

ing that period I felt no attraction to other females, I assume now it was because I hadn't met that special someone. Eventually, though, I married and had two children. Now I realize I was living in a fantasy world that consisted of subconscious views. I'm not sure but maybe it was deeply ingrained in me.

There is no denying that my experiences were natural progressions of growth. I was just stepping forward into the path of what probably was already me. I was becoming more in tune with myself as a free, liberated, Black woman. On the same note, my marriage fell apart. I grew stronger as a person and outgrew things that seemed to fit before. At the time, I thought my world was shattering. I didn't realize I was shedding a layer of skin. I was being reborn. So what else could have possibly complicated my life? A beautiful, black, strong and attractive woman, that's what. I had never felt such strong emotions before. I knew these powerful sensations were real by the way the intensity and chemistry burned within me and between us.

From the life I came, this was totally unexpected. Yet, I never tried to fight those feelings. Up to that point, I never had any attraction to women. Even when gay women gave me the "look," I just smiled and continued on. Maybe they saw something in my that I didn't see. Whatever, love is love, pure and simple. What's so difficult to understand about that? There is nothing immoral or disgusting about loving another human being. Love is not about pussies, dicks or breasts. Love is not just sex. Love is about souls connecting. The gender factor is mute as well as other people's opinions. It's your life and it doesn't matter if others don't get it. Each one of us in this world has the right to live happy and fulfilling lives with those we love. And why shouldn't that be celebrated? What will become of our lives if we're not true to ourselves? The best way to celebrate "Gay Pride" every day is to live your life for yourself. Aren't you worth it? I know I am.

ONE STEP BEYOND

by **Lynnell S. Long**
Transsexual
Lesbians

Part Two Facing Prejudice

In my last article, I wrote about transsexual lesbians, and our fight for acceptance from the lesbian community and from ourselves. If you recall, I wrote a line that said: "Although no one in the lesbian community has ever told me I wasn't a real lesbian [to my face], I know some lesbians do not consider transsexual lesbians, real lesbians."

Well, that has changed. Although the person that said I wasn't a woman or lesbian never said it to my face, it wasn't too long before I heard about it, and was face to face with her. On July 3, I attended a Bar-B-Q along with my girlfriend, Cobalt. When I arrived, I was glad to see a lot of familiar faces. It was a beautiful day for a Bar-B-Q, and the couple hosting the affair went out of their way to make sure everyone had a nice time.

A week prior at the Pride Parade, someone told me that there was someone that wasn't happy with my article about me being a lesbian. I found out later that her animosity toward me was actually about an article I wrote several months ago. I was at the Bar-B-Q for no longer than five minutes when I was introduced to this person. I was polite, introduced myself, and shook hands. When Cobalt and I got to a table, I told her that was the one that was supposed to be upset with me. As the night went on, I expected her to approach me. She never did. Instead I heard whispers and school yard giggles. As I walked by, I heard her and her crowd say things about me, but never saying anything to my face. To be honest I didn't know how to handle the situation. I didn't know if I should be bigger than her and ask her what was her problem, or should I just leave it



alone. Eventually, I decided to have a good time and let her and her posse have their fun at my expense. I'm not one of those people who can easily hide my emotions. My anger, frustration, and pain was showing all over my face. The host, who happens to be someone who accepts me as I am and who I admire, saw it, and so did my girlfriend. I tried to pretend it didn't bother me, but it did.

It didn't bother me that someone didn't like me, I've dealt with people like that all my life. There is bound to be someone who hates who I am. I am different, and society always preys on those who are different. It gives definition to their world.

What bothered me was seeing someone that I'm sure has been discriminated against in the '60s, and most of her life, discriminating against me. I'm not going to change who I am because some angry dyke has a problem. In the past, I would have taken the easy way out, and hid. I closed and locked that damn closet door, there is no where for me to run. I used to practice what I would say if I ever ran into someone that knew me before I became Lynnell. I had a speech all prepared. I would tell them the how and why. What do I say to someone that hates or dislikes me, but don't know what type of person I am. She says she reads my column every month, so maybe I should address the question to her. What is it about me you can't understand?

You have never met me before, and yet you call me a man. The tears I've shed, and the fears I've accomplished, I don't expect you to understand. I don't expect you to know what it's like to be gender dysphoric at the age of 8. How can you possibly understand? How can you understand what it is like to look in the mirror and see the genitalia of a boy, yet every other aspect of you is female? Do you know what it is like to be born intersexed? What it is like to be fed testosterone because your body doesn't produce it, and the doctors are determined to make you a boy, even if it kills you? Do you know what it is like to be suicidal because you feel you can never accept yourself as a woman born with a deformity? Do you know what it's like to be a woman and be discriminated against because of a birth defect? Well, do you?

I know that when some people look at me, they don't see a woman who has fought the battle of life and won. They see what their ignorance, fears, prejudice, and bigotry tells them to see. I am a woman, and I am a lesbian. I know it, and that's all that matters. I don't need anyone's seal of approval to be me. I owe no apology for the me that you see.

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PRIDE 1997

We've got lots of photos inside from the annual Chicago Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade. Pictured above is the Greater Chicago Committee's contingent, which was co-sponsored by dozens of Black lesbigay/trans groups. Photo by Patrick A. Robinson. At RIGHT are folks enjoying the Village Potluck, also sponsored by several Black lesbigay organizations. Photo by Israel Wright

