition of the current laws criminalising homosexual acts and the right to basic freedoms of expression, and the march was the first item on the country's TV news.

Speakers at the rally included Black gay activist and founder member of GLOW, Tseke Simon Nkoli, who stated, "There have been gay organisations in existence for ten years now, and it's been the third year of GLOW. And now this is the first march that has ever been organised in Africa. It happened this year because now was the time that we thought we must make ourselves visible.

Now the constitutional guidelines for South Africa are being discussed. We don't want to be left out of that debate."

Info from the Pink Paper



**ARGENTINE  
AGGRESSION**

Last issue (October/November) we reported on how in the midst of increasing harassment of lesbians and gays, the Argentine courts had outlawed **Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (CHA)**, the country's only national lesbian and gay organisation. In the latest round of repression, a key Buenos Aires newspaper has published the home addresses and national identity card numbers of CHA's directors. Most of the eight directors were fired from their jobs, according to a CHA spokesman. The newspaper, *Actualidad*, then went on to publish a second list detailing names and ID numbers of 36 known members of CHA. The list had previously been in the hands of the attorney general and once again, most have lost their jobs.

CHA called on lesbian and gay activists worldwide to begin "aggressive protests against all Argentine embassies and consulates." "If you have access to radio and TV please denounce the situation in Argentina," CHA's Emmanuel Valido urged. "We need a big international scandal."

Life for Argentine gays has been deteriorating for the last two years. At first, overt harassment from police, who arbitrarily arrest gays nightly, then the outlawing of CHA because "homosexuality injures the principles of morality and good customs of our society", and now this threat to people's lives and livelihoods.

CHA have issued a call for solidarity action and monetary support to publicise and pay for the legal challenge.

Since CHA is now illegal, postal money orders should be made payable and sent to **Rafael Hector Hugo Freda, Humberto Iro. 641 Planta Baja Dto 'C', 1103 Capital Federal-Buenos Aires, Argentina.**

**GUATEMALAN MAGAZINE**

Grupo Caslen in Guatemala have produced a new magazine called **Comunidad G**. It contains information about Aids, safe sex and homophobia in Guatemala. For a copy write to **4A, Avenida 3-27, Zona I, Guatemala, Guatemala, CA.**

**US RABBINIC VICTORY**

The United States largest and most liberal branch of Judaism has overwhelmingly agreed that "all rabbis, regardless of sexual orientation, be accorded the opportunity to fulfil the sacred vocation which they have chosen."

The motion was passed at the Central Conference of American Rabbis, meeting for its 101st annual convention in Seattle. It represented the 1.3 million Reform Jews who make up the largest segment of America's Jewish population.

The resolution to accept gay and lesbian rabbis and gay relationships was put forward by a 17 member committee, who received a standing ovation at the end of the Conference, for their work.

The committee took four years to reach its conclusions, and during that time members undertook a comprehensive study of sexuality, which included anonymous personal testimony from gay and lesbian rabbis and rabbinic students.

The committee's statement to the conference concluded: "We applaud the fine work of the gay and lesbian outreach synagogues, and we, along with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, call upon rabbis and congregations to treat with respect and to integrate fully all Jews into the life of the community regardless of sexual orientation."

Rabbi Samuel Karff, the President of the Conference, told delegates: "For some Jews, the heterosexual norm is not a viable option. Such persons not only merit respect as God's children as Jews, but should not, on the basis of sexual orientation alone, be denied the right to be rabbinic students."

Although the motion was an historic one, the final conference resolution reaffirmed that gay unions are not on a par with the Jewish ideal of "heterosexual, monogamous, procreative" marriages and that creating a traditional Jewish home still remained a religious duty, for which heterosexuality was the only appropriate choice.

Info from Capital Gay

**UNITED IN URUGUAY**

United is a new gay organisation in Uruguay. They are seeking contact with other groups and can be contacted at **HU, Venezuela 1499 esquina Magallanes, Montevideo, Uruguay.**

**CANADA: WHITE AND  
RIGHT**

Stan Waters, a Canadian senator-elect began his term in office with an attack on Black lesbians. Elected as a representative of the far right Reform Party which, according to a recent poll, is currently the most popular political party in the province of Alberta, told reporters shortly after his election that he was firmly opposed to granting federal funding to certain groups whom he deemed "undeserved".

When he was pressed for an example, he cited the Black Lesbians of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, a support group for Black lesbians. Some news commentators joked that it was uncertain whether Waters was opposed to giving money to Black people, lesbians or the people of Dartmouth!! More seriously, advocates of a conservative agenda complete with inherent racism and homophobia appear to be gaining political ground in Canada.

Info from BLK

**Obituary**

Derek St Louis died in late November; he had been ill for some time. A schoolteacher, he was one of the founders of the Black lesbian and gay movement in Britain. He helped to establish the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre Project over half a decade ago. For over four years he was a volunteer worker at the South London Lesbian and Gay Young People's Group & an active member of the Greenwich Lesbian and Gay Centre. He lived in Lewisham. Some people remember him for his warmth & humanity, others for his courage and determination. He will be greatly missed.

**BLGC would like to write a tribute to Derek for the next issue. If you have memories of the man and his work that you would like to share, please contact us.**



# TAKING ON

# THE VOICE

In late October, footballer Justin Fashanu became perhaps Britain's best-known 'out' black gay man, after describing his life in the *Sun*.

The response of the *Voice* was extraordinary. Previously this black newspaper, like much of the press, had been sometimes positive, sometimes negative in its coverage of black lesbians and gays. But on 30 October, column after column was devoted to attacking Justin Fashanu in particular, black lesbians and gays in general.

John Fashanu: "My gay brother is an outcast!" proclaimed a front page headline. Inside, under the story entitled "My gay brother has shamed the family name", a boxed item in bold print claimed, 'In Nigeria, the Fashanu name is revered, but Justin's confession is likely to tarnish it. Nigerians are amazed at Fashanu's admission, because amongst the country's 100 million citizens, homosexuality is a sinful crime!'

An editorial comment lamented that 'the very person that gave the community so much hope has let his family and the community down with his tawdry revelations in a daily tabloid newspaper.'

In 'Soul Stirrings', the 'Christian' page, Marcia Dixon consoled readers shocked by 'Justin Fashanu's "confessions" of homosexuality' because he 'has been a high profile Christian extolling the virtues of Christianity', explaining that as a 'habitual sinner' he could not really be a Christian at all.

'It's all lies' was the heading of a back-page article about athlete Carl Lewis, subtitled 'World record holder Lewis scotches gay rumours.'

Tony Sewell, in his regular column, complained that 'Homosexuals are the greatest "queer bashers" around. No other group of people are so preoccupied with making their own sexuality look dirty. Why do they need to come out in the first place - what was wrong with the closet?' Sewell, however, saw no reason to hide his own sexuality: 'We heteros are sick and tired of tortured queens playing hide and seek around their closets.'

To emphasise the view that lesbians and gays are to blame for any attacks on them, a quote from John Fashanu was repeated in large, bold print: 'If I saw him now I could not be responsible for my actions.' Interestingly 'Gay hate on the up' was the title of a news item on the International Lesbian and Gay People of Colour Conference. This was less hostile in tone but contained many inaccuracies.



On a different note, an article entitled 'AIDS: it's up to us to get the message' urged, 'Gay, straight, black and white - everyone has to practise safe sex.' It is hard to dispel myths, however, when bigotry, sensationalism and inaccuracy - demonstrated so clearly in that issue of the *Voice* - are widespread in the mass media.

Black lesbians and gays responded swiftly and angrily, and those in charge at the *Voice* began to realise that they had made a serious mistake. The editorial comment in the next issue, on 6 November, showed a rapid U-turn: 'We must seriously look at the gay issue, not deny it as a normal part of the black experience. In every society and every race, there are people who have different sexual orientations. This has always been the case and will always be so. We need to understand this and stop treating gays and lesbians as if they were from another planet.' Next to this was a letter from BLGC in response to an earlier item on fostering and adoption, printed under the headline 'Why gays make good parents'.

An article entitled 'Glad to be gay' featured 'out' black gays -including Dennis Carney and Alex Owolade in London and anti-apartheid activist Simon Nkoli, though no lesbians.

The newspaper printed several responses to the previous week's main story. 'People like Fashanu should be ashamed of themselves, and not tell the world about the disgusting practices they indulge in,' wrote a 'real' black man. In contrast another reader praised the footballer for having 'shown the public that not only is he a brilliant sportsman, but has proven strength and courage in this world of homophobia.' It was clear that the *Voice* still had not realised how offensive the promotion of bigotry was: readers were invited to give their opinions on 'Do you feel that homosexuality is normal and acceptable?' and offered £5 for each letter published.

Presumably, this was paid to an anonymous correspondent from Brentford who was 'extremely frightened about the way our community is being forced to accept

homosexuality'. Most of the letters printed, though, were positive about Justin Fashanu and critical of the paper's coverage of him. In a page encouraging black people to foster children, one item was headed 'Lesbians can be caring mothers, too'. The debate continued on 20 November.

There was still no guarantee that some future issue would not be as objectionable as that of 30 October. However, the publisher and senior staff were alarmed. The *Voice* gets much of its revenue from 'equal opportunities' employers such as councils, despite its own lack of commitment to equal opportunities. As black lesbians and gays continued to campaign, it had become clear that the newspaper might lose valuable advertising.

On 25 November, NALGO's national lesbian and gay conference passed a motion - moved by its black caucus - calling for a boycott of the *Voice* and withdrawal of financial support and advertising by local authorities until black lesbians and gays got a four-page right of reply and a regular full-page column.

Two days later, there was a front-page apology: 'The *Voice* has received a number of complaints from the gay community, who have suggested that our coverage of the recent Justin Fashanu story was irresponsible and gave the impression that The *Voice* is anti-gay. It goes without saying that The *Voice* is opposed to all forms of prejudice against any group in society because of their race, sex, religion or sexual orientation. We have examined our treatment of the story in question and we accept that in some respects it could be interpreted as homophobic. This was not our intention and we therefore regret any offence that may have been caused.'

However the *Voice* still has not approached black lesbian and gay groups to offer a right of reply and regular column, and discuss a basic code of ethics. If this does not happen soon, there could be a cold winter ahead as advertising sources freeze up and disgusted readers stop supporting the newspaper.



# INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN & GAY

On the evening of Friday 2 November, the University of London Union buzzed with activity as black lesbians and gays from many parts of the world began to gather for the Sixth International Lesbian and Gay People of Colour Conference. It was the first time that the Conference - held every two years - had taken place outside North America. Delegates introduced themselves, and talked of the situations in which they lived and struggled.

On Saturday morning, still more people registered - over two hundred and fifty people in all attended - and selected the workshop topics which interested them most. Fourteen workshops had been scheduled, on a range of topics from 'Sexuality: sharing our lives and differences' to 'Militarism and state uses of force', from 'The politics of health - access to health care' to 'Child abuse and rape' (discussed separately by women and men). Children's workshops were held at the same time.

Other subjects were suggested over the course of the next couple of days, and discussed, including 'Healing internalised oppression' and 'Mixed racial heritage'.

At the opening plenary, speakers from different parts of the world talked briefly of their experiences. No delegates from South Africa - where the first ever lesbian and gay march had just been held - were able to come. However the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Witwatersrand had sent greetings: 'It is unfortunate that we cannot be with you but we are with you in spirit.'



ALL CONFERENCE PHOTOS TAKEN BY INGRID

Afterwards, the packed programme of discussions started, and continued until Sunday afternoon. Time had been set aside for caucuses for women, people with disabilities (including those living with HIV), younger and older people and parents/childcarers.

The final plenary took reports from some of the workshops, a number of resolutions and proposals for working towards the next conference.

Throughout the weekend, delegates shared their experiences of discrimination, sometimes violence, but also of creativity, healing and working together to challenge injustice and build a supportive community.

Men and women talked of the varying attitudes to lesbian and gay sexuality in different parts of the world, and about the development of a distinct culture - sexuality is about far more than what people do in bed. Sometimes black lesbians and gays have faced hostility from those who should have been their allies. For instance some heterosexual aboriginal women left an international women's conference in Australia in 1989 because their lesbian sisters were taking part.

At times the very existence of black lesbian and gays has been denied. Over the centuries, images of women in charge of their own bodies and of gay love have been distorted or suppressed. In the 'Religion and culture' workshop, ancient traditions in India of women in control of their lives, and the changing attitude of the Church, were described.

Spirituality continues to play an important part in the lives of many black lesbians and gays. Though some hold religious beliefs, all too often their experiences of organised religion have been of rejection. Fundamentalism was condemned by ILGPOCC as an extreme version of the excessive exercise of power. Attempts by the Western media and governments to single out Islamic fundamentalism, using it as an excuse for racism, were criticised.

The mass media also came in for criticism because of their misleading coverage - there was anger at the behaviour of the Voice (note National News) - and because they encourage machismo, helping to create a climate of fear and aggression.

Violence of different kinds - and ways of coping with and combating it - was discussed in several workshops, including those (held separately for women and men) on 'Child abuse and rape'. Sexual exploitation is often linked to sexism and racism: delegates talked of the era of slavery in the USA and of the people in the Philippines and elsewhere who are used to 'service' Westerners. Abuse can also go on within lesbian and gay relationships: black lesbians and gays are at risk from those close to them, strangers and the state.

In Ecuador, someone who has gay sex may be jailed for seven years. Wherever militarism flourishes, black lesbians and gays are in jeopardy: people talked of its deeply harmful impact on their lives. A





# PEOPLE OF COLOUR CONFERENCE

message of solidarity was sent to the Mohawk nation, currently struggling for its rights against the Canadian government. Delegates opposed the presence of US American and European armed forces in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Australia, and called for military withdrawal from the Gulf and an end to the war drive. At the same time, all invasions in the Middle East in recent decades were condemned.

Black lesbians and gays who have fled from persecution risk being forcibly returned, it was pointed out in the workshop on 'Immigration and refugees'. Delegates agreed that immigration laws are discriminatory on racial and other grounds, and should be abolished, but that where they exist they should not discriminate against lesbians and gays, whose relationships should not be defined in merely sexual terms but as emotional relationships and ones of solidarity.

The spread of AIDS has sometimes been used to try to justify even tighter immigration controls. The workshop on the 'International AIDS crisis' gave those who took part a chance to share their experiences of raising awareness around HIV and providing support to people with it - work in which black gays and lesbians with HIV have often played a pioneering role.

People with HIV often face premature death because of poor public health care

facilities. The drug AZT is still too expensive for many people; drug companies should issue drugs on the basis of human need rather than profit. In general black people's health is endangered by stress, violence and toxic waste. Women's right to abortion if required is under threat in some parts of the world; at the same time many cannot have children if they choose, because of poverty.

Methods of healing such as herbalism and acupuncture, developed by black people, have been taken over by middle class white people for their own gain. Nevertheless many black people have healing skills, though they are not always able to practise these.

Discussions were intense, sometimes heated. A weekend was a frustratingly short time to explore the range of issues which affected the lives of black lesbians and gays, the problems they had tackled and the achievements they had made. Some time was taken up in getting to and from the venue where food was served, a nearby community centre: catering costs at the Union were too high to afford and food from outside could not be brought in. Also, not surprisingly, with so many delegates from such widely varying backgrounds, different people had different priorities and ways of working.

At the end of the final plenary, exhausted delegates agreed that the next



conference would be held in Vancouver, Canada, and that an international committee would offer support, especially with fundraising. Several people also pledged to try to raise funds to pay off the Sixth ILGPOCC's remaining debts.

Networking and sharing information went on throughout the three days. On Sunday evening, delegates gathered in Brixton to talk, dance and relax together in an atmosphere of great warmth at the social, bringing this remarkable event to an end.





# INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY PEOPLE OF COLOUR CONFERENCE

## OUR CHILDREN ARE PRECIOUS

When I was invited to organise a programme for the children for ILGPOCC, the first thing that came to mind was the feedback that was given by one of the lesbian mothers at the Zami II Conference. She spoke about children being marginalised in that Conference. It was with this brief that I set about organising.

the road. Even though there was a large group of people standing around them, their safety was basically ignored. When someone did realise the situation, the creche workers were called, as though childcare was the sole responsibility of those workers and parents, and not everyone at the Conference.



At the Planning meeting I tried to get to work with a Black gay man. Sadly this didn't happen. The time in which to come up with the goods was very tight and I'm sorry that Parents and Carers did not get to know, until the Conference itself, what was available for the children.

8 children came in all, a wide age range, from 6 months to 9 years old. They had a Batik workshop, singing workshop, and painting. It was a job well done to hear children and their guardians say they had enjoyed themselves. In the end, 2 men did take part in caring for the children over the weekend.

Several issues did crop up that made me more aware that our community needs to urgently discuss our attitude to children and being around them, remembering of course, we all were children once.

The first example happened at the dining hall. The dinner was late, and the children were playing outside. It happened that a couple of them were playing near

This made me ask the serious question - What is our attitude to children, especially those of us who don't have close contact with children at present?

Children have always been part of our communities. Which brings me to the next issue - Why are Black gay men so reluctant to be involved with childcare? What sort of role-models are we preparing for our children with these present attitudes? After all, we reap what we sow.

I wish to say a big thank you, to all the people that were involved in organising the programme for the weekend, particularly the creche workers who put in very long hours and were marvellous.

Lastly, for future conferences, I hope that children will be integrated much more into the adult workshops, to the point where adults and children can have workshops together. I believe we can make this happen.

Avril Rogers-Wright

## WOMEN & IMMIGRATION CONFERENCE 2nd March 1991



This women-only conference will take place at Hackney Town Hall. The Planning group invites Black lesbians to join us & contribute ideas/experience. Meetings are fortnightly at Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, WC2.

**NEXT  
MEETING:  
Tuesday 18th  
December, 7pm.  
For more details  
contact our  
worker Andrea on  
071-254 6689.**



# WAR AHEAD? HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

Certainly the law against gays and lesbians serving in the armed forces is unfair. However I cannot share his optimism about such a war, nor can many other black lesbians and gays.

To begin with, many in our community have experienced modern warfare or have friends or relatives who have done so. It is harder for us, perhaps, than for white lesbians and gays to forget the horror of war and its effect on civilians. Even where black people fight because it seems to them the only way to win their freedom, it is a last resort and not something to glorify.

Secondly, many of us would question the claim that Britain's military presence in the Middle East is to protect its own people or indeed those of any other country. The invasion of Kuwait has caused much suffering, certainly, but how does it threaten British national security? For years the West lavished support on the Iraqi government as it carried out acts of aggression and human rights abuses: why this sudden concern with moral principles? Why are Britain's leaders not more strongly opposed to invasions by other powers in the Middle East? Indeed, if this government were more consistent, Saddam might be pressured into withdrawing peacefully. On the contrary, a war might escalate and - if chemical let alone nuclear weapons were used - endanger many nations' security.

Thirdly, many evidently black soldiers fought for Britain during the Second World War, but the black community here has faced ongoing

racism. A government may draw on an oppressed community's support in wartime and treat it appallingly when peace is restored.

Fourthly, conscription might be introduced. Many of us are in the age group that might be called up and required to kill or be killed by other black people, some of them gays and lesbians. I think there would be much reluctance.

Finally, when societies become fiercely militaristic, as some of us know to our cost, basic human rights - including lesbian and gay rights - are often disregarded. As a result of war in the Gulf region, Britain itself would probably become far more brutal, sexist and homophobic.

A number of black people - and a few white people too - are attracted by Saddam's image as a 'strong' leader. They somehow disregard his record, including getting the West's assistance in violating international law and inflicting horrific injuries on other black people. I believe that, as black lesbians and gays, we should not condone militarism, which has brought such harm to many of us. Whether or not Kuwait should have been established in the first place, its occupation was wrong.

However I do not believe it is in the interests of black lesbians and gays, or indeed those of most people in Britain, for war to break out in the Gulf. Even if there were short-term gains for lesbians and gays in the armed forces, the overall long-term damage would be enormous.

Anyway, that is my opinion. What is yours? **SH**

Before the next issue of the newsletter comes out, it is possible that war will break out in the Gulf region, and that the British army will be involved. I believe that this will deeply affect black lesbians and gays in Britain, and that we should begin to talk about how we will respond if the worst happens.

In a letter to Capital Gay in November, a member of the executive of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality suggested that lesbians and gays serving in the armed forces should seriously consider coming out now. The government, it was argued, would then have to acknowledge the contribution of gays and lesbians to 'national security'; or risk losing their much-needed services, which would show how discriminatory laws themselves damage national security.

## **STONEWALL HOUSING ASSOCIATION** is looking for

1. PROJECT WORKER admin/hostel work (full-time, 35 hours pw) salary: £15336 p.a. plus sleep-over payments.
2. PROJECT WORKER referrals/hostel work (part-time, 17.5 hours pw) Locum maternity cover post for 35 weeks. Start early Jan. Salary £15336 p.a. pro rata

Stonewall is a lesbian and gay organisation providing hostel accommodation to lesbians and gay men aged 17-25 threatened with homelessness or homeless due to the reaction of others to their sexuality. A large number of our residents are lesbians of African or Asian descent and we would therefore particularly welcome applications for the permanent post from lesbians of African or Asian descent. For the locum post we would particularly welcome applicants from lesbians/gay men from minority ethnic communities as they are generally under represented within the project.

For both posts we are looking for people with a commitment to collective working and with a good understanding or experience of working class issues and issues relevant to young homeless lesbians and gay men. For the admin post as least one years paid or unpaid work in an office organisation will be essential, and for the locum post some experience of hostel work would also be essential.

For more information and an application form contact:

Stonewall H.A., T.F.C., 560 High Road, Tottenham, N17 9TA. Tel: 081-885 2305

Closing date for applications: Locum post: 5pm Tuesday 11 December 1990, interviews to be held 15th December.  
Admin post: 5pm on 4 January 1991.



# Struggles of Native Canadians

## Interview with

Celeste  
George

Celeste George, is a Native Canadian lesbian recently in London as a facilitator for the International Lesbian and Gay People of Colour Conference. Kris Black talked to her about her work, and issues affecting Native Canadian People. Below is the first part of the interview.

*KRIS: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?*

CELESTE: I'm a Native Canadian lesbian of Colour, and I always say that because its very important that I identify as a woman of Colour, because in Canada we are considered to be separate, and it has been used to separate us from having solidarity with other people of Colour.

I'm an anti-racist activist. I've run "Unlearning Racism" workshops for 5 years and really alot of my paid work has just been to support that work. Because of the marginalised way that a racist society approaches racism or any other oppression, you don't get to support yourself and do that kind of work.

*KRIS: Would you like to tell us what some of the issues are for Native Canadian people and some of your history too, because I'm sure that will put things in a context?*

CELESTE: The issues for Native Canadian people are in some ways similar to all North American Native people. We have grown up ( this is the second generation, I am of the second generation) after colonialisation. So my parents bore the brunt, and their generation bore the brunt of the intense colonialisation that happened. You know, the machinery of people trying to wipe out our culture, our cultural genocide all across North America.

The issues that arise today, come out of that intense genocide period. for example, the wiping out of our spiritual and cultural values and the ban on religious and spiritual practice.

Politically, during that period, many Native people were not allowed, through specific laws to organise and it was a definite policy on the part of the Canadian government. Issues that are coming out of that period include the mass removal of Native children from their parents, they were sent to residential boarding schools, usually Catholic or Protestant organisations intent on wiping out all of their culture and creating brown, white people, basically. This turned alot of my parents generation against the elders and the traditional ways of life. That has created a disenfranchised people. We have the highest infant mortality rate in Canada, we have the highest suicide rate and murders, alcoholism is rampant.

Most Northern reserves or Reservations, which we were forced onto by the Government, cover the marginal lands. We are not meant to have, for example, minerals or anything that might give us an economic base. In most of those lands the Native people have lost their way of life, the traditional hunting and gathering way of life, and nothing has replaced it. In terms of young Native people now, we see, as I was saying, tremendous rates of suicide and so forth. The racist policies have created in many First Nation people, disillusionment about what Canadian society and Government will do.

Right now the issues are self determination. Many young people of my generation, and even older people, who were politicised when colonisation was happening. Make no mistake, I'm not saying that politicisation happened NOW, many resisted when it was happening. What is coming out now, is that we are becoming very politically open about resisting. For example the Mohawk Nation in Akwasasne, in Quebec, resisted and this has been very important.

Also Native people now have a new heroic figure. There is a politician, Elijah Harper, who was part of the process. The Canadian Government tried to force down the throats of everybody, not just Native people, a new structure of government in Canada.

They decided for example, that Quebec had special rights, whilst ignoring Native people, women and the whole North West and Yukon Territories, where vast numbers of Native people live.

Last summer, when they had this vote, they tried to force it through, but needed the permission of the different provinces. They needed their okay to have it come into law.

Elijah Harper, is a Native man and an elected representative in his province. He refused to go along with it. He was a pivotal point, where many people, not just Native people, were against this law - so essentially it failed.



That has galvanised a lot of political action on the part of Native people. It has been a wonderful year in terms of seeing Native people being politicised and aware. We have a sense of great excitement, also a great sense of urgency, because we know that the police and military have already been used against Native people in Quebec.

*KRIS: Where you say that your people are on Reservations and some live in the city. Are some people on Reservations by choice? And would you describe what it means to live on Reservations?*

**CELESTE:** A lot of people are still on Reservations by choice. The short history, is that when colonisation was happening, European settlers were allowed free rein to come to Canada and choose land, free. One of the things about Treaty's, which some Native groups, not all, signed, was that we would keep the land at so many acres per person, but through lying and greed, dishonesty and trickery and whatever else not, many Native groups were forced onto marginal land. Some were quite close to other settlements, but others were set away from settlements. For many Native people this is all that we have, and there are some, like those of mixed heritage, like the Metis, who do not even have those kind of lands, because they were set-up into getting land allotments. When the great Metis leader was fighting for Native rights, what eventually happened was that those land allotments were tricked away from the people, so people are still on Reservations.

However, with the high unemployment, which may be from 70-90%, many are forced to come to the cities. While we're on Reservations we also don't have access to healthcare, housing or jobs.

*KRIS: Arising out of that would you like to talk a little bit about what physically the struggle is about, in terms of reclaiming land rights? I understand that the people of the Mohawk Nation are fighting the military and the police and over here, we don't necessarily know what that struggle is about. We hear it is about land, but we don't necessarily have access to understanding what the essence is about for you.*

**CELESTE:** It's difficult to designate it as just about land, because there are so many things that get thrown into that kind of designation. White racism would have you believe that we're trying to say "we want the land, we want you all to get off it", so it's like a kind of impossible scenario. Really, what the fight is about, is self-determination, attached to land claims. Primarily, the right to self-determination. Land rights come into it in terms of Oka and the crisis there, because historically, the Native people were lied to and tricked out of their land in terms of the local and Canadian Government refusing to deal with the Mohawk people. Well, not just Canadian, many Mohawk people do not respect borders, and should not, because their territory extends into the United States.

What happened in Oka? The Native people have a land claim in the area, but the Oka council wanted to sell the land and make it a golf course, before the land claim was settled with the Native people. They knew that to Native people, it would be just another example of *fait accompli*, and we would not, as Native people, had any say in what is essentially, Native land.

So, the Mohawk people set up a barrier at Oka, and at

Akwesasne, which is another Reserve attached to the Mohawk Nation, another barrier was set up in solidarity. The Quebec Government sent in the Provincial police to bring down the barriers, not speaking to the Native people, not offering to negotiate, just having a strict police operation, and a policeman was killed.

Native people and people of Colour in Quebec, all agree that the police are very racist and actually hate people of Colour, no matter who they are, but primarily, they have behaved very oppressively towards Native people.

After the policeman died, the Quebec Government, without consulting anybody, ordered in the military. This was ironic, because the Quebec Government have always said they don't want to be considered part of Canada any more. Yet here they were bringing in the Canadian army. The Canadian army responded and were involved in a military style proceeding, which included entering Oka and physically removing the Warriors.

*KRIS: What are the Warriors charged with?*

**CELESTE:** They're charged with various kinds of offences, all to do with property, that is not theirs ostensibly, trespassing and so forth. No one has been charged with the death of the policeman, because nobody knows who killed him. At the time, the police entered the area and charged the barricades, so nobody's actually sure whether the police didn't shoot their own.

The Warriors are still awaiting trial right now, and many of them are not sure what it is going to mean. Many people who were there, put their lives on hold to do the action. One of the ways that the Canadian and the Quebec Governments have handled this is again by forcing people apart and criminalising them. The Warriors were accused of being revolutionaries, who were there only in terms of gambling and selling illegal cigarettes, basically making money on the Reserves. That's been disseminated across the media, as if they were a criminal element in Quebec and Canada, so the Government did a great service to the people in ridding Oka of them.

*KRIS: In terms of legal help and support, do you have money to pay for supporting the Warriors fight through the courts?*

**CELESTE:** There is help in terms of support in Canada, but as with any struggle more money is needed. As Native people, the only way that we can get any kind of satisfaction, because of governments at all levels refusing to support us, is through an action like this, which is totally against all levels of government and not just a land claims issue.

In terms of getting money, the legal defence will need all sorts of funding from our allies everywhere, not just in Canada.

Donations can be sent to:  
Defence Fund for Mohawk Sovereignty  
C/O Bread and Roses Credit Union  
348 Danforth Avenue  
Suite 211, Toronto  
Ontario, M4K 1N8,  
CANADA.





# AIDS UPDATE

## NGO AIDS CONFERENCE

The second international conference of Aids non-governmental organisations, meeting in Paris from November 1st-4th, attracted over six hundred delegates from 63 countries. Despite a large number of gay conference organisers, the subject of homosexuality barely featured on the agenda.

Speakers from Australia, Mexico, Thailand, the USSR and many other countries insisted that suppression of any gay issues by governments and 'respectable' bodies, such as WHO, was hindering the fight against the virus worldwide.

Rafael Freda of Comunidad Homosexual Argentina offered his own country as an illustration, where the denial of legal rights to the lesbian and gay group threatens the only major grassroots HIV campaign.

A resolution from the fringe meeting, presented by Juan Jacobo Hernandez of Mexico, Lisa Power of the UK and

Patrick Frou of France demanding that WHO work more closely with lesbian and gay groups, was agreed by an overwhelming majority at the last plenary. The move represented a triumph for Asian groups in particular, who have been completely ignored by regional WHO staff. The Human Rights workshops brought forward a demand that the United Nations recognise the International Lesbian and Gay Association as an official Non-Governmental Organisation, which would require them to consult it on all issues concerning human rights.

Delegates cheered a speech by Noreen Kaliba of TASO in Uganda, in which she urged that people of different sexualities and cultures should work together.

There were a number of complaints concerning Conference resources, including the fact that there were no facilities available for people with Aids, and the lack of translation facilities. The

latter angered delegates, who walked out, en-mass, of the final plenary, when Argentinian speaker, Alejandro Zalazar was effectively silenced by the omission.

The majority of delegates therefore missed the ACT UP Paris demonstration against the Chair of the French Aids Council, which took place during the same final plenary session. The action occurred after ACT UP were subjected to a number of accusations of "hobnobbing" with the French government at the opening event.

On a positive note, the Conference saw the founding of ICASO, the International Council of Aids Service Organisations, which will act as an organising group for voluntary bodies working with HIV throughout the world. Ruth Morgan Thomas of the UK was elected as one of three European members of the Council.

Info from Capital Gay

## BHAN VIDEO RELEASED

The Black HIV/AIDS Network's (BHAN) new video, entitled "Our People - HIV/AIDS and the Black Communities", has just been released. The video explains simply what HIV and AIDS are; how the virus is, and is not spread; how to protect yourself and where to get further help and information. It also explores some of the problems Black people have faced when challenged with HIV and AIDS. The video contains interviews with Black HIV/AIDS workers and stories told by David Yip (The Chinese Detective), Sneha Gupta (BBC presenter) and Leon Herbert (The Paradise Club).

BHAN is working with local authorities to make the video as widely available as possible. Copies of the video are available in English, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, Cantonese and Swahili for £75+VAT for a single copy or £560+VAT for a whole set of the eight different languages.

To obtain the videos write to PICTURE TALK FILMS, 61 Cromwell Ave, London N6 5HP. For information about BHAN and the services it provides contact BHAN, 106-108 King Street, London W6 0QU. Tel:081-741 9565.

## CAN YOU HELP?

The Health Education Authority is seeking "out" Black gay men aged 16-25 who are willing to appear in a film (to be shown & perhaps televised) on issues of safer sex & AIDS prevention. If you are interested then contact Tyrone Smith, Leicester Black MESMAC Project, c/o BHAF LEICESTER, at the address below.

### BLACK HIV/AIDS ORGANISATIONS

**BHAF LEICESTER**- Black HIV AIDS Forum, 29 New Walk, Leicester LE1 6TE..  
Tel: Leicester 559995

**BHAF MANCHESTER** - Black HIV/AIDS Forum, c/o AIDS UNIT-Room 6003, Town Hall Extension, Manchester M60 2JB.

**The Black Communities AIDS Team Leeds** - Leeds City Council, Health Unit, Selectapost 14, 2nd Floor Annexe, Civic Hall, Leeds LS1 3AQ. Tel: Leeds 462431

**BHAN** - Black HIV AIDS Network, set up to support Asian, African and Afro-Caribbean people affected by HIV and AIDS. 106-108 King Street, London W6. Tel:081-741 9585

**South East Asian HIV/AIDS Support Group** - Contact BHAN at the above address or telephone Andrew Kaur 081-746 8783.

**Blackliners** - Helpline for Black people, offering advice and information on HIV/AIDS. c/o PO BOX 74, London SW12 9JY. Tel: 071 673 1695.

**SHARE** - Shakti HIV/AIDS Response, offers advice, information and counselling for South Asians with/concerned with HIV/AIDS. BM BOX 3167, London WC1N 3XX



# Books

## More serious pleasure lesbian erotic stories and poetry

Sheba collective, Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1990, £6.99

This anthology contains three dozen pieces of fiction and poetry. *Serious Pleasure*, a previous collection of lesbian erotica by the same publishers, appeared last year.

The contributors range from better-known writers such as Storme Webber, Berta R Freistadt, Jewelle Gomez and Fiona Cooper to others, including Linda Devo and Rosie Cullen, whose fiction has never been published before. A number are black lesbians.

The items, all quite short, vary widely in setting, pace and style. Some are humorous. Overall the book is not solemnly, mind-numbingly tedious in the way that some works which set out to provide sexual excitement are. However the items do not all succeed in avoiding common pitfalls of erotic writing.

Both women and men have sung and written about sex for thousands of years, and it can be difficult to find an original plot or fresh metaphor. Here, the use of one sea image after another may give the reader a sinking feeling.

Attempts to convey, in print, what is an intensely personal experience can easily be awkward or banal. Some of the pieces in *More Serious Pleasure* are considerably better-crafted than others.

The introduction explains that the anthology differs from the previous one: 'Not only did lesbian writers want to write about sex, this time round they seemed eager and able to develop sustained story lines and interesting plots.'

Generally, erotica is often flimsily-plotted, personalities are not developed and sex has little obvious connection to people's daily lives and struggles. At the same time the characters tend to reflect society's values and obsessions, for instance with dominating others, being competitive and technological gadgetry (like Rambo with more gasps and slightly less gore).

Some of the contributions to this are little more than descriptions of sexual activity. In Tina Bays' story, for instance, the narrator and her far-off lover have scarcely more individuality than the computer into which she types her fantasies.

Other stories pay more attention to the characters and their settings, though sometimes the sex scenes seem disconnected from the rest. Occasionally, lovemaking is described neither to dazzle the reader, leaving the surroundings in darkness, nor to be merely decorative; but instead throw light on how people relate to one another. The story by Daisy Kempe is an example.

In some pieces, like Sapphire's, touch is life-affirming. In others, however, it borders on violence. The main character in Susie Q's tale, who is grabbed and groped by a masterful stranger and surrenders gladly, perhaps resembles those women - in pornographic stories for men - who are fulfilled in similar ways. To some readers this may be a relatively harmless fantasy. Regrettably, many men and a few women try to play out such scenes in real life.

It is sometimes claimed that publishing work of this nature is a sign of opposition to censorship. But for each such piece which appears in a book or magazine (unless a publisher is desperately short of material) something else, which may convey a different view of sexuality, is left out. Editors have no option but to 'censor': what is at issue is what, and why.

There are other choices which are even more questionable. Why include accounts of children's feelings or physical contact with one another in a book presumably aimed at adult readers? The stories by Liann Snow and Marnia Montague are very different from Cherry Smyth's rather unoriginal fantasy, but is this the right anthology in which to publish them?

*More Serious Pleasure* is an uneven collection. Some of the stories and poems are dull, or unpleasant; while others are entertaining, even moving.

*Zami: a new spelling of my name*, Audre Lorde,  
Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1982 (reprinted 1990)

This is a reprint of what has become a black lesbian classic, the autobiography of New York-based writer and professor Audre Lorde, whose other works include *The Cancer Journals*, *A Burst of Light* and *Chosen Poems - Old and New*. The book tells of her early years, including the experience of coming out.

## DIARY

**Fri 7th Dec 9pm-2am**

Greenwich Lesbian and Gay Centre Gay men's party. Admission £1/£2  
3rd Floor, 17 Bowater Road, Westminster Industrial Estate, Woolwich SE18.  
Tel 081-316 5954

**Sun 9 Dec 3pm**

Meeting for Black lesbians re. fundraising for ILGPOCC, raising profile in Black community etc, Southwark Women's Centre, 2-8 Peckham High St, London SE15. Wheelchair access; full details 071-701 2564

**Mon 10 Dec 8.30pm**

"Zami mass" - planning meeting for Black lesbians wanting alternatives to homophobic family celebrations, bar, Elephant & Castle Sports & Leisure Centre, London SE1, Wheelchair access.

**Wed 12 Dec 7pm**

Black lesbian & gay Christian gathering, 4th floor, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, 235 Shaftsbury Ave, London WC2. Lift, few steps-portable ramp, toilets not wheelchair-adapted. More details from Hong Tan, BM MCC, London WC1N 3XX.

**Fri 14 Dec 7pm**

How can we fundraise to help clear the 6th ILGPOCC's debt, and for the 7th? What criteria should be used for assisting delegates to this. These are among the issues to be discussed at an open meeting for black lesbians & gays, 40 Theobalds Road, London WC1. Wheelchair access.

**9pm-2am**

Greenwich Lesbian and Gay Centre lesbian party. Admission £1. See above for details.

**Sat 15 Dec 8pm-12pm**

Pre-Club rave for Holloway Neighbourhood group's, young lesbian and gay groups, at the Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton Street, London N7. Tel 071-609 4059 or 071-700 4658.

**Tue 18 Dec 7pm-1am**

Gay mens Farewell to 1990 Social at Greenwich Lesbian and Gay Centre. See above for details.

**Fri 21 Dec 9pm-2am**

Mixed social at Greenwich Lesbian and Gay Centre. Raffle. See above for details.

**Tue 5 Feb 10am-1pm**

London Lighthouse Open Day for the Black communities.  
at 111-117 Lancaster Road, London W11. Tel 792 1200

**GUESS WHO'S HAVING A VALENTINES BASH  
FOR BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS? MORE  
DETAILS TO FOLLOW? STAY TUNED.**

## EDITORIAL POLICY

The BLGC Newsletter is published bi-monthly and aims to provide information on international news, as well as events and campaigns nationally, of interest to Black lesbians and gay men. News items, articles, letters (all written in simple language) or photographs and cartoons are always welcome. Deadline for February/March issue is 25th January.

In line with BLGC policy, we will not publish material that is racist, sexist, ableist or assumes readers are without childcare responsibilities, or of a certain social class, cultural/religious/British-born background. Individual articles do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the BLGC. Volunteers for the production of the newsletter are always welcome.

Tel: 081-885 3543.



# REGULAR GROUPS

## LESBIANS AND GAY MEN

**SHAKTI LONDON** - South Asian Lesbian and Gay Network. The London group meet every 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month from 3-6pm at London Friend, 86 Caledonian Road, London N1, (Nearest tube: Kings Cross). Full Disabled access. A Bhangra disco for lesbians and gay men is held on the 3rd Friday of the month at LLGC, 67-69 Cowcross Street, London EC1, from 10pm. Produce bi-monthly newsletter. There are other Shakti groups forming around the country (see below). For more information Tel: 081-993 9001

**SHAKTI BRADFORD** - Tel: 0274-723802

**SHAKTI LEICESTER** - c/o LLGL, 45 King Street, Leicester LE1 6RN. Tel: 0533-550667

**LONDON LESBIAN AND GAY BLACK GROUP** meet Fridays at 8pm at 40 Theobalds Road, London WC1. Wheel chair accessible.

**LEICESTER BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY GROUP** Support/Socials/Meetings, for details write to C/O Michael Wood Centre, 29 New Walk, Leicester LE1 6TE. Tel: 0533-559995

**BIRMINGHAM BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY GROUP** - Meets 1st and 3rd Thurs. Tel: Friend 021-622 7351

## LESBIANS

**CAMDEN BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** runs socials, discussions and workshops for Black lesbians. Camden Lesbian Centre/Black Lesbian Group, 54-56 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Tel: 071-383 5405. Access good.

**LAS DIVINAS** - Latinamerican Lesbian Group, We meet the fourth Friday of every month at Camden Lesbian Centre/Black Lesbian Group, 54-56 Phoenix Road, London NW1. 7pm. Or contact us c/o Latinamerican Women's Rights Service, Tel: 081-694 8176.

**AFRICAN/CARIBBEAN BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** meets Tuesdays 7.30-9.30pm at the Hackney Women's Centre, 20 Dalston Lane, London E8. Partial disabled access. Details on 071-254 2980

**YOUNG BLACK ZAMIS** (for black lesbians 16-25 yrs) meets 6.30-9.30pm on the 1st and 3rd Friday of the month at the Camden Lesbian Centre, 52-54 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Tel: 071-383 5405. Access good.

**ONYX** - group for Black lesbians meets on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month at 6.30pm at London Friend, 86 Caledonian Road, London N1, (Nearest tube: Kings Cross). Tel: 071-837 2783. Full Disabled access.

**ORIENTATIONS** - Chinese and South East Asian lesbian and gay group meet at London Friend, see ONYX for location and phone number.

**PECKHAM BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** meets fortnightly at Peckham Black Women's Centre, 69 Bellenden Rd, London SE15. Tel: 071-358 1486

**YOUNG BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** at Lewisham Young Women's Project meets the last Wednesday of every month 7-10pm at Lewisham Young Women's Project, 308 Brownhill Rd, Lewisham. For further details ring 081-698 6675

**BIRMINGHAM BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** c/o Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre, Devonshire House, High Street, Digbeth, Birmingham, B12 0LP. Tel: 021-773 6952

**NOTTINGHAM BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** - Meets at Nottingham Lesbian Centre, 30 Chaucer Street, Nottingham, NG5 1LP. Tel: 0602-411475

## GAY MEN

**LET'S RAP** - London Group for Black gay men, meets fortnightly. Tel: 071-737 3881

## BLGC DEFINITION OF BLACK

All lesbians and gay men descended (through one or both parents) from Africa, Asia (ie. the Middle East to China, including the Pacific nations) and Latin America, and lesbians and gay men descended from the original inhabitants of Australasia, North America and the islands of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean.

## WANTED

Is there a Black gay man of African descent willing to be a sperm donor? If so please contact the BLGC office on 081-885 3543

## The WOMEN'S THERAPY CENTRE

6-8 Manor Gardens, London N7

December and January

Workshops are:

- \* Women who love too much (lesbian workshop)
  - \* Intuitive massage
- \* Women who love too much
  - \* Women as managers
  - \* Self healing tension and relaxation
- \* Body image and our relationship to food
- \* Women and depression
  - \* Am I a lesbian ?
  - \* Bulimia weekend workshop
- \* Envisioning - a way of living
- \* Women and Anger

Costs on a sliding scale.

Ring 071-281 7879  
for more details