

TRANSLUCENT TRANSEXUAL

by **Lynnell Stephanie L.**
Spirituality/Sobriety

Part 1

Happy fifth anniversary to me!

If anyone would have told me one day I would be celebrating five years of being sober and drug free, I would have laughed in their face. For years, drugs and alcohol were my reality. It was the ultimate escape from the hell I called life.

It wasn't that life itself was unbearable. It was my life that was unbearable.

My mother was a Minister, and of course when you're the child of a Minister, you go to church whether you want to or not. I sat in church many days trying hard to comprehend the idea of "God and Jesus Christ." I have always had the understanding that there was a "Supreme Being," I just didn't believe it was God as taught in the Bible or Jesus Christ.

I expressed that thought to my mother. After a thorough talking to and a good cursing out, from then on I kept my thoughts to myself. I guess for me to worship and believe in a power greater than myself, that power had to prove itself to me. When my prayers as a child, adolescent and as an adult went unanswered, my suspicions were confirmed, **THERE IS NO GOD!**

My thinking was, if there was a God, why was I born intersexed, sterile and with many other complications? I never expected much from God, except to help me feel comfortable in my body. There were times when I was younger and was teased for looking and acting like a girl. I would pray to God to help me look and act like a boy, just so people wouldn't tease me.

After years of using drugs and alcohol to numb out, in February '93, I signed myself into rehab, and have been abstinent of drugs and alcohol since. I would like to say it was my



doing when I decided to go in to rehab, but it wasn't. After years of not believing in God, I felt I had no one else to turn to, so one night I prayed for the strength to stop using drugs. Later that same night, I found myself on the phone calling hospitals that could help me with my problem.

In rehab, I was again confronted with the idea that "God" was the answer. That he and only he could help me with my problems. Although it was with the help of something or someone that I was able to sober up, I just couldn't believe it was the God I was taught as a child. The God who, I was taught, hated me. He had to because I was born with so many problems, and those problems only escalated. How could I believe in a God that hates? A lot of Ministers, including my mother, always preached against homosexuality. They said that God was a loving God but only if you went to church every Sunday and gave a tenth of your earnings. I was taught to fear God, and I did, very much so. There was no way in hell I could believe that "that God" would help me stay sober.

But they told me the only way I was going to stay sober was with the help of a power greater than myself. Since I didn't believe in God, I had to believe in something, so I started to believe in that voice that told me I was more than what I had become. It was a strong and loving voice. Gentle but stern. I didn't name him, but I knew he would always be there when I needed him. That voice helped me stay sober for the first two years of my recovery.

Whenever I felt like drinking or smoking dope, I talked out loud, sometimes yelling. He would always answer me, and made sure I had bus fare to my meetings.

At one time I dated men. When I did, the voice of God never became hateful or told me I was going to burn in hell. When I fell in love with a man he smiled upon me. He cradled me in his arms when my lover broke my heart. This was the God I wanted desperately to believe in as a child. I never doubted there was ever a God, I just couldn't believe the creator of the world was a hateful, jealous and vengeful God. My God is a loving God. The voice that I heard, that convinced me to believe I will never be alone, was the God I've been searching for all my life. My quest for spirituality had begun.

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Divide to Make Powerless

by **D.L.**

A friend of mine asked me if it bothered me when people compared the struggle between Black civil rights and gay civil rights, or equated them as the same. Sure I have thought about this issue, but as a Black gay man I never really sat down and examined how I felt. Today, I was sitting reading the current issues of **BLACKLINES** and I came across a letter to the editor about this very subject. The writer, Vernon [redacted], was very upset and proceeded to proclaim that gays and lesbians have suffered more than Blacks.

Mr. [redacted] begin to say that while it is not OK to preach anti-Black rhetoric from church pulpits, that it was all right to preach anti-homosexual rhetoric. What Mr. [redacted] failed to see is that you can not compare the suffering from one group to another. Suffering, pain and bigotry are just as hurtful no matter which group it goes to, but since he wrote his mind, as a proud African



American male, I will write down a few thoughts for Mr. [redacted] to ponder.

First, the church may speak anti-gay messages but they always say that gay people can be saved, albeit on their terms. Well for centuries this same religion was used to enforce and condone slavery. It was said we didn't have souls—some even believe that today. They preached that we, as a people, were lost—no hope. Just put a harness on our backs and work us until we drop dead.

As for the positive media images he claims that we as African Americans have such a vast array of, I would like to see those images. Black people in black face does not count. We are still just there for the amusement of others.

The idea that isolation for gays and the random institutionalization of known homosexuals compared to the enslavement of an entire race is just ridiculous, it does not compare on any level. But what Mr. [redacted] failed to see is this one simple point: some of us fall into both mixes. Some of us are African American and gay. We should not be forced to choose which bigotry is worst. And as ridiculous as this whole subject is, including my column, it just goes to show, that they are winning, i.e. the bigots, because they are having us compare wounds instead of helping one another heal and fight back. So in the future, if you want to know which kind of hatred is more harmful than the other, just remember neither compares to the harm you are causing by inflicting yourself with the knife that they gave you for nothing.

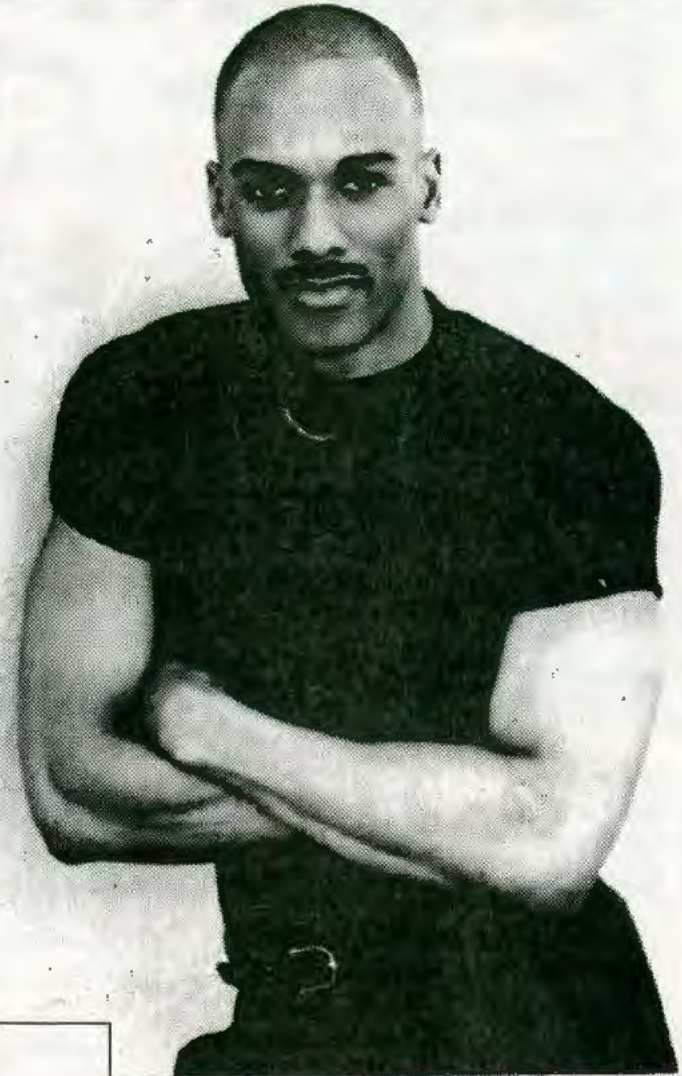
BLACK

LINES

FEB. 1998, Vol. 3, No. 1 Free/\$2 outside Chicago EXPRESSIONS FROM BLACK GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDERED LIFE

BOYKIN STEPS DOWN

Keith Boykin is stepping down as head of the National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum, after this month's national conference. See page 24 for an interview.



INSIDE

Murder on
So. Side, 11

Rustin Awards,
Events 6

Black History
Month, 14

Flow music, 22



Dancer/Choreographer
David Rousseve performs
his newest work in
Chicago Feb. 19-21.
See page 17 for an interview.