

School of Racism. As a woman who works in the sex field, I am accustomed to the expectation that I don't have any brains or sensitivity, but I'm not going to put up with it, from either fundamentalists or feminists.

Goldsby also says she doesn't expect me to understand Black homosexuality so well that I could ask the questions that matter to her. Well, why not? When I go to hear a contemporary lecturer on history, science, or politics, I certainly expect them to deliver more than a white male middle-class perspective. How they personally grew up is no excuse—presumably they've had to learn and study the breadth of their subject. I'd rather you expect more from me than expect nothing!

The main clue Jackie gives me in her response to this show is when she asks if the black dyke in the film clip is being characterized as an "evil serpent." Now here's the nitty gritty—an image that draws bluntly on a classic racial stereotype. What I've seen working with Black writers, photographers, and particularly models is that they often feel in a no-win situation because of the instant racial stereotypes audiences can easily put on their sincere sexual presentation of themselves. For example, a picture of a butch or dykey-looking woman will be criticized for portraying Black lesbians as studs, gangsters, or overbearing bulldaggers. But if the subject is lying on her back, then she'll get panned for playing a slave or slut caricature; as straight, passing, or a sell-out. Women of color get the stigma of being *ultra* sexual; perversely sexual, no matter how they present their sexual vision.

Some react to this by putting up a wall, refusing to create or reveal any explicit erotic

imagery. But that invisibility and reluctance perpetuate the racism, the conspicuous absence. The women of color who do put their sexual identity out there for the public are pioneers in confronting the racist and sexist dilemmas of erotic representation. By their exposure, they turn the "oversexed" slur into a demand, a deliberate provocation to *be seen*. Their appearance is a direct confrontation with the racial politics of sexual fantasy, whether they be up-to-the-minute lesbian feminists or just the kind of Black dyke porn star in *Up!* who probably doesn't read *OUT/LOOK* but had the guts to do in 1973 what the short-sighted "women's community" could not look in the face.

Susie Bright
Editor, *On Our Backs*
San Francisco, California

IS IT TRUE THAT LESBIANS HAVE NO SENSE OF HUMOR?

■ I cannot allow Jan Clausen's and Mary Wings's reduction of lesbian lives to "allegiance to the cunt" to go unanswered. The loyalty many lesbians feel is not to pieces of women's anatomy but to women as whole human beings—mind, body, and spirit. This trivialization as "cunt-fetishists" of women who choose to live women-centered lives independent of intimate relationships with men is shockingly reminiscent of the attitudes of the worst misogynists and homophobes.

In addition, Ms. Wings's concern about the establishment of a "National Lesbian Purity Board" is, at best, misplaced. Even if the will to do so were there, the lesbian community is too small and powerless to enforce its morality on the population at large or even on other lesbians. However, the oppressive morality of the

dominant heterosexist and patriarchal culture continues to be pushed down women's throats by all the institutions of our society. Sometimes, particularly in a period of backlash, it can even be reflected in the lives and writing of other lesbians.

Ann E. Menasche
San Francisco, California

THE OLD (LESBIAN) IN-OUT

■ As a woman who is a card-carrying member of the middle class and a teacher, I, too, find something off-putting in these increasingly vocal s/m girls with their urgent manifestos.

However, to paraphrase Andrew Holleran's "There is no substitute for an embrace," I would put it that there is also no substitute for penetration. I can't tell you the number of lesbians I've met in twenty-five years who seemed to be actually frightened of it. One hesitates to delve into the psycho/social motives here, but I would offer that to be afraid of penetration is to be afraid of one's own body. One needn't be "into s/m" to realize this.

Name withheld
Long Beach, California

WHO SPEAKS FOR GAY NATIVE AMERICANS?

■ It would seem that *OUT/LOOK*'s pages are open to anyone with an opinion on American Indian berdaches except those most qualified to speak—American Indians themselves. First we had Ramon Gutierrez (Winter 1989) with his flagrant misquotes and factual errors and his fantastic conclusions at odds with those of every authority on the subject. Now, we have Scott Bravmann citing Gutierrez (Spring 1990) and pronouncing the efforts to include berdaches within lesbian and gay

history a "failure."

What Bravmann does not mention—and readers who depend on OUT/LOOK would never know—is that the recovery of the berdache tradition since the 1970s has been led, not by white romanticizers and cultural imperialists, but by gay and lesbian Indians themselves—such as Maurice Kenny and Paula Gunn Allen, whose silence-shattering articles in 1975 and 1981, respectively, preceded the "discovery" of the berdache by white scholars (including myself). Indeed, the connection that gay American Indians feel to the berdache tradition is a central and indispensable element of their efforts to challenge the homophobia that has been imposed on their communities in the past century. To deny this connection, especially in so flip-pant a manner as Gutierrez and

Bravmann do, is to undermine the political and cultural integrity of contemporary lesbian and gay American Indians.

This is ironic, considering that Bravmann wants to criticize social constructionists for their ethnocentrism and to offer the self-constructions of African-American and Latin-American lesbians as alternatives. But Bravmann does exactly what he criticizes. Placing theoretical knowledge over the actual experiences of Indian people, he proceeds to define the boundaries of gay and lesbian history in a way that excludes an entire segment of our community.

As for OUT/LOOK's role in all this, I can only ask: when will your readers be allowed to hear from Indians themselves? When I declined to respond to Gutierrez last year, I suggested that you offer the space to an American

Indian instead—and I provided you with the names of at least ten qualified writers. But instead we get Bravmann!

Your readers can at least turn to the words of Paula Gunn Allen in *The Sacred Hoop* and the twenty different Indian contributors in *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*. If my own view of berdaches is at odds with the pronouncements of the ivory tower crowd, I suspect it is because of the relatively greater time I have spent listening to these "other" voices rather than theirs.

Will Roscoe
San Francisco, California

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