1984 Article about SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women in Soujourner: The Women’s Forum by Angela Bowen

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SAGE: A Journal That Fills a Long Unmet Need

by Angela Bowers

A new publication will arrive in
our mail at the end of April 1984: SAGE, a scholarly journal on Black Women. The name was chosen because it "fits right" and captured in one word the spirit of the journal (wise, considerate, having good judgment), according to the founding co-editors, Patricia Bell-Cсот, an equal opportunity officer at MIT, and Beverly Guy-Shelford, director of the Women's Research and Resource Center at Atlanta's Spelman College.

Pat and Beverly, long-time friends, began talking seriously last
July about an idea that's been a dream of many Black women scholars for years, always discussed as a feasibility study at high priority. In
1979, when Pat was working on But Songs of Our Brave, the first Black women's studies reader (which she edited with Barbara Smith and Gloria T. Hall), she noticed that contributors commonly spoke of the need for a Black women's journal.

After their discussion in the summer of '83, Pat and Beverly decided to "jump ship" at the two excluded in union in a recent immigration. This was about the only time in conversation when they spoke a lot. Occasionally, when one talked, the other listened, and then they would interrupt each other. Generally, they were soft "uh-huh" or "yes, oh, or something else. "You go ahead, you'll do better on this one."

They have one another plenty of room to make a point, they also have a perfect understanding of each other to be released present and a similar personality. They share the work of editing SAGE with two other women who, like them, are southern-bred: Janet Sims-Wood of Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Jacqueline Jones Royster of Spelman. More Pat of their common background. "It wasn't an exciting planning. It just happened that way."

In addition to holding from the same region of the country, all four women are also academics. But although SAGE is called a "scholarly journal," the editors hope in this issue that phrase. Most people, they say, have the idea that a "scholar" is very smart, only of interest to academics.

It's not meant through format and content to reach a broader audience. We want SAGE to be considered a serious vehicle for the discussion of issues having to do with Black women. By "scholarly" we mean "analytical and critical," that does not limit the impact only to academics. We find that community persons, policy makers, students, anybody who has thought about the critical issues that Black women can participate in this forum, regardless of their occupation.

The partners consider SAGE a "feminist publication" (another simultaneous aim). They describe the journal as "pro-feminist." It's obviously assumed that women should be equal to men and that women should be represented in the domain of power. What makes it different from feminist publications in general is that we are very aware of the impact of both race and class on the female experience. So SAGE will deal with race, class and gender. It will also deal with issues like sexual preference and ideology.

While recognizing that SAGE's initial subscribers will be primarily "women's studies people", the editors feel that its format and writing style will attract readership who "pervade the popular culture. Each issue will also have a "sage," a woman - "who won't necessarily be dead or famous" whose phone number will be on the editorial page along with a description of the way she will speak to the theme. The first issue offers two sages: Mary McLeod Bethune (the first Black woman college president) and Jeanne Noel (author of The Negro Female Educator).

Each issue will also include an editorial, review, essays, interviews, reviews of books, film and video, research reports and conference reports. Its editors knew a number of people writing about education, SAGE's first issue evolved naturally. Now they are soliciting material for the fall issue. "Mothers and Daughters," making their appeal through radio, conference reports, mailings, word of mouth, and newspaper articles like this one.

Pat and Beverly describe many plans for SAGE. In general, they expect to present reviews and features around issues that "may not traditionally be looked at as Black women's concerns—things like peace and disarmament, which some people in the Black community don't see as Black issues. We may address more global issues from a Black feminist perspective." Future themes will include "Health" and "Black Feminist Theory."

The editors hope to solve the distribution problems of a fledgling magazine by networking in many directions. "All the editors have been involved with networks both inside and outside of academia, so we have a network." They are also building a diverse mailing list, including Black and white women's organizations, Black women's bookstores, libraries, organizations, publishers, and grassroots organizations. One issue they've taped is the Black Women's Health Network, headed by Mother Aries, a non-profit dynamic Black women's health action organization. Beverly is serving on SAGE's board, and a national advisory board, which consists of scholars as well as professionals and includes Black and other women of color, white women, and Black and white males.

Pat Bell-Cсот and Beverly Guy-Shelford say that they have paid a high price for SAGE in terms of