

Annie Leibovitz *Women* Exhibit • TLC Troubles • "Avon Calls" on Michelle Parkerson

Volume 7
Number 10

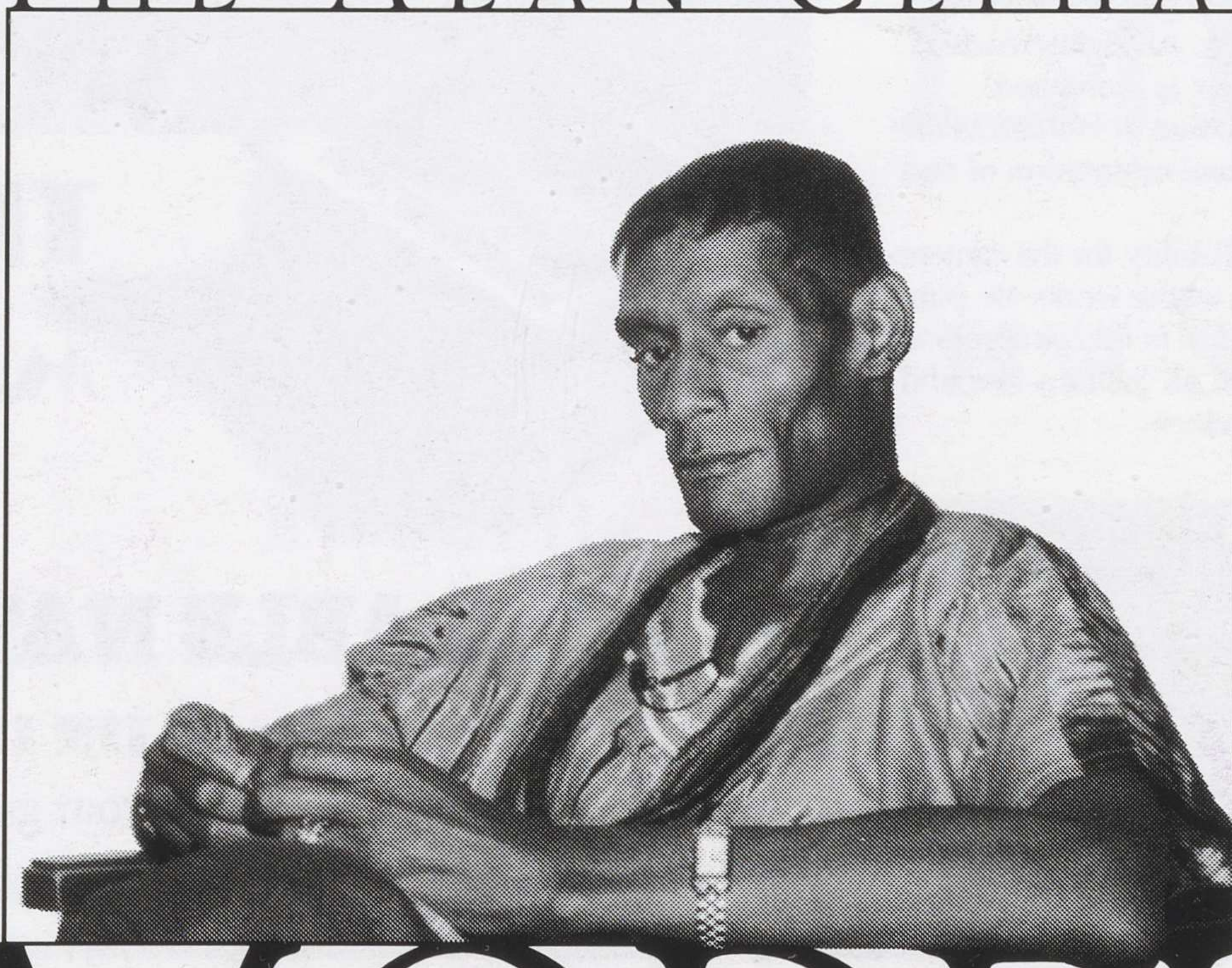
November
1999

Women In The Life

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6th anniversary issue

THE ALAN CEPHAS STORY



A MODEL LIFE

THE PREMIERE LESBIAN MONTHLY

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Publisher/Editor:Sheila Alexander-Reid
Associate Editor:Lois Alexander-Reid
Administrator:Diana Kenlow
Staff Photographer:Kimberly Gilmore, Shakira Washington

Website Designer:Lisa Koenigsburg
Copy Editor:Gussy
Art Director:James Morris

Staff Writers: Straight from L.A., r. erica doyle, E. Darlene Cooper-Rogers, Tiphannie Cooper-Rogers, Jennifer Cantu Smith
Contributing Writers: Robin E. Powell, Michelle D., Kim Alexander, Greg Hutchings, Diana Kenlow, Michelle Parkerson, Chanreese

Event Staff: Charlene Hamilton, Jill Cummins, Ron Cummins, Shakira Washington, Sheri Simon

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Dear Sisters:

Perhaps you have read the personal, compelling stories of lesbians of color dealing with cancer in *Zora's Journal* (produced by *Women in the Life*.) Perhaps you know or are a lesbian with cancer, the partner or caregiver of a lesbian with cancer, and you know firsthand the effects of cancer in your life... another challenge coupled with being female, being of color.

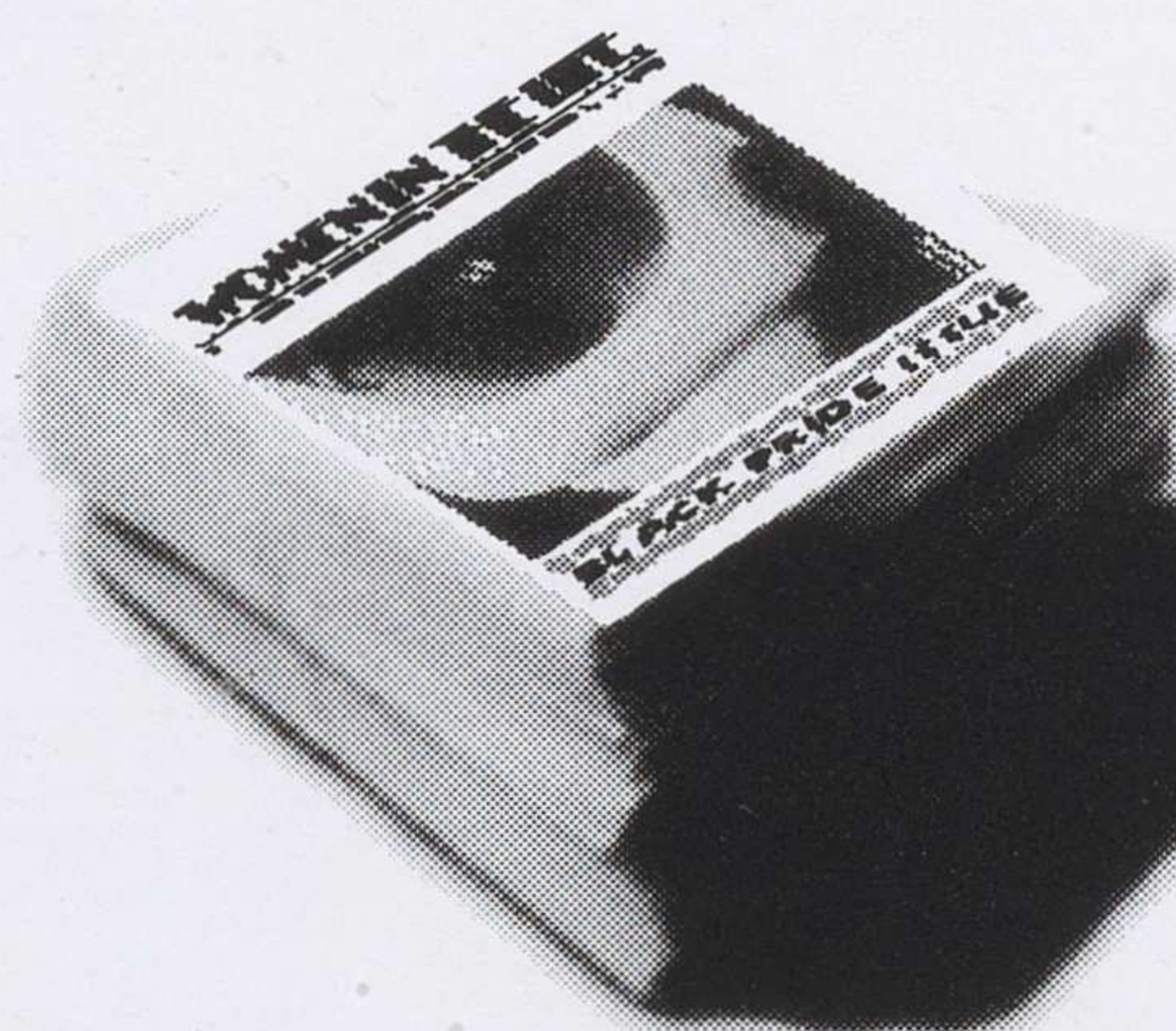


The Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer can help.

Through its Care Teams, the Project provides direct services to lesbians with cancer: meals, transportation to appointments, light housekeeping, child care, hospital visits, massage, peer support, general and bereavement support groups, and legal referrals. We have provided a safe space for lesbians of color to grieve when our client and their friend passed on.

We need you to volunteer: to cook your special dish, visit a sister in the hospital, facilitate a support group, provide peer support (remember when you were first diagnosed?) The Project provides training. If you are interested, ("we are the ones we've been waiting for",*), please call me, Imani Woody at 202-332-5536. Peace.

*National Black Women's Health Project



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like a carbon copy of his white counterparts. His square-shaped head and high cheekbones made him the perfect candidate. His flat butt made him a natural for pants ads. He was black, but didn't appear threatening or intimidating to whites.

That infamous debut photo shoot for Hyde took place at National Airport. Alan was told to be there at 6am to shoot at 7am. The photo ran in the *Post's* Sunday Magazine. Shortly thereafter, when a big Ralph Lauren show came to town, Alan heard they were having a model's "go-see." Designers come to town to with a few big name models for a show. Then they put out a "go-see" call for 10 or so local models. If you wanted a job you'd go and see if they like your look for their collection. Ralph Lauren only chose three local models from the "go-see," two women and one male. That male was Alan Cephas. When Hyde wrote about the Lauren show in her column, she mentioned Alan as a local standout in the collection. After that article came out, department stores, Woodward and Lothrop, Lord and Taylor and Hecht's came a calling.

When the Bill Blass show came to town the same three local models were chosen from his "go-see." After his show, Blass urged Alan to visit some agencies in NYC. Alan went and signed with Wilhelmina Models, Inc., the agency made famous by the HBO movie *Gia*, (based on the true story of a lesbian, Wilhemina model with a severe drug habit). Next came a catalog shoot for Montgomery Wards, followed by a series of liquor and clothing ad gigs. When *GQ* magazine began booking Alan regularly, he knew he had some decisions to make. The commute back and forth from DC was taking its toll. The lure of success in New York and the trepidation of leaving DC made Philly the natural choice. That worked for awhile, but the migration to New York City was inevitable. At 27, Alan moved to Brooklyn because it offered more diversity and a healthier artistic climate than Manhattan.

His career skyrocketed as he worked for all the top designers with such famous models as Iman, Beverly Johnson and Renauld White. He socialized with Phyllis Hyman, and other celebrities in the late '70s and early to mid '80s.

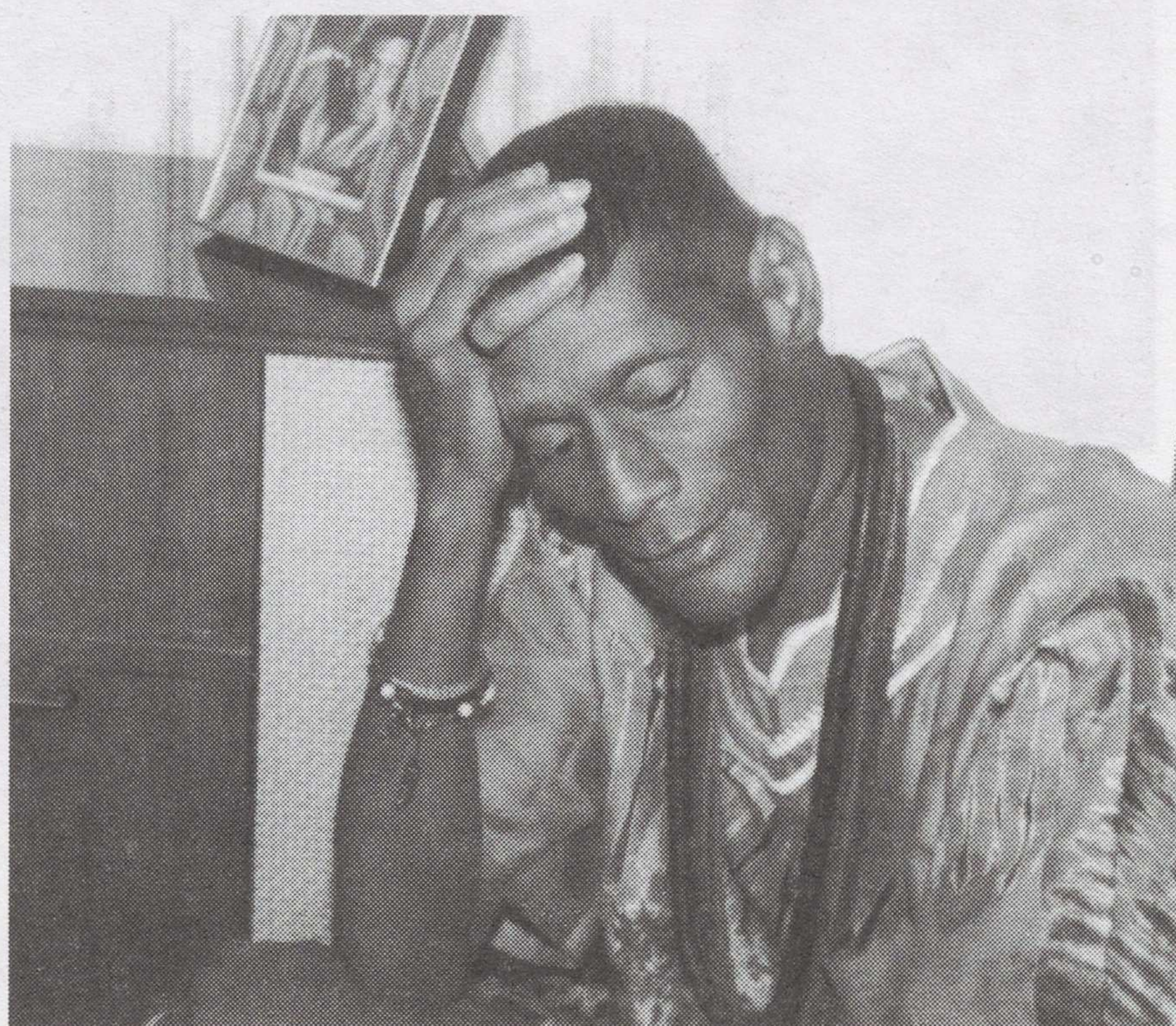
At the time in NYC, Studio 54 was the place to see and be seen. Coming out of that excessive lifestyle years later left Alan with profound insight as to what is really important in life and what is not.

After years in the business, traveling the world as one of the beautiful people, Alan became very ill, and moved

back to DC. What was thought to be pneumonia, turned out to be "the AIDS." That's how it was referred to at the time. The support system of friends and family that he left in DC welcomed him back with open arms. Taking nothing for granted, Alan is the first to tell you he is blessed. He is painfully aware of the fact that many do not have that vital support. Living in a nurturing environment that provides you with a safe, familiar place to rest your head is a plus at any point in life. To have that comfort when you are chronically ill and so dependent on others is critical.

Twelve years later, it is 1999 and Alan Cephas is still alive and living with AIDS. When asked if he's beat the odds, Alan is quick to respond:

"No, I haven't beat the odds, but I'm a survivor. Most people don't live with



AIDS for twelve years. All of my friends are dead. Some of the most talented people I ever met are dead."

Maybe I shouldn't name names, but to hell with it...Irving Depts, Patrick Kelly, Dwight Bird and Melvin Lindsay. It makes me angry to know that so many positive black men are gone. So I haven't beat the odds. My time just hasn't come yet. Doctors tell me I have 5 years, but I don't believe them. They don't really know because all of the drugs they give us are experimental. They have no idea how they will affect us."

Alan has become well versed in medical jargon. He's been in too many clinical trials to mention and speaks from experience when he says, "Doctors don't want to find a

I've been slapped in the face with something I didn't know I could even get at the time. Things that you've planned for your future, well you realize it's not going to happen. I live in today, in this moment because with the drugs I'm taking today, I don't know what state I'll be in tomorrow. I'm not healthy enough to actually work a job, but I miss that challenge and I miss that paycheck every other week. Now I have to do things in my time. I'm saddled to the DC government with that one check a month from SSDI (Social Security Disability Income) but some people don't even have that, so I'm lucky.

All photos of Alan by Shakira Washington



Alan with a sample of his artwork

I am content now just to see the seasons change. I don't have a favorite anymore. Summer is the worst for me because I can't stay exposed to the sun for more than 15 or 20 minutes realistically. I live for spring.

I look for the azaleas in April or May. I look at the clouds all the time and watch the different shapes and light shining through. God is fierce."

Alan Cephas is a realist. He knows his prognosis isn't good, nonetheless he refuses to give up. Life is short... no one realizes that more a person diagnosed with an incurable disease. But that same knowledge makes Alan appreciate every day, even the bad ones. His body may be weak, but his spirit is strong and unflinching. He has faced death each and every day for twelve years, and is still here to tell his story. The Alan Cephas story is one of inner versus outer beauty, one of courage in the face of danger and one of inner peace when surrounded by chaos.

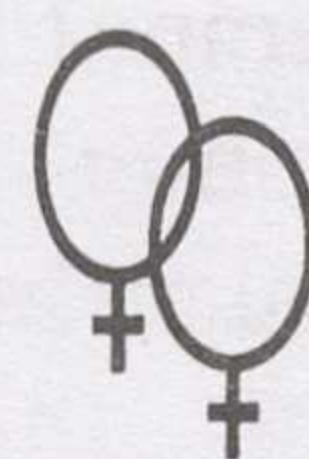
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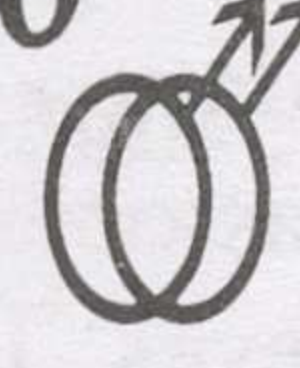
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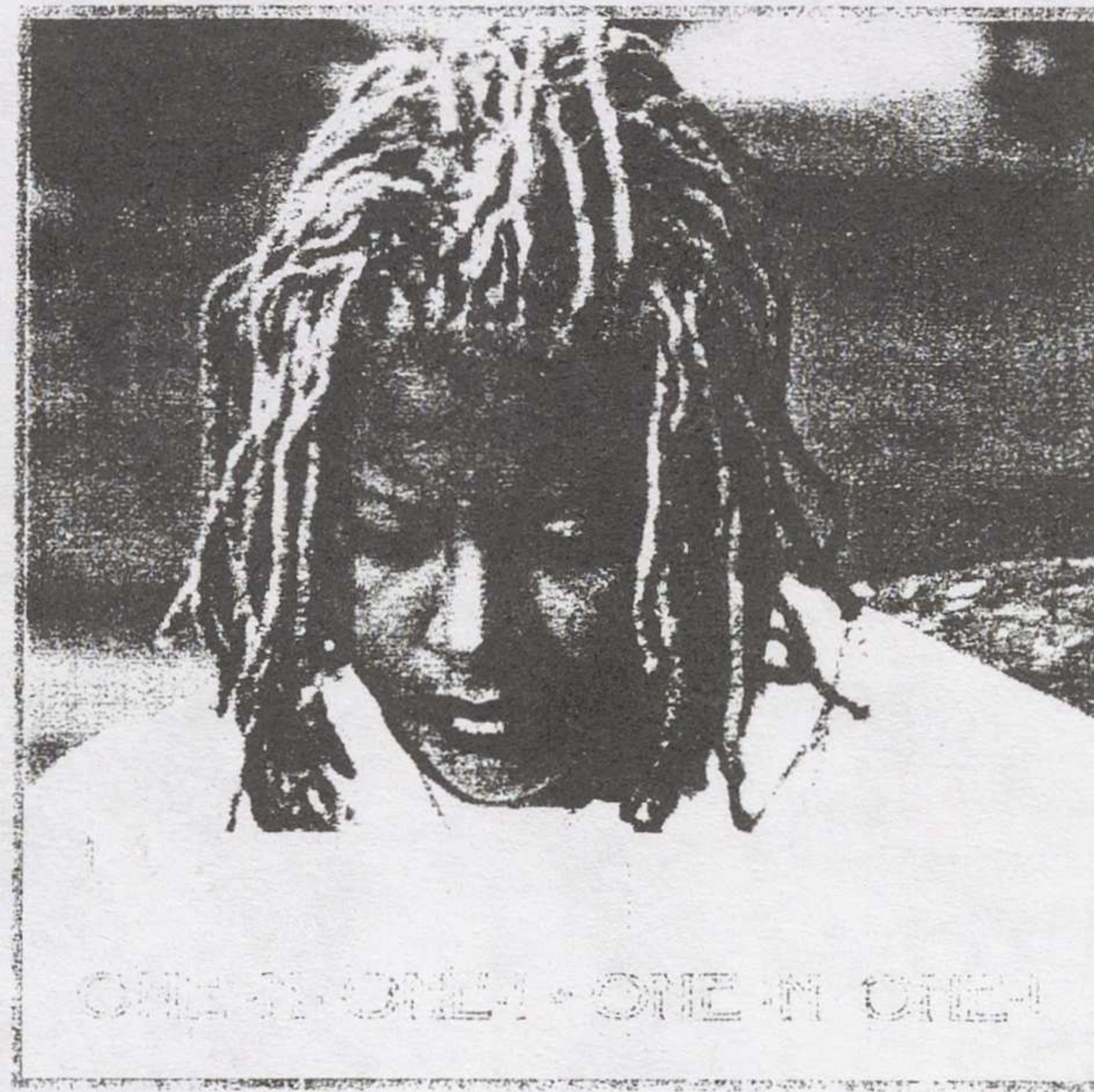
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poets ezum



{Every Goodbye Ain't Gone}

I demanded my freedom
to breathe, to romp,
to play,
to be-without you.

I surmised that my bliss was elsewhere. Perhaps
in the smile of another,
in the tears of another,
in the deep recesses of my mind-without you.

I destroyed Me
and You
and Us
to discover that without you
there is no me.

By Chanreese
Submitted via fax

{Shattered}

Gone.
A memory.
A dream.
A prayer.

Remains.
The thunderous echo of words of devotion
The after-taste of a mahogany nipple
The painful glow of a lopsided smile
The mourning
The ruins of ME.

By Chanreese
Submitted via fax

{Womyn Space}

Smell the incense
of Egyptian Musk,
Somali Rose and meditation
permeating the inner walls
of womyn space.
Inhale deeply
of its lingering
scents as it curls and swirls,
across the floors, in the corners
traveling down the halls
and dancing in the rooms
of womyn space

Hum the music
sing the song
feel the rhythm, let it move you
allow the vibrations to groove
your mind, body and soul.
Embrace the climate
of sisterhood,
for here
I am my sister's
lover and friend
confidant and protector.
Yes,
it is here
where we are all one.
Equally loved and equally strengthened
by

harvest moons
and guidance from the Goddess.
Daughters of Mother Earth
our spirits run free,
celebrating all of our Womyness
spreading all of our wisdom.
Feel the wave of empowerment

Accept the gift
Of sisterhood, all around you,
In womyn space
womyn space...
womyn space!

By Diana Kenlow

*Diana Kenlow is the Office Administrator of
Women in the Life by day, a poet by night.*

White House Rejects Deal on Moseley-Braun (10/28/99)

The White House yesterday rejected an offer by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) for a hearing next week on the ambassadorial nomination of former senator Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill.) in exchange for sensitive documents.

The White House spokesman Joe Lockhart called Helm's request "completely unreasonable and unmemorable." But he said the White House was not inclined to circumvent the committee process to install Moseley-Braun as ambassador to New Zealand.

The stalemate increased the likelihood that Clinton would give Moseley-Braun a "recess appointment" when Congress recesses next month. That would enable her to serve until the end of this Congress, when Clinton leaves office.

Legendary DC Nightclub Closes



Tracks DC, an institution in the gay and lesbian nightclub community, officially closed

on Saturday, November 6, 1999. "A Night to Remember," the name of the closing night party brought together past and present talent and patrons. Over the last 15 years, Tracks DC has been the benchmark by which all other local and national gay and lesbian clubs are measured. Located at the corner of First and M Streets SE, the club was one of the first to open in that area. In what was and is still considered a rough neighborhood, Tracks DC drew throngs of patrons willing to take the risk. In its heyday, Tracks DC would have endless long lines around the block on weekends and fairly packed houses during the week. The last Tuesday of the month, known as Ladies' Night for years, was the largest lesbian party in DC at the time. Ladies Night's ended in the early 90's when younger, fight-prone patrons began frequenting the club in large numbers and older lesbians stayed away. Still Tracks DC was the club where many gays and lesbians came out to themselves and their community. The small room in front with its video screen and the large room in back with its huge, dance floor educated the world about the wonders of house music. Its outdoor deck and volleyball sand court, provided patrons with a viable social alternative to remaining inside the sometimes cramped and smoky club.

Tracks DC opened in the post disco, early house days and has hosted performers from Cyndi Lauper to Grace Jones. DJ's that played in Tracks DC were well known, and could spin anywhere with just the name Tracks DC on their resume. Elaborate lighting, décor and sound created a dramatic theatrical effect and forced other clubs to do the same in order to compete.

Verdict: McKinney Convicted of Felony Murder, Additional Charges

(Laramie, WY) Aaron McKinney was convicted on five felony counts of the six brought against him.

After a week of jury selection and another 6 days of trial, a Laramie jury heard closing arguments yesterday and deliberated

until they handed down 5 separate convictions for Aaron McKinney, for the brutal murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard.

McKinney was found guilty today of Felony Murder - Robbery, Felony Murder Kidnapping, Second-Degree Murder, Aggravated Robbery, and Aggravated Kidnapping. McKinney was found not guilty of First-Degree Murder.

"We are pleased with the verdict handed down today," said Jeffrey Montgomery, Executive Director of the Triangle Foundation, a statewide gay civil rights and anti-violence group in Michigan, and steering committee member of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. "Although we were hoping for a First-Degree conviction we understand that the jury probably took several mitigating circumstances into consideration in handing down the lower convictions."

The same jury responsible for the guilt phase of the McKinney trial will be the same jury asked to determine whether McKinney will face life in prison or the death penalty. The sentencing phase is expected to last several days.

"Testimony in the sentencing phase will be difficult to hear, because although the 'gay panic' defense was disallowed for the fact-finding phase, the judge has indicated that testimony regarding alleged past negative gay experiences may be offered at that time," continued Montgomery. "We can't help feeling that the extent to which anti-gay testimony was offered in the trial had the effect of mitigating the verdict from First-Degree to Felony Murder. 'McKinney is a murderer and should spend the rest of his life in a prison cell contemplating the life he destroyed.'"

Aaron McKinney was sentenced to serve life in prison for his part in the murder of Matthew Shepard.



Matthew Shepard's parents
Dennis & Judy Shepard

news
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you!

Fall 1999 Elections Bring Victories for Gay Candidates

New York state gets its first openly gay Mayor, Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund winners also prevail in Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Texas and Washington, D.C.

Voters in upstate Plattsburgh, N.Y., apparently made history

THE
ANNIE
LEIBOVITZ
EXHIBIT



Toni Morrison

Women

Washington, DC— *Women*, a special exhibition of photographs by Annie Leibovitz, features more than 70 portraits by the internationally renowned photographer. The exhibition, which is a celebration of American women at the end of the millennium, includes portraits from a broad spectrum of society: an astronaut, farmers, scientists, artists, musicians, show girls, actresses, writers, athletes and political figures. Women who are well known—including Hillary Rodham Clinton, Katharine Graham, Gloria Steinem, Louise Bourgeois, Toni Morrison, and

Ruth Bader Ginsburg appear alongside women who are not usually singled out. *Women* is on view at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC from October 27, 1999 through February 28, 2000.

These photographs are intended to show "how we look and what we do," says Annie Leibovitz, and they create a vivid and striking collective portrait of women today. "I'm very moved by the sense of dignity these women have," says Leibovitz.

The presentation is drawn from photographs in *Women*, a book to



Chamique Holdsclaw

tickets for a specific day and time. Tickets may be purchased at all TicketMaster Outlets including Hechts stores and Tower Records, on the internet - www.ticketmaster.com, through TicketMaster PhoneCharge by calling - in the Washington area, (202) 432-7328; in Maryland (410) 481-7328; and in Virginia (703) 573-7328. If you are calling from outside these areas, please call toll free 1-800-551-7328. Same day tickets can also be purchased in person at the museum. Tickets cannot be purchased from the museum by telephone. Please call TicketMasterPhoneCharge. Ticket prices

are \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors and students, and free for members.




Serena & Venus Williams



Jamaica Kincaid

About the Corcoran Gallery of Art: The Corcoran, a privately funded institution, was founded in 1869 as Washington's first museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as European painting, sculpture and decorative arts. The Corcoran College of Art and Design is Washington's only 4-year college of art and design. The College's Open Program, which offers classes for children and adults, draws more than 3,000 participants each year. The Corcoran Gallery of Art is located at New York Avenue and 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC, and is open every day, except Tuesday, 10 am - 5 pm, and until 9 pm on Thursdays. The Corcoran is closed every Tuesday. The public information line is (202) 639-1700. The Corcoran Web site address is www.corcoran.org.



gossip

*leaves a nasty
taste in your mouth*

by lois g. alexander-reid

What is this phenomenon in our community where we feel the need to tear each other down? Don't we see by now that every time we part our lips to disparage someone we really give more insight into our weakness than the weakness of our subject?

I used to be that petty. I used to feel the need to "...strut and fret my hour upon the stage..." now I choose to wait. I feel like a tree, firmly rooted, reaching for the sky and all around me is this incredibly pesky wind, swirling about with my leaves, the stuff I put out. Eventually the winds will cease, the leaves I've shaken loose will still, rest at my feet and disintegrate. And the wind will be but a memory...if that. So why get caught up in the gossip?

Fuck the tongues that wag. It was appropriate then (in the courting days of my lover and me) and is, apparently appropriate now (my lover has become my wife: 30-year mortgage, invitations to both families-in their entirety-for the wedding reception, inquiries about our having children-from the mothers, and all). Nonetheless, the swirling: as if what we are doing is something with which to be toyed. Believe me, I have gone down that garden path. Sweeties, it leads nowhere. OK, it leads to a more absolute degradation of self. Let me lead by example.

It is no secret that I suffer from depression, that I take medication-prozac-to treat that depression and (the part no one dare mention even in the re-telling of the story) that one reason for my state of mind is because I survived child sexual assault. Sistahs, should I be ashamed of that? Oh no, you won't stuff me in that terribly erroneous, constrictive jacket,

hands tied to themselves with me the only force really confining myself. Moreover, anyone who wants to know can ask me. I wield my power. Living "out" prevents pain. I take the wind out of any sail that's trying to fly as a result of my struggles. I can think of nothing for which I am ashamed. Ask me.

It is more shameful that the rumor mill continues to grind. Bring me my share of rumors and I will stop them by not reacting, not honoring them with a response; merely sending my condolences to the tongue, heart and mind that is feeling the need to feed. We are so disconnected from our own pain that we find solace in feeling "something"...anything. Grind. It's an insatiable hunger. Some of us feed it with lies, grandness, pity, sex. It's about power, ultimately...or what we think is power and control. It's only a contact high. Trust me.

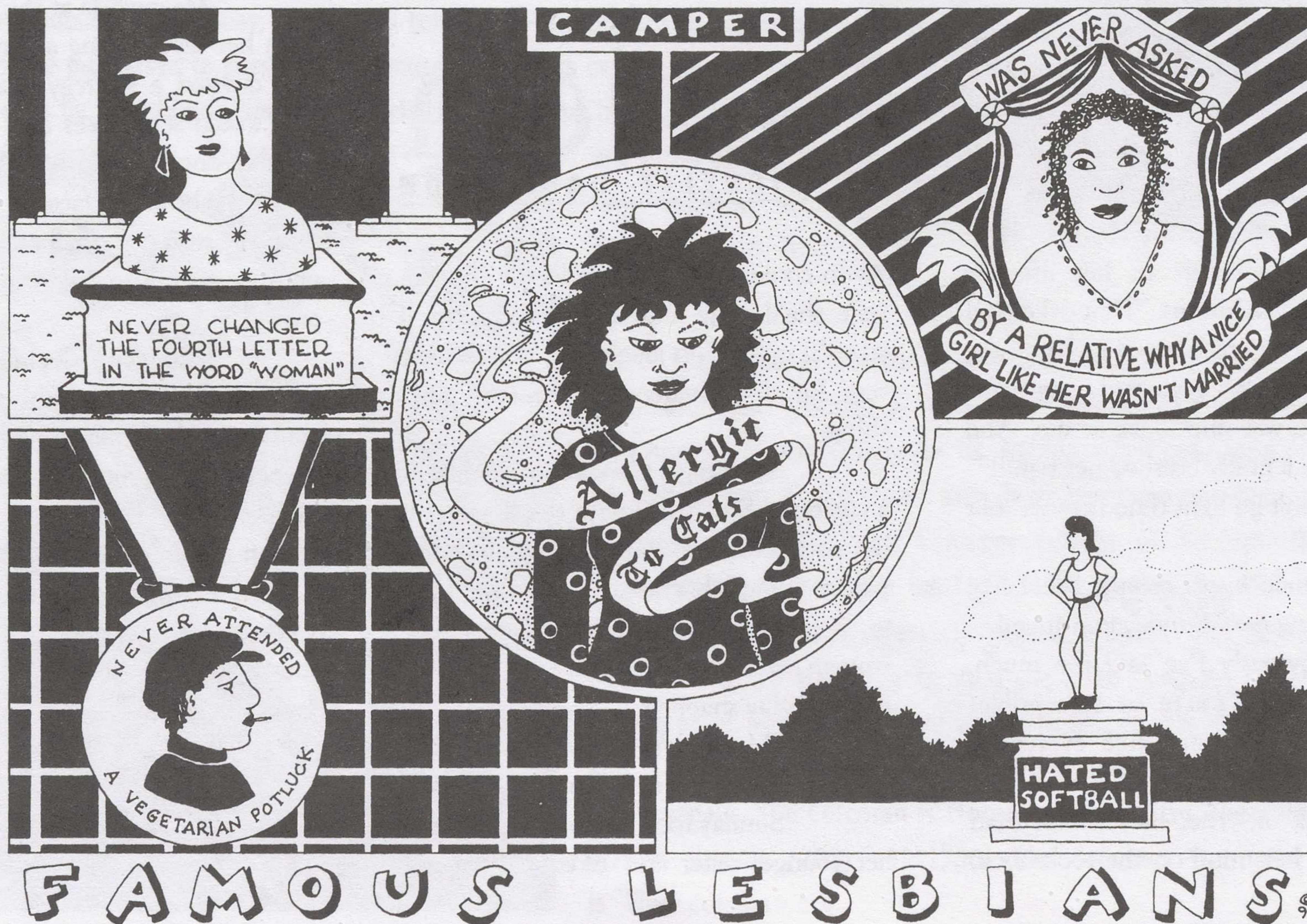
To be honest, no one can manage honesty anymore. My wife was right when she said, "It's some kind of vicious thing that turns on itself and everybody that participates is guilty." It is all so familiar. My own family has been this way: talking in hushed tones-just loud enough to hear, form an opinion. I confront, seeking confirmation, clarification, but other foolishness is put on the table, convoluting things even further until I question everything and everyone: what's right, what's wrong? So, I create my own set of beliefs that don't quite jibe with everyone else's. So, I learn, the hard way, there are things folks call "sin," "morality," and "justice," but no one seems to be able to demonstrate them, just talk about them, and judge you according to them.

I try to invoke pity, understanding. I try to recall my periods of needing to hurt others, feeling better about myself by tearing someone else apart. I want to pray, intently, for the souls of my sisters in pain who do not have the desire or the spirit to excise their wrongdoing; who do not have the breadth to forgive; who seem to want to stay in pain. I want to pray, to embrace them and let them know, it's o.k. if you feel the need to hurt me.

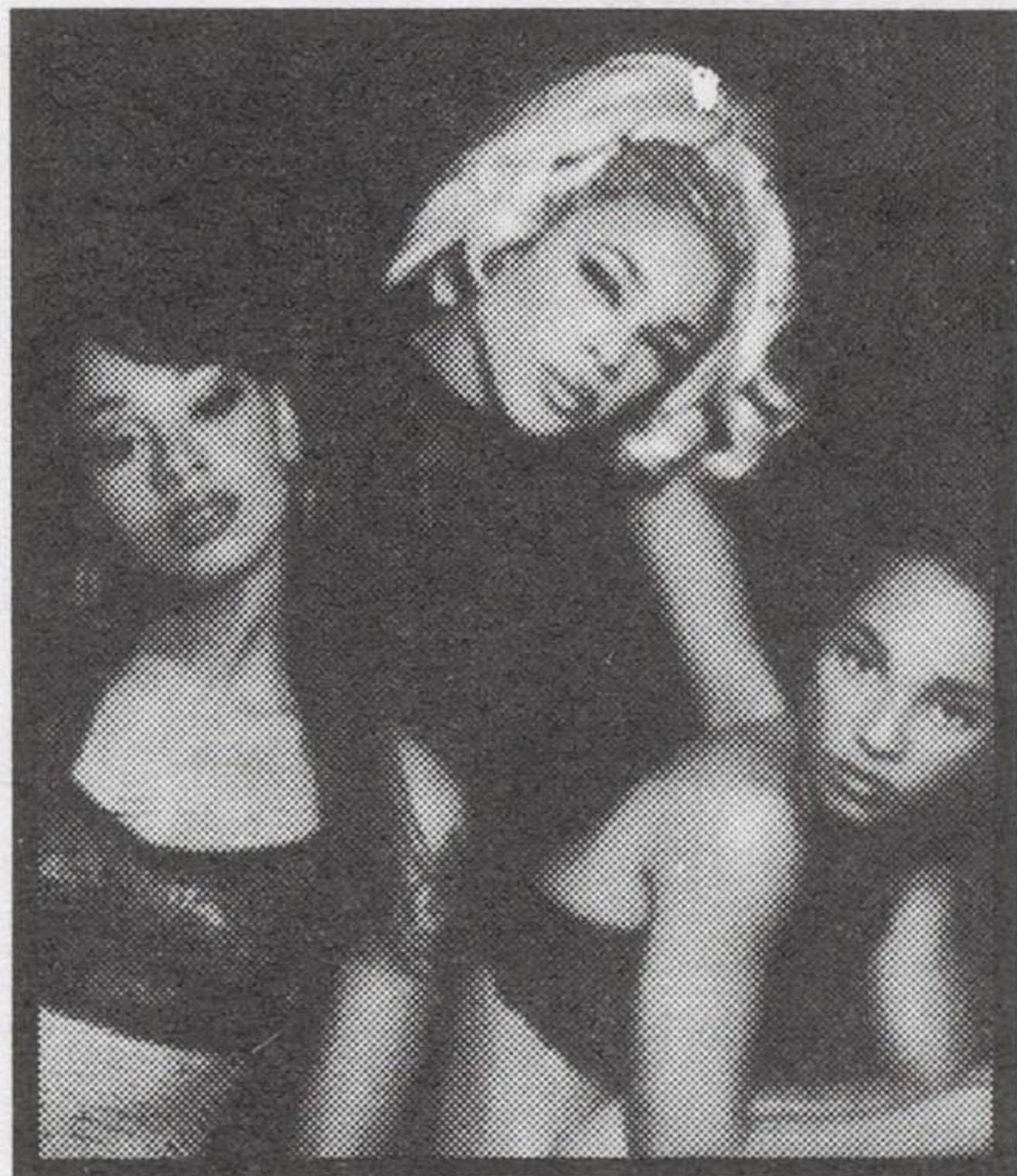
But, I'm getting in touch with my own hurts and part of that process is releasing the cruelty that was done to me, to avoid further cruelty. I'm making room for the good stuff and you bitches will not sidetrack me.

Girlfriend #1, thank you for the info, but I will not jump on your bandwagon to hang Girlfriend #2. This ain't no witch-hunt. See, I know how the wind blows on your cross of fire. At any given moment, the flames might be licking at my soul. Girlfriend #3, I don't know you that well, but I won't be swept up in whatever little wind gust you intend on stirring up.

It's no accident that hurricanes are named after womyn.



TLC On Top But in Trouble



Female music group TLC is being heaped with praise for their hit song; "Unpretty" that tells women to love themselves for what's within. The message is a positive one but seems a bit hypocritical coming from TLC, a group that has exploited looks and sex appeal from day one. It is unfortunate that just as "Unpretty" has hit reached number one on the charts, things are starting to unravel for the threesome. For the first time since their 1992 debut, TLC is showing signs of inner dissension between its members. In a *Vibe* story, Lisa Lopes a.k.a. Left Eye told reporters, "I'm not into TLC." According to inside sources, her lofty ambition of launching a solo career seems to be her only priority. When she missed a taping of MTV's Total Request Live, TLC members, T-Boz (Tionne Watkins) and Chilli (Rozonda Watkins) told everyone Left-Eye was sick. They later admitted they had lied, saying Left-Eye had actually stayed behind in the hotel because she was mad at them. On her own behalf, Left-Eye admits to missing rehearsals, being busy with her solo project and even considering quitting TLC. When LaFace rejected all of the songs Left-Eye submitted for their new CD *FanMail*, she sent the label a letter announcing she was quitting the group. After the fallout, she changed her mind and decided to stay. But her uncertainty still haunts the future of the group.

This is not Left-Eye's first taste of bad press. In 1994 she was arrested for burning down boyfriend (Atlanta Falcons' wide receiver) Andre Rison's house. Rumors had it that Left-Eye torched the house as revenge for Rison's cheating. That fiery temper is flaring again. She explains her latest tantrums as attempts to get LaFace's attention, to shake things up and express her unhappiness with how they were handling the group. It is safe to say Left-Eye's behavior has gotten everyone's attention. There is a four-page story in the November 6 issue of *Entertainment Weekly* detailing the group's troubles. The title of the story... "Unpretty."

By Sheila Alexander-Reid

The Sports Page

By Charlene Hamilton

NFL

Walter Payton

Hall of Fame running back Walter Payton succumbed to bile duct cancer at age 45 on Monday, November 1. The football legend known as "Sweetness" will be remembered for his ability to avoid being tackled on the field and for his gentle and loving nature off the field. Payton who earned a ring for his play in Super Bowl 20, was not just a great player, but also a great person. Commissioner Paul Tagliabue ordered flags over stadiums lowered to half-staff and a moment of silence observed before Sunday (Nov. 7) games in honor of Payton's passing.

Tennis

Sunday, October 30, 1999

The Williams vs. Williams match that fans wanted in the US Open finally occurred, but it was not in Flushing, NY. The Venus-Serena face-off took place in Munich, Germany. The match was the second sister vs. sister final in pro tennis history. The first was in Key Biscayne, Florida in March of this year, when Venus beat Serena in three sets. Venus also won their two non-title matches in 1998. But in Munich, it was all Serena. She won 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.



Photo: Annie Leibovitz

Sunday, October 17, 1999

Venus was on a mission, as she gave Martina Hingis a thorough thrashing at the Swisscom Challenge in Zurich. Playing for the first time with no family members present, Venus rose to the occasion. Miles away from the shadow of younger sister, Serena's US Open championship title, Venus did not drop a single set in the tournament. Her 6-3, 6-4 victory over Hingis made

quite a statement. Not only did Venus earn her ninth career title, she prevented Hingis from winning a title in her home country.

Boxing

Saturday, October 9, 1999

Laila Ali, daughter of the great boxing champ, Muhammed Ali, made her boxing debut in Verona, New York. Her opponent, April Fowler was knocked out in only 31 seconds into the first round. A waitress from Michigan City, Indianapolis, Fowler never knew what hit her.

NBA

Master P, the multimillionaire rap artist and producer whose real name is Percy Miller, was waived by the Toronto Raptors along with former Duke forward Antonio Lang.

Tuesday, October 12, 1999

Basketball legend, Wilt Chamberlain 63, was found dead of an apparent heart attack in his home. During his career that spanned from 1959 to 1973, the 7-foot-1 Chamberlain played 14 seasons, won two NBA championships and was a four-time league most valuable player.

Golf

Tiger Woods is having a record year, winning 8 of his last 11 tournaments, and 4 in a row.

Tuesday, October 25, 1999

Golf pro Payne Stewart, died at age 42 in a private plane crash. His Lear jet went down in South Dakota after apparently running on autopilot for hours until it ran out of gas. In June, Stewart won his second US Open championship title with a nail-biting 15-foot putt.

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Dick Clark on the big screen & party favors.**

Special hotel room rate: Single/Double for only \$99 when
you mention *Women in the Life* upon making reservation.

Call: 202-842-1300 for reservations.

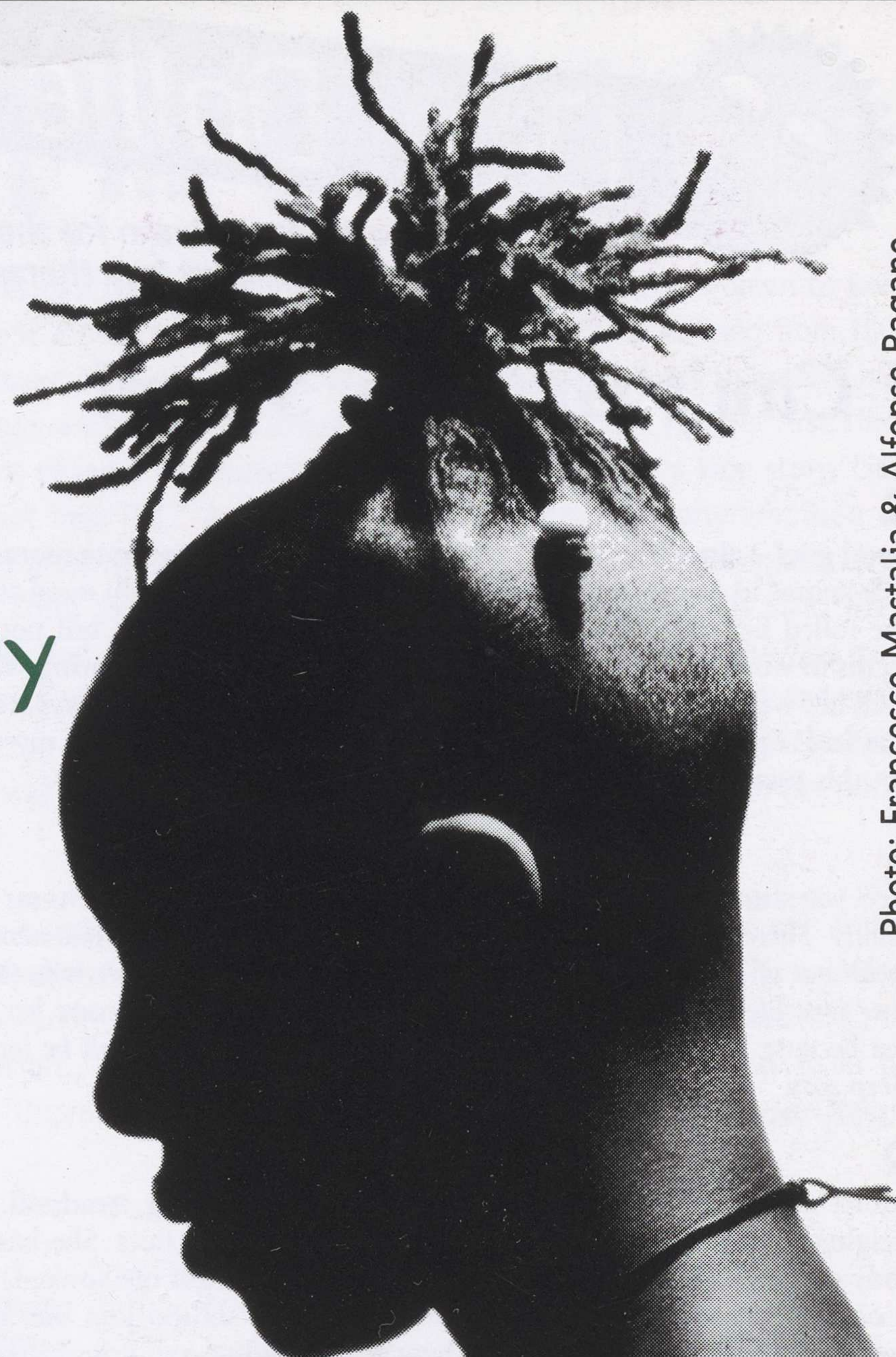
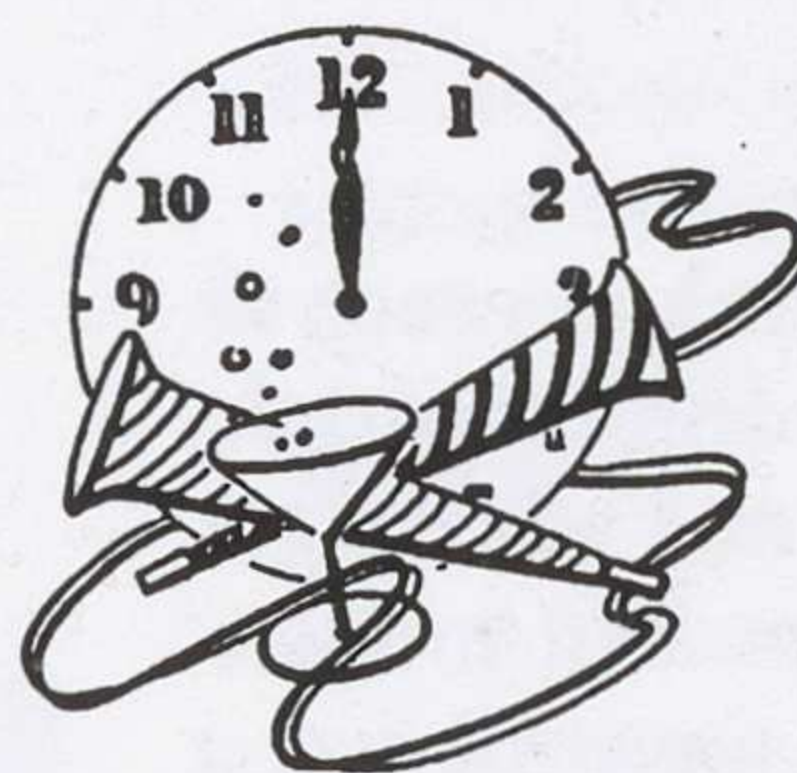


Photo: Francesco Mastalia & Alfonse Pagano

**WOMEN
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**WINTER
EVENTS**

Above photo
taken from the new book

DREADS

Published by Artisan.
Copy of *DREADS* to be raffled off
at Millennium Eve Ball.

All events for age 21 & older. ABC laws in DC require proper ID be shown at the door. No ID, No admittance, no exceptions!