



4 Big Girls: Around the Table

—review by *Barbarism*

All you need to know is that 4 Big Girls are fucking brilliant and next time they pass through your town you'd better break open your piggy bank and GO SEE THEM. Better yet, get together all of your friends' piggy banks and bring them to your town! 4 Big Girls are performers/writers Deb Parks-Satterfield, Carolyn King, and Heather Clark, based in Seattle—"our combined weight divided in half makes a fourth person." Combining wit, humor, song, and tons of vision they bring the stage alive with a series of vignettes about being fat, black, and queer. No easy terrain, they tackle and take digs at stereotypes and attitudes of fat phobia intersecting with racist and homophobic cultural assumptions. Presenting fat fire and fury they break through stigma and prejudice with positive, active responses that are hysterically funny and pointed.

I caught 4 Big Girls Around The Table at a benefit for Lesbians and Gays of African Descent for Democratic Action that was produced by Clark Lee & Sydnor Public Relations and was part of their Kwanzaa '94 celebration. The performance was opened by a candle-lighting ritual—Kwanzaa being a spiritual celebration of the African American community—with libations to invoke ancestors, and seven candles raising the seven principles of unity, self-determination, faith, purpose, creativity, cooperative economics, collective work, and responsibility. This raising of power was but a tease of what powerful juju would follow with the performance of 4 Big Girls.

The simple stage design of two hanging banners framed the breadth of feelings and experiences that Around The Table addresses, from "Fat Woman's BRA SNAPS, 13 INJURED" 'It sounded like a Bomb Going OFF!' says bystander," to "I didn't take a bath for 20 years because I was too fat to fit in my tub." 4 Big Girls' brilliancy lies in their ability to weave the painful reality of living in a fat-hating, black-hating, queer-hating world with a self-reflective humor that transforms the power of that hate.

They perform a series of vignettes that are quick, energetic, confrontational and refreshing. As sexy, big, fat, black, queer women they take up their space on stage. The material they perform breaks through issues of food, lust, mothers, sex, lovers, therapists, dieting, the

church of Oprah ("We are all Oprah & promise to be true. If you're a large Black Woman, then you are Oprah tooooooo ... she lost some weight, she gained it back, she lost some weight, she gained it all back"), putting on pantyhose, the idiocy of "height-weight proportionate," along with a range of stereotypes of fat black women being 'The Maid', 'The Earth Mother Goddess', 'Miss Fat Black America'—they manage to cover just about everything you can imagine and then some. (Some of the material came from an earlier show—Bigger than a Bread Box.) Their perspective shifts along with the various roles and alliances between which they are caught—illuminating racist, classist, fat-phobic assumptions within the dyke community as well as the world at large (so to speak).

Their material is incredibly hard hitting: I laughed so hard I was peeing in my pants, and found myself crying at one point. All three woman were very sexy and very hot—"Built like a truck, satisfying like a Caddy"—strutting it and being political and sexy and saucy at the same time, with abundant fat sexuality on stage in the flesh that left me wet and excited. They touched on things I often struggle to explain, "yeah that, and that too, that's what I mean."

I've been fantasizing about tying up my mother and gagging her with a twinkie and forcing her to sit through 4 Big Girls over and over until she really gets it. I can think of a slew of other people that should see 4 Big Girls as well—including you! ★

