

ONE STEP BEYOND

by Lynnell S. Long

The true S/HE

So, it's BLACKLINES' one-year anniversary and my six-month anniversary writing for BLACKLINES. During the past six months, I have covered topics from "Coming Out" to "Transitioning." Most of you by now know the difference between a transsexual and a drag queen. But there's more to the transgendered community.

Imagine you're at work, and you are about to address the person standing in front of you. You say, "excuse me Ms., I mean Sir, I mean which is it?" S/he talks and still you can't tell if the person is male or female. If you guessed correctly that the person is genetically female you may think, "that's just a butch dyke." The reality is s/he is a true s/he, the term is called Bigendered; one should not confuse the term with Bisexual.

If you look in the dictionary for the word Bigendered, you won't find it. The definition for bigendered is someone who is both male and female, although not necessarily biologically. In the past, this person may have been called androgynous. The difference between being androgynous and bigendered is



as follows: when a person is living an androgynous life, normally that person considers him/herself between genders. A person that is bigendered identifies as male and female, alternating genders.

Cobalt, a 23-year-old bigendered person, will proudly admit to being bigendered, but because s/he is dating a woman and is biologically female, s/he's often thought of as "just a butch dyke." When Cobalt's male self emerges there is certainly a difference in Cobalt's demeanor and voice. He is a man. Cobalt often says that being a man is not what's between your legs, it's mental, and emotional. It's difficult at times for him to come out because of the feminine drag he must wear at work. He's slowly coming out at work, by wearing suits and ties. Thus far, his dressing in male drag has gone unnoticed.

It wasn't until after two months in a lesbian relationship that Cobalt told his/her lover that s/he is bigendered. It was difficult for Cobalt's lover to accept his/her as bigendered status, because Cobalt's lover fell in love with a woman. She was used to being loved by a woman and used to making love to a woman. Cobalt's lover, being a lesbian, vowed to never date men. At first, she found it awkward dating a bigendered person. It helps that when Cobalt switches from male to female,

that s/he is still the same loving, sweet, caring and gentle lover.

When Cobalt's female self emerges, once again there is a difference. Being born a genetic woman, it's easier for his/her female self. Cobalt has lived all of his/her life as a woman until last year, when s/he accepted that s/he is both male and female, and came out as bigendered. As a female she doesn't have to worry about passing.

"It's frustrating that there aren't any resources for bigendered people, as far as I know," says Cobalt. After searching the Internet and finding the Transgendered Community Forum on America Online, Cobalt started his/her own folder on the message board under gender issues, titled "Bigendered." After a few days people from all over the country started replying.

"I was glad to finally hear from people who feel as I do. Before I was the only bigendered person I had ever heard of, but now I feel much less isolated. Others do exist," says Cobalt.

Imagine you meet someone who's bigendered, how would you greet him/her? Would it be difficult for you to make love to a person that switches from male to female? What if your lover told you after two months of dating that s/he is a true s/he? If you are a lesbian would it affect your sexuality? I don't have to imagine because Cobalt is my lover. Learning to respect, admire and love my girlfriend as a bigendered person was not the easiest thing I had to do.

Between my mood swings from the hormones and him/her swinging back and forth between genders, it was definitely an interesting year. But I did it, I managed to get used to him/her switching and I'm able to tell the female self apart from the male self. I'm glad s/he came out as a bigendered person, as much as s/he supports me and will do anything for my happiness, what better way to return that depth of love, than to cherish, respect and support my bigendered lover.

You can find Cobalt's Bigendered folder in the Transgendered Community Forum on AOL (Keyword TCF),

where you can also find other transgendered topics.

Lynnell S. Long is a Chicago writer and activist on transgendered issues. Send e-mail messages:

and we'll forward them, or write

WAKEFIELD from 25

put him at risk. My verbal-caring-it's-time-to-be-a-good-friend personality sat there and shared his joy. Inside, another person wanted to yell at him and ask just what he could be thinking to allow any situation or circumstance to occur where he "exchanged body fluids."

It is a conversation I have had with so many others. "It just didn't seem like the right time to bring it up ... I needed the essence of his love to flow through me ... I didn't want him to think that I did not care enough...."

Believe me, the list of reasons/excuses goes on and on and on.

It is ironic that Audre delivered those words on the third day of Kwaanza, UJIMA. A day when we celebrate and call to mind our collective work and responsibility. This year, let your collective responsibility break the silence. Tell your friends that you love them and that part of loving them is to help them to avoid the risk of transmission by talking openly and honestly about why men do what they do sexually. Whether HIV-negative or HIV-positive, you want them to avoid any act which could cause anxiety because of the risk of viral transmission. Our behaviors change and we are able to maintain change because we find the support we need to maintain the change. We find that support when we speak the truth of our lives into existence.

We can rewrite the history of this epidemic one man and one woman at a time. We are infected one at a time, we can break this silence one at a time. Tell someone you care about that you love them, then get them to talk about explicitly and openly about sex. Our sharing can launch an epidemic of HIV prevention that no CDC campaign could ever touch.



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UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH NICKI

by **Lynnell S. Long**

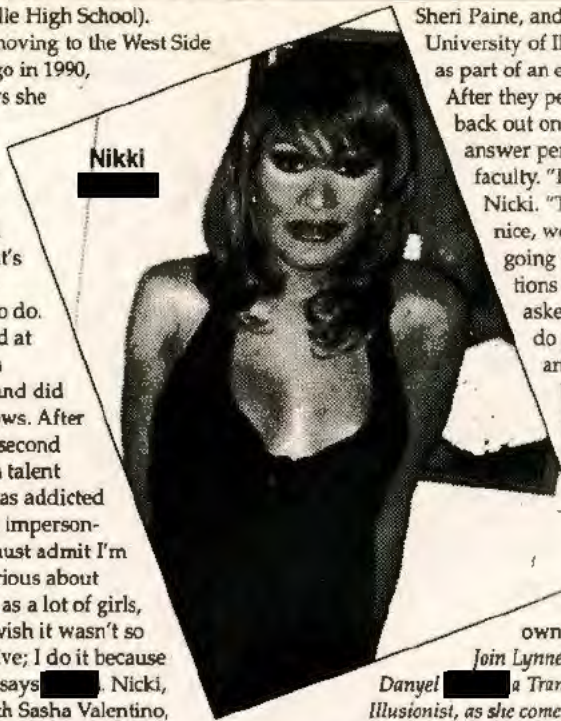
"I prefer the word transsexual because some people consider us drag-queens, and I find that very derogatory," said Nicki [redacted] Ms. Windy City 1996 and former Ms. Illinois.

"When I get up I don't get up and say OK, well I want to make sure everybody sees this is a woman. When I get up, I comb my hair back, put on my clothes and leave, that's just me. I don't wear make-up, I only wear make-up for shows ... never for daily wear," said [redacted].

"Growing up, everyone told me that I sound like a girl, I look like a girl and I act like a girl. To me this is better, because trying to fit in society, I tried to be the male image, and it never worked. Actually, when I was little I always wish I were a woman," said [redacted], who was raised in suburban Bolingbrook (where Green attended

Romeoville High School).

After moving to the West Side of Chicago in 1990, Nicki says she started watching other girls perform and knew that's what she wanted to do. "I worked at the Baton 'briefly' and did other shows. After winning second place in a talent show I was addicted to female impersonation. I must admit I'm not as serious about pageants as a lot of girls, in fact I wish it wasn't so competitive; I do it because it's fun," says [redacted] Nicki, along with Sasha Valentino,



Sheri Paine, and Whitney, perform at the University of Illinois in Chicago yearly as part of an educational seminar.

After they perform they all come back out on stage for a question and answer period by the students and faculty. "It was a lot of fun," says Nicki. "They were actually really nice, we thought they were going to ask us stupid questions but they didn't. They asked questions, like 'what do you do in the daytime' and stuff like that."

Between doing shows at Mario's on Sundays, Stardust on Mondays, and The Culture Club on Tuesdays, Nicki says she works at an Escort Service.

One of her goals in life is to open her own Beauty Shop.

Join Lynnell Long next month with Danyel [redacted] a Transsexual / Female Illusionist, as she comes out at work.

UP ON IT

Music reviews by **J.**

Ronny Jordan — *Light To Dark* (4th & Bway)

On *The Quiet Revolution*, Ronny Jordan's 1993 debut, the guitarist's melding of jazz, hip hop, and rap helped propel an emerging sound. *Light* finds a more mature and secure Jordan with less acid in his jazz (a spicier George Benson, if you will). But adept songwriting, mostly by Mr. Jordan, and punchy rhythms should gain him respect as a true jazz musician without losing his appeal to non-jazz listeners. With tunes like "Homage," "The Law" (featuring some mean guitar work), and funk-tinged "Downtime," *Light* never slouches into the popular, prosaic jazz that has seduced artists like Najee. A particular highlight is "I See You" with percussion and vocals by Sola Akingbola, which lovingly evokes Al Jarreau. If you missed his recent Chicago performance, you should get out more.

Liquid Soul — *Liquid Soul* (Ark21)

Any fan of Groove Collective

should look in Chicago's backyard for Liquid Soul. By now you should at least be familiar with their name. Currently, this highly regarded band

jams every Sunday at the Elbo Room. Their sound is eclectic, encompassing many facets of jazz, and has earned them a substantial following. This CD was recorded nearly two years ago, but due to popular demand, keeps getting pressed. Most of the songs are competently penned by sax player Mars Williams and the band.

However, classics like Coltrane's "Equinox" and Miles Davis' "Freddie The Freeloader" still shine brighter than original compositions. Again, we're dealing with material from 1995 and like most accomplished bands, recorded CD's pale miserably to experiencing the group in person. Rumor has it, Liquid Soul has inked a major label deal, so I urge you to catch this band while you can.

Tricky — *Pre-Millennium Tension* (Island)

If anyone should be nervous about the year 2000, it's Tricky. He is to trip hop what Teddy Riley was to the New Jack sound. Although this is only his

Streetbeat release 'The White Party' music

Miami's StreetBeat Records has released of *The White Party—A Continuous Club Mix*, a compilation CD named for the famous Florida circuit party (which also benefits AIDS groups). Mixed by South Beach DJ David Knapp, the CD features such dance artists as Donna Summer (an ironic choice, given the controversy over her anti-gay remarks), Nootropic, MK, Judy Cheeks, Individual, Cajmere featuring Dajae, Shades Of Love, Alcatraz, Alison Limerick, Shawn Christopher, Dan Hartman and Loleatta Holloway. It is set for a November 19 release. The "White Party" AIDS gala fundraiser, held in December at Miami's Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, is one of the most sought after tickets and is attended by over 2500 guests attracting such illustrious AIDS activists as Madonna and David Geffen.

Five-volume 'Free To Be' Dance mix series

The Right Stuff label is releasing a series of five compilation discs tailored to appeal to the nation's gay market. *Free to Be Me: A Celebration Of My Life*, available separately, each have their own distinctive mood and theme, from exuberant dance music to divine divas, and lots more in between. Featured artists include: Boy George, Lulu, Patti Austin, Pebbles, Chaka Khan, Nona Hendryx, Nina Hagen, Peggy Lee, Judy Garland, Eartha Kitt, Julie London, Vikki Carr, Malcolm McLaren, and Martha Wash.

second official solo release, he's been adding his unique touch to music for more than five years. But like any musical trend, trip hop can easily become overexposed and fade into obscurity without notice. "Now they call me superstar," he bemoans on Tricky Kid, adding caustically "everybody wants to be naked and famous." But he labors on, deftly mixing samples, white noise and scratchy vocals by himself and chanteuse-in-crime,

Martina (who impressively raps on Bad Dream and Lyrics of Fury). Unquestionably, the hypnotic Christiansands stands out with Tricky's repetitive "You and me/What does that mean/Always/What does that mean/Forever/What does that mean/It means we'll manage."

Question: As an adult, I find perverse campy amusement in Foxy Brown and Lil' Kim. But do their fans make the same distinction?

BLACK

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Black History Month



Welcome to the Special 1st Anniversary Edition of BLACKLINES, which includes features on Black History Month & much more. Clockwise from top left: Bayard Rustin, Gladys Bentley, James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Pat Parker. Illustration by Otis Richardson.

ALSO INSIDE: National Black Lesbian & Gay Conference (page 8); Chicago's Bayard Rustin Awards (page 8); Black English (page 18); Kahil El'Zabar (page 21); A Real Read (page 20).

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