

## THY CUP RUNNETH OVER Being Different by Lynnell Stephanie Long

I sit at the computer waiting for my next article to come to mind. For so long I have poured out my thoughts and ideas on living, on my life. The stories on my life can be seen on stage as well as in my articles. Today something is different.

Today, I hesitate before I write. I feel I am under watchful eyes since "The Incident." If so, so be it. But still I am hesitant to write. That's interesting, I said it. I said my fears out loud.

I always thought I could save the world. It turned out that I was the one that needed saving, from me. I am my own critic. I love myself, but still I am feeling something I can't describe. Maybe it's serenity. No that's exactly what it is. I feel serene in knowing there is but one judge and jury, and I pray to her every night.

I have changed. I feel it. I broke the wall that for so many years held back a lake of fear. I allowed myself to feel that fear. I cried when I needed to. I called someone if I felt overwhelmed. But all-in-all I was still enough to feel it. I'm not Goddess. I can't change people's minds or opinions about people like me. People like me? Who I am? I fear the answer to that question may be more than I am ready to reveal. Yet, it is time to answer that question. Who am I? I am human. I breathe the same air as you, drink the same water as you, sleep like you do and I too will die someday. I am a child of a woman that could never accept that her son was born intersex. So she allowed doctors to try to fix me. Feed me testosterone, without prevailing. I am a woman, different than some women. The struggle to be the woman I am today was very difficult. It entailed going against the beliefs of my mother, facing abandonment by my family and friends, and waking up late at night from flashbacks of incest—looking for my mom-



mie. But I was invisible to her. I didn't exist. I wasn't her child anymore.

I am a woman that gets up every morning and thank Goddess I didn't have the courage to kill myself as I wanted to many times before. I wake up in the morning and I see me. But like I said, I am different. And because of that difference, I am stricken to a world of hormones and the possibility of sex reassignment surgery.

Because of that difference, many women, including my mother, whom I love dearly, feels that I am an imposter. Who am I? I am a Receptionist. Eight hours a day I work beside many women that haven't a clue that I am different. That's the way I want it. I am a frightened child that sleeps with a teddy bear because events in my life have triggered memories of the past. I am a woman that looks in the mirror and smiles because I am different. It is because of that difference that I am able to be open-minded towards others. It is because of that difference that I am writing and performing. It is because of that difference that I value life, the sunset and rain.

You see, because of that difference and my fight to be where I am, I have earned the right to proudly say I am woman.

It's springtime now. I love the smell of the lake, the feel of the gentle wind and the feel of my girlfriend's arms around me as we watch the sea gulls. I smile more often because I have a new awakening that I am not alone. Goddess is always near. Always! In a 12-step meeting recently someone said she "once cried out to God while being molested," asking him where he was. She said God told her he

was there, shedding tears because his child was being abused. That sharing opened my eyes to a world I tried hard to forget. This writing is the will of my higher power, but my ego tells me different. It is only after enduring the past few months that I realized, I am not alone. Goddess is there watching, making sure I do her work.

I recently read a book about a Jewish Gay man that grew up in the Bronx. In the book he talked about his lovers. He talked about his religion and his faith. It talked about AIDS and HIV. He talked about his family, fearing what they would think if they knew he was "different." In the Trans community, more and more of us are dying from AIDS & HIV but it seems no one notices. Including me. I fear AIDS & HIV. I prefer to never talk about. But that will not make it go away. It exists EVERY FUCKING WHERE. For a long time, it was hard for me to kiss an HIV+ man in performing. I feared it would crawl from his mouth to mine and I would die. I told him and he started to cry. It's not the truth. AIDS & HIV cannot be transmitted through a casual kiss. But my ignorance caused me to hurt someone. When the time came for the performance, at first I hesitated. Then I saw "him." My Black brother.

A man who—as he described in his writing and performing—had an uninvited guest. I kissed him releasing all my fears. Fears which kept me from getting too close to him. I kissed him. For I know what it is like to be abandoned by others because you are "different."

Yes I am different, but aren't we all? How many of us get teased because we're light skinned? How many of us get bashed because we're gay? How many of us sit in a bar and never get hit on because you're Black? Difference isn't all that bad. I've learned to live with it. I've learned to love myself and others, because I am different.

Lynnell is the winner of the 1998 Georgia Black award. Her e-mail address is [REDACTED]

## Leo Moon

by Derrick [REDACTED]

It was a "forest for the trees"-type thing. I was too close to see what you were. Being this close to the Leo Moon I could never see you all at once so each section of you shone as brightly as the section before. It wasn't until my birthday someone gave me a telescope and said "Look at the Leo Moon whole." As I focused my eyepiece and readjusted my senses I saw you whole and complete. And while parts of you shone just as brightly as before other parts were dim, cold, and would never support life. I put away my telescope that day and cried to the heavens above.

"You bring the Leo Moon back, make him as I perceived him to be," wanting things back the way they were. Why didn't I just ask for the Earth to rotate for me and me alone. I had just as much a chance for this request to come true as I had for my demands to be met.

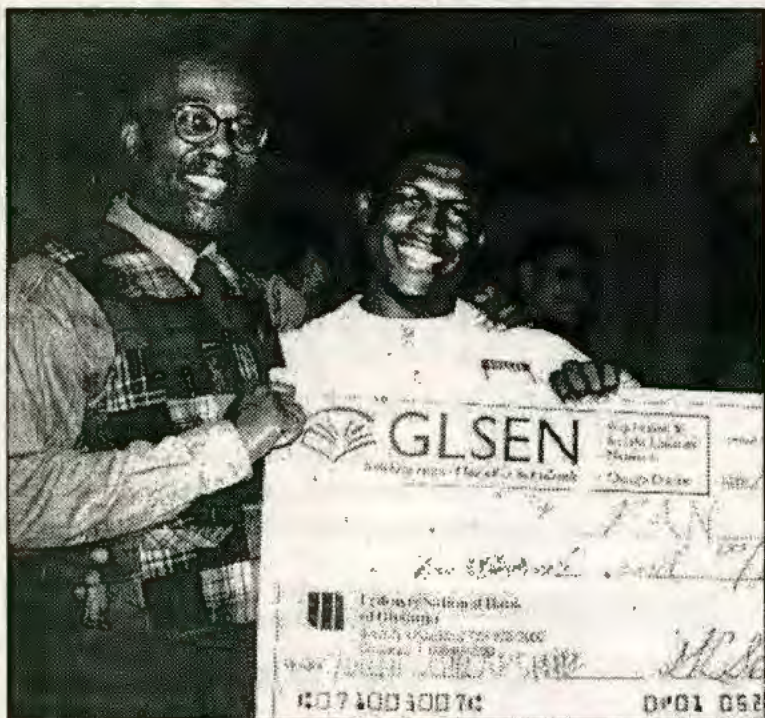
The cosmos answered me back with a deafening silence. The silence said who was I to make these demands that the celestial be as I perceived them to be. Was it the universe's fault that I stood too close to the Leo Moon and could not see it for what it was? For several months I pondered this before I took out my telescope and searched out the heavens for the Leo Moon. Scanning the night I passed the Leo Moon twice before realizing I had done so. No longer was I upset with its patchy light and dark areas. I realized the celestial body was as it was when I had last seen it, as it had appeared to the early astronomers, and as it would appear to some future stargazer.

So goodbye, Leo Moon; you have taught me that we must all be as the creator made us. With our patches of light and dark dancing our dance in the galactic ballet of life. And while I will never again look at you without the aid of my telescope I will always remember the innocence I once had as I flourished in your nightly glow.

# BLACK

LINES

JUNE 1998, Vol. 3, No. 5 Free/\$2 outside Chicago EXPRESSIONS FROM BLACK GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDERED LIFE



## YOUTH PRIDE

Trinity [redacted] Made History When He Started a Pride Group at [redacted]

[redacted] — Believed to Be the 1st at a Black High School.

See page 20 for details.

Trinity is pictured here with Richard [redacted] one of his mentors.

## BARBARA SMITH

The Pioneering Writer is in Chicago this Month to Discuss Her New Book.

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