

Leather Scene

A White Thang

by **Cain Berlinger**

"It's a white thang" One brother responded when I mentioned the importance of placing our personal history among those of the Leather Archives and Museum. A few years ago, attending the Castro Street fair in San Francisco, I came upon a booth sponsored by a well-known bear magazine hawking its latest calendar. I was incensed that there were no bears of color represented. I took my concerns to the Internet and was told to put up or shut up!

Following this warm advice I sent pics of myself to the leading three bear mags. One magazine folded, another gave no response, the third presented me to the public as 'our first black bear.'

The point of the story is that if I hadn't gone to the publishers, they wouldn't have come to me. Consequently, I received many e-mails of support especially from brothers complaining of too little people of color coverage in the gay community.

In a recent community workshop, the topic was "How do we get more POC's to our events." It was an effort by community leaders to include diversity in our ranks. Do we need a special invitation to take part in our community?

Being POC's with similar dreams, and visions, is enough incentive to stand alongside our community and share our ideas without fear that we will be ignored or unwelcome.

Involvement is essential not only to our growth as a people but to gay community growth. Our varied lifestyles, and cultural experiences are as valuable to teaching others about our diversity and contributions as it is to providing encouragement for future generations of culturally diverse gays.

Being gay fetishists is not only about our sexual lives but securing those freedoms and being counted among those instrumental in insuring that those freedoms are kept through community interaction. We are shar-



ing our intelligence, personal development and support through nurturing, not just in the community but as part of the community. If our only contribution is the perpetuation of sexual myths and stereotypes than we are doomed to be forever seen in that light.

Popular media is fond of asking the question "Where are the POC role models coming from?" If we do not make our presence in the board rooms, in community meetings, event planning, then we have no right to complain about invisibility.

For years, I was often the only POC at many community events, and because of that singular presence, I was often singled out as the only possible variance that might have been different from those views expressed around me. Today POC's have taken visible positions in the gay community, founding leadership clubs, outreach to other POC's, chairs on boards, winning titles, becoming an inspiration to those previously reluctant to come forward. Community spirit is not a white thing, it's a people thing.

THY CUP RUNNETH OVER

The Transsexual Movement

by **Lynnell
Stephanie Long**

"Today the question is not whether we shall be free but by what course we will win." — Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I have a confession to make. I once interviewed a transsexual but didn't like the way the interview went and never turned it in. During the interview the person I was interviewing constantly referred to him or herself as a man. I was confused. I thought all transsexuals are/were women.

Well, after two years I realize how much I matured and I now

know why I did what I did. Shame. Well that's my confession and life goes on right? Well, maybe not. There are some things I don't understand. One is straight women. I mean, why would some women want to waste their time on some musty, insecure man is beneath me. Secondly, I don't understand why some young men walk around with their pants hanging off their ass. It looks ridiculous and stupid. Thirdly, why, when you start dating someone, their ex gets jealous and all of a sudden wants them back? Let me tell all ex's, "LET GO!" If they wanted you, you wouldn't be an ex.

Last but not least, I don't understand some transsexuals.

After being told I wasn't allowed to visit a "womyn-born-womyn" organization, I was very upset. Well, I'm over it now. But because of that incident there were a lot of transsexual women that were upset and disapproved of what I did. What did I do? Stand up for MY rights. It appears some transsexuals do not consider themselves women at all. Well, after visiting Tri-Ess, an organization for white suburban men who dress in drag once a month, I can say I agree. They are not women. Most are cigar-smoking lawyers & doctors who have a fetish with women's clothing. They are Cross-Dressers or Transvestites, not women. But because they are not women, that doesn't make what they are doing wrong, just confusing as hell—for me.

Another transsexual asked me, "Why did you use Martin Luther King Jr's name?" Dr. King didn't take a stand for some of us, he took a stand for all of us. King has been and will be my hero. Rosa Parks fought for me too and I refuse to sit in the back of the bus. I refused to be told what to do or where to go.

I think it's understood that I do not represent the entire transgendered community. Not all of us want to be treated and respected as women. Not all of us consider ourselves women. Some call themselves "queens." Queens? After hearing several transsexual women refer to themselves as queens, I asked what that means. They told me all transsexuals are queens. That Transsexuals are roy-



alty and should be treated as such. Although I will never consider myself a queen, I liked her definition.

There is a lot happening in the Transgendered community. TIME magazine recently had a positive article about transsexuals and transgendered activists. Lorraine S. Baskerville of TransGenesis held the first fundraiser by an African-American transsexual woman at "All Jokes Aside" hosted by Flame Monroe. Now Flame Monroe is in a class all by herself. Sure there are many Female Illusionists, but only one Diva like Flame. Only one African-American, Female Illusionist/Comedian/TalkShow Personality (WGCI)/Actress. Yes the girl is working it and will tell you in a minute to kiss her ass, on the pink.

Then there's me, but of course you have heard enough about me. That's why I'm changing my writing style. I've been writing for BLACKLINES for two years now. I'm sure by now you know that I am a TS Leather/ SM Dyke, Poet, Playwright, Photographer, Activist, member & Transgendered Component Director of "A Real Read." If you don't, I suggest you go to Lambda Publications (1115 W. Belmont, 2nd Fl) and get some past issues because I'm getting tired of talking about me. My cup isn't the only one that runneth over. So much is happening in the Transgendered community that's not being reported. Well, I am going to try my hand at reporting. So if there is anything going on that involves the transgendered community, tell me. In fact, if you want people to know about it, I'm your girl! You can e-mail me direct or mail a letter to Lambda Publications. If it's worth having, it's worth reporting!

E-mail [redacted]@m

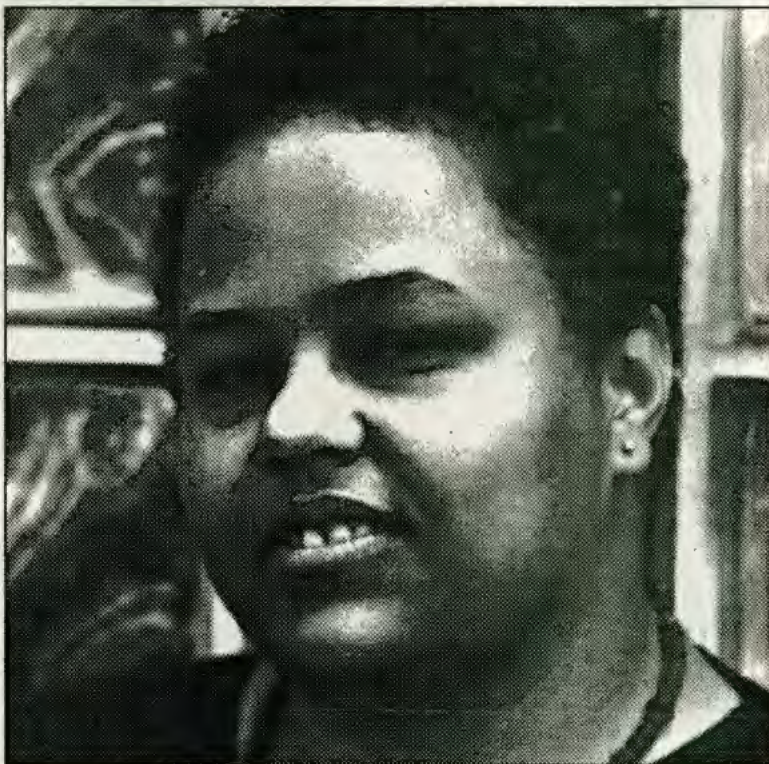
BLACK

LINES

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SINGER NEDRA JOHNSON

She's bold, butch
and beautiful —
and singing at
Mountain Moving Sept. 19.
Her new CD, *Testify*, is
also now available.
See page 22 for an interview.



MARCH ON!

Lesbigays at Bud Billiken
Parade. See page 16

