OLD LESBIANS OF COLOR INTENSIVE SESSION REPORT

Context/Goals, Objectives

• To begin a conversation (the tip of the iceberg). Open a space that gives Women of Color the opportunity to recognize themselves and each other.
• Identify where we are, individually and collectively, and how we got here (to this phase of our life and to the Gathering).
• To share information and knowledge.
• To explore our diversities.
• To identify challenges and strengths.

This intensive session brought together a very diverse group of 25 Lesbian Women of Color who are active and committed, with diverse interests and life experiences, with long-time involvement in collective and organized work in different movements.

Civil Rights          Social Justice
Spiritual            Black Lesbians
Latina Lesbians       Political Campaigns
Anti-racism           Feminist
Cultural             Transgender
LGBTTT                Lesbian
Women of Color (spiritual)  Butch
LGBTTT Elders          Sororities
Lesbian Mothers        Gay and Lesbian Adoption
Sexuality              Human Rights
Nationalities, races, and languages, among other characteristics and identities, were broadly diverse. The richness of ideas and experiences open a wonderful space for reflection.

We laughed, were moved, heard each other, and connected.

We noticed interesting things during the session, but select two to share with you this morning.

First - Many of the women identify native/Indians as part of their mix of cultures and races.

Second – Different interpretations for many of the questions.

(designed like that, respecting the diverse ways of receiving and delivering information)

We reaffirm the different ways communications need to be recognized and respected.

Some of the general comments of the participants about the Intensive for Old Lesbians of Color include:

“Most valuable experience was sharing my experience of what has been my involvement with social movements. Great to see how much I have accomplished in my life.”

“We need to continue to fight the good fight in order to leave a legacy.”
“We are all powerful, limited only by our imagination. If you can imagine it, God will make it so.”

“Somos iguales.” (We are equal.)

“Claiming our identity is a way of defending ourselves.”

“I let my sexual orientation hold me back. I promise myself I will leave a legacy beginning now.”

“Great session for introspection and self-realization.”

“My legacy is important to me. My spiritual self is flying.”

“I learned about myself and found all the women in the group had similar challenges and various cultural backgrounds. Now I feel more connected to these women.”

“It was good to share my personal information about the legacy that I am leaving and the legacy that has impacted me from others.”

“If it had not been for this Intensive, I would not be here.”

“I want to express gratitude for the Women of Color session and for the space held by Olga and Ali at OLOC. The affirmation afforded by the visibility of other Women of Color lifted my spirit and expanded my sisterhood.”

**Some strong thoughts were shared on the conversation related to the question: Why do you identify yourself as a Woman of Color?**

It is an “inner” thing

A way of rebelling in this country

Heritage

How I feel love

A sense of power
A feeling more than a skin color
Who are your people
Defending who I am
Learning where my power is
Where my heart is

Part of the answers when asked for one word to complete the phrase “diversity is...”

Accepting     Natural
Everyone      Us
Essential     Multi-cultural
Energizing    Freedom
Inclusive     Variety
Universal     Love
Spicy         Challenging
Answer        Negative
Completion    Presence
Space         Safety
Divisive      Good
Sexy          Spice of life
(,) period
A reflection on: Do I live or have lived as I imagine? brought similar reactions, a majority of YES at the individual level and NO when talking about society or social advances.

Among the main community of each participant, they mention:

As general as the planet and as specific as CARA, Amazons, and Black psychologists. Including also:

- African-American Lesbians  
- LGBT  
- Lesbians  
- Boricuas in California

Family  
Circle of Friends  
LGBT in Church Congregation  
South Florida

Most of the women mention haters as a group they definitely don’t consider “their community.”

Some of the challenges identified in a short exercise at the end of the session include:

- Need for more inclusion of Women of Color in OLOC
- Lack of information on OLOC
- Invisibility
- Need to address Lesbian survivors of cancer
- Lack of financial resources in Lesbians of Color communities
- Lack of laws for protection of LGBT communities
- Colonization of mind

Among important strategies that should be considered to advance our work, the following were mentioned:
• Positive outreach from OLOC to Women of Color
• Personal invitations
• Visibility
• Popular education
• Join organizations and committees
• Use peers for empowerment
• Create a target committee for writing grants for funds for Lesbians of Color
• Culture as tool of resistance
• Letters, marching, protest
• Run for office

The conversation, the exchange, the network begun a few days ago, opened here in this OLOC Gathering, NEED TO BE CONTINUED.

We recommend and propose that OLOC organize future activities, including retreats of Lesbians of Color, to strength participation of these communities in OLOC at local and national levels.