

TRANSLUCENT TRANSEXUAL

by **Lynnell Stephanie L.**
Facing Discrimination

I sat in the audience at the Bayard Rustin Awards, waiting for them to announce the winner of the 1998 Georgia Black Award. After reading the nominees, they announced the winner, me. Proudly, I strutted up the stage to receive my award. The acceptance speech I made was about change, acceptance and Unity. I was glad to know that people are becoming more accepting. I thanked the Greater Chicago Committee for having a category awarding a trans person. The entire night I stared at the award. I was thinking about all the articles I wrote and the performances. The thought of Unity, didn't seem like a distant dream anymore.

The day after receiving the award, still smiling, reality sat in hard. Reality that some people will never accept the trans community.

Being a member of "A Real Read," Chicago's Premiere African-American LesBiGayTrans Performance Ensemble, I am also a part of the Women's Component. The Women's Component was scheduled to perform at an event, but three hours before the performance, I was informed I was not welcome because the organization hosting the event was a "Women-born-Women only" environment. The woman that discriminated against me is an older Black woman. How ironic for me to be discriminated against by a Black woman, during Black history month at a Black Herstory event.

Anger soon overwhelmed me as I lashed out the wrong people, soon apologizing. The person I should have lashed out at, is the same person that reads my column every month, just to have something to talk about. Well, like my mother used to say, "It don't mean



nothing, they talked about Jesus Christ too."

My question is, is Unity possible? If so, is it just for lesbians and gays, or is it inclusive to people like me? My mother used to tell me stories of the times she marched with Dr. King and Jessie Jackson. How people from all walks of life would come together, fighting for a common cause, Justice! At times I compare myself to Dr. King. I never had a problem before I came out. I didn't have to come out, my world was safe. But I tasted freedom. I knew what it was like to walk down the street and people greet you with "Miss and Ma'am." When I visited Mountain Moving Coffee House in the past, no one noticed me. Today, I am told because I am an out and a proud transsexual woman, I can not perform there. That is the policy of Mountain Moving.

Like Dr. King, I've been to the mountain top. My dream is to help my trans brothers and sisters. Borris Powell, in his performance at the Award's ceremony, said when you've tasted freedom, sometimes you got to go back and help others. I know the only way things are going to change is if someone stands up and fights!

It was my time to go back, that's why I'm out! I believe Unity is possible, but not until Black folks stop discriminating against each other. Some might ask, why do I want to go somewhere like Mountain Moving Coffee House or the Michigan Fest, if transsexuals are not welcome. Those same

people should ask, why did Blacks in the '60s want to drink from all water fountains? Or why did Blacks fight for equal rights, they should have been content with what they were given, right? I won't be happy until trans folks are welcomed EVERYWHERE. There shouldn't be a place discriminating against anyone.

In a world where a lot of people are gender variant, meaning dressing and acting like the opposite sex you were born, how can someone like that not understand? How can some lesbians, known for their 'manly' appearance, discriminate against the trans or gender variant community? How? Because others let them.

If Unity is ever going to be possible, discrimination must be stopped!

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Choose Life Over Love by D.L. [REDACTED]

I'm surrounded; that's what you say when you don't want to say how crazy and nutty the folks around you seem to be. I know I have to say this, especially recently. See, I've come to this conclusion that when Shakespeare said all the world is a stage and that we are merely players, he was correct. Our lives seem to be one big soap opera or movie after another. We have sequels in our lives; just ask Bill Clinton. The only way we get canceled is by death, but until then we remain on the air. I guess our deal is better than the Hollywood stars.

How, you may ask, can someone so young become so bitter so fast? I don't look at it as being bitter. I think I'm just more up to facing the fact that, like movies and soap operas, there really are no happy endings. Even so-called happy endings are not that



happy when you take a closer look at them. We see people go in and out of relationships as quick as the President can squeeze a rear end or two.

Sure, we have our long-time soap opera couple, but they are rare and few. We have our Erica Kanen, too many of them to be exact. They see a happy home and they decide they want to destroy it. Maybe this isn't their conscious thinking, but in the backs of their minds they think, like Erica, hell, if I can't be happy, no one will.

Well I've had it. I refuse to take part in this vicious cycle we call life. I've decided to rewrite the script and begin again.

No more meeting guys and thinking they can complete me. I am complete. No more looking for Mr. Right; he doesn't exist. I just want Mr. Compatible. No more late-night tears because the guy I gave my heart to tells me how great a guy I am but that he is just not feeling this relationship.

IS there really love? I'm sick of this question. Who knows? I haven't seen it. All of the guys I know have never had it. Sure, they pretend that they do but they don't.

Real love doesn't end; it multiplies like gremlins. So I guess when we expose it to sunlight, we are left only with the destruction it has caused on our lives. I guess I've asked myself so many times "What would I choose. Love or money?" I'll take the money because love just leaves you broke.

BLACK

LINES

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ANGELA DAVIS

1970s revolutionary leader Angela Davis is still on the frontlines — speaking out about a wide variety of issues. She's also out as a lesbian, and promoting her new book, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*. She'll be in Chicago to autograph copies the end of March. See page 20.



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in town March 25-29

See page 14 for details.

ALSO INSIDE: New leader for Forum; Bayard Rustin Awards; Ardis McBell dies; Women's Film Fest; Music Beat; Politics; and More!