

# AGENDA

ANN ARBOR'S ALTERNATIVE NEWSMONTHLY

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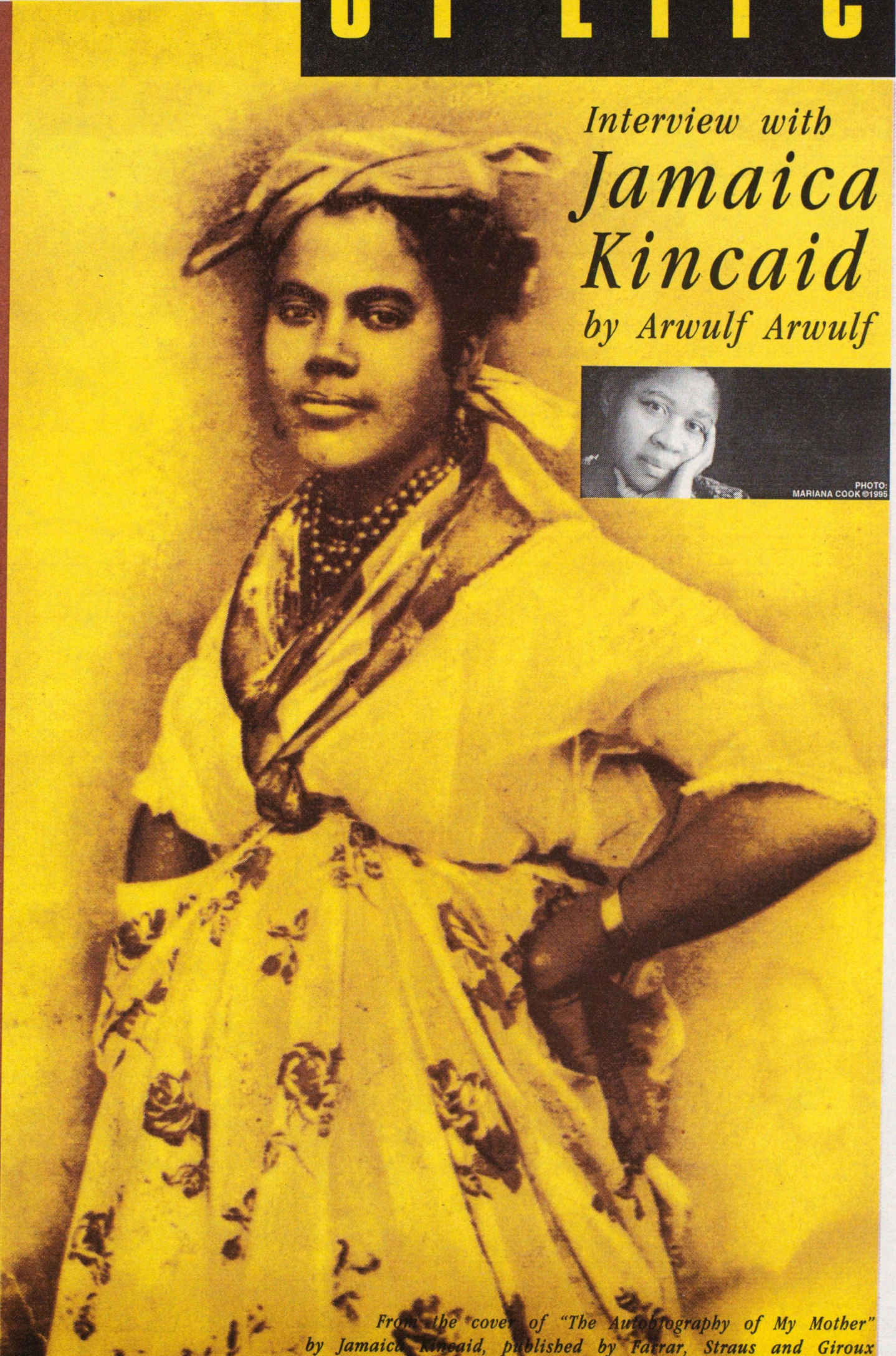
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*Interview with*  
**Jamaica Kincaid**  
*by Arwulf Arwulf*



PHOTO: MARIANA COOK ©1995



*From the cover of "The Autobiography of My Mother" by Jamaica Kincaid, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux*

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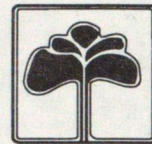
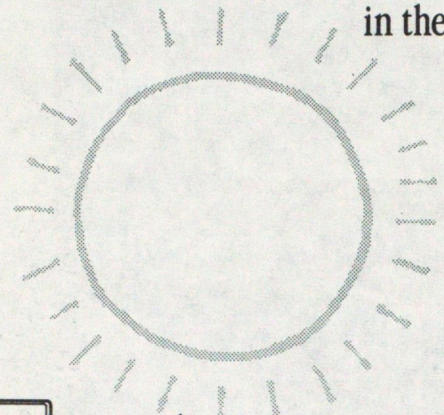
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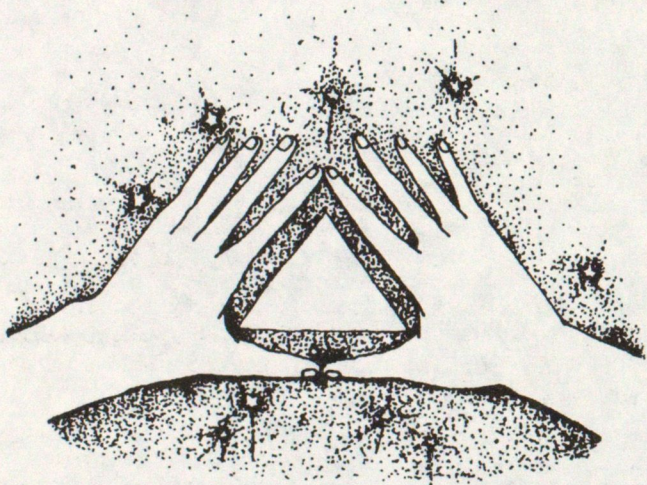
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The Michigan League

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# LETTERS

Love us? Hate us? Have a response to an article we published? AGENDA wants to know what you think! Send letters by the 20th day of the month preceding publication of our next issue to: AGENDA, 220 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Please include your address and phone number (for verification purposes). AGENDA reserves the right to edit or reject any letter. We give preference to letters under 400 words.

## OPEN LETTER FROM CORNTREE CO-OP

There is a hidden treasure nestled on rolling woodland at 1910 Hill, a place with a rich history that stretches back into Ann Arbor's radical roots. This treasure is Corntree, a family housing co-op, daycare home and community resource center. Best known years ago as a childcare co-op, now when one mentions Corntree, a typical response is, "Corntree? I remember Corntree! My kids used to go there! What are they doing now?"

Founded in 1968 by parents, Corntree is a four-story house perfect for childcare with lots of big living and playing rooms and a dining room big enough for our vegetarian/vegan, mostly organic communal meals (boarders welcome).

The most distinguishing feature of Corntree is its progressive politics. An excerpt from our unofficial history ("unofficial," the history's title page explains, "because no-one at Corntree ever has the last word") reads: "During the late '60s and early '70s Corntree was one of the homes of the revolution in Ann Arbor. If you were a member of the Human Rights Party, if you supported liberal causes, were against the war in Vietnam, or advocated equal rights for minority groups, chances are you met at Corntree at least once. The Rainbow House and the White Panther Party are gone, but Corntree remains, a neighborhood oddity, a remnant of a decade of social ferment."

The Corntree philosophy was founded on the ideas of A.S. Neal, the leading exponent of the free school idea and author of "Summerhill." The driving force of the child care co-op was parent involvement. To children, Corntree was a magical place for free play; to parents, it was a challenge to their abilities to compromise and grow within the context of the consensus decision-making process. Today, Corntree still challenges us to work and clean cooperatively, resolve conflicts together, and take personal responsibility and accountability for our relationships with our housemates.

Unfortunately, after years of struggles, the co-op slowly began to fade away. It has seemed at many times that Corntree's final days were at hand. However, Corntree's spirit is strong and there is now a core group living here committed to its revival.

We have gone through the intense regeneration process necessary to obtain a license to be a daycare home for twelve. We plan to continue the spirit of parent involvement by offering work exchange. Our basic philosophy is child-directed, wholistic and Waldorf-based; we offer full-time, part-time and afterschool care.

Corntree is truly a home, from the yule log burning in the fireplace and everybody dancing to a live klezmer band, to yummy smells coming from our great kitchen and the sounds of children downstairs in the big activity room—even some very heavy concentration happening in the craft room!

And we want to share this hidden treasure with you. We're opening our doors to the community as a place for people to meet and have classes, workshops, and even small conferences. This is a great place for homeschoolers, theatre groups, and afterschool clubs to meet. We have lots of room for lots of people to do lots of things.

We extend an invitation to folks of all ages to help us recreate a Corntree Community. Call and come see what a treasure Corntree is. Help us preserve the spirit of the Corntree Co-op for many more years! And please come join us for our Open House scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 13 from 4 pm-9 pm, featuring a vegetarian potluck, a fire blazing in the fireplace and music honoring the birthday weekend of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Old or new Corntree-type folks, please give us a call at 769-5665 or 769-5671. (Can anyone tell us more about the origin of our name? Why are we called "Corntree?" Call ahead, stop by for dinner, and tell us!)

Let's leave you with the words of one of our Corntree children: "Come and share this wonderful treasure with us. Become rich in LOVE and PEACE. Come join us." —Leighanna, age 11.

# THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

You have a keen sense of humor and love a good time.

Do not put so much sugar in your coffee or he will think you extravagant.

There is a prospect of a thrilling time ahead for you.

Hypercritical tendencies may be increasing presently.

Our first and last love is ... self-love.

Make use of whatever advanced technology is available.

Note: all dialogue taken verbatim from actual Chinese fortune cookies.

Happy New Year, and remember: you will receive good news by mail!

Tip o' the pen(guin) to the Byliners (especially Scott Rosenberg!)

TOM (SELL YOUR IDEAS, THEY ARE TOTALLY ACCEPTABLE!) TOMORROW • 1-3-96

## F.Y.I.

AGENDA is interested in receiving items from you for F.Y.I. Press clippings, press releases, summaries of local events and any other ideas or suggestions are welcome. Just mail them to: F.Y.I. Editor, AGENDA, 220 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

## AFSC OFFERS DIALOGUE WORKSHOPS

Question #1: You're walking down the street and you see a young man with the words "AIDS kills fags dead" or "The only good dyke is a dead dyke" on his t-shirt. You're upset by this so you: a) don't say anything; just stand there fuming; b) slap him because you're bigger than he is and then tell him how ignorant he is for wearing such a t-shirt; c) slap him and then run away as fast as you can because he's bigger than you are; d) yell at him as loud as you can that he'd better take that t-shirt off right this minute or he'll be sorry; or e) none of the above.

Question #2: You're at a social event and a white woman to whom you've just been introduced says "Oh, you don't sound black. You sound white." You: a) whisper to yourself (again for the billionth time in your life), "Not all white people are alike," and just ignore the comment; b) get an attitude and tell her that she surely sounds white saying some dumb shit like that; c) yell at your white friend that she (your friend) should have known better than to have introduced you to someone who could say something so ignorant in public; d) sarcastically tell her that yes, you were fortunate enough to have learned to speak "white language" despite the fact that you grew up in a black household and attended predominantly black schools; or e) none of the above.

If you answered anything other than "none of the above" to the two questions above, you probably have fewer gray hairs than the rest of us but you also probably feel that there are more productive ways of dealing with homophobic and racist comments. If you don't say anything at all (response "a"), it doesn't educate the "offender" about homophobia or racism and it doesn't make you feel any better either. And if you respond in the spirit of responses "b," "c," or "d," you may

feel good right then, but you may later wish you would have had the patience or verbal tools to respond differently, to perhaps turn the situation into an opportunity for real dialogue.

On the weekend of February 24 (9 am-5 pm) and 25 (1-5 pm) the American Friends Service Committee's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues Program will hold its next "Toward Understanding" workshop in Ann Arbor. In the workshops, AFSC staff and volunteers teach a non-violent approach that can turn verbal confrontations about sexual orientation into opportunities for dialogue.

Although this workshop focuses particularly on dialogue about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues, the techniques taught in the workshop can be applied to dialogue on other social issues, such as racism, as well. Participants are provided with background about how the theory of non-violence is applied to the practice of communication, information about scriptural passages and approaches to the Bible, and lots of opportunities to practice.

We are particularly encouraging those who work in, or who are involved with, communities of faith to attend the workshop. People of all sexual orientations and ethnic and religious backgrounds are encouraged to participate. Persons interested in attending or scheduling a workshop, or for more information, call Jan Wright or Dawn Richberg at (313) 761-8283.

## DETROIT NEWSPAPER STRIKE ADDENDUM

Due to an outpouring of support from our readership, AGENDA surpassed its fundraising goal of the \$1,000 needed to publish a cover story on the Detroit News and Free Press strike and to finance half of the two-page poster advertisement in support of the strikers [see AGENDA, Dec. 1995]. We sent the extra funds (\$384) off as a donation from AGENDA readers to the Striker Relief Fund.

The following organizations and businesses should be added to the list of signatories on the poster: Latin American Solidarity Committee, Wooden Spoon Books, Volume One Books, Jourden's Marathon, and Industrial Workers of the World.

If you missed the boat last month, it's not too late. In fact, the longer the strike continues, the

more crucial your support becomes. Send contributions to: Striker Relief Fund, c/o Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO, Attention: Eric Lindemier (2nd floor), 2550 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48208.

## CITY TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

Ann Arbor City Council, at its Dec. 4, 1995 meeting, made significant steps towards strengthening the City's anti-discrimination law—the Human Rights Ordinance.

The Human Rights Commission has been working on proposed changes to the Human Rights Ordinance which prohibits discrimination in housing, public accommodations, and employment based on a person's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, condition of pregnancy, marital status, physical disability, source of income, family responsibilities, educational association, or sexual orientation.

The current law stipulates that offenders pay a \$500 fine. The Commission is looking at stiffening that penalty in order to better assist people who have been discriminated against. A public hearing will be held on Jan. 16.

# AGENDA

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20,000 free copies of AGENDA are distributed at the beginning of every month from over 300 locations in the Ann Arbor Metro Area.

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"What do I see for the future? Only one thing: Humanity must abolish war, or war will abolish humanity." —Martin Luther King, Jr.

While 1995 was celebrated across the nation as the 50-year anniversary of the end of World War II, for many here in Ann Arbor the year was significant as the 30th anniversary of a local organization dedicated to peace and justice—the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice (ICPJ).

It was in Dec., 1965, amidst a fledgling anti-Vietnam War sentiment, that several members of Ann Arbor's religious and spiritual communities—Margaret Blood, Barbara and Russ Fuller, Bob Hauert, Pat Jackson, Gene Ransom, Nan Sparrow, and Wilbur Williams—came together to form an interfaith organization dedicated to active non-violence. This organization came to be known as ICPJ.

"A Christian Perspective on the Vietnam War" was the group's first public event in Feb., 1966. About 100 people attended the conference at Northside Presbyterian Church (a significant number, given that anti-war sentiments were unpopular, particularly in religious organizations).

Over the next couple of years, ICPJ-organized anti-war events drew ever-larger numbers of attendees. In Dec., 1966, an anti-war conference at First United Methodist Church attracted more than 200. The next May, 837 people signed an Ann Arbor News ad supporting a peace plan and 400 attended a panel discussion.

As the war escalated, so did the ICPJ's anti-war efforts. They joined with other concerned groups and individuals to provide draft counseling (by 1968, 23 clergymen of the 60-member Ann Arbor Ministerial Association went on record as supporting draft resisters); organize conferences; and participate in the 1969 March Against Death, in Washington, D.C. (2,000 Ann Arborites made the journey). Barbara Fuller recalls that period as "a kaleidoscope of adults, young people, clergy, mailing parties, publishing ads, meetings in homes and churches, trips to Washington, talking with politicians, and the stirring of deep and strong emotions inside of us all."

ICPJ responded to reports of the massacre at My Lai (Vietnam) by participating in an eight-day



MARCH, 1986: ICPJ members at anti-contra aid march

PHOTO: GREGORY FOX

## Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice Turns 30!

vigil. In 1971 Barbara Fuller and two other Ann Arbor activists traveled to Paris as part of a delegation sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, to meet with representatives from North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front People's Revolutionary Government, to encourage the start of peace talks.

In 1972, 100 local peace activists simulated a crater caused by one 500-pound "daisy cutter" bomb (the type dropped by the U.S. on South Vietnam) by digging a hole 40 feet across and 8 feet deep in an empty lot. Leaflets explained that if North Vietnam were to bomb Ann Arbor at the same rate the U.S. military had sent theirs country, the city would have 3,595 such craters.

The war ended on April 30, 1975. While many peace organizations folded, ICPJ did not. Its

members recognized the need for reconciliation with Vietnam and aid for the war's victims—goals which were probably even less popular than opposition to the war itself. Other issues became part of ICPJ's long-term agenda, particularly hunger in the United States and abroad, disarmament, environmental preservation, farm workers' rights, and international economic policies.

Over the last 20 years, ICPJ has sponsored events too numerous to list, in accordance with their broad peace and justice agenda. One of ICPJ's greatest achievements has been the Hunger Walk, a fundraiser for local and global hunger-relief agencies. The first Walk was held in 1975; the 20th was held Oct. 8, 1995. ICPJ also raised funds for FRIENDSHIPMENT, a national effort to send food and medicine to Vietnam; campaigned

against the B-1 bomber; organized a Peace Conversion Conference to explore how defense contractors and workers could be incorporated into the civilian economy; and marched in opposition to the infamous 1978 Nazi march in predominantly Jewish Skokie, Illinois.

Throughout the 1980s, ICPJ was predominantly concerned with the oppression, poverty and the many covert "dirty little wars" propagated by the U.S. in many parts of the Third World. They formed the Task Force on Latin America to take on U.S. policies in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, as well as other Central and South American nations. ICPJ also sponsored a number of conferences dealing with racism, the real causes of poverty and the wastefulness of our war-based economy.

As the current decade began, ICPJ rekindled its anti-war machine to oppose the war in the Gulf. ICPJ held weekly vigils, leafletted in front of the Federal Building, took out a signature ad in The Ann Arbor News, co-sponsored a series of four teach-ins on the crisis, and helped organize anti-war marches.

True to its name, the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice is not only concerned with ending war, but with creating a just peace. Its Task Force on Latin America, for example, is active in the national "50 Years Is Enough" campaign exposing the unjust and exploitative policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The Middle East Task Force continually draws attention to injustices in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Task Force on Racial and Economic Justice works to dismantle racism, to defend prisoners' rights, and to resist legislative efforts to gut social service and welfare programs. ICPJ's energies are also aimed at counteracting the religious radical right, ending the war in Bosnia, ending the embargo against Iraq, and continuing to struggle for disarmament.

A series of special programs will be held throughout 1996 to commemorate ICPJ's 30 years of continuing passion, dedication, anguish and people-to-people action to create a world of just peace. Watch upcoming AGENDA calendars for details.

—By Thom Saffold

On Saturday, Jan. 20, ICPJ will hold their "30 Years for Peace with Justice Celebration" at 7 pm at the First Presbyterian Church, 1432 Washtenaw. Come to this free multicultural program of song, dance, poetry, fun and inspiration. For more information about ICPJ, or to get involved in the peace-making, call them at 663-1870.

### LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL PROGRAMS OFFICE division of student affairs

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# Rhythms of Life

## Interview with Jamaica Kincaid

By Arwulf Arwulf

**Editor's Note:** Author Jamaica Kincaid will be at the Pendleton Room in the Michigan Union on Monday, January 29, at 8 pm, reading from her new novel, "The Autobiography of My Mother," immediately followed by a reception and book signing at Shaman Drum Book Shop.

Kincaid's new novel, to be published January 15, 1996 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, explores the themes of sex, human relations, and the interplay of power and powerlessness that have run through the life of a 70-year-old West Indian woman.

The author of four other books, Kincaid was born and educated in St. John's, Antigua, in the West Indies, and now lives with her husband and two children in Bennington, Vermont.

The following text is an abridged version of Arwulf's late-December telephone interview with Ms. Kincaid.

**Arwulf:** I've been reading your latest book, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, and it's an extraordinary piece of writing. But you know that—you wrote it. What do you think of it?

**Kincaid:** Oh dear! I'm not really the person to ask about my own writing. I always wish it was better. And I'm always somewhat disappointed in it, and always think: Well, the next book I'm sure I'll get it right then. So, I'm not really the person to ask. I'm always more interested in how it makes sense to other people because it's so much in my own head and so much an expression of my own sensibility. I'm always surprised.

**Arwulf:** The stories you tell are so very personal, and they will speak to most anyone. I'm just curious about the origin of that remarkable scene, early on in the book where the boy goes into the river—never to be seen again—pursuing an apparition of a woman surrounded by fruits. Did that just come to you from the aethers or is that something you remember from someone?

**Kincaid:** That actually is a story my mother told me. It seems to have happened to my mother. And that was not too terribly unusual in the old days, before electricity and so on, people used to have more contact with things like that, and used to believe more in things like that. I don't know if they do so much anymore. Everybody has television, and everybody has electricity, and everybody has the modern world. They were quite frightening, you know, and so you can imagine that people wouldn't want to cultivate them. I remember when I left, being so pleased that that was one thing—spirits—I need never be afraid of anymore. The spirits were quite common among peoples' stories about themselves. That is not something I made up.

**Arwulf:** I would assume then that there's a lot of things that your mother gave to you in that way which appear in your writing?

**Kincaid:** Absolutely. It may be a root factor, I suspect, in my becoming a writer. I did like listening to my relatives' tales about their lives. I used to make them tell me things, or overhear things. I liked hearing what happened.

**Arwulf:** I think the earliest example we have is one of the first things you published: your short story, *Girl*, from the collection, *At The Bottom Of The River*. And that's a very obvious example of an oral tradition being set down so the rest of us can share in it. I found it so delightful because there's nothing unnecessary here. It's very brief and it's very conversational. And we're right there with you, hearing your mother giving you all this endless advice. It's a beautiful thing:

*...this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a button hole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't have a crease...*

**Kincaid:** Yes, it is my mother's voice, completely. And the voices of the mothers of girls that I grew up with.

**Arwulf:** It was interesting for me to compare *Autobiography* with *Annie John*, which seems to be one of the most moving—and I think accurate and honest—portrayals of growing up that anybody's ever written that I've read. With *Autobiography*, we're shown someone who's growing up all too quickly. And I'm wondering, is this your understanding of how your mother grew up? Did she grow up that quickly? There's a lot of tragedy in here.

**Kincaid:** It's not my mother's life at all, as I know it. My mother, for one thing, left Dominica when she was sixteen, and has lived in Antigua her entire life. This woman never has children; my mother has four. The things that are attached to the woman are these



JAMAICA KINCAID

PHOTO: MARIANA COOK

historical events and everyday events of life in a place like that. I wanted to talk about history. I wanted to talk about the effect it would have on an individual. It would have a different effect on different people.

Everybody's very interested in the concerns of the group and the rights of the group. But I'm always interested in how these large things transform and/or make each individual. And I tried in the book to portray the various people that would come out of this situation of overwhelming power and overwhelming powerlessness. So you have these portraits of different people's responses to it. You have a sort of sketch of what the historical situation is in one group and in the other. And then how it works on individuals. That's what I'm trying to do.

**Arwulf:** That seems to be a perspective that I notice in much of your work. It's always brought down to the personal level because that's really the way it happens in life. We tend to make everything so abstract, it's very refreshing to have the personal angle.

**Kincaid:** Yes, and in the end you get up as yourself. You're always surprised that your travails start out as a group, but when you step out of bed you're not a group, you're a person.

**On Power & Wealth**  
**Arwulf:** In *A Small Place*

you said that the tourists and the people who came from elsewhere and took power and did all these horrible things, they were just considered as boorish and incredibly poorly behaved. You didn't think of them as racist. And race in itself is really a European concept, isn't it?

**Kincaid:** Yes! Absolutely!

**Arwulf:** You dropped any pretense of beating around the bush, which you don't do anyway, and really spoke about capitalism. It was on page 36 where you were talking about being shy about being a capitalist because your people were capital, in a very real sense, for so long. Do you feel like elaborating on capitalism?

**Kincaid:** Actually, I like capitalism in its way. I don't think we have capitalism. We have *something*. But there's nothing wrong with someone, it seems to me, having their own, you know, little stuff, and making a profit at it. I think that what we now have is just a kind of... I was thinking "unparalleled greed," but it isn't really unparalleled.

It's funny you asked all of this because last night I just finished reading a book on the history of the Atlantic Slave Trade. And it was so horrifying I almost had to get up in the middle of the night and go for a walk. I suppose the most horrifying thing about it was the role of Africans in the slave trade, which could not have taken place for as long as it did, or on the scale that it did, without the cooperation of Africans.

**Arwulf:** Complicity.

**Kincaid:** Yes. Absolutely. And it's deeply horrifying because we all want to believe that this whole episode is a matter of victims. And the victims are of one kind, and the victimizers are another kind. But there was a human descent on all levels, on the part of all the groups of people, into hell, for hundreds of years. Four hundred years of just this hell. And it made me again think of this greed, which we've organized around capitalism.

And it's really quite sensible to organize it into some kind of theory but I don't think what we have now is capitalism. There needs to be another word for it. Another concept for it. Because it's another kind of exploitation organized on some inhumane level, and we

(SEE NEXT PAGE)



**WHO:**  
Jamaica Kincaid

**WHAT:**  
Reading from her new novel, "Autobiography of My Mother" with reception/book signing to follow (sponsored by Shaman Drum Bookshop)

**WHEN:**  
January 29, 1996, 8 pm  
Reception to follow

**WHERE:**  
Reading: Pendleton Room, Michigan Union  
Reception: Shaman Drum Bookshop, 311-315 S. State

**INFO:**  
Call 662-7407

## Kincaid Interview

(FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

need to be able to identify it and to deal with it imaginatively.

You know it's so involved. It holds so much pain, so much cruelty, so much murder, on the part of a small group of people, and again complicity. On all our parts. And again the senseless accumulation of wealth. No one, no one has ever been able to say what to do with all of this wealth that one has. You can't do anything with it. And if it represents power, there's a limit to what you can do with this power. The only pleasure you can get out of this power is the pleasure of just seeing people tossed around. That hardly seems pleasure to me.

**Arwulf:** It's interesting that you should say that we don't really have capitalism. It's like, who has ever really done socialism, either? Maybe when we put names on things like that, then they get distorted and people oversimplify.

**Kincaid:** I do think that these things must be communally and democratically decided on. Though one can't say that what we have has been communally and democratically decided on at all. I suppose you and I could talk about it forever and we'd just come to this incredible grief. But there is something enormously wrong. I say this sitting quite comfortably in a nice room in Vermont. And I'm sure there's somebody somewhere who's paid for my little comfort.

I'm very aware that it's quite possible that what I have, even though I don't have very much at all—it's a very modest room, and I am always, as most people in my situation, in enormous debt—I'm always aware that perhaps for every little comfort I have, maybe someone has less. And I insist on being reminded of that, actually.

**Arwulf:** You have a very highly developed sense of that, which I admire.

**Kincaid:** Well, I come from the opposite of it and I feel obligated to always remember that. My life is very peculiar because there's no reason in the world for you and I to be speaking to each other; there's no reason in the world that I should have had the opportunity to have written books and to have people interested in them. And I've never really quite lost the interest in the mystery of how that came to be.

### On Racism & Greed

**Arwulf:** There is a chapter in *Autobiography* which begins:

*What makes the world turn? Who would need an answer to such a question? A man proud of the pale hue of his skin cherishes it especially because it is not a fulfillment of any aspiration, it is his not through any effort at all on his part; he was just born that way, he was blessed and chosen to be that way and it gives him a special privilege in the hierarchy of everything. This man sits on a plateau, not on the level ground, and all he can see...he knows with an iron certainty should be his own.*

*What makes the world turn is a question he asks when all that he can see is...so securely in his grasp that he can cease to look at it from time to time, he can denounce it, he can demand that it be taken away from him, he can curse the moment he was conceived and the day he was born, he can go to sleep at night and in the morning he will wake up and all he can see is still securely in his grasp; and he can ask again, What makes the world turn, and then he will have an*

*answer and it will take up volumes and there are many answers, each of them different, and there are many men, each of them the same.*

*And what do I ask? What is the question I can ask? I own nothing, I am not a man.*

It seemed like the heart of the book's message for me—one of the most resounding passages—where you give a great depiction of the mindset of a person who would come along and need to measure everything, and need to own everything.

**Kincaid:** I think of that as the most tricky part for the reader. I'm so glad that you noticed that and that it didn't throw you. I really wanted to say those things in it and I thought it was perhaps abstract for people...

**Arwulf:** Oh, anything but! *It noticed me.* I've been walking around blinking ever since I read that. Because it was, again, so beautifully put. It needed to be said and you said it so well.

**Kincaid:** I'm very deeply pleased and touched that you said that because when I was editing, correcting it, and I came to that part I really thought 'well this is where I'll lose the reader but so be it.' So I'm very glad that you got that.

### Fabric as History

**Arwulf:** Do you foresee a continuing series of portrayals of women from your background?

**Kincaid:** I imagine so. As long as I'm alive I'll always be interested in this area of my own; I can only write autobiographical things, in the sense that I can only write not just about my own individual life, but about the life of the people I know. I can only try to sort it out: What happened? Why did it happen? Who did it happen to?

**Arwulf:** On the cover of *Autobiography* there is a photograph of what appears to be a young West-Indian woman. Is this a picture of your mother?

**Kincaid:** No. It's a postcard that was given to me on my 25th birthday. On the back of it it says 'Happy 25th Birthday!' It was such a beautiful postcard, I kept it. And I've had it all these years. I was 25 in 1974.

**Arwulf:** I'm so presumptuous. I'm sure everybody presumes all these things.

**Kincaid:** Yes. But my mother wouldn't have been that age. That postcard is from 1934. And it's of a woman in native dress from Martinique. They remained French. Dominique changed hands; Dominique was French and became English, but it kept a lot of its French influence. So it's not out of context at all. Dominicans did still have that sort of head dress. And the thing about that kind of costume, it has many things in it from parts of the conquests of Britain. It has cotton, madras—all the materials that she's wearing are the products of colonial empire, or slavery. Fascinating, eh?

**Arwulf:** Now that you mention it, yes. I'm never going to look at that picture in quite the casual way that I did before...

**Kincaid:** Yes, it's very interesting about people from my background. We always identify fabric. So that you say 'madras,' 'nankeen,' 'sea island cotton,' you call the fabric by its name. 'Seersucker.' You always say 'dotted Swiss' or whatever it is, you always call it. And for a long time I was just very interested in that, and I realized that in a way, when you are identifying the fabric you are really talking historically, you are saying enormous volumes of things, just by the word.

For instance, poplin is a weave that Huguenot French people brought with them to

England when they were being persecuted, and it was a weave of fabric for a Pope's clothes; poplin. We would always say a 'poplin' or a 'linen.' And I realized that we were just saying 'history.' We're just speaking history.

If you look at a piece of poplin, I don't know if they use that weave any more, it was kind of coarse, and it had a certain kind of bounce to it. But in any case it was always interesting to me that we would always identify the cloth. Cloth and weave, I think, always has incredible history to it, and a lot of it is oppressive. Or horrifying.

**Arwulf:** It represents labor.

**Kincaid:** It represents labor, which ought to be an expression of the deepest being, a kind of spiritual expression. Through work you know yourself; it's often associated really with a blunting of the self.

### A Geometry of Style

**Arwulf:** The first thing that I noticed when reading your books was that you seem to write about things from so many different angles. In fact you even said so. For example, in *Annie John*, when she went to the grocer's with her mother—I think the exact quote was: 'I was shown a loaf of bread or a pound of butter from at least ten different angles.' It seemed like a perfect description of your style. Has anyone else pointed that out?

**Kincaid:** I don't think anyone has ever said that. It's interesting because in that case, she was, I believe, complaining about the thoroughness of this process of being acculturated into that particular kind of femaleness. And she was being sort of cynical about it. How can one loaf of bread be so interesting? Or how can anything so common be so interesting when there was a whole world of historical difficulties, a whole world of all sorts of difficulties? I think that was what she was saying.

But I see what you mean. And I have to say I think you're right. One of the things that I suspect people like me, from my part of the world, or with my history, would have to do would be to look at the world from the angles that haven't been looked at before. Not because of deliberately wanting to be new but just because that is our reality, and it has not been looked at before, for all sorts of reasons. Many many reasons. But there are many people like me, presenting the world, the same world, but from many different angles.

**Arwulf:** From a very personal angle and then also from the perspective of a people who have not had a voice, officially.

**Kincaid:** Yes. I would put it even more indecently. I would say, the voice of the defeated.

### Small Places

**Arwulf:** A *Small Place* is the most refreshingly direct and no-nonsense statement that I've ever found on the subject of colonialism and neo-colonialism. It would be helpful if everybody in North America would own a copy and read it. There's not one wasted syllable in here. You deliver it all in a remarkably short space, and you say so much that needs to be said. And it's very humbling. I know that North Americans and Europeans are not fond of being humbled. I think that's something we have to re-learn.

**Kincaid:** Yes, true. I suppose when one wins, it's hard to take time to sort it out. Winning is delicious.

**Arwulf:** But then we must figure out what constitutes winning. It's wickedly overemphasized. Here in the University of Michigan community I keep hearing this phrase 'We're Number One' and it just gives me hives! I mean that's a stormtrooper term.

**Kincaid:** Yes! Oh boy, it sounds awful. Why you'd want to be that. It's hard to fathom.

**Arwulf:** But they teach young people to say that here. Loudly.

**Kincaid:** Yes, they're number one. In which case I'd always want to be number two, three or somewhere below that.

**Arwulf:** What is so frightening about number one from your perspective?

**Kincaid:** Well, the moment one isn't, would be my first fear. There's always a moment when one isn't. And it's such an overwhelming fear, such a profound fear that you do all sorts of things to maintain number one, and none of them will ever be good. Because the natural flow of things is that it goes up it goes down, it goes down it goes up, and if you are grasping to be, and your whole psychological being depends on your being this number one, you know you're bound to be anxious that you won't be, and then the anxiety will lead to just incredible unhappiness. You never get to even enjoy being number one anyway. Unless you're truly remarkable and you just get to be number one and say 'ah!' and expire.

There's great anxiety in this country that we're not number one anymore, that there isn't anyone clearly who's number one. So you can still be under the illusion that we're number one, but they're even writing that we're not. So I feel your school mirrors a larger continental problem. Or national problem.

**Arwulf:** And of course most of the people who can afford to go here are from the some very privileged sectors of the population, and so the whole perspective is very distorted. It's very frightening to operate in this community—to work here, to watch people carrying on. How are things in Vermont?

**Kincaid:** Vermont somehow seems to be immune, still, from all sorts of things. The collective consciousness about Vermont is that it should remain Vermont. It's still rural and still fine. It doesn't have so many of these anxieties. We get to Vermont and the general calm of Vermont overtakes us and so we lose all that. It just remains a kind of a nice place. It's very beautiful and unhurried and uninterested in becoming the Aspen of the North, or the anything of the anything. It's just Vermont. It's as if it has gotten the special grace of always being never fashionable.

**Arwulf:** Well I hope that endures.

**Kincaid:** I hope so too! I mean this is America. But there's something about it. It doesn't seem fashionable to people. It sort of resists trends, really.

**Arwulf:** We have this horrible word: 'development.' And then there's the converse: 'underdeveloped.' But Vermont doesn't seem to fit into either category, does it?

**Kincaid:** No! It's too many cows, I think.

**Arwulf:** Cows and hills!

**Kincaid:** And the soil is very full of rocks. Yes it resists these things. I think. But maybe I'd better not speak too soon. I'd better knock my head. For wood.

AGENDA wishes to acknowledge the generous assistance of Thomas Bray, and thank him for recording this interview at the WCBN-FM production studio.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- *The Autobiography of My Mother* (Fiction) Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996 (226p)
- *Lucy* (Fiction) Plume, 1990 (164p)
- *A Small Place* (Non-Fiction) Plume, 1988 (81p)
- *Annie John* (Fiction) Plume, 1985 (148p)
- *At the Bottom of the River* (Fiction-Short Stories) Plume, 1978 (82p)

Send your Literary Events for the February issue of AGENDA by January 15 to: AGENDA, 220 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

**7 Sunday**

**Poetry Reading: Del Rio Bar** 1:30-4:30 pm, 122 W. Washington. Join the FEED THE POETS GROUP for an afternoon of poetry from the area's finest poets, including Brenda Flanagan, Daniel Carleton & Charlie Zwinack. There will also be one hour of open mike reading. Interested poets should contact the Del Rio for scheduling arrangements or further information. 761-2530

**"Kerry Tales: Winter Tales with Mother Goose": Kerrytown Shops** 2 pm, Workbench, 2nd fl., 410 N. Fourth Ave. TRUDY BULKLEY, storyteller, entertains as Mother Goose with rhymes, riddles and fun. All ages welcome. 769-3115

**8 Monday**

**Writers Series: Guild House** 8:30 pm, 802 Monroe. Poetry reading by EDWARD MORIN. Morin has had poems published in "Hudson Review," "Ploughshares," and "Michigan Quarterly Review." He has published books of poems, songs on cassette and an anthology, and has taught English at U-M. 677-6839

**12 Friday**

**Publication Celebration: Shaman Drum** 4-6 pm, 315 S. State. CELESTE BRUSATI, Assoc. Prof. of Art History at U-M, celebrates publication of her new book "Artifice and Illusion: The Art and Writing of Samuel Van Hoogstraten." Her examination of the art, writing, and career of this multifaceted artist reveals a rich appreciation of one of the most often cited but least understood figures in 17th-century Dutch art. 662-7407

**13 Saturday**

**Children's Hour: Borders** 11 am, 612 E. Liberty. Have a royal time at story hour hearing about princes and princesses. 668-7652



**KATHRYN TALALAY will read from her new book, "Composition in Black and White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler," at Shaman Drum Book Shop. (see 15 Monday)**

**Book Signing & Taste Test: Borders** 1 pm, 612 E. Liberty. PAMELA STOVALL, author of "Zero Proof: Two Hundred Non-Alcoholic Drinks from America's Most Famous Bars and Restaurants," will be in the café to mix non-alcoholic drinks from her book. 668-7652

**15 Monday**

**MLK Day Reading: Shaman Drum** 4-6 pm, 315 S. State. KATHRYN TALALAY, archivist and editor at the American Academy of Arts & Letters, reads from her new book, "Composition in Black and White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler." The first critical and authorized biography ever published about this extraordinary woman, it has been hailed as "an invaluable addition to African-American biography." The tangled, obsessive, and profoundly conflicted life of Harlem's biracial musical prodigy, who died tragically in 1967 at the age of 35, is revealed with authenticity and a deep sense of humanity. 662-7407

**Writers Series: Guild House** 8:30 pm, 802 Monroe. SALEEM PEERADINA, who grew up in Bombay, is widely known in India as a poet, critic, teacher of creative writing, and a TV interviewer for Doordarshan. He has two published books, "First Offence" and "Group Portrait." 677-6839

**18 Thursday**

**Discussion & Book Signing: Borders** 6:30 pm, 612 E. Liberty. JOANNA V. SCOTT, professor of political science at EMU, will discuss "Love and Saint Augustine" by Hannah Arendt. Arendt became famous for her political masterpieces "The Origins of Totalitarianism," "The Human Condition," and "Eichmann in Jerusalem," but she started her scholarly career with an exploration, in her doctoral dissertation, of Saint Augustine's concept of *caritas*, or neighborly love. Scott and her collaborator, Judith C. Stark, have translated this work, making it available for the first time to English-speaking audiences. 668-7652

**Poetry Reading/Fundraiser: Shaman Drum** 7:30 pm, 315 S. State. Local poets will read the poetry of various Latin American artists in both Spanish and English. The event is a fundraiser for the video: "Sister Cities and Sister Churches 1986-1996: A Documentary." A \$5 donation is suggested and all proceeds will support production of the video documentary. Harambee Productions, Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, and the A2-Juigalpa Sister City Committee are co-sponsors. 668-1628

**19 Friday**

**Poetry Reading: Shaman Drum** 8 pm, 315 S. State. LORNA GOODISON, a visiting faculty member at U-M, will read from her newest collection of poems, "To Us, All Flowers Are Roses," described by Derek Walcott as "a rooted, organic delight, true in its intonations to the Jamaican language she loves, fresh in its wit and pain and in the high, spiritual gossip of its leaves." 662-7407

**20 Saturday**

**Children's Hour: Borders** 11 am, 612 E. Liberty. 668-7652

**21 Sunday**

**Performance: Shaman Drum** call for time, 315 S. State. KEN CORMIER, local poet, songwriter and musician, will perform selections from his vast, eclectic repertoire accompanied by his guitar, boom-box, body and other useful tools. Cormier has self-published a collection of short stories entitled "Balance Act" and has recorded an audio-cassette entitled "God Damn Doghouse." 662-7407

**22 Monday**

**Writers Series: Guild House** 8:30 pm, 802 Monroe. Poetry reading by LARRY DEAN, whose most recent chapbook is "Workers' Comp." He lives and works in Chicago. 677-6839

**23 Tuesday**

**Publication Celebration: Shaman Drum** 4-6 pm, 315 S. State. JINDRICH TOMAN, Assoc. Prof. of Slavic Languages & Literatures at U-M, celebrates publication of his new book, "The Magic of a Common Language: Jakobson, Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, and the Prague Linguistic Circle." This work examines the historical factors that produced the profoundly influential Prague Circle, along with the basic tenets it promulgated and the social and cultural environment in which it flourished. 662-7407

**25 Thursday**

**Discussion: Borders** 7:30 pm, 612 E. Liberty. DINESH D'SOUZA, author of "Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus," will talk about his new book, "The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society." D'Souza argues that the American obsession with race is fueled by a civil rights establishment that has a vested interest in perpetuating black despondency, among

other things. D'Souza is a Research Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. 668-7652

**Reading: Shaman Drum** 8 pm, 315 S. State. Poet, author, & EMU Professor CLAYTON ESHLEMAN will read from "Watchfiends and Rack Screams: Works from the Final Period by Antonin Artaud," which he edited and translated with Bernard Bador. The book is comprised of nine works including letters, poems, essays, dictations and notebook entries, along with an extensive introductory overview of Artaud's life and work. 662-7407

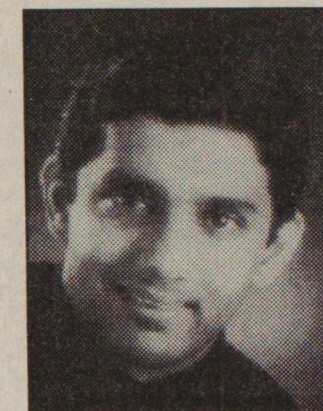


PHOTO: LEN BE PAS

**DINESH D'SOUZA will talk about his new book, "The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society," at Borders. (see 25 Thursday)**

**26 Friday**

**Reading: Shaman Drum** 8 pm, 315 S. State. JEROME WASHINGTON reads from his book "Iron House: Stories from the Yard," winner of the 1994 Western States Book Award. His book is a testimony from Attica, an American prison where he spent 15 years surviving overt brutality and quiet soul murder. Before he was released and charges against

him were dismissed, he won a historic First Amendment lawsuit in defense of his right to write. 662-7407

**27 Saturday**

**Children's Hour: Borders** 11 am, 612 E. Liberty. We'll celebrate everyone's birthday with "A Very Merry Unbirthday." 668-7652

**28 Sunday**

**Publication Celebration: Shaman Drum** 3-5 pm, 315 S. State. REBECCA ZURIER, Asst. Prof. of American Art at U-M, celebrates publication of "Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York," which she co-authored with Robert W. Snyder and Virginia M. Mecklenburg. The book examines the relationship between the artworks of the Ashcan artists and changing social concerns in New York at the turn of the century. 662-7407

**29 Monday**

**Reading: Shaman Drum** 8 pm, Pendleton Room, Mich. Union. JAMAICA KINCAID will read from her new novel, "The Autobiography of My Mother." This heart-wrenching novel explores the themes of sex, human relations, and the interplay of power and powerlessness that have run through the life of a 70-year-old West Indian woman. The New York Times says of her work, it is "written with passion, conviction and a musical sense of language." The reading will be followed by a reception and book signing at Shaman Drum. 662-7407

**Writers Series: Guild House** 8:30 pm, 802 Monroe. Presentations by TERRY WOOTEN and BRIAN DEMPSTER. Wooten is the editor of "Stone Circle Anthology," and has published a few books of his own. Dempster received his MFA from U-M where he currently teaches. He has received many poetry awards, including The Academy of American Poets and the Hopwood. 677-6839

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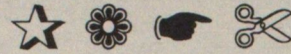
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## SCREEN SCENE

By John Carlos Cantú

### HEAT

[1995. Directed by Michael Mann. Cast: Al Pacino, Robert DeNiro, Val Kilmer. Warner Bros. 170 mins.]



Watching Michael Mann put the pieces of his craft together has been quite an interesting pastime. One of Hollywood's enigmatic talents through the last two decades, Mann has always seemed on the verge of doing something significant...only to slide back to mediocrity nearly each and every time.

The largest part of Mann's difficulty has been his penchant for overtly stylized cinematography. His first notable success, *Thief*, dazzled the viewer's eye with a flair whose only current equals are Nicolas Roeg and Jane Campion. But where Roeg's visual style is subordinated to his quirky intellectualism, and Campion is seemingly driven to rewrite the rules of the visual narrative, Mann's taste for middling melodramas has made his work of little serious consequence.

His subsequent films—*The Keep*, *Manhunter*, and *The Last of the Mohicans*—have been disjointed ventures that meander almost aimlessly. These films have staggered more through mangled scripts than they've thoughtfully entertained. Thus more often than not, Mann's promise to improve upon his previous efforts has only happened by increments. We can always count on getting bowled over, yet a little coherence would also be nice.

With *Heat*, Mann has finally fit his talents to a relatively straightforward story. Perhaps the film overplays its hand, but there's no question that his take on organized West Coast crime is clever.

The plot is simple: Vincent Hanna (Al Pacino) is a Los Angeles detective whose sole purpose in life is to hammer bad guys. On the other side of the badge, mastermind Neil McCauley's (Robert DeNiro) sole purpose in life is to jazz the cops who interfere with his business.

These two men's competition occupies most of the film's nearly three hours, but Mann's sprawl-

ing screenplay also has pit stops for two dysfunctional families, a wayward romance, and one of the finest action set pieces since the famed Starbuck shoot-out in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*.

Despite surface similarities with Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, and the use of Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfathers*, the film that Mann obviously has at heart is Sergio Leone's woefully ignored *Once Upon a Time in America*. The fate of these two movies says more about the state of the entertainment industry than it does about the films themselves.

*Once Upon a Time in America* was butchered by its distributor so that it would fit comfortably in the two-hour rotation favored by film exhibitors. Unfortunately, the film was not only in tatters when it was finally released; far more important, it was incomprehensible. Only in the video "director's cut" does Leone's operatic saga make its considerable impact.

By contrast, *Heat* could lose one hour of its running time without much narrative loss. But what would be missing is the film's visual texture. And this atmospheric ambience is what Mann does best. His ability to telegraph visual asides makes the film a visceral masterpiece.

Add DeNiro's riveting performance to Pacino's bravado—with a nifty existential turn by Val Kilmer—and one leaves *Heat* in a thoroughly altered state of mind. Maybe this is why this film seems the ultimate California crime stopper. Where else could such driven combatants let their vindictiveness flair so vividly...and with such mellifluous languor?

### RATING KEY

- ★ Acting
- 🌸 Cinematography
- 👉 Direction
- ✂ Editing
- 🎞 Narrative
- 🎧 Sound
- ⊕ Special Effects

When a symbol appears following a title, it implies that the corresponding category is a strength of the movie.

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### JUMANJI

[1995. Directed by Joe Johnston. Cast: Robin Williams, Bonnie Hunt, Kirsten Dunst. Tristar Pictures. 104 mins.]



It's to be granted that *Toy Story* has generated quite a media buzz with its being the first completely computer animated motion picture made. The film deserves all the popular success it's currently enjoying. Yet its middle-of-the-road approach is also geared towards mass popular success. There's no edge to its *raison d'être*.

By contrast, the near equally popular *Jumanji* is a far more enigmatic film. This Robin Williams vehicle—despite its surprisingly commonplace story that has little in common with the Chris Van Allsburg story—represents the future of cinematic special effects. And once you overlook its hackneyed narrative, the wonders in store for future audiences is quite amazing.

*Jumanji* begins in 1869 when two New England boys fearfully bury a wooden case in which the *Jumanji* game is stashed. How they found it, why they're burying it, and the whole point of the sequence is of marginal consequence. We only know they're frightfully grateful to be rid of the accursed game.

Flash forward to 1969 and town nerd, Alan Parish (Adam Hann-Byrd), discovers the case when it's accidentally excavated near his father's shoe factory. After tossing the game's dice in the company of a girlfriend, he gets magically drawn into the game board, and is lost in the jungles of *Jumanji* for a quarter-century.

Flash forward (again) to 1995 and two orphans, Judy and Peter (Kristen Dunst and Bradley Pierce), have inherited the Parish mansion that was abandoned after Alan's disappearance. The Parish shoe company has gone bankrupt and the old home town is a pale reflection of its enterprising self.

When the two kids discover the game board, they release Alan (Robin Williams) and inadvertently let loose a squadron of giant mosquitoes.

Between the kids, Alan, and his once-upon-a-time girlfriend, Sarah (Bonnie Hunt), *Jumanji* escalates into a race to complete the game against man-eating vines, a loony 19th-century wild game hunter, and a rampaging herd of elephants, rhinoceros, and zebras.

This is clearly a movie where more is not nearly enough. Lifting plot devices from *The Wizard of Oz*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Little Shop of Horrors*, *Romancing the Stone*, *Gremlins*, and *Back to the Future*, *Jumanji* is every bit as frantic as one would expect...and perhaps even more so.

Indeed, director Johnston improves upon his previous *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, but that he succeeds says more about *Jumanji* that it does about his journeyman by-the-numbers plotting. But, then again, analysis is probably more harmful here than simply surrendering to the visual and aural barrage taking place on the big screen.

Which leads us back to the film's remarkable visual effects. Not that the figure is of any significance (excepting that it nearly outstrips some third-world economies), but the \$65 million dollars used to make *Jumanji* hasn't been wasted. Granted, no single f/x packs the wallop of the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park*, but then it would also be difficult to top a hungry *Tyrannosaurus*. *Jumanji* cleverly moves in the opposite direction by giving us marauding animals that could escape from any local zoo.

*Terminator 2*, *Death Becomes Her*, *The Last Action Hero*, and *Jurassic Park* were only the beginning. Through the turn of the century, the special effects that are in store for us are going to be nearly unimaginable. Whether any filmmaker is resourceful enough to use these wondrous accouterments to create something of masterful importance remains to be seen, but as the little tot so rightly said in the otherwise forgettable *Poltergeist*: They're (definitely) here.

After a near half-century of fighting to keep their box office alive, the film studios may well have finally coined the alchemist's gold they've been desperately seeking. Through Cinemascope, Cinerama, Smell-o-Vision, and other sometimes daffy special effects, the presumption has always been that there had to be something that would drag audiences away from their television sets and back into motion picture theaters.



# LOCAL MUSIC

## Best of 1995

By Alan Goldsmith

**H**appy new year. It's time for the annual The View From Nowhere local music best-of-the-year rundown. I'm very sorry if I disappoint you all, but this wrap up of cool stuff from 1995 is only going to focus on the truck load of historical sound recordings from the crème de la prime of this town's rock and roll-defined performers that flooded The View From Nowhere mailbox in '95.

This is where you get a second chance to run out to your local record store and be rewarded with music that is as good if not better than all the crap going down on the commercial airwaves around here (in spite of this "we play local music" hype that means once a day, two or three bands and then we're going to tell you how god damn hip we are to play local music tripe that seems to be the rage this week on most local rock outlets) and in your small way, to support a local scene that is as vital and important as any in the country.

**#1 (Tie) Brian Lillie—"Waking Up In Traffic"** (Thursday Records CD) and **Lisa Waterbury (with Dave Monk)—"World of Hell"** (self-produced tape).

Lillie's cd came out of nowhere this past summer packed with low key, totally original folksy tunes about falling in love, growing up and never giving up hope about life and the future. With his grainy, slightly off-key voice, his fearlessness when it comes to revealing his soul and freshness and energy, Lillie should be playing this year's A2 Folk Festival and being heard by a wider audience.

Waterbury is on another planet with her Velvet Underground-ish solo songs about death of life and death of love. "World of Hell" is Lisa and sideman Dave Monk in an eight-track studio, a little more in tune, a little better recorded than her earlier basement tapes. But like Lillie, Waterbury has some influences that can be traced (Nico, early 20th-century cabaret singers, etc.) but these are not artists you can nail down in a few words. If you like singer/songwriters, check them out.

**#3 The Navarones—"Looking For My Baby" b/w "Buzz Job"** (Schoolkids' 45) and **"Fire Engine Baby" b/w "Sock It To Me Cindy"** (Happy Hour 45). I'm counting these two singles as one selection but these four tracks are all wonderful celebrations of the roots of American soul music. While the term "garage band" turns my stomach when used to define music recorded in the 1990s please don't fall into this trap when thinking of these two 45s. Leader Dan Mulholland is a celebrator not a cloner of the music of the 60s, whether it's the mid-tempo soul ballad of "Baby," or the punched-up R&B rave of "Cindy" (with guest vocals by Scott Morgan). This is timeless stuff and further evidence of the genius and good taste of Mr. Mulholland and crew. It's time for a full-length cd.

**#4 Gordon Gigantic—"Gordon Gigantic"** (self-produced tape). If there is any one greatest injustice on the local music scene, it's the fact that Larry Miller, the guiding force behind this five-tune release, isn't world-famous by now. From the original lineup of Destroy All Monsters, to his other-planet ravings of Larynx Zillion's Novelty Shop, Miller has proven to be another one-of-a-kind performer of world-class talents and brains. On this tape, Miller shows his power pop side, with a spark and fire that makes you smile. I guess if you need a frame of reference, Pearl Jam and the Gin Blossoms might work, but one listen to the best cut here ("Same Boat") shows Miller blows both of those groups out of the water—no lie.

**#5 Kiss Me Screaming—"Kiss Me Screaming"** (Powtime/Schoolkids' CD). The only reason I didn't make this number one is because Khalid Hanifi and company are going to be the next band signed to a big money record deal—we all know this—and I saw no reason for the ego boost/career jump start of wasting that slot this year for a band that won't be a "local band" when 1997 rolls around. This full-length collection is a text book example of perfect guitar pop. It sounds like nobody else, and if you have any sense of classic pop/rock you could figure this out in ten seconds on your own. Hanifi is a songwriting/record-producing genius and I'm not just saying this because I've known him for years (since I scammed my way into co-producing the first Map Of The World single after catching Hanifi's prior band at the now legendary Joe's Star Lounge gigs in the 1980s). Kiss Me Screaming is the real thing and if I were you, I'd grab this release, not only because it'll be a collector's item soon enough, but because it's what great rock and roll is all about.

**#6 (Tie) Mr. Largebeat—"Hologram Man" b/w "Lady Lamoona"** (Flying Turtle 45) and **Ms. Bliss and Naming Mary—"Coming In Waves" b/w "Stardriver"** (Wintermute 45). The 45 RPM single is not dead yet—but is alive and kicking as evidenced with these two local releases!

Mr. Largebeat is in his own little universe too with these two spaced-out, flowing pop tunes, the best of which is the nearly perfect "Lady Lamoona," a cosmic love song of sorts that recalls early Pink Floyd in a modern sort of way.

On the Wintermute release split between Ms. Bliss and Naming Mary you get more ethereal space music with low-key, hypnotic guitars from the former and Zen-like uplifting trance/keyboard music from the latter.

**#8 China Doll—"Tango"** (self-released CD). I could babble on about the second coming of ABBA or how this is death/dance music from hell or how China Doll is redefining music for the next century with their knife-in-the-heart synthpop, but... This is one band you're not going to see live. The only way to witness this genius at work is to shell out the cash for this CD. Great dance club music, even if you hate dance club music.

That's all for now. Send your comments and suggestions to: *The View From Nowhere*, AGENDA, 220 S. Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 or e-mail to: ALANNARBOR@AOL.COM.

## MUSIC BOOKS

### 3 Keepers

By William Shea

The following are three of the best books I've read on popular music in 1995:

**Popular Music and Society** by Brian Longhurst, Polity Press, 277p

In 1969, Carl Belz' *The Story of Rock* started what could arguably be called the era of modern popular music criticism. While there were earlier books that looked at popular music, Belz was one of the first to take the emerging rock music seriously. Shortly after Belz' work came Charlie Gillett's landmark *Sound of the City* in the 1970s, followed by Simon Firth's *Sound Effects* in the 1980s, leading up to Philip Ennis' brilliant *The Seventh Stream* in 1992. All these volumes are today considered essential in the study of rock music. There is now one more that should be added to this list: Brian Longhurst's *Popular Music and Society*.

This book does a first-rate job at tracing the sociological roots of popular music. First Longhurst outlines the arguments put forth by Theodor Adorno in the 1930s. He then looks at the larger sociological debates on popular culture through the 1950s and 1960s and applies them to popular music. Next he contextualizes the ideas of Gillett, Frith and others through the 1970s and 1980s. Finally he brings us up to date on the latest arguments in sociology that have bearing on popular music. This overview is important in and of itself, but it's Longhurst's look at the production, text, and audience of popular music that makes this volume worth the buy.

Avoiding the jargon of sociological debate, Longhurst explores the role of sexuality and politics in popular music, illustrating their significance to the artists and audience in the production of popular music. He offers a short but concise look at the sociology of black music, emphasizing the social context in which all contemporary black music, particularly rap music, develops.

The strongest section of this work is the chapter on fandom. If you ever wondered why the Deadheads followed the course that they did, this explanatory chapter would be a good place to start the search. Longhurst does an excellent job of explaining Lawrence Grossberg's rather oblique theories on fandom by applying them to popular music. The result is clear, precise and important. Longhurst's

work is a very valuable addition to the criticism of popular music.

**Adolescents and Their Music: If It's Too Loud, You're Too Old** edited by Jonathon Epstein, Garland Publishing, 401p

This book also takes a sociological approach, but to a narrower field in popular music. Although all the articles deal with "youth music"—rap, heavy metal, and rock music—in most cases the perspectives taken by the authors in this compilation can be applied to other areas of popular music as well. For instance, Lawrence Grossberg's stance in his "The Political Status of Youth and Youth Culture" could be equally applied to other audiences, say in country and western. Similarly Jerry M. Lewis' view about concerts in "Crowd Crushes at Two Rock Concerts: A Value-Added Analysis" could be applied to other concerts equally.

The strongest part of this compilation is the annotated bibliography. Although highly sociological in orientation, it breaks down the literature into sections on methodology, historical analyses, performers and performances, and audiences.

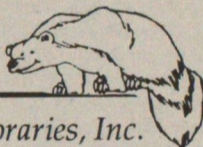
**The Land Where the Blues Began** by Alan Lomax, Dell Publishing, 539p

This is a wonderful and important book. Lomax is a folklorist and son of the late John Lomax. Together during the 1920s through the 1960s, the Lomaxes travelled throughout the South recording largely rural black music. John Lomax also "discovered" the great folk musician Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter. In their travels they recorded the tales and lore of pre-integration southern black men and women. Aiming largely at the Mississippi delta region, one gets an honest feel for the hardships and pressures put on these people—the feelings that imbued their music with real soul—from the tales told to Lomax.

One of the many strengths of this work is that Lomax does not use the strained relationship between whites and blacks as the sole agent for the blues aesthetic. He notes that the way blacks interacted with each other, both men and women—how they worked together on such mammoth projects as building river levees, clearing the delta region and building the railroads—had as much impact on the collective attitude of black people as did the apartheid social structure. And it is through the stories from the muleskinners, roustabouts, and field hands that we eventually see where the blues really came from. Not merely from the South, but from the heart and soul of black folk.

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# arts agenda

## ART IN THE CAFÉS

by Orin Buck

We take the changing art displays in local coffee houses for granted these days, but a recent event at the Packard Espresso Royale Caffe highlights our unusual luck in having these displays, and the problems inherent in trying to show fine art to a general audience.

Loralei Byatt's show of larger-than-life photographic self-portraits went up without anything seeming to be out of the ordinary. The store manager, Harth, remembers that when he came in the next morning he immediately noticed the new work, which had an especially strong presence on one long wall. As customers came in there was immediate comment. At first this didn't seem to be a problem, but over the next couple of days the majority of people who came in made some negative remark. People sat away from the work and business went down. Harth says, "Shocked as I was that first morning, taking it down never crossed my mind," but by the third day his employees were begging him to do just that. Understanding that the Caffe had to do what was best for business, the Ann Arbor Art Center (formerly Ann Arbor Art Association) and the artist withdrew the work and another show was hastily hung.

Problems like this don't come up as much when art stays where only art fans can see it. Coffee houses and other public locations are the only place most people in Ann Arbor regularly see fine art—gallery shows and the U-M Art Museum are just not that well attended, in comparison. There have always been stores displaying art for sale as a decoration of the premises—for example, the Del Rio Bar has long had ongoing exhibits. But a few years ago in Ann Arbor artist organizations and regular galleries began actively seeking outside locations that would host regular exhibits.

René LaMar and the Ann Arbor Artists' Co-op introduced the idea of the "Roving Galleries" to Ann Arbor in the late '80s. With regular rotating displays at up to 30 locations, the Co-op grew to several hundred members in its brief existence partly because the Roving Galleries offered artists more ex-

posure and more sales opportunities than a typical gallery situation. With wall space less at a premium, more artists and more types of art could be displayed, including beginners and amateur artists without enough work for one-person exhibits. The Artists' Co-op had displays in stores, public places (like the lobby of Community Television Network), and in most of Ann Arbor's coffee houses. Once in rotation, an artist's work would be seen by thousands more people than would see it in a gallery show, and with more repeated exposure. When work sold, it was usually to people who rarely go to galleries.

When the Artists' Co-op went out of business the Ann Arbor Art Center managed to pick up the three downtown Espresso Royale Caffes as off-site galleries starting in October 1993. The Art Center also shows at Oasis Hot Tubs and St. Joe's Hospital's Michigan Heart and Vascular Institute. Around the same time the Matrix Gallery established itself in Sweetwaters Cafe on W. Washington, lately showing only there. (The next show in Matrix itself starts Jan. 13—see below.) Galerie Jacques has a display in Main Street News.

The Art Center's program is better than the Artists' Co-op's in some ways. Art was commonly damaged in transport by Co-op volunteers. The Art Center has the artist transport the work, and only one piece was ever damaged in a show. The 85-year-old Art Center has a bigger group of professional artists to choose from. It injures artists, while the Co-op tried to give all artists a chance, hanging even bad art. The Art Center has mostly one-person shows, which are difficult for artists to get at regular galleries.

The Artists' Co-op program began as a free service to businesses, with sales from art intended to cover costs, but as the real costs became apparent, the Co-op began charging for the service. The Art Center charges an amount comparable to what plant decoration services charge.

In its time, the Artists' Co-op often had to remove art from shows. They obeyed requests for "no nudes" and so on. In a previous Art

Center Packard Espresso Royale show two drawings of nude men showing penises got some strongly negative comments, but the manager left them on the wall. An intriguing painting by Mark Homola with female frontal nudity is currently hanging in the Main St. Espresso Royale. Byatt's show was unusual only in the strength and unexpectedness of the audience response.

After seeing the work any art crowd would be surprised by the reaction—certainly nobody at the opening reception could understand it. In the photographs Byatt is looking directly at the viewer. The 30" squares are half filled with Byatt's face. She says the work is about stereotyping and roles that women have to play. Each has a different prop—in one a large fish is stuck head-first into her mouth. Honey is dripping all over her face in another. One that the store manager said looked like an abused woman achieved its affect with a nylon stocking pulled over Byatt's head. Throughout, she looks angry or oppressed, not cute. The work appears to be an assault on the ideal of beauty which is promoted by the commercial media and deeply ingrained in the anorexic fashion-conscious mindset. Byatt's theme is common beginning with feminist art in the '70s, and art fans have long been accustomed to much more extreme work.

Although two of Byatt's self-portraits had previously hung in the State St. Espresso Royale with no comment, it seems that the large group of work posed such an assault on the world view of the majority of customers that it broke through and actually managed to offend them. They couldn't ignore it as they sat drinking coffee and studying. Rejection by this audience shows Byatt's unusual success in creating challenging art that can help us outgrow our expectations of how women are supposed to look.

Even though the Art Center picks work primarily for artistic, not decorative value, it can't really do much when the public wants some art to stay in the galleries where it can be ignored. We must remain thankful that the Art Center, Matrix Gallery and Galerie Jacques continue to enrich our environment as much as possible. Their programs are a valuable resource, but business' need for safe, inoffensive decoration sometimes makes it impossible to show the best art. ■

## JANUARY 1996 Visual Arts Calendar

**12 FRIDAY**  
 "Every distance is not near" Reception 5-8 pm, Alexa Lee Gallery, 201 Nickels Arcade. Sharon Que sculpture in metal, stone & wood thru Feb. 10. 663-8800

**"Grandpa Speaks..."** Opening 8 pm, Galerie Jacques, 414 Wesley. Paintings and drawings by "outsider" Sam Mackey, co-founder of Detroit's Heidelberg Project. Exhibit thru Feb. 29. 665-9889

**"Against Family Values"** Reception 6-8 pm Ann Arbor Art Association, 117 W. Liberty. Work in several media by Cynthia Belanger, Donna Milbauer & Stephanie Sailor examines women's role in family. Exhibit Jan. 4-Feb. 4. 994-8004

**13 SATURDAY**  
 "Sol LeWitt: Five Wall Drawings" 11 am, U-M Museum of Art, 525 S. State. New Art League Second Saturday event is a presentation by the installers of conceptual art drawing by founder of conceptual art in the Museum Apse. Drawing in progress can be viewed Jan. 10-17. Exhibit thru Aug. 4. 764-0395

**"Passages"** Alexa Lee Gallery, 201 Nickels Arcade. New works by Boston painter/printmaker Cynthia Nartonis thru Jan. 6. 663-8800

**"Love and Hate"** Clare Spittler Works of Art, 2007 Pauline Ct. 1995 Group show includes Tokumi Aizen, Alice Crawford, Lynn Evans, Jesse Jacob & Kirsten Ingrid Rogoff. Exhibit thru Jan. 30. 662-8914

**9 TUESDAY**  
 Robert Ferguson, Aleksis Lahti, & Kelly McCormick N. Campus Commons Gallery. Work in several media thru Jan. 31. 764-7544

## Opportunities IN ALL MEDIA

**34th Ann Arbor Film Festival** Entry deadline Feb. 15 for Mar. 12-17 competition. All categories & genres of independent film in 16mm. Ann Arbor Film Festival, PO Box 8232, Ann Arbor MI 48107. 995-5356

**Art Classes** Registration for A2 Art Association Art Center winter term classes is in progress. Classes begin Jan. 15. 117 W. Liberty. 994-8004

**1996 Visual Arts Conference** Jan. 11-12, Clarion Hotel, 2900 Jackson Rd. Featured speaker Constance Hallinan Lagan. 8 workshops presented concurrently: The Power of Publicity, Making Money in Mail Order, The Essentials of High Self-Esteem For the Craft Professional, Successful Craft Selling, Pricing and Costs (Pts. I & II), Money Matters, & a Mock Jury. Registration & fee info: Marilyn Gouin, The Michigan Guild, 118 N. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor MI 48104-1402. 662-3382

**Art Reach of Mid Michigan** Deadline April 1. Soliciting 10 slides or photographs of recent work by area artists for upcoming shows. 517-773-3689

**1996 Greektown Art Fair** Deadline Feb. 1. 150 artists & artisans to be selected for May 17-19, 1996 Greektown, Detroit event. 662-3382

**Young Potters Can Win Cash Awards** Application Deadline Jan. 5. Michigan potters aged 20-30 (as of May 1, 1996), students or residents of Mich., can win up to \$500 & entry into national competition. For info & entry form: Mid-Michigan Chapter of the National Society of Arts & Letters, Doni Lystra, 875 Scio Church Rd., A2 MI 48103. 663-5915







Bluesman KEB' MO' is just one performer in a stellar line-up for The 19th Annual Ann Arbor Folk Festival at Hill Auditorium on U-M's campus. (see 27 Saturday)

Visit the "Comedy Store": Hillel 7 pm, 1429 Hill. Watch this hilarious hit Israeli comedy show. 769-0500

"English Afternoon Tea": Whole Foods 7-8:30 pm, 2398 E. Stadium. Cooking teacher Julie Lewis shows how to host an English afternoon tea. Register, 971-3366

U-M Folk Dancing Club: Leonardo's 7:30 pm, N. Camp. Commons. Eastern European & Middle Eastern line dances. Beginners welcome, no partner necessary. 764-7544

Soda & Schmooze with J.B. Pritzker: Hillel 7:30 pm, 1429 Hill. This Democratic activist will discuss strategies for landing a job in Washington, D.C. 769-0500

Swimmers: A2 Queer Aquatics Swim Team 7:30 pm (see 2 Tue)

"Close-Ups: Love, Sex & Relationships": Residence Hall Rep. Theatre 9 pm, Mosher Jordan Res. Hall. Music, poetry, dance, improvisation & theatre. Amy, 764-9619

Tuesday Nite Flicks: U-Club 9 pm, 1st fl. Mich. Union. Free pop/popcorn. For U-M studs, staff, faculty & guests, \$1. 763-8426

Open Mic Night: Blind Pig 9:30 pm (see 2 Tue)

Meeting: Dyke Shindig 10 pm, call for location. Discussion group for lesbian and bisexual women. 763-4186

### 17 Wednesday

5% Day Benefiting the Mich. Theater: Whole Foods 2398 E. Stadium. Shop at Whole Foods today and 5% of your purchase will benefit the theater. 971-3366

Israel Information Day: Hillel Call for appointment, 1429 Hill. 769-0500

Living with HIV Support Group: HARC (see 2 Tue)

"State of the People" Protest: Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice call for time & place for carpooling to Lansing for Gov. Engler's 6 pm address. 973-3031

"Buhrrr Blast": A2 Parks & Rec. 3:30-5:15 pm (see 3 Wed)

Services for Lesbians, Gay Men & Bisexuals 6 pm (see 3 Wed)

Gay Radio Hour: WCBN 88.3 FM 6-7 pm (see 3 Wed)

Meeting: Huron Valley Greens 6:30 pm, Cafe Espresso Royale, 214 S. Main. 663-3555

Project Otzma Informational Meeting: Hillel 7 pm, 1429 Hill. Learn about opportunities in Israel. 769-0500

Meeting: Coalition Against the Contract "On" America 7 pm (see 3 Wed)

Progressive Jewish Collective Kickoff Event: Hillel 7:30 pm, 1429 Hill. New

flict 4-7 pm, Mich. League. Talks between people of different races, religions & sexual orientations. 936-1875

Juan Williams: EMU Office of Campus Life 7 pm, McKenny Union Ballroom. Talk by political analyst for the Washington Post. 487-3045

Lesbian Book Group: Common Language 7-9 pm, 215 S. Fourth Ave. Kim, 662-7980

Multiple Sclerosis Support Group 7 pm (see 1 Mon)

"Healing the Digestive System with Food & Herbs" 7-8:30 pm, Community Room, Society Bank, 2300 E. Stadium. Seminar led by Cindy Klement (Miller), NC, Id., \$10. 665-0383

Yolanda Adams in Concert: U-M Office of Multicultural Affairs 8 pm, Power Center. Performance in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Obtain complimentary tickets at Mich. Union box office. 763-TKTS

Social for Lesbians, Bisexuals & Gay Men 9 pm (see 1 Mon)

Bird of Paradise Orchestra 9 pm (see 1 Mon)

### 16 Tuesday

Protest at Newt Gingrich's Speech: Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice call for time & place for carpooling to Burton Manor, 27777 Schoolcraft, Livonia, for Gingrich's 11 am talk. 973-3031

Living with HIV Support Group: HARC (see 2 Tue)

"Awaken Your Light Body!" 10-11:30 am, 2-3:30 pm & 7-8:30 pm (see 9 Tue)

Videos: N. Campus Commons Arts & Programs noon-2 pm, NCC Piano Lounge. "Killing the Blood-Seed Demon: Death & Fertility in a South Indian Tradition" and "The Struggle for Angkor." 764-7544

Tenant Talk: A2 Tenants Union 6 pm (see 2 Tue)

Teen Les/Bi/Gay Support Group 6:30 pm (see 2 Tue)

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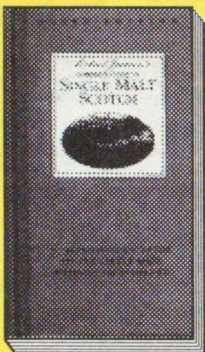
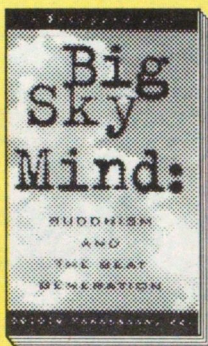
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### BOOKS



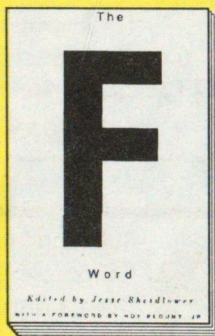
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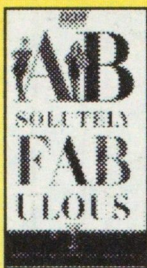
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