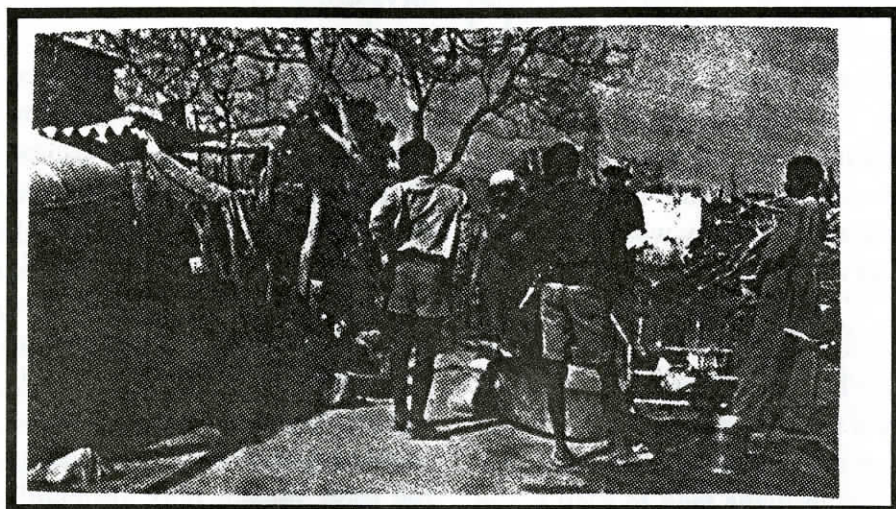
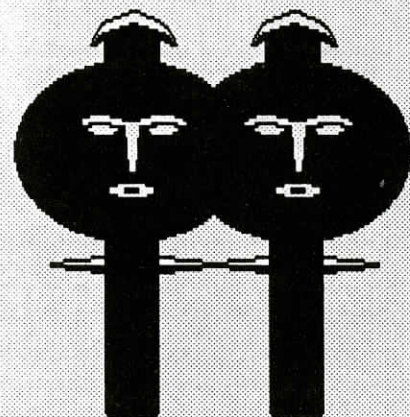


# Black Lesbian & Gay Centre

BM Box 4390, London WC1N 3XX

071.732.3885 (office)

Newsletter: April/May 1993



Mafaro, a group for Black gay men in Sadza, Zimbabwe (of whom we wrote in the November/ December 1992 newsletter), sent us this photograph of them at work on their community farm. They are still appealing for donations of old clothes, which they can sell to generate income. Mafaro can be contacted at M.C.C., P.O. Box 28, Sadza, Zimbabwe.

## 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.

## national news

### More discrimination against lesbians

Under the new Child Support Act, single mother will be required to reveal the identity of absent fathers so that they can be forced to pay child maintenance.

Any woman who has a child by privately arranged donor insemination will be compelled to name the donor if she claims benefits. A refusal could mean a

20% cut in her benefit. Men who have donated sperm would become liable to pay child maintenance, averaging £25 a week, even if they are not an active parent.

These measures are included in the guidelines issued by Child Support Agency, effective from 5 April.

These rules, however do not apply to donors from sperm banks. Many lesbians face discrimination if they apply to donor insemination

clinics and private sperm donation is the only option left to them. Their guidelines state: "it is uncommon for artificial insemination by anonymous donor to be provided for an unmarried woman."

Such rulings will in effect restrict the rights of lesbians who wish to have children and probably find that men are reluctant to donate sperm privately if it means them having to pay maintenance regardless of any private arrange-







# national news

Against Defamation (GLAAD) have also reached an agreement pursuant to which the previous joint press statement is being issued. As part of the accord, Ranks has agreed to produce and distribute a public service announcement which further expresses his view that violence against lesbians and gay men is wrong

Meanwhile the Bobby Brown tour in the USA will no longer have Ranks as supporting artist. Also Shabba was dropped from an appearance on the *Tonight* show after GLAAD announced that it was planning a national protest against media that publicised Shabba's music without addressing the issue of his homophobia. A member of the staff team at NBC who produce the programme said that Ranks was pulled from the line-up after reviewing a tape of his appearance on *The Word*.

*How soon they change!*

## Letter of condemnation for Buju

In an open letter issued by the Anti-Racist Alliance, ten prominent members of the Black community - heterosexual, lesbian and gay - condemned anti-lesbian and gay lyrics.

The letter was provoked by Buju Banton's homophobic Boom By By as well as Shabba Rank's rantings that lesbians and gays ``deserve crucifixion''.

The letter stated: ``As Black people opposed to homophobia



we are shocked and totally opposed to the anti-gay and sexist sentiments expressed in recent materials produced by some Black reggae artists.

"These songs divide and weaken our communities. The Anti-Racist Alliance was formed to oppose racism and the fascists at the time when support for those evils is at its worst level for 50 years in Britain and Europe.

"Black people and lesbians and gay men all stand to lose from the rise of fascism. Black lesbians and gay men are especially threatened. Surely this much is clear even from the history in Europe in this century? Jews, gypsies, Black people, foreigners, homosexuals and many others were all murdered in the Nazi concentration camps." The letter was signed by Linda Bellos, Justin Fashanu, author Trevor Carter, comic DJ Elayne, Isaac Julien, NALGO's Kurshad Kharamanoglu and Sanjev VEDI, Martin Lindsay of the National Union of Students, Bob Purkiss of the TGWU and Marc Wadsworth of the ARA.

The ARA is backed by 28

trade unions and Black and Jewish groups and by 90 MPs although, much to the chagrin of Black Lesbians and Gays Against Media Homophobia, not one Black MP agreed to sign the letter.

### 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.

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: 071-732 3885



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# national news

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## The Burnsall strike continues

Since 15 June 1992, nineteen Black workers, most of them Asian women, at Burnsall Limited, a metal finishing company in Smethwick, West Midlands, have been on strike for union recognition, equal pay and basic health and safety at work.

Like many other Black workers across the country, workers at Burnsall's were facing working conditions which damaged their health, low wages, arbitrary demands for overtime and consistent harassment from the management. 26 of the 29 workers joined the GMB in March, and after three months in which the management categorically refused to recognise the union, took the decision to go on strike. Over eleven months later, the workers are determined to continue the struggle till their demands are met.

This strike is the most recent in a series of struggle by Black workers, in which Asian women have been at the forefront, stretching back to the Grunwick strike in the late 1970's. In this period of acute recession and attacks on workers' rights, say supporters of the strike, the Burnsall strike is a symbol of resistance.



## GLR launches a new gay and lesbian programme

GLR, the BBC radio station in London, is launching a new, weekly one-hour programme. Gay and Lesbian London, starting on 19 March at 8pm, includes news features, interviews and music.

It will be presented by radio journalist Dixi Stewart and actor/journalist Matthew Linfoot. The programme will reflect a cross-section of people from the lesbian and gay community in London.

A spokesperson said: "Whilst aiming to inform the audience and encourage feedback and discussion, Gay and Lesbian London will be entertaining and, we hope, of interest to all our listeners."

So it will be up to us as Black lesbians and gay men to make use of this programme and use it to promote ourselves and our events. Let's just make sure it doesn't end up being like the first series of "Out", where Black lesbian and gay issues were conspicuous by their absence.

## Some progress re:Buju Banton

Following a discussion at the Astoria Theatre, a Black woman said that she would take Buju Banton's record away from her children. The mother's claim came after the lyrics were explained to her and the rest of the audience at a Black social and discussion group called Focal Point, by Ted-Walker Brown of Black Lesbians and Gays Against Media Homophobia.

The meeting attracted about 40 people, mainly Black women, and a number of journalists from Black publications. One of Banton's UK representatives failed to turn up in spite of an invitation.

Despite many comments such as "we do not mind you personally, but we do not agree with your being homosexual", Ted felt that some progress was made.

Black Lesbians and Gay Men Against Media Homophobia continue to do campaigning work and can be contacted at the address listed under the regular groups section.



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# international news

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## Times are changing in Brazil?

Brazilian gay activists are compiling a number of examples of anti-discrimination legislation from around the world in the hope of presenting them to the legislative assembly when it considers amendments to Brazil's constitution. The constitution will be voted upon in October.

There have been efforts to include a prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexuality under the section that concerns the rights of the individual, but these have been defeated. Reasons have included lack of a legal precedent, uncertainty about the meaning of "sexual orientation", the worry about the consequences of including lesbian and gay men in the constitution and the assumption that homosexuality is an illness.

Despite this, homosexuality is not illegal in Brazil, but prejudice is widespread, and there has been an increase in the number of attacks on lesbians, gay men and transvestites.

Grupo Dignidade seek copies of anti-discrimination legislation from other countries, especially those that include the term "sexual orientation", which they hope can be used to formulate constitutional change.

## More murders in Mexico

Neftali Ruiz, a well-known activist in Chiapas, southern Mexico, was shot dead on 6 February by an unknown assailant. His death is the latest in a series of unsolved murders of gay men in Mexico, with over twelve being in Chiapas alone.

Ruiz had publicly criticised the police for their investigations of the previous murders. Ruiz formed part of a delegation of local gay leaders which met with the police to demand more effort in solving the previous murders. The police agreed to work harder provided that transvestites stop dressing in women's clothes and gay prostitutes stopped working on public roads!

A spokesperson for the Mexican Lesbian Human Rights Organisation said the Mexican government is responsible for allowing homophobic hate crimes to persist.

Alongside the many murders gay leaders have been harassed by the police. Twenty-two-year-old Martin Arriaga was severely beaten, stabbed and left for dead.

The police have been trying to say that the twenty-three murders of gay men last year were crimes of passion or sex orgies that went wrong. Understandably the gay community is challenging this.

## Lesbians and gays ignored in South Africa

A charter of Fundamental Human Rights in South Africa which purportedly enshrines in law the equality of all South Africans has been widely criticised for failing to incorporate protection for lesbians and gay men.

In theory the charter guarantees citizens' and political rights, but conspicuously absent are the rights of women to have an abortion and the right of lesbians and gay men to equality under the law.

Minister of Justice Dick Coetsee said: "The government will... leave it to a Constitutional Court to decide whether the new constitution covers such areas."

Under current South African law any sexual contact between men carries a possible life sentence and Coetsee added that the situation would not change.

Carl Neihaus, a senior spokesperson for the African National Congress, condemned the charter saying that it should enshrine the rights of all individuals, which includes the rights of the gay community. "We oppose any legislation which criminalises acts amongst the gay community," he added.

Simon Nkoli, the Black gay activist, has also condemned the charter.



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## centre update

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The Centre has now reached a crucial stage. On the one hand, new and exciting prospects are opening up month by month; on the other hand, just staying afloat at a time when numerous community organisations and small businesses are folding up will take a lot of effort.

Funding for the year ahead will cover little more than salaries and volunteer expenses. So BLGC will have to raise thousands of pounds just to pay the rent and bills, let alone to improve access and bring the back of the arch into use as a social and meeting space with a cafe and bar area, which will allow the Centre to move towards self-sufficiency.

A freelance fundraiser is assisting BLGC with this task, but there is still a long way to go. So if you might be able to help by holding a benefit, persuading other organisations to give donations or in any other way, please get in touch - every little helps!

Drop-ins began in February. These have been successful, as Black lesbians and gays have dropped by at the Centre to drink tea or fruit juice, watch videos, play board-games or listen to music and chat, breaking off every now and again as a train rumbled overhead!

Fewer people have turned up at employment advice sessions. Hopefully, as time goes by more Black lesbians and gays will take advantage of the chance of free advice on a wide range of employ-

ment issues, from harassment in the workplace to interview techniques.

A small gathering in honour of Audre Lorde was held on 23 February. This was a moving occasion; those present shared with one another the ways in which this great Black lesbian writer, teacher and activist had inspired them.

Plans are under way to rearrange the library, and feedback from a questionnaire sent out with the February-March newsletter is helping BLGC to prepare a programme of advice sessions, discussions, workshops, cultural gatherings and other events for the summer and beyond. Work on HIV is to intensify.

Amidst all this, 'coming out' and other calls have been answered, publicity sent out, supplies ordered and equipment serviced. BLGC has worked to raise its profile (and some funds) through talks and training at a range of places, from Haringey through Westminster to Hillingdon.

Without volunteers, many of these activities would have been difficult if not impossible. More help is needed, if the Centre is to survive the effect of funding cuts and reach even more of those who need its services - if you can spare a little time, please have a word with one of the volunteer coordinators, Sakthi or Clarence, if you have not already done so. They can be contacted on 071-732 3885.

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### Listen.

**The Black Lesbian and Gay Centre will not work without you.**

**Yes we know you like to party.**

**We know you like to socialise.**

**We know you may not have much time.**

**But really is a few hours a month (unless you want to do more) much to ask?**

**It is too easy to sit back and expect someone else to do everything and demand that it be dropped into your lap.**

**A Black Lesbian and Gay Centre needs active input from the Black lesbian and gay community.**

**Get involved.**

**Meet new people.**

**Learn new skills.**

**Develop the ones that you already have.**

**Share your skills with the Black lesbian and gay community**

**We need it.**

**Really you have nothing to lose.**

**Fill in the form opposite and return it to:**

**Black Lesbian and Gay Centre**

**BM Box 4390**

**London**

**WC1N 3XX.**

**P.S Do it soon**

**P.P.S. Tell your friends!!**



# volunteer details

Date .....

Name.....

Address.....

Tel:.....

Do you mind us contacting you by post? Yes / No.

Do you mind us contacting you by phone? Yes / No.

Please tick alongside the areas in which you can volunteer.

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Counselling*   | Helpline            |
| Advice/Information work                                    | Library             |
| Archives   | Publicity           |
| Newsletter   | Creche work*        |
| Driving*   | Fundraising/events* |
| Talks/training*  | Performing          |
| Cooking  | Centre maintenance  |
| Staffing the centre  |                     |
| Interpreting/translating (please specify language(s))..... |                     |
| Other (please specify)                                     |                     |

\*We may have to make checks for these areas of work. (This will be done with your knowledge.)

Please tell us about yourself and why you want to volunteer for BLGC, what are your skills and interests and in what work are you interested. (This is not obligatory but it will help the volunteer coordinators when allocating task to volunteers.)

Names of references. We will not contact them without your permission.

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Thanks again for your interest in BLGC.



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# hiv news

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## Chinese HIV tests

The secretary for health and welfare in Hong Kong has promised to protest to the Chinese authorities over the practice of ordering random HIV tests at the Chinese border. The Chinese policy targets mainly ethnic Chinese when they visit the mainland. Travellers are charged about £14 for the blood test which, although providing very quick results, has been criticised about the reliability of the test and also concerning the standards of hygiene under which the test takes place. No counselling is offered to those who are told of a positive result.

A spokesperson for the Guangzhou health and quarantine bureau said: "We select those who might have a higher risk of spreading the virus...in order to prevent the disease from spread-

ing.'" Sadly the Chinese press continues to believe that AIDS is foreign to China and has blamed foreigners and those who have had contact with them for spreading it.

## Alarming HIV figures in Beijing

In Beijing police have agreed to allow a gay men's organisation called Men's World to meet unmolested because it is believed that a group like this might help curb the spread of HIV.

According to research from the National Health Education Institute most of the 900 people in China who have tested positive for HIV have been through intravenous drug use. As a result the government has been reluctant to recognise the risk to gay men.

An unofficial survey has

revealed that only 6% of gay men in Beijing have ever used a condom during anal sex. Researchers are hoping for funding from the Chinese public health ministry and the World Health Organisation to carry out a more comprehensive study.

## The Landmark moves

The Landmark, a centre for people living with HIV and their friends and carers, has moved temporarily further up the road. Their new address is 107 Tulse Hill, SW2 2QB. The Black only space on a Tuesday run by volunteers from Blackliners is still in operation from 5-9pm, offering counselling, sessional workers, massage, reflexology, and social space. For more information call 081-678 6686.

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## 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, Manc. M60 2JB.

BCAT LEEDS (Black Communities AIDS Team) Leeds City Council, Health Unit, Selectapost 14, 2nd Floor Annexe, Civic Hall, Leeds LS1 3AQ. Tel: Leeds 462431

BHAF WEST MIDLANDS (Black HIV/AIDS Forum) 9 Anstruther Rd, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3NN. 021-212 0122.

BHAN (Black HIV/AIDS Network) Support Asian, African and Afro-Caribbean people affected by HIV and AIDS. 111 Devenport Road, London W12 8PB. Tel: 081-742 9223 (helpline) 081-742 2828 (admin)

SOUTH EAST ASIAN HIV/AIDS GROUP contact BHAN (above) for details.

BLACKLINERS Helpline for Black people, offering advice and information on HIV/AIDS. Brixton Enterprise Centre, 444 Brixton Road, London SW9 83J. Tel: 071-738 5274

NAZ. A HIV/AIDS project for the Muslim and South Asian Communities. Contact NAZ c/o BM 3167, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 081-993 9001.

SHARE (Shakti HIV/AIDS Response) Advice, information and counselling for South Asians with/concerned with HIV/AIDS. BM SHARE, London WC1N 3XX



# change is needed now

The following speech by Dennis L Carney of Black Gay Men United Against Aids was read at the Reach Out and Touch march in central London last year. We feel many of the points raised in it still have relevance today which is why we feel it merits transcription.

Hi.

I am proud to be able to be here with you today and I thank the organisers of Reach Out And Touch for giving me this opportunity to speak with you.

I do not know whether I am HIV Positive or not but I know many other Black gay men who are positive and are unable to speak to you today for fear of being shunned when they return to work or family.

My name is Dennis Carney. I am a founder member of Black Gay Men United Against AIDS. This group was formed two years ago to help provide safer sex information and support to the Black gay community around HIV/AIDS.

Black Gay Men United Against Aids is currently working with two of this country's leading Black HIV/AIDS organisations:- The Black HIV & AIDS Network and Blackliners, to ensure that the Black gay community are targeted with HIV prevention information that is culturally sensitive and relevant.

It is over ten years since HIV was first discovered in this country. During this time the Health Education Authority has produced and co-ordinated much of this country's HIV prevention campaigns.

As far as I am aware the HEA has only produced one single HIV poster, among the many produced, targeted at Black gay men.

Can I ask the audience, have any of you seen it? O.K. Not many of you have. Well, I have, last year, I think, and guess what? I've forgotten what it looks like or what it said.

I believe that there is a common myth amongst many Black gay men that you can't get infected with HIV if you only sleep with Black gay men.

This is not surprising when you consider that nearly all the images used in HIV prevention campaigns are of white men.

What about women, Black people and children living with HIV/AIDS, not forgetting Black men who dare to love other Black men or men period?

There are some who believe that the health needs of Black gay men have been addressed by HIV infor-

mation targeted at the white gay community.

But what if you're Black and gay and don't go clubbing in Heaven on a Saturday night, don't go drinking in gay bars and don't read Capital Gay?

How are you supposed to get access to accurate, up-to-date and unbiased information about HIV and AIDS? Buy a copy of the Voice, Britain's best anti-gay Black newspaper?

At this year's Candlelight Memorial Service organised by The Terence Higgins Trust, in memory of people who have died from HIV and AIDS, a number of organisations and speakers were inducted to participate. Did you know that not one Black organisation was invited and no mention was made of the many thousands of Black people who have died and are living with HIV/AIDS in this country, Africa and around the world?

I remember feeling cheated, angry and deeply hurt by the insensitivity of the organisers and wondered whether THT really believes that HIV sees no colour.

I am aware that there is not one single HIV support group for Black gay men living with HIV in Britain. There are many other groups and organisations up and down the country, providing safe spaces for others to meet and share experiences and hopefully receive much needed support, in a world not free from discrimination.

I have come into contact with many Black gay men who are HIV positive and who suffer greatly from the fear of discovery by their families and friends that they are HIV positive and gay. For many people, this is too much to deal with.

Some of these men have discovered who their true friends are and have valued the support they receive from their families.

There are many who have found themselves homeless, harassed, unemployed, isolated and friendless because of ignorance, fear and prejudice.

This has got to stop and stop now!!

Yes! Black gay men do exist. They need access to culturally relevant information. They need access to appropriate and sensitive HIV/AIDS services. They need support from their families and friends.

And they also want a world free from discrimination.

My message to you all is that when the history books are written about this terrible age of HIV, my hope is that they document the indisputable fact that there were many, many, many people who dared to care, like you have today.

Thank you.



# —because of a dog called toto...—

## a tale about outing

"Come out, come out wherever you are." - The Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*

It is hard to smile when you are angry. That is what I should have said when you asked me why I looked so sad, when you introduced me to your parents as a friend.

I know that I would never, ever, refer to you as a friend. Lover is far too restrictive and clinical for me. Boy-friend too adolescent. I suppose I don't know how I would describe you. But it would definitely not be as a friend.

"You really ought to know."

"I am not psychic. Speak

to me." You always said that whenever I grew silent on you, a silence you hated not because I wasn't talking but because it always meant that you would be searching for the incident which made me unhappy.

"Are you okay?" you asked.

"I don't know"

"What does that mean?"

"It means I don't know."

"What have I done?"

"Think about what you have done."

"That really isn't an answer and it isn't fair."

"I am trying to be fair."

It is hard to smile when you

feel denied. That is what I should have said the time you tried to kiss me a clandestine goodbye after I had met your parents.

Sixteen hours ago you and I had crawled, naked, out of your parent's bed and squeezed into the single one in your box room because I felt, and you sensed, that making sex, having love in your

lover, so tender moments ago, grows stiff at the sound of a key entering a lock, who freezes yet jumps from sofa to armchair when the door squeaks open.

"Hi," I said.

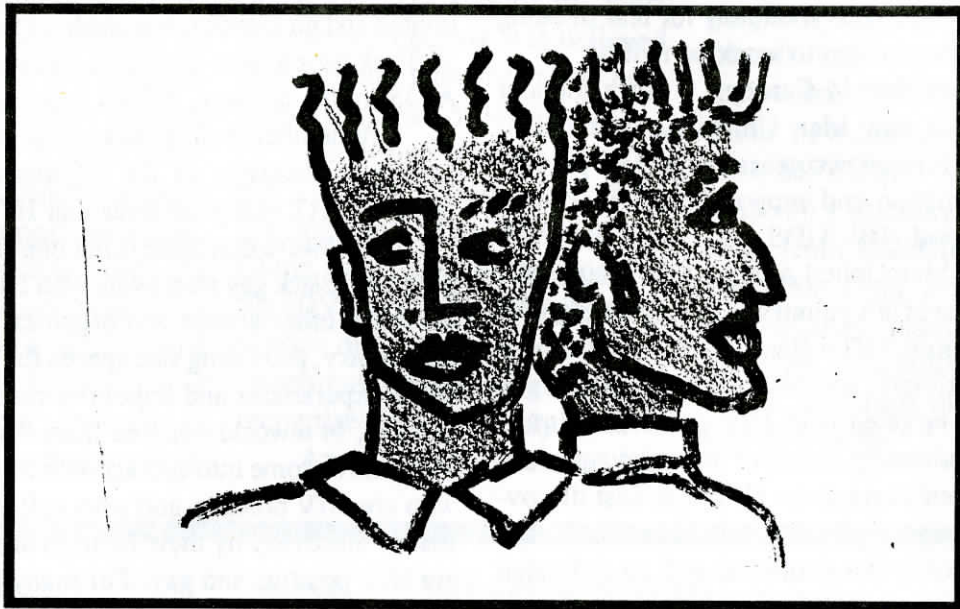
"Hello."

"Hi, mom. This is my friend..."

I didn't hear the rest because

I was so thrown.

Reality has many sides and yours on this day differed so much from mine. My reality saw the man I love denouncing me. Me, Jesus. You, Peter. Your



parent's bed would be something we could not live with.

We laughed as we struggled to stay under the single duvet.

"I love you. Do you know that?" I said.

"Yes."

"Yes?"

"What?"

"Well do you love me?"

"Yes," you answered.

"Tell me, then."

And although it was said in a tone that was meant to lack sincerity I knew that you meant it and you needed me as much as I needed you.

It's hard to smile when a

reality differed from mine because you saw nothing wrong in what you did.

I excused myself, lying about having to care for a nephew or niece or shopping for my mother. I needed out. It would be too hard for me to have to control my desire to kiss you, let alone my desire to out you, both of which I did not want to do.

It's hard to smile when you don't want to, especially when you don't really mean it. "I'll call you later," I said. I pulled the front door softly behind me, belying my fury.

I suppose it showed how much



you mean to me that this caused me such misery.

Later that week we had a huge row about this and other things: you, their precious only child, not being out to your parents; how hurt they would be if you told them you loved me; how hurt I was; the obligations we had to each other; the extra-relationship affair that I had, which you discovered much later.

"No, you will not turn this around," I said.

I called you a coward and you agreed with me. I screamed at you and continued to call you names. Wimp, weak, yellow, pathetic.

"Stop!" you shouted. I didn't and you walked away.

You did not return my calls, you ignored my letters. Your parents said that you had gone away. I didn't believe them but later found out that you had. An aunt's in Manchester for two weeks.

For that period my mother made me eat, made sure that I did

not make myself ill. My sister listened to me moan about how much I missed you. Even my brothers invited me to drown my sorrows with them when I explained what had happened between us. They supported me more than I imagined, especially since they admire you and scorn me because of your football skills. (What's so impressive about a gay man on a soccer pitch?) I remembered how good you look in shorts.

I realised just as quickly that I missed and love you. I was being selfish. If you love me that is all that matters. You love you family, that cannot be denied. It is possible to love both.

So you won't kiss me in front of your father. I can wait till the bedroom door is closed. So you won't refer to me as your lover to your mother. Just call me that in bed.

My family is very important to me. It has always been supportive of me and my sexuality. I can't expect that same of your parents. Beside mine aren't de-

vout Muslims. My parents have grandchildren, thanks to fertile siblings and their rampant hormones. Yours never will.

"I only want to adopt," you've said, more that once.

I won't force you to come out. Come out in your time. Don't come out at all. It doesn't really matter.

"It's for you," said my sister, handing me the telephone. Her tight-lipped smile failed to hide the laugh in her voice.

"Yes?" I said.

You whispered a hello.

"I'm sorry."

"You understand, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Come round," you said.

"No. Come here."

"Why?"

"Because my mother misses you." And we both knew, but didn't care that, I was lying.

**T Khan/C Allen**

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Have you ever wanted to see your work in print? Have you a piece of written work that you completed ages and ages ago which you believe merits publication? Has it has a link to Black, lesbian and gay or Black lesbian and gay issues? Then send it in for

publication in BLGC's newsletter. We welcome articles, short stories, poems and reviews. However we will not publish work which contravenes our editorial policy. So ask yourselves this question. What use is that

box of poems gathering dust beneath your bed if no-one sees them?

Share your fierceness with other members of the Black lesbian and gay community.

**GET  
SCRIBBLING!**



# from blgc's archives

every now and then BLGC looks through its archives and finds items that merit re-transcription. What follows is a selection.

## BLACK LESBIANS FINDING OURSELVES IN EACH OTHER

Coming out for me was about admitting to myself that I could love other women sexually, and deciding it was about time that I stopped holding that part of myself back, I was 19.

My parents came here from the West Indies, my sister and I were born here in London. I grew up liking women, thanks mostly to my sister who was my 'best-friend' all through my childhood. We went to the same primary school, and the same all-girl secondary school. We went on holidays together, I even went with her on her first few dates with boyfriends, so mum and dad wouldn't get suspicious.

### 'Trying' to like boys

I wanted to be like my big sister, but I just couldn't be as interested in boys as she was. I still liked girls better than boys. I thought they were much more sensitive and interesting. (I remember thinking that women's bodies were nicer too, and a lot more interesting, but I never told my sister that!) I did try to like boys, but it felt like 'trying'. I didn't think that was how it was supposed to be, but I kept 'trying'.

I didn't dislike talking with boys in school, but most of them just seemed to have 'one thing on their minds'. I remember going into the sixth form, only knowing one boy from primary school. In the sixth form we were expected to mix with the boys from the local boys' school. I thought I'd be friendly to them, the way I'd be friendly to a girl. I got a reputation for being 'forward', and most people thought I did more than talk with boys (I found this out later, much to my surprise!).

I had my first real boyfriend when I was 17. He was bisexual, I told him I was too. He was black, and very proud of it. We went to a lot of gay men's clubs together. Some of the clubs were mostly white men but there were others where there were mostly black guys. So I knew homosexuality wasn't a white thing - I used to laugh when I heard people say that.

I enjoyed going to the clubs and the parties. I could go out, dance, enjoy myself and just be friendly to men. When I did go to 'straight' clubs, I usually ended up getting aggravated by some guy who couldn't take 'no' for an answer.

didn't know what it was to grow up black. I didn't, couldn't, reject my past. I was already open to abuse from white people because I'm black. I already alienated some black people because of my education - I'd seen the hostility that could generate. I'd imagine how those people would react if I said I was a lesbian too!

As a black woman living in this country I need the friendship and support of my family, friends and other black people. Just because these white people were gay or lesbian didn't stop them being racist and patronizing, they could make you feel like 'a minority-within-a-minority'.

Sometimes I'd see some lesbians, in the more mixed clubs, and I'd try not to stare too hard.

I can't remember the first women-only disco I went to. I remember going to A Woman's Place when it was in William IV Street, to help out in the newsletter. I was the only black woman, except for one week when another black woman who worked on 'Gay Switchboard' came along. She was a lesbian! I remember being really pleased to meet and talk with her.

### Getting over my fear

Coming out to myself meant realising that when I used to say that I'd probably sleep with a woman sometime in my life, it was what I really wanted. It meant getting over my fear of the word 'lesbian'. I knew from things my dad had told me that there were gays and lesbians back home, even in his day. I tried to imagine what it must have been like for them, and what it would be like for me.

I was scared. I considered telling my parents - you were supposed to come out to everyone according to some of the lesbians I'd met. But they weren't black; when I met more black lesbians they tended not to be 'out' at home or at work. I began to wonder if it was necessary, or was I just being cowardly.

### Keeping links with our families

Now I realise that white people don't take the same kind of risks as I would by coming out - no one would say to them it's a white thing, for a start. They could, if their family rejected them, go to a gay/lesbian community. Whereas, I'd be relegating myself to a group of people who



Finding support -  
meeting black lesbians

After coming out to myself, and to my friends (some of whom were already 'out' to me), I came out to my Black Women's Group and found a lot of support and re-affirmation for who I am. I realised at the same time how 'lucky' I was.

Not everyone has black gay friends. Not all black women are in a position to leave home at eighteen, or to be a full-time student - which I feel gave me a lot of time to think about myself and my sexuality. A lot of the girls I know from school are pregnant or married/living with their boyfriends, or both. I could imagine that I would not be able to define myself as a 'lesbian' if I'd been raised in Barbados, or it might take a strength of character I don't know if I'd have.

Meeting other black lesbians was difficult, initially. I didn't know where to find them, and neither did the white people on Gay Switchboard or Lesbian Line. Purely by chance a black woman I met invited me to a 'black woman's party'. I didn't go the first couple of times. Eventually I decided to go and see what it would be like. I was amazed; they were all black women and they were all lesbians - I hadn't known that's what my friend had

And there were all kinds of black women there - not just women in dungarees - 'Rebel-girls', 'Jazz-funkers', older women, young women, women with permed hair, women with natural plaited hair... I remember thinking that some white lesbians look and dress differently from other white women, but this didn't seem to be the case with black women.

Over the last year I've met and talked with other black lesbians about how difficult it was finding other black lesbians. We've talked about organizing a black lesbian support network. A solid network of black women who could offer help and support to other black lesbians. We all probably do this anyway on an informal, one-to-one basis. What we would like is something that black women could turn to for help, understanding, and support. The Black Lesbian Group doesn't exist any more, and the Black Gay Group are mostly men, who realise they can only offer limited support to black women. We hope this will include women from differing backgrounds, ages, interests and who speak languages other than English.

Dorothea Smartt

from blackout issue no.1 summer 86

the following poem entitled *Black Woman, Black Sistah* appeared in the same issue

Iris blue  
snowdrop perfume  
fern scented  
forest wild  
earthy dampness  
now hushed, trilling chorus  
the gliding flight of sleek feathered birds  
the peeling brushed gray sky  
away to the sleepy mistiness of the dawn  
the yawning rise of clouds  
the earth below  
carpeted by the moist running grass  
bathed by dew  
the slinking stealth of the night animals  
creeping to their slumber nests...

For you black woman, black sistah  
I shall sculpt words  
into a sheer delicate bouquet of untamed  
tropical flowers  
though captive  
for you, I shall write of the vision  
that haunt our days  
though afraid of dreams  
carrying their own swords of future bloodshed  
to thrust against the crumbling remnant  
of our battered armours  
for you, I shall write of ballads  
we wish to be loved for ourselves  
not the martyred romance  
of the satin cling of our ripe blackberries hues skin  
For you, I shall sculpt words  
of the heady varying fragrance of the basking jungle  
the vision of true freedom.

Avril Rogers-Wright



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# review

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## MOVEMENT IN BLACK - 15 YEARS ON

*Movement in Black*, by Pat Parker, first appeared fifteen years ago. I did not come across it at the time (in my mid-teens, all I read about lesbians was what I could find during furtive forays in the local library!). But, reading it now, I am struck by how fresh and relevant this collection of poems appears today.

Pat Parker was an activist as well as a writer and performer, serving as a board member and medical coordinator at Oakland Feminist Women's Health Centre in the USA until a couple of years before she died of breast cancer in 1989. The poems in *Movement in Black* are both intensely personal and political, sometimes jolting the reader into remembering how intimately women, children and men are affected by injustice and violence. The poet does not merely bewail how bad things are, though, and the blighting effects of racism, sexism and homophobia. She celebrates love, resistance, revolution. The title poem is about the struggle of African-American women to survive and overcome:

...I'm the woman with 8 kids  
I'm the woman who didn't  
have any  
I'm the woman who poor as  
sin  
I'm the woman who's got  
plenty.

I'm the woman who  
raised white babies &  
taught my kids to  
raise themselves.

movement in Black  
movement in Black  
can't keep 'em back  
movement in Black...

The style is so simple and direct that it is possible to miss the care with which the poet works to get across what she wants to convey to the reader and listener. There is little sloganeering. The anger is plentifully seasoned with humour; and the oppressed people in these poems are capable of mistakes and weaknesses as well as acts of courage and strength. Occasionally the choice of words seems awkward or hackneyed, but for the most part the language is skilfully crafted.

The poems are entertaining, thought-provoking, moving, sometimes very funny. They touch on a range of themes: growing into womanhood, housework, the American way of life, the shattering impact of male violence, interracial friendship and love in a racist society, the joys and pitfalls of non-monogamy, the use of alcohol to numb, blatant heterosexuality and much more.

The last poem was perhaps the most poignant for me. It is about the ideal for which so many struggled:

... turning the world around  
and making it over  
a dream of women, all women  
being sisters.  
a dream of caring; a dream  
of protection, a dream  
of peace...  
and the frequent reality of  
mistrust, barriers, exclusion;

though the dream still:

... lives for those who would  
be sisters

it lives for those who need a  
sister

it lives for those who once  
upon a time had a dream.

A Black lesbian and gay community has been built up in London and other towns and cities, a great achievement I and many others could not even have imagined in the days when *Movement in Black* was first published. But, all too often, we move in cliquish circles, unwelcoming to newcomers and those who do not easily fit in, unforgiving of those who 'slip up' in some way. When we fail to show acceptance and solidarity towards one another, we are less able to defend ourselves against those outside forces which threaten our rights and very existence. We can perhaps get better at challenging oppression, caring for one another in practical ways and communicating among ourselves and with the wider public, all of which Pat Parker sought to do in her lifetime.

Savi Hensman



# Essex Hemphill calls for submissions for *Beside Companions*

Essex Hemphill, cultural activist and editor of the critically acclaimed collection *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*, invites submissions to be considered for *Beside Companions*, his forthcoming anthology of Black gay men's short fiction to be published by Plume. Building upon the ground-breaking work of Joseph Beam's *In The Life*, Marlon Rigg's *Tongues Untied* and *Brother to Brother*, *Beside Companions* continues to challenge the invisibility and silences that surround the lives and experiences of Black gay men. At a time when we are facing AIDS, violence and other destructive issues within our communities, *Beside Companions* seeks to offer hope and healing and a renewal of faith in ourselves.

*Beside Companions* aims to chart territory beyond the coming-out stories and the political treatises on racism. This anthology intends to examine more closely home, friendships, family - immediate and extended - lovers, "brothers" and the impact life's joys and sorrows have upon these relationships. *Beside Companions* seeks to acknowledge and affirm the ways Black gay men support, sustain and love one another through these critical times.

If you are a witness to the truth that Black gay men are taking care of their own, your submission of up to two (2) pieces of your very best short fiction (including novel excerpts) is strongly encouraged. There is no concern about explicit, graphic language.

You should, however, adhere to the following guidelines:

\*Each piece of short fiction (10-20 pages in length) should be submitted in duplicate with a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Submissions lacking SASE cannot be returned.

\*A short biography, no longer than a paragraph, should accompany all submissions.

\*No poems, essays, entire novels, plays/play excerpts please.

\*No simultaneous submissions.

\*No gratuitous sex, violence, misogyny or sexism will be considered.

Black gay artists interested in submitting art work for the anthology's cover and inside illustrations are encouraged to send up to six (6) slides, clearly numbered and identified, with a short biography and an SASE. Those without SASE cannot be returned. Slides for the cover can be in both in colour and black and white. Slides for illustrations inside the book should only be in black and white.

Send original, unpublished submissions with SASE to

Essex Hemphill

Anthology 1993

401 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700

Santa Monica, California 90401-1455

Closing date for all submissions, short fiction and art work is 1 June 1993.



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# poetry poetry poetry

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## For the children of our community

You are here with us  
children of lesbians, Zami,  
dykes  
few gay men  
born outside  
the confine of heterosexual  
marriage  
artificial insemination  
intercourse  
within marriage  
any which way you are  
here with us

You are here with us  
hidden at times  
and out in the open  
amongst us

Children of our community  
you are precious  
may you know that always

A massive power battle  
goes on  
shrouding your presence

amongst us

Many a pillow  
has been drenched with  
tears  
of some mothers  
as the fearfuls of society  
scream  
unfit mother, unfit mother  
against she that loves  
women  
and loves and wants her  
children too

Children of us  
you are valuable  
many a pillow has been  
rained by tears  
Mummy, mummy  
on rare occasion daddy  
why are you different  
they say these horrible,  
terrible things  
about you at school

They, the other children of  
the nuclear family  
they, the eyes of too many  
teachers

Mummy, mummy why  
can't you be  
like everyone else??  
Hush, Hush  
Mummy is happy

Hush, hush  
remember these words  
dear one  
the world has always been  
made up of different  
sexuality  
true soulful beauty

Children of our tribe  
may you always have a  
strong sense of esteem  
you with us  
girl child  
boy child  
differently abled  
you unborn  
you are precious  
may you always carry that  
knowingness althru your  
lifespan  
a big yahoo going out to  
you

**A Rogers-Wright**

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## The Woman at the Well

By the well she stands alone,  
in ragged sari,  
the sun glistens of brassen  
urn,  
perched upon her head,  
she awaits her turn.

Her walk to the well  
has taken an hour,  
but still it is early awhile,  
as the slight chill in the air,  
begins to dissipate,  
while she starts the day

with tiredness inside.

A weariness to life,  
her thoughts turn inwards,  
as the sound of the women  
around,  
pass by her with comforting  
warmth,  
as standing alone, she weeps  
inside.

Her face etched in lines  
now deep and worn,  
ancient she is not, although  
seemingly so,  
life has passed her by,

as she stoops under the weight  
of countless days,  
for what is the meaning  
of life without hope.

Thoughts now darkened  
by the journey made,  
and each day, this journey is  
made,  
to collect water for her home,  
while yesterday, today and  
tomorrow,  
all merge into one,  
a constant struggle to sur-  
vive,



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# poetry poetry poetry

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to meet her life in battle torn,  
only her will is her guide.  
Tiredness seeps through stature  
small,  
for her tomorrow is just  
another day,  
no different than any other,  
while the grim fight goes on,  
to face each day, each morn,  
each crisis that springs her  
way, and hopes that shatter  
away.

For the rains have not fallen  
in quite a while,  
and the land's thirst remains  
unquenched,  
as parched fields lie awither-  
ing,  
under the blazing fire,  
the soil now dried, the crops  
have died,  
and hunger is just kept at  
bay.

And even as this struggle  
goes on,  
two children have died,  
both sons,  
one two, the other four,  
the doctor was far away,  
time was short,  
it wasn't too long before they  
passed on,  
from this weary sojourn,  
too late, always too late,  
and too little anyway.

Now with three daughters  
left,  
the oldest fifteen,  
how can she find a husband,  
no money, no dowry, the  
young men all in the big  
city.

Her man sits alone,  
by the hut in village bare,

defeated and forlorn,  
the land does not give  
its meagre treasures,  
for him the battle is lost,  
worn down by the plough  
and the stubborn soil,  
the struggle to live,  
he sits, eyes glazed, lost.

No work is there  
to take the place,  
of the little land that they  
share,  
and now with the rains still  
far away,  
even that is no longer there,  
a loan could be got  
to carry them through,  
but at what price,  
their land forfeit,  
to be in debt for the rest of

their lives.  
Hope flies away like a dark  
ened crow,  
tears stream down her face,  
for lost life, husband, sons  
the loneliness her daughters  
will face,  
while silently inside she tires  
to find  
deep within herself,  
some inner strength,  
to hold together her family.

By the well she stands alone,  
in ragged sari,  
the sun glistens of brassen  
urn,  
perched on her head,  
she awaits her turn.

S. Khan

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## explanation

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It has been brought to our attention that some people are annoyed at certain images that were used in BLGC's last newsletter, particularly those which appear to be sado-masochistic and those that have sexual imagery of men.

Firstly, while it is not the intention of BLGC to advocate sado-masochistic practices we have shown images that may be perceived as sado-masochistic. We feel that the images used need to be taken within the context of the articles that accompany them as they relate directly to the reviews or articles.

We would never have used such imagery gratuitously but felt that, especially when reviewing a photographic exhibition, an example of the work is not only necessary but beneficial to the understanding of the reviewer's comments.

Secondly, in a time when the

incidence of HIV amongst gay men is on the rise, BLGC feels that it is important to provide information about this occurrence, whilst encouraging the practice of safer sex among our community. It is to this end that we included debatably graphic images of male-male sexuality, as these have proved to be effective in getting the message of the importance of safer sex practices across to gay men. Once again it needs to be reiterated that the imagery needs to be taken within the context of the articles that accompany it, and that BLGC would not use redundant imagery of male sexuality.

Nevertheless we apologise for any distress caused and we will bear the comments in mind. However, we hope that our explanation is accepted and that our stance is now clearer.



# make Black lesbian and gay news.

# hiv and aids awareness day

Would you like to read more about Black lesbians and gays in the lesbian and gay media? One way of making sure this happens is to keep newspapers and programme-makers informed about what is happening for us. The editor of the Pink Paper is particularly interested in news from groups throughout the world, and can be contacted on 071-608 2566 or at 77 City Garden Row, London N1 8EZ. He is also interested to hear from anyone who would like to write an article for the paper - contact him in advance to discuss the subject, length and other details.

The editor of Capital Gay can be contacted at Units 58-60, 49 Effra Road, London SW2 1BZ or 071-738 7010 with news, letters and proposals for articles.

The Black Experience Group, a number of Black gay men who organise socials for Black lesbians and gay men and their friends (Taco Joe, 15 Atlantic Rd, Brixton SW9, fortnightly on Saturdays), are going to be holding a HIV and AIDS awareness day at the University of the South Bank, London, on Saturday 24 April 1993. At the time of this newsletter going to press no further information has been received.



## —apologies—

We feel we owe Sheba Feminist Press an apology concerning the illustration used of *The Gilda Stories* in the November/December 1992 newsletter. The image, accompanying the interview with Black lesbian writer and activist, Jewelle Gomez, showed the cover of the US edition and not the UK edition as published by Sheba in June.

So if you wish to purchase a copy of this exciting lesbian vampire story then look out for the book with the cover as illustrated, right.

Sorry, Sheba.





## employment advice

### TROUBLE AT WORK? ADVICE SESSIONS FOR BLACK GAY MEN

Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights provides advice to individuals in relation to their employment or in seeking work.

This would vary from someone being harassed or victimised at work because they are gay or for being Black.

Some might not be too sure which union to join in their workplace and want to know which union would represent their interests.

Some might be getting made redundant but are not too sure what their legal entitlement would be.

Queries may also arise about contracts - people may want clarification on certain clauses of the contract so that they are well aware of their rights within the contract, if and when situations arise where they would need to take action against a worker or other staff within the workplace.

Whilst seeking work, we can advise on filling

in job application forms and techniques of presenting yourself at interviews.

Advice and support on all the above issues and other aspects in relation to employment/unemployment is given.

LAGER is open from 11-5pm Monday to Friday. We see people on an appointment basis. Contact Macsud at LAGER on 081-983 0696.

I also provide advice sessions at BLGC on the first Tuesday of the month from 4.30-6pm. Contact me at either LAGER or BLGC if you think you would like to make a prior appointment.

Macsud

There are also employment advice sessions for Black lesbians at the Centre on the last Tuesday of the month from 4.30-6pm. Advance booking is advised.

## come and help BLGC

BLGC needs your help.

On Saturday 24 April between 11am and 4pm BLGC will be asking for people to come and volunteer to help clear the back of the railway arch in which we are located and also the area behind the arch itself, which will act as the garden/patio area in the future. Also we would like people to help varnish the wooden front entrance (right).

The work is not really glamorous but nevertheless needs to be done.

We will provide all the equipment needed and also soaps and creams for when you have finished.

Travel expenses and a food allowance will also be given. So if you can make it, whether for the entire day or for half an hour or so, your help will be gratefully welcomed.

It is important that you call us at the office in advance so we know how many people to expect.

It could be more fun than you imagine.



Call 071-732 3885 to let us know if you can make it. Hope to see you then!



# ———— love yourself, love ourselves ————

Black Gay Men United Against AIDS is a group of Black gay men who, becoming aware of the lack of work being done with Black gay men around the issues of HIV/AIDS, got together to do specific work in this field. Part of this work included a social/discussion group for Black gay men called Let's Rap. Let's Rap, during its run, held a session on the topic of loving yourself and other Black gay men.

What follows is an attempt to document that session and some of the main points that were raised within the safe forum that is Let's Rap.

Let's Rap itself is currently under review. That does not mean that it won't happen again but merely that it will re-emerge more dynamic and more fierce than before. Keep aware, you don't want to miss this.

Some ways to love yourself include: improving self-esteem; gaining confidence; empowerment and identity; being honest; getting involved and having integrity.

## Individually

With all of the above there is a need to be assertive and to state your needs, as well as getting in touch with your emotions. We need to interact with other positive people, have self-respect and, without being selfish, recognise that you are the most important thing in your life. Recognise and believe in your capabilities while developing your creative self. Identify and acknowledge your needs. Try to look after your health with a good diet, rest and general well being. Learn your spiritual as opposed to material worth. Set yourself achievable goals. Define who your enemies are and do not mis-direct your anger. Endeavour to forge links with others and communicate with other Black gay men outside the club scene. Challenge homophobia whenever you feel it appropriate and you feel comfortable to do so. Educate others. Accept your sexuality. Be out and proud. Take responsibility. Be non-judgmental of others. Become involved with Black lesbian and gay projects. Be consistent. Be reliable. Be here. Finally, remember to have a sense of humour and be able to laugh at yourself.

## Collectively

We should meet, socialize, forge and maintain long term friendships. We have to support our own Black institutions and organisations (BLGC, Black Experience, Let's Rap), as well as supporting other oppressed/sympathy groups (depending on how or if we identify with such groups on a personal level).

Let's begin to acknowledge each other outside the club/pub scene. Try to take our support further than attendance by getting *actively* involved in the groups/organisations we support. Always reaffirm our Black gay identity through literature and art, bearing in mind the scarcity of such things in certain areas of the country and those privileged enough to get books/literature should share them. Always be realistic in terms of what is achievable. Let's share experiences, both good or bad, and *please* let's return messages. Talk to each other and don't be afraid to do so. Listen actively without making assumptions. Read and, just as important, write Black gay literature. Express ourselves and acknowledge each other by networking in the Black and the gay press, connecting across the world. And isn't it really about time we stopped bitching and bad-mouthing and started to support and appreciate each other without judgement, across class divisions, becoming more positive about ourselves as Black gay men, celebrating our diversity and recognising our differences as a positive thing. If we respect each other we can help each other to achieve our potential and not put down people's efforts. Let's make each other our role models and become a role model to others. When we can, let's challenge homophobia. Finally, we must not become insular and should encourage Black heterosexuals to join our struggles and commitment to the Black gay cause.

**For more information about Black Gay Men United Against AIDS (BGMUAA) and Let's Rap call 071-737 3881 or BLGC on 071-732 3885**



## — bhan dance —

The Black HIV and AIDS Network (BHAN) is holding a "Bhan dance" on Friday 30 April 1993 at the Islington Roundhouse from 8pm until 2am.

The tickets are only £10 per person and will include food.

Monies raised will go towards the work of BHAN, offering counselling, support, information and education for African, Asian and African-Caribbean people affected by HIV and AIDS.

Admission is by ticket only.

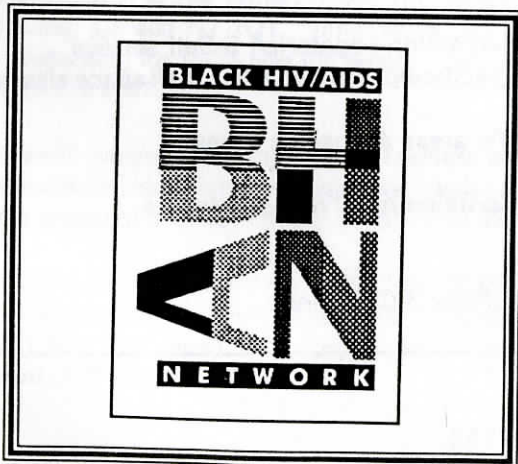
Tickets can be purchased by writing to BHAN at

111 Devonport Road,  
London W12 8PB.

with cheques payable to "BHAN".

Please remember to include your name and address.

Prepare, as the flyers say, "to be funked..."



## — access details —

BLGC and  
Camden Lesbian Centre/Black Lesbian  
Group

**BLGC** call 071-732 3885 for details

### Access codes

A1. B2,5 no's 12, 37, 63, 78, 312, P2, P12. B2,6 no's 36, 36b, 171, P13. B3, 4 Peckham Rye C4 steep. D1 entrance and two internal doors 35" D3, 5, toilet 29" D3, 5, back door 29" D2,6. E1. Fnone. G1 42"x 61.5", G2. H1. J2 in front, bare concrete floor in back. K1. L1, 2, 3, 4, 7. M3. N2, 3 BLGC publications, 4 advance notice needed, 5. Q-none, child care costs provided. R-light refreshments. T1, 2. U1, 2

### CLC/BLG(Camden Lesbian Centre/ Black Lesbian Group)

54-56 Phoenix Road London NW1  
1ES

071-383 5405

### Access codes

A single yellow line outside entrance B1, 3, 5 nos 14, 14a,18,30,73 stop on Euston Rd, near Shaw Theatre. C1. D main door 32.75", 3, 5, fire exit door 31.5", other doors 31.3". E ground floor building, 1. F none. G two toilets - door to 1st 30.5", 3 dimensions 5.75'x4.5', turning distance 3', door to 2nd 29.5" 3 dimensions 3x5.5', turning distance 2' H2 front door to meeting room 8', meeting room to office 7', meeting room to large WC 11.5', meeting room to other WC 22', meeting room to creche 18' creche to fire exit 13.5. J1. K1, 3 in meeting room, creche & office. L1, 2, 4, 5, 7. M3. N8 some info on large print & tape, BSL stage 2 communicator, minicom. P3. Q2, age limit 11, 8. Rnon-alcoholic drinks available. S3. T1, 2, 4. U1,2, minicom in office.



# access codes

A PARKING	1-Outside entrance 2-Less than 50 yards away 3-More than 50 yards away
B PUBLIC TRANSPORT	1-Tube 2-Bus 3-Rail 4-Less than 50 yards 5-More than 50 yards 6-More than 1/4 Mile
C ENTRANCES	1-Level 2-Ramp without rail 3-Ramp with rail 4-Steps without handrail 5-Steps with handrail 6-Steep steps 7-Shallow steps 8-Curved steps
D DOORS	1-Width 2-Heavy 3-Light 4-Revolving 5-Opens inwards 6-Opens outwards
E INSIDE BUILDING	1-Level 2-Steps without handrail 3-Steps with Handrail 4-Steps steep 5-Steps shallow 6-Steps curved
F LIFT	1-Dimensions 2-Controls high 3-Controls low 4-Controls flush 5-Controls protruding 6-Handrail 7-Seating 8-Smooth 9-Jerky 10-Doors automatic 11-Doors manual heavy 12-Doors Manual light 13-Doors concertina 14-Doors straight
G TOILETS	1-Dimensions 2-Doors open inwards 3-Doors open outwards 4-Rails 5-Air driers hand operated 6-Air driers foot operated 7-Air driers automatic 8-Taps hand operated 9-Taps foot operated
H DIMENSIONS OF PREMISES	1-Large building 2-Small building 3- Corridors
J FLOOR SURFACES	1-Smooth 2-Carpet 3-Slippery
K LIGHTING	1-Bright 2-Dim 3-Flexible(eg. movable)
L SEATING	1-Hard 2-Soft 3-High 4-Low 5-Plentiful 6-Static 7-Movable
M HEATING	1-Warm 2-Cool 3-Variable
N PARTICIPATION	1-Braille 2-Tape 3-Large print 4-Signers 5-Induction loop. 6-Finger spelling 7-Lip speakers 8-Note takers
P HELPERS	1-Transport 2-Meeting & escorting. 3-General help.
Q CRECHE	1-Run by men 2-Run by women 3-Run by both sexes 4-Facilities for children with disabilities 5-Under fives only 6-Up to 12 years only 7-Girls only 8-Mixed
R FOOD & DRINK	1-Drinks only 2-Vegan 3-Vegetarian 4-Non-vegetarian 5-Self service 6-Table service 7-Licensed bar 8-Specific alcohol free areas 9-all space alcohol free
S SMOKING	1-Not allowed 2-Allowed 3-Specific areas 4-Specific times
T STRUCTURE OF ACTIVITIES	1-Formal meetings 2-Informal 3-Continuous 4-Frequent breaks
U TELEPHONE	1-In an accessible area 2-Private phone 3-Call phone

**LONDON FRIEND** 86 Caledonian Road, London N1

Tel: GENERAL 071-837 3337 WOMEN'S HELPLINE 071-837 2782

**ACCESS CODES** A1 B1-Kings Cross-, 5 B2-no's 17 & 221, 4 B3-Kings Cross, 5 C4/7(1 step) D1-90cm E3/4 - one set of 2 steps, 3, 4 one set of 13 steps, 3, 4 Fnone, ramp for ground floor access only G1/4-one toilet 214cmx207cm with two handrails + sliding door, 8 one toilet 87cmx207cm, 2, 8 H2,3-one corridor 312cm J1-kitchen, toilets & entrance vinyl floor, 2-remaining rooms & corridor K2 L1, 5, 7 M3 Nnone P3-if prior notification is given Qnone-contact them as arrangements may be made R1 + crisps S2 T2-but structured U2-not for general use



# regular groups

## LESBIANS AND GAY MEN

## LESBIANS

**SHAKTI LONDON** - South Asian Lesbian and Gay Network meets every 2nd Sunday of the month from 3-6pm at LONDON FRIEND (SEE PANEL PAGE 22). Bhangra disco on the 2nd Sunday of the month (except April) at Recessions, 2 Brunswick Shopping Centre, Russell Square, WC1. 10pm 'til late. For more information tel: London Friend.

**SHAKTI BRADFORD** - Tel: 0274-723802 /722206.

**SHAKTI BIRMINGHAM** - Tel: 021-622 7351. Ask for a Shakti contact.

**MANCHESTER BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY GROUP** - Meetings 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month at Manchester Gay Centre. Further info from: PO Box 153. Manc. M60 1LP.

**ORIENTATIONS** - Chinese and South East Asian lesbian and gay group meet at LONDON FRIEND (SEE PANEL PAGE 22).

**CYPRIT LESBIAN AND GAY GROUP** meets on the 1st Sunday of the month 2.30pm-5pm at LONDON FRIEND (SEE PANEL PAGE 22). Ring for more details.

**LEICESTER BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY GROUP** Support/Socials/Meetings, for details write to c/o Michael Wood Centre, 29 New Walk, Leicester LE1 6TE.

**BIRMINGHAM BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY GROUP (KOLA)** - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month. Tel: Friend 021-622 7351.

**BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS AGAINST MEDIA HOMOPHOBIA (BLAGAMH)** - For more information write to BLAGAMH, FREEPOST, London SE8 5BR. (No stamp needed.)

**BLACK LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL GROUP** - Meets every Monday at The Venus Project, The Old Laundry, Hornsey Road, London N7 7QT. Information, advice, resources, counselling for 16-25 year old people. Tel: 071-281 2121 or 071-272 8467.

**MOSAIC** - a group of Mixed Race Lesbians and Gay Men, holds discussions every month and runs regular socials. For further information contact BLGC tel: 071-732 3885.

**BRISTOL BLACK LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL GROUP (SAFAR)** meets the first Tuesday of the month. Info call (0272) 639 789 (men), 427 731 (women) or Bristol Switchboard (425 927).

**CAMDEN BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** runs socials, discussions and workshops for Black lesbians. For details contact CLC/BLG (SEE PANEL PAGE 21).

**LAS DIVINAS** - Latinamerican Lesbian Group, meet last Friday of month, 7pm at CLC/BLG (SEE PANEL PAGE 21).

**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.

**NOTTINGHAM BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** - Meets first Friday evening of the month in Black Lesbian Room, Nottingham Women's Centre, 30 Chaucer Street, Nottingham, NG5 1LP. Tel: 0602-411475.

**BLACK LESBIANS IN SOLIDARITY** - For more information write to: PO Box 11, 124 Vassall Road, SW9 6JB.

**ZAMIMASS** (group for working class black lesbians) - For more details contact CLC/BLG (SEE PANEL PAGE 21).

**BLACK LESBIAN CULTURAL WORKERS COLLECTIVE**. For Black lesbians producing cultural materials (hats to sculpture to music). For details contact BLGC.

**OLDER BLACK LESBIAN GROUP** (over forty) meets 1st Sunday of every month between 3-6pm at West Hampstead Women's Centre, 55 Hempstal Rd, NW16. Tel: 071-328 7389.

**ZAMI (MANCHESTER BLACK YOUNG LESBIAN GROUP)**. First meeting Thursday 9 April 7-9pm. To get Black women together so that they are not alone. Advice, counselling and support. For more information tel: 061 834 7256 or 061 236 6205 Mon-Thurs 6-9pm.

**LEEDS BLACK LESBIAN SUPPORT GROUP** c/o Harehills Housing Aid, 188 Roundhay Rd, Harehills, Leeds 8

## GAY MEN

**LET'S RAP** - Black gay men talking to Black gay men. London group tel: 071-737 3881 or BLGC office.

**NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE BLACK GAY MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP** - contact 091-233 1333 before 6pm or 091-261 7768 after.

**LONDON BLACK MESMAC GROUP** - For African and African-Caribbean gay or bisexual men under 25. Meets Thursday evenings. Tel: 071-831 2330 for venue.

**LEEDS BLACK GAY MEN'S GROUP** - for African, Asian, Caribbean and other Black Gay Men, meets fortnightly on Thursdays 7.30pm onwards. For further information contact David/Michael on 0532-444209.



# — dates for your diary —

for BLGC access details see page 21

## SAT 3 APRIL

2-4pm Black lesbian drop-in, BLGC. Light refreshments.

## TUE 6 APRIL

4.30-6pm Employment advice for black gay men, BLGC (please book by 4.30pm on 1 April on 071-732 3885 if possible).

## WED 7 APRIL

5.30-7.30pm Black lesbian and gay drop-in with film, BLGC. Light refreshments.

## WED 14 APRIL

5.30-7.30pm Black lesbian and gay drop-in with board games, BLGC. Light refreshments.

## WED 21 APRIL

5.30-7.30pm Black lesbian and gay drop-in with comedy favourites (e.g. Roseanne), BLGC. Light refreshments.

## SUN 25 APRIL

4-6pm Black gay men's drop-in, BLGC. Light refreshments.

## TUE 27 APRIL

4.30-6pm Employment advice for black lesbians, BLGC (please book by 4.30pm on 22 April if possible).

## WED 28 APRIL

5.30-7.30pm Black lesbian and gay drop-in with music, BLGC. Light refreshments.

## SAT 1 MAY

2-4pm Black lesbian drop-in, BLGC. Light refreshments.

## TUE 4 MAY

4.30-6pm Employment advice for black gay men, BLGC (please book by 4.30pm on 29 April if possible).

## WED 5 MAY

5.30-7.30pm Black lesbian and gay drop-in with film, BLGC. Light refreshments.

## WED 12 MAY

5.30-7.30pm Black lesbian and gay drop-in with board games, BLGC

## WED 15 MAY

'Solidarity! Liberation!' conference, Kennington Training Workshop, London SE17. Stalls, books, videos, food, speakers, workshops; creche, sign-language interpreters, wheelchair access. £5/£2 conc. Further details from London Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition, PO Box 306, London N5

## WED 19 MAY

5.30-7.30pm Black lesbian and gay drop-in with comedy favourites, BLGC

## TUE 25 MAY

4.30-6pm Employment advice for black lesbians, BLGC (please book by 4.30pm on 20 May if possible)

## WED 26 MAY

4.30-6pm Black lesbian and gay drop-in with music, BLGC

## SUN 30 MAY

4-6pm Black gay men's drop-in, BLGC

## WHAT'S NEW

A young lesbian group in Hammersmith and Fulham for women between 16 and 25 has started up on Wednesdays 7-9pm; for further information contact Phil on 081-748 4910.

## WORKSHOPS AND COURSES

From April, BLGC will be running monthly one-day workshops on challenging racism and heterosexism. For further details, ring 071-732 3885 or write to BM 4390, London WC1N 3XX.

The Power to Assert Yourself, 24-25 April, and the Power to Create Empowering Relationships, 22-23 May, are the themes of workshops to be run by Michael Mallows, at a fee of £90 per weekend. For details, send an sae to POWeR<sup>2</sup>, 37 Layfield Rd, London NW4 3UH.

A ten-week course on lesbian culture on Wednesdays 7-9pm, starting on 28 April, is being organised by Hammersmith and Fulham Community Education Service, at a fee of £21/£5 conc, at a wheelchair-accessible venue; for further information ring 071-385 6166.