

TRANSLUCENT TRANSEXUAL

by **Lynnell S. Long**

Where do
we go from here?

It's been a year since I started writing for BLACKLINES. I ask myself—What have I accomplished? Is the transgendered community any closer to acceptance from the Black LesBiGay community? Where do we go from here? In the past year I have learned much more about myself ... I feel I have matured. Writing for BLACKLINES has opened so many doors. It has encouraged me to stop procrastinating, and write my autobiography—I have finished the first chapter, and have started on the second. I have also written more poetry, prose, and plays. As a direct activist, I have aspired for transgendered visibility.

Although writing is one venue, I have found another. That venue is with A Real Read—Chicago's Premiere African-American LesBiGayTrans Performance Ensemble. As the Trans Component Director and member of A Real Read, I bring to the Ensemble the missing voice a lot of performance ensembles fail to present. I write and perform my own work. The story of the transgendered community is one to be heard, and Byron Stewart, A Real Read's Artistic Director, along with other members of A Real Read, invited me to give a voice to a community seen, but rarely heard. I must admit, in the beginning my writing and performing was not done as a representation of the Trans community, I did it for me. I loved attention, and being on stage. I was one of the most egotistical bitches in Chicago. I soon realized I didn't have to wear that mask anymore. I was afraid of anyone getting to know the real Lynnell—being rejected before caused me to keep a wall between me and others. When I saw the other members of A Real Read were beginning to accept me as I am, the woman I am, it helped me to let down my defenses, and allow them to get to know me. By doing so I got to know myself as well. It was my decision to OUT



myself. Why do I continue to out myself? Why don't I slip into the mainstream, work a 9-5, and no one will know I am a TS? A part of me feels this is my mission ... that Goddess' will for me is to be a voice for the Trans community. To be out, and gain acceptance from the Black LesBiGay Community for all transsexuals.

I'm not sure of anything anymore. When I was 15, the doctors told me I was sterile, and I ask the Goddess—why me? When I was 28 and strung out on drugs, I again asked—why me? Now I'm 30-something, and asking the same question—why me? Why must I be the one to be out and face ridicule? Sometimes I feel like giving up. It would be simple to do, I am fortunate enough to be passable. But is this what I want? Do I want to start over? I don't know. What I do know is that a lot of you have changed your opinion of transsexuals after reading my articles, and/or seeing my performance. After my performance at the BLACKLINES' Anniversary Party, a woman walked up to me with tears in her eyes thanking me for the work I do. I had similar experiences at the CBLG Unity Conference, Lambda Literary Awards, and at the Bailiwick.

I'm not sure what the future holds for the trans community. I do know there is a reason I am writing for BLACKLINES, and performing with A Real Read. There is a reason I am an out Black transsexual. The Trans Movement is in process, and I will not abandon ship. There is much work yet to be done.

There are a lot of people I want to thank for helping me along my journey. I would like to thank: Tracy Baim, and the staff at BLACKLINES. Byron Stewart, Sanford E. Gaylord, beja

C.C. Carter, Somalia and Shannon. All the lovely women at Paris Dance and Mountain Moving Coffeehouse for letting me share my poetry. The Black Gay Men I took a picture of at Gerber Hart. Everyone that has become open-minded, and has allowed themselves to change their opinion of transsexuals. Everyone that came out to the Bailiwick, and supported A Real Read. The lady at DuSable, and others like her. Everyone I have ever interviewed, especially the girls at the Baton. A special thanks to my girlfriend Cobalt.

Divided We Fall

by **Robert**

The issue of race in America is a popular topic these days. However, the issue is usually framed as a Black-white issue. What about other communities of color? It's time to begin an honest and inclusive dialogue about race relations and how all communities of color are impacted by racism in our society.

We as Latinos, African-Americans, Arabs, Asians/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans need to begin a dialogue amongst ourselves so we may collectively fight against oppression and also so that we may understand each other's issues. While I believe that the larger ethnic and racial communities need to begin this dialogue, and to some extent has, we as queer communities of color need to sit down and start talking.

The closest thing the queer community has to an ongoing dialogue is WACT, womyn of all colors/cultures together, which meets monthly and includes womyn from all walks of life.

Last year's Rainbow Jam was a multi-cultural event put together during the Democratic National Convention as a party for queer delegates of color. It was co-sponsored by 17 local and national people of color groups who worked together to make it a truly historic event. The proceeds helped establish the Queer Youth Development Fund for queer youth of color. The coalition brought together many diverse groups and individuals who usually do not interact for whatever reasons. Many new



friendships and working relationships came out of Rainbow Jam. We need to continue that.

The issue of racism impacts the queer community and we see racism manifest itself in many ways. Whether it be a selective 3-I.D. policy at clubs, lack of adequate funding to HIV/AIDS service providers in our communities, or the lack of people of color in leadership/decision-making capacities in our queer social-service/community organizations, we as communities of color need to work together so that we can start addressing these issues and the many others that we face in a so-called "color blind" society that continues to allow racism to dehumanize our communities.

Add to that, population experts predict that Latinos will surpass African-Americans as the largest minority in the city and speculate, unnecessarily I might add, that this growth and accompanying Latino political power will come at the expense of the African-American community. We need this dialogue so that we can begin to build coalitions whose political strength is a result of its multicultural focus and not have communities of color pitted against one another.

There is a lot of work and struggle ahead. Queer communities of color have double the work to do. Fighting homophobia in our respective communities while fighting racism within the larger queer community requires a lot of time and energy. It would be nice if we all could rest our heads on each others' shoulders now and then. It would also be nice if we all were seated at the same table.

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MARY MORTEN

A Coalition
Builder and
Long-Time
Feminist, Lesbian, and
Business Advocate
takes over as
Daley's Liaison
to the lesbigay
community.

See page 18 for an interview.

Karen Williams

Lesbian comic Karen Williams (right) is in Chicago for two shows in September. On Sat., Sept. 13 she performs at Mountain Moving Coffeehouse. On Sept. 15, she performs with Lea DeLaria at All Joke's Aside. See page 12 for info.



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