

TRANSPARENT



AUDREY NICOLE

Cover Model

IT'S BIGGER THAN ME

By Justine Lindsay

SEARCHING FOR RASHAAD

By NeShaun Rice

THE GURLS

by Johna'e Wright

**FOR & BY
BLACK TRANS WOMEN**

SPRING 2024 EDITION



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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Spring 2024 edition of (Trans) Parent Magazine, the first and only magazine by, for and about Black transwomen. In this, our third issue, the content includes powerful articles as the contributors boldly share some of the most intimate details of their lives. Their courage is commendable in a world that is often judgmental when people reveal their personal struggles and accomplishments. The women have stood firm in the face of demanding situations and have overcome them with determination and dignity.

In this issue you will behold striking photography, motivational narratives, inspiring poetry, and stirring testimonies. I encourage you to sit back with a glass of your favorite beverage and spend some time getting to know the women who have labored so diligently to produce this issue. Be sure to share a copy, either digital or print, with your colleagues and friends.

The State of Emergency (SOE) program succeeds in large part due to the leadership and commitment of the SOE advisors. This edition of the magazine is the result of the hard work of the SOE Black Transwomen Leaders. – TS Gabrielle Chanel, Tiana Taylor, Neshawn Wright and Johnae' Wright. These women have persevered through trials that

include illness, loss of close friends, and violent attacks. The content is produced by Charlotte, North Carolina based Black Transgender women who refuse to quit in the face of adversity; women who are determined to love, encourage, and empower one another to succeed no matter the odds.

The Advisors are further supported by Creative Director, Jerry Washington; Editor, Jennifer Carbuto; and to the Program Visionary/Director, Jermaine Nakia Lee.

To our readers, we hope that you find the magazine informative and inspiring. We invite you to suggest topics and submit content for future issues.

We extend a warm welcome to those who are new to the Lionel Lee Jr. Center for Wellness and the State of Emergency program. Stay tuned as the fantastic journey of broadening the scope and impact of the Transparent Magazine continues!

Peace and blessings,

*Sonja Lee, Founder/Executive Director
Lionel Lee Jr. Center for Wellness*

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BLACK TRANS WOMEN ARE LIVING IN A STATE OF EM

What is SOE?

STATE OF EMERGENCY (SOE) is an online and in-person coalition of LGBTQIA & Allied citizens committed to improving the safety, quality of life and upward mobility of Black Transgender Women (BTW) in the Charlotte NC area through peer support, community capacity building and providing access to (or creating) psycho-social, medical, educational, financial, personal care and housing resources.

Why does it matter?

Despite the notable progress of the Transgender movement in the last decade, resulting in greater public awareness and significant legal victories, Trans people continue to face blatant discrimination, high levels of violence, and poor health outcomes. Trans people of color (especially Trans Women of Color) endure dramatically worse health and economic outcomes as they navigate multiple systems of oppression.

51%

OF BLACK TRANS WOMEN REPORT EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES

49%

OF BLACK TRANS WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED A SEXUAL ASSAULT DURING THEIR LIFETIME

47%

OF BLACK TRANS WOMEN REPORT BEING FIRED, NOT HIRED, OR DENIED PROMOTION

Top 3 Issues

CHALLENGING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR TRANS WOMEN OF COLOR

Results from The National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's recent study.

1. HEALTH

Health disparities due to systemic racism and transphobia. BTW face staggering rates of STD infection, lack of primary care and high rates of suicide. SOE seeks to increase opportunities for physical exams, purchase of medication and nutritious food, transportation to doctor visits.

2. ECONOMICS

Trans Women of Color bear the economic consequences of discrimination - high rates of poverty and unemployment. BTW are likely to live in extreme poverty earning under \$10,000 a year, with Latina Trans Women facing 7x and

Black Trans Women facing 8x the poverty rate of the general U.S. population.

3. SOCIAL CAPITAL

Trans Women of Color experience frightening levels of physical violence. This is particularly true among Trans Women of Color working in sex work and other informal economies. Brutal murders of these women occur with alarming regularity, often with little response from law enforcement. BTW led-strategies and social gatherings foster community relationships that serve as support systems for this marginalized community.

EMERGENCY

What we're doing about it.

HEALTH

Racial Equity in the area of Health - SOE is in partnership with a comprehensive network of primary care, mental/emotional health and hormone therapy providers. SOE will create a state of the art, interactive website and accompanying glossy publication of healthcare resources for BTW. The website will feature a quarterly updated resource list of primary care, mental/emotional health and hormone therapy resource listings especially tailored for BTW.

By expanding access to quality health care resources, we will improve outcomes in the areas of health and wellness. BTW face staggering rates of STD infection, lack of primary care and high rates of suicide. SOE seeks to increase opportunities for physical exams, purchase of medication and nutritious food, transportation to doctor visits.

ECONOMICS

The SOE state of the art, user-friendly website will also feature a weekly updated NOW HIRING job listing of TWOC affirming and available employment opportunities in the Charlotte area.

In addition, the portal will boast a monthly updated resource list of BTW affirming, local, state, faith-based and not for profit organizations that assist with food, personal care items, housing, transportation and emergency assistance funding.

Moreover, the website will highlight The SOE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUND - an active portal where local BTW can request emergency assistance for food, healthcare/meds, personal care items, transportation and housing.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Building community is a key part of SOE. While efforts are underway to strengthen hate crime legislation and bar the use of the so-called gay or trans panic defense for people charged with attacks, SOE aims to do our part locally. SOE understands safety doesn't just relate to physical harm but secure social capital as well - there is safety in numbers - there is safety in a synergized community.

The SOE website serves to build and strengthen social capital amongst TWOC. The SOE website will feature beautiful and affirming images of Charlotte area TWOC spokesmodels, Q&A/Networking portals, updated news topics related to TWOC, feature visual artists/music/poetry by TWOC and direct contact info of TWOC affirming organizations.

“

The American Medical Association has called the surge of Trans Women of Color murders an 'epidemic.' SOE is committed to addressing the social determinants that put Trans Women of Color at-risk.”

— Rev. Sonja Lee, SOE Executive Director





IT'S BIGGER THAN ME JUSTINE LINDSAY

NFL's first openly Transgender Cheerleader

In 2022, Justine Lindsay made headlines as the first ever openly Transgender National Football Association (NFL) cheerleader. She landed a coveted position on the Carolina TopCats for the Carolina Panthers. Her hiring marked an

important moment for inclusivity and diversity in professional sports. All the more remarkable when one considers the tumultuous relationship the NFL has had with race, class and LGBTQ+ issues.

by (Trans)parent Magazine Editorial Team

“EVERYTHING THAT I DO, IT’S ALWAYS BIGGER THAN ME. IT’S GOING TO HELP THE NEXT GENERATION.”

Thus far, Lindsay has enjoyed two glorious and sometimes challenging seasons with the Carolina Panthers. Though she gave stellar performances at each game, there has been some harassment, death threats and even physical abuse. Nevertheless, Lindsay remains undeterred.

“It just stuns me...it surprises me how people have so much criticism without fully knowing me as a person,” Lindsay said. “Honestly, it’s really sad.”

GLAAD, a LGBTQ+ advocacy group, found in a 2023 study that while acceptance for the LGBTQ+ community has

reached record highs, there continues to be a significant lack of understanding and familiar reality for Trans and Non-binary people. In a 2022 Trevor Project survey of LGBTQ+ youth, 99% noted that seeing LGBTQ+ representation in film and them “feel good” about their gender identity or/and sexual orientation; while 67% felt the same about openly queer professional athletes.

“It really touches your soul because, you know, it’s bigger than me,” she said. “Everything that I do, it’s always bigger than me. It’s going to help the next generation.”

Q & A

What’s your favorite quality about yourself?

I am a great listener. Whether someone is sharing something good, bad, or ugly, I am always a good listening ear to those whom I love.

What is something that makes you feel unstoppable?

Looking back over my life and acknowledging how many remarkable things I have accomplished, makes me feel invincible.

What three words would you use to describe yourself?

Graceful, humble and loving sums me up.

Do you yourself brave?

I feel that I have gone through so many challenges in my life. The fact that I can bounce back from it is simply amazing.

When do you feel the safest?

I love being at home. Being at home, reading a novel or a scripture from the Bible, brings me so much peace.

What’s your favorite childhood memory?

My mom used to take me to the now demolished Eastland Mall in Charlotte NC. They had a very popular ice skating rink on the inside. My Mom would sit and watch me skate for hours, cheering me on the entire time.





Group photo

Photo by Laura Wolff
Lindsay with teammates Peyton Dixon, Camryn Karns, Allison Armstrong and Chris Crawford.

Program Director

Jermaine Nakia Lee

Photos

by Eakin Howard via
Getty Images

What's your biggest life regret so far?

Initially, I really regretted moving back to Charlotte from L.A. I had so many creative and work opportunities that could have propelled my career. But soon I realized, everything happens for a reason.

What's something you're really bad at?

I consider myself a very talented dancer. But I am a really bad tap dancer.

What do you look for when finding new friends?

The vibe, the connection is very important to me when forming friendships. I want friends who are mindful and aware of political-social justice issues. Those topics make for good conversation. A good sense of humor is also attractive.

Does your family have any big traditions?

Sunday dinner at GrandMa's house is a religious tradition in my family. I have a really BIG family. When we depart, it's a no-no to say "goodbye." Only "I love you" and "talk to you later" are acceptable.

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SEARCHING FOR RASHAAD

A Black Trans Woman's Asexual Journey

When I was in kindergarten, I had a boyfriend named Rashaad. One day while preparing for nap time, he handed me a pack of grape Now & Laters and whispered in my ear “do you wanna go together?” I rolled out my nap time mat then whispered “okay, what do I have to do?” Grape Now & Laters were my favorite and I really didn’t have much else going on at the time. “You have to let me bring you candy and sleep beside me during nap time.”

Say less, Rashaad! Boy, you had me at candy. As promised, I received Now & Laters as I napped beside him every weekday for about two weeks. One day I caught a cold and had to stay home. When I returned to school, Rashaad had moved on to a girl in our class named Anjanette. I was devastated. Anjanette was now going to be getting my grape Now & Laters. That really didn’t sit right with my five year old spirit.

It wasn’t too long before my next boo Derrick (aka boyfriend), came along. Derrick had crimson red hair and green eyes. All the little girls in my class thought he was so cute.

He reminded me of a piece of raw chicken, all pasty and fleshy. Nevertheless, Derrick was sweet and generous. He was always down to trade snacks or scratch & sniff stickers.

One day during recess, Derrick pushed this little boy off the swings. Derrick noticed I had been waiting a very long time for him to share the swing. My Derrick pushed

that baby right into the dirt and dared him to cry or tell our teacher.

I can’t even lie, this was my type of carrying on. Five year old me was gagged! When recess was over, Derrick told me to lay my mat beside his during nap time. I was okay with this because I used to do the same thing with the Now & Later man. The difference was, Derrick had a Superman blanket and wanted to do stuff under it. Now as much as I liked Derrick and his oatmeal cream pies, his stickers and the fact that he “Deebo’d” that boy off the swing for me, there was no way I was getting under that blanket. I picked up my mat and moved it right next to the teacher’s desk. Get somebody else to do it, Derrick.

I always remembered these two boys. As I got older, I discovered that guys were usually somewhere between being a Derrick or a Rashaad. Derricks were the typical guy that would show interest in me. They’d tell me things they thought I wanted to hear, give me gifts then expect me to get under the blanket with them. A Rashaad was the rare guy who just wanted to share their space with me with no expressed expectation of getting physical. The only thing going on under the blanket is cuddling on the couch and watching a good movie. I soon realized that there are way more Derricks in the world. And yet, I’ve always held out hope for a Rashaad.

Like a lot of queer and feminine kids, I was sexualized at a very early age. The adults in my life made assumptions about what I was-about what I was doing and what I was going to become. They had no idea that I was out here

By NeShaun Rice

fighting for my life, for years, aggressively avoiding being pulled under blankets. When I was about 12, my grandmother told me if I didn't start "acting like a boy" that I was going to end up a sex worker in prison and die from AIDS. At the time, I had two uncles in prison (her sons). I imagined they were selling whatever sex workers sell and telling her about it in the letters they sent her every week.

Otherwise, how would she know? Why would she put that imagery in my head? If that's what prison was about, I decided I was not going. I knew I liked boys. Always had. I had zero interest in doing anything physical with them. By the time I was 13, my friends were starting to develop crushes and fall into boyfriend/girlfriend relationships. I was still presenting as male, at the time. So I envied their freedom to hold hands and kiss before class. Soon they would graduate to sex, for which I had no interest.

At 15, I started to feel pressure to have sex. Personally, I felt my life was just fine without it but it seemed like everyone I knew had done it at least once and loved it. Being queer made me feel isolated, but my lack of desire to have sex just made me feel weird. Around this same time, my mom told me I was likely transgender and it made all the sense in the world to me. She didn't ask me if I was...she told me I was. That confirmation, knowing that she understood something about what I was going through was extremely comforting. I was hoping she would solve the other part of my puzzle and tell me why I had no interest in sex. The only thing she would repeat is "once you get started, it's going to be hard to stop." I just couldn't imagine that being true for you. But I figured, I probably just need to get my first time out of the way. Surely it would activate that thing inside me that had all my friends going crazy and I'd be closer to normal.

I somehow convinced myself to go ahead



and lose my virginity, on April Fools Day, no doubt. I swear, I could not have picked a more appropriate date. When it was over, I knew what had just happened could not have been what all my friends swore was the best thing in the world. For the life of me, I could not understand why people would want to engage in this aggressive, sweaty, somewhat traumatic activity. Oh my God, there was so much sweat. Somebody please tell me why there's so much sweat? I was more than okay with never having to go through that again. Still something deep within knew that it was probably going to be required of me when I found myself in a relationship. Admittedly, sex got less weird the more I had it. I even occasionally had some great experiences with it. But the feeling remained, I still wasn't sold on the wonders of sex. After going through a few decades worth of Derricks, I finally discovered that I am not weird. I am asexual.

Asexuality

(Ace, for short) is primarily defined as the lack of sexual attraction to others, but it's really not as simple as that. It's a spectrum.

There are three major types of asexuality:

Sex Repulsed - People who have absolutely no interest in sex;

Sex Neutral - People who aren't repulsed by sex, but don't require it or seek it out;

Sex Positive - People who may not have sexual attraction for other people but they do have sex for pleasure.

If I were to choose one of these categories, it would probably be either sex neutral or sex positive. I don't feel I fully fit into either one of these descriptions. I fall somewhere between gray-sexual (I experience sexual attraction occasionally, but not frequently) and demisexual (I require an emotional attachment before becoming sexually attracted to a person). I can experience sexual attraction but it takes some effort to get me there. Most people can look at a person and determine quickly whether any sexual attraction exists. This is known as primary attraction. I, however, usually have to spend time building an emotional/spiritual connection before the possibility of any sexual attraction. Very rarely do I experience

primary attraction to someone. If I do, there is usually a smell/scent component in addition to the physical attraction. I'm talking body chemistry though, not like Chanel Bleu for men.

I've heard it all, my asexuality stems from me getting older, or its a medical issue, or I just haven't met the right person. I've had to explain to them that my health is fine. Plus I'm not that damn old. Truthfully, I've felt this way my whole life. I've always understood that sex was more for my partners pleasure than mine. I can count the number of times I actually enjoyed having sex. In every instance, it was an individual I'd grown to deeply respect and love. As for long term relationships,

that has only been two very special people. Everything else has been pretty much performative.

Dating as a Black ace trans woman has been challenging, to say the least. In the past, where I would operate from a sex neutral stance and just engage to satisfy my partner, I'm now more vocal about what my needs are and how high or low my sexual desire is. It does fluctuate. There are rare occasions when I'm hot and ready like a Little Caesar's pizza. There are times when I'll do my civic duty, if you know what I mean. There are also times when my partner might have to hop on the internet and handle their own business. I sometimes find it necessary to negotiate sex. I want to



make sure my partner is content. But they're not about to wear me out.

I reconnected and fell in love with a Derrick couple years ago after a four year period of abstinence. The connection I felt to this man is something that still baffles me. With him, I had a confounding primary and secondary attraction. This Derrick has the most amazing eyes, oh and



that smile. I swear, I can get lost in his natural scent. He's very chivalrous. I'm talking making sure that he's closest to traffic when we walk down the street. He gets upset if I even think about opening my own door. He always shows respect for my asexuality even if he doesn't really understand it. I tried explaining as best I could but there was clearly some area of discontentment. At some point, he would find himself playing under someone else's covers. Now this, in itself, wouldn't normally be enough for me to vacate a relationship. I understand that mistakes happen. I don't believe in throwing love away when things get rough, especially since it takes so much and so long for me to get there. I wanted to hear him out and I wanted to be open to working it out. I had to decide if I could forgive him and continue forging this path forward together or if I needed to go ahead and reactivate my OkCupid profile.

While listening to him confess what happened and why, I'd prepared a very diplomatic response in my head. I was ready to forge ahead...until...until this very beautiful, this apparently very stupid man told me the reason he cheated. "I cheated because we weren't really having sex like that." I immediately felt attacked. I couldn't see a way back from that. How could he feel comfortable making this my fault? I expected him to take accountability for his actions and not

try to use my asexuality to justify his infidelity. I had gone through most of my life feeling like something was wrong with me because I'm asexual. I refused to be made to feel that way by someone who is supposed to love me. I had the deep suspicion that if I let his infidelity fly, it would become a reoccurring issue in our relationship. Our needs were very different and that's not a bad thing. Our differences couldn't be ignored. So I decided to forgive my Derrick. I also chose to let him go.

As I've grown through that breakup, my first as a fully realized asexual person, I've been reminded to be patient with myself and with any prospective partners. I'm learning about myself more and more each day. Any potential partner must also be willing to learn about my sexual orientation too. I'm intentional about being sure to foster an environment that encourages healthy dialogue so that we can express our wants, needs, what's lacking, what's too much, etc. I have also realized that the same way I expect my partner to accept everything about me and not try to make me be anything other than who I am, I must do the same for them. I can not try to shape them into being who I think I need them to be. As great as my Derrick was and as strong as our connection was, our situation was destined to fail. He was hoping I would one day morph into his Trans porn star. I was hoping he would be my Rashaad. If you think about it, he sorta was like Rashaad, in that, he also gave my Now & Later's to another girl.





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Scan to listen to music

Thee Egyptian Goddess

SONGWRITER,
RECORDING ARTIST
AND MODEL



SOUNDS

Johnáe Thee Egyptian Goddess



Sex on the beach sand all over me all between the sheets all over me

One of a kind, your so fine that you'll find Fine Fine

*You and me we need let go stop at buyou
Get something to eat, wanna know so much about you.
Back to where it was maybe just because you knew what it was, but you didn't discuss
Maybe it's just a dream, hope wake up and see the man you use to be ooo weee*

*We break up we make up with no trust there's no love
You will see what you need let it be, let it be
Be be be ohh just let it be be
It's the sounds we make when we make love
Be be be oh just let it be be
It's the sounds we make when we make love*

*La da da de da La de da de de while you f*** me that's all I get to sing
I don't wanna fuss Capricorn but a cusps
You look so amazing (damn) you just made me cuss*

*We break up we make up with no trust there's no love
You will see what you need let it be, let it be
Be be be oh just let it be be
It's the sound we make when we make love
Be be be ooh Just let it be be
It's the sounds we make when we make love*

*We break up we make up we want trust
There's no love
We break up we make up we want trust
It's the sounds we make when we make love*



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IT STARTS AT HOME

What's your ACES score?

Transgender Women of Color come in all shapes and sizes and come from all places. One of the places we all start is home. Home is meant to be our safe place, where we get our needs met by loving caretakers. The problem is, not everyone's home embodies unconditional love. Often, the first feelings of unworthiness start in our own families. When you are "different," no one will remind you of that more than your loved ones. These criticisms often begin as early as 6 or 7 years old. Families are not typically equipped to understand Trans identity. Maybe you were more drawn to Barbie dolls but Dad said "boys are you supposed to play with cars." Maybe you loved to adorn yourself with your Mom or sisters clothing and jewelry. Maybe presenting and identifying as a woman or girl has always aligned with your true self.

I would suggest you calculate your score on what are called the Adverse Childhood Experiences or "ACES quiz." This short but insightful quiz asks a series of 10 questions (SEE next page) about common traumatic experiences that occur in early life. A higher ACES score can affect one's health throughout their lifetime: poor mental health, chronic physical health conditions and/or substance use disorder. The quiz is intended to be an indicator of how likely one might be to face these challenges.

The quiz considers the challenges an average family might encounter like incarceration, forms of emotional, mental or sexual abuse. These childhood events can be centers of trauma and may be an indicator of how you struggle as an adult with anxiety, depression or other mental health challenges. While racism, natural disasters and housing insecurity are not included, the quiz still gives a good indicator of how your childhood trauma could surface in your adult life.

TAKE THE QUIZ.

You might be surprised to learn something new about yourself.

Remember, everyone is different. Adverse experiences in childhood can affect every child differently. Again, a high ACES score doesn't

necessarily mean you are destined to have social, emotional or health problems later, but it is a scientifically proven indicator. Genetic factors also play a role. Some children are predisposed to be more sensitive to adversity than others. The other factor not accounted for in this quiz is resilience or the ability to cope; to bounce back from whatever life hands you. Did you know that those studied who demonstrated resilient behavior had at least one stable and responsive relationship with a supportive adult? That's all it takes: one person who cared about you. TAKE THE QUIZ. You might be surprised to learn something new about yourself.

by Norena Gutierrez, MS, NCC, LCMHCA

Give us a call if we can help you in your journey to your authentic self.

mehanawellness@yahoo.com

704-492-3147



TAKE THE ACES QUIZ



Before your 18th birthday, for each “yes” answer, add one. The total number at the end is your cumulative number of ACEs. An ACEs score of 3 or more is considered to be high.

- Did a parent or other adult in the household (often or very often) swear at you, insult you, put you down, humiliate you or make you afraid you’d be physically harmed?
- Did a parent or other adult in the household (often or very often) push, grab, slap or throw something at you? Were you ever hit so hard that you bruised or were injured?
- Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever touch or fondle or have you touch their body in a sexual way? Any attempt or actual oral, anal or vaginal intercourse with you?
- Did you (often or very often) feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important? Do you feel your family didn’t look out for each other, feel close to each other or support each other?
- Did you (often or very often) feel that you didn’t have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, or/and had no one to provide for you?
- Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
- Was there domestic violence in your childhood household or surroundings?
- Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker/alcoholic or who used street drugs?
- Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?
- Did a household member go to prison?

We at Mehana Wellness Center are committed to the Trans community in the greater Charlotte area.

Source: NPR, ACEsTooHigh.com. This ACEs Quiz is a variation on the questions asked in the original ACEs study conducted by Center for Disease Control (CDC) researchers.



Model
Zelihanna Torres

Photography
by Jerry Washington
jwashproductions.com



I AM A TRANS- *Conservative*

There are so many critical issues within the Transgender and Non-Binary community. Where does one start: workplace discrimination, bathroom discrimination, incompetent healthcare, U.S. military restrictions, religious oppression, political marginalization, identity dysphoria plus high rates of physical and sexual abuse.

As a Trans-woman of color, I understand the necessity of creating a safe society for all people, regardless of gender identity, race, ethnicity, creed, religion or socio-economic status.

Individuals are now identifying as Transgender before puberty. Considering the fact that 60% of youth suicides are committed by Trans-identified youngsters, we can't afford to ignore the increasing attacks on the Trans community.

The assault on the Trans community by the Florida state legislature is a perfect example. In February 2024, legions of allies convened on Florida's capital in Tallahassee to protest House Bill 1639. This bill would restrict Floridians from placing preferred gender markers on their state ID's. These kind of unfair and unconstitutional bills are being debated by elected officials all over the country, particularly in Southern states.

Now, I consider myself a Trans-conservative. Being Transgender in America comes with a variety of

challenges, including discrimination, lack of access to appropriate healthcare, bullying, social isolation plus unsupportive environments at school and home.



That said, you might be surprised to know that I don't agree with allowing minors to gender transition (in any form) before adulthood.

In general, I believe gender transitioning is a very serious, life altering decision. I've come to notice that many in my circle (who are contemplating this transition) do not fully consider the impact it can have on mental health, academic performance, housing, employment and access to gender-affirming care.

I don't believe many, especially minors, count the costs of gender transition and weigh the intolerance of Transgenderism that exist in people of color communities.

Detransition: to temporarily or permanently transition back to one's assigned, gender at birth. The exact number of individuals who detransition is difficult to determine due to various factors, such as lack of comprehensive data collection, and different definitions of the transitioning. While studies suggest that the rate of detransitioning is relatively low, it consistently increases by over 2% more each year. Meaning, the number of Americans discovering their Trans identity then having a change

Commentary by Zelihanna Torres



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Equity & Social Justice for Gender Diverse People



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CHARLOTTE BLACK PRIDE

2024 Theme
P.O.P
Pride on Purpose
Make it POP!

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Save the Date
July 13-21, 2024

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continued from page 23

of mind increases (not decreases) every year. I would imagine those stats correlate to individuals declaring Transgenderism before adulthood and before counsel with an affirming therapist.

High rates of detransitioning only fuel beliefs that any gender identity other than Cisgender is illegitimate.

I do take some exception to my conservative views on the sexual transition of youth as it relates to Gender Dysphoria. The term refers to psychological distress that results from an incongruence between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender identity.

Gender dysphoria often begins in childhood. Youth or adults who are denied or have no access to gender affirming treatments can become anxious, depressed, socially withdrawn and suicidal.

In general, the suicide attempt rate among transgender persons ranges from 32% to 50% across the U.S. - this percentage is even higher amongst Trans youth. Discrimination, bullying, violence, being rejected by family, friends and community; harassment by intimate partner, family members, police and public; ill-treatment at

healthcare system are the major risk factors that influence the suicidal behavior among Transgender persons. Simply put, if a kid is experiencing suicidal tendencies or attempts due to Gender Dysphoria, I support them transitioning.

Another controversial thought, I get annoyed with the public conflating Transgenderism and being Non-binary. There is a dramatic difference. A Transgender is a person whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

Non-binary (or Genderqueer) is an umbrella term for gender identities that are not solely male or female (identities outside the standard gender binary). Much of the public is already of the mind that Transgenderism is a dysfunctional condition.

Though I believe Non-binary identity is a natural state of being and should be respected, I get frustrated because I identify as a woman. I have a binary gender identity. But so often, in the media, Non-binary identity and Transgenderism are used interchangeably. These identities might be cousins but they are not the same. Most Trans folk of color identify as a women or man. I am a proud Transgender women of color.

CHARLOTTE BLACK PRIDE

2024 Theme
P.O.P

Pride on Purpose
Make it POP!

CHARLOTTEBLACKPRIDE.ORG

Save the Date
July 13-21, 2024

With support from the Southern Trans Youth Emergency Project, we were able to pay for the cost of traveling to an out-of-state healthcare provider and staying overnight, as well as the cost of the prescriptions.

THE GRANT HAS BEEN A LIFESAVER."

- Parent of a Trans Youth in Oklahoma

CAMPAIGN FOR SOUTHERN EQUALITY | **SOUTHERN TRANS YOUTH EMERGENCY PROJECT**

MAKE A DONATION:
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SAVE THE DATE

TIME OUT YOUTH'S
ASCEND *gala*

A CELEBRATION OF LGBTQ+ YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND PROGRESS

POSE

THE CATEGORY IS: GLITZ AND GLAMOUR

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24TH
6:00PM - 10:00 PM
THE REVELRY

Homegoing Celebration
For
Avery Juwan Scurlock
Sunrise August 11, 1995 Sunset June 5, 2019



Tuesday, June 11, 2019
3:00 P. M.
Clark's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church
14743 NC Highway 87 West
Tar Heel, North Carolina 28392
Reverend Stephanie McArthur, Pastor



THAT WAS MY CHILD

The Dangers of Being a Black Transgender Women in North Carolina

STATE OF EMERGENCY (SOE) is an empowerment program for & by Black Transgender Women in Charlotte, NC. SOE's signature projects (exclusively for Black trans Women in Charlotte) include:

- *This publication - (Trans)parent Magazine*
- *An online talk show of the same name*
- *Emergency financial assistance*
- *Empowerment Retreats*
- *Assistance accessing resources for every area of wellness*

SOE was birthed from community forums that I organized at my studio rental facility in 2019. We called those gatherings The Charlotte LGBTQ+ Community Conversation. It was, and still remains, an in-person and virtual gathering place to build community capacity.

At the time, Charlotte was deemed the #1 most dangerous city in America for Trans and Non-binary folk, Black Trans Women in particular. We had recently experienced the back-to-back brutal murders of two Black Trans Women in the Carolinas-only weeks apart. So in addition to exploring strategies for affordable housing, caring for our Black Trans sisters was a primary agenda item and then the COVID-19 virus emerged Dec. 2019. By March 2020, the World Health Organization characterized the outbreak as a pandemic. Soon Charlotte and cities across the nation would be placed on lockdown. Public gatherings of any kind were prohibited. This meant our in-person meetings to raise crisis funds for Black Trans Women were

brought to a halt. Fear and uncertainty consumed most of the community members who regularly convened for The Charlotte LGBTQ+ Community Conversation. Even virtual planning became futile as members were wrestling with contracting the virus, avoiding the virus, financial troubles and in many instances, the death of loved ones.

It was Rev. Sonja Lee of the Lionel Lee Jr. Center for Wellness and I who remained engaged.

We understood, if we (as Cisgender) were having severe hardships during the pandemic then the Trans and Non-binary experience had to be dramatically worst. Understanding the urgency of the moment, we founded SOE and identified five dynamic Black Trans Women to form SOE's Leadership Team. Around that time, Brenda Scurlock of eastern North Carolina reached out to me via SOE's Facebook profile. Having done some research on Carolina based groups that support the Trans community, Ms. Scurlock happened upon SOE. We exchanged mobile numbers and scheduled a call where Ms.Scurlock shared her family's tragic story.

Scurlock's beloved child (born male-Avery Scurlock- but in public identified as a Black Trans Women named Chanel) was discovered shot dead on June 4. 2019. That evening, Chantel had informed her Mother that she'd be grabbing dinner at a Chinese restaurant in the town of St. Paul which was not far from their home. Though Chanel's best friend Shania knew, Ms. Scurlock was unaware that Chanel had also arranged a meet up with a gentleman

by Jermaine Nakia Lee, Co-Founder/Program Director STATE OF EMERGENCY

“I’M PROUD OF YOU FOR BEING UNAPOLOGETIC ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS AND EXPECTATIONS.”

she met on a dating app. Shania, 19 at the time, always discouraged Chanel’s frequent random meet up’s with strangers from the app. Shania disapproved of Chanel’s random date that evening as well and urged her to just go home. Chanel promised her she would cancel the date.

Chanel obviously changed her mind. Robeson County sheriff’s deputies found Chanel’s body in a field just outside of Lumberton county when responding to a report of gun fire. Her car was initially missing but was later recovered. That night, she lost her life to Javaras Hammond, a 20 year old. Hammonds was later arrested at his Lumberton home and charged with first-degree murder plus robbery with a dangerous weapon.

News spreads fast in a small town, especially that of tragedies. Chanel’s local friends (and even national mourners & advocates) began to express their feelings on her Facebook page.

“You lived your life as you wanted,” one friend wrote on Facebook.“ During Chanel’s Homegoing service at Clark’s Chapel AME Zion Church, she was eulogized by Rev. Stephanie McArthur. “We have to believe something good is going to come out of this,” Rev. MacArthur lamented during the service. “Let the family know trouble don’t last always. Better days are coming sooner than later. Nothing can surpass the joy, the love and comfort of Jesus Christ.”



Brenda Scurlock, Mother of the Chanel Scurlock

Tell us something special about Chanel?

Chanel was the light of my life, my sweet baby.

What were some of her goals and aspirations?

Chanel dreamed of a career in fashion design. She was extremely talented and had incredible style. She was also an up-and-coming makeup artist.

Did you and Chanel have a healthy relationship?

Chanel and I were wonderful. I accepted Chanel as she was. All the labels don’t mean anything to me. That was my child. I was concerned about the evilness of this world and expressed that to Chanel quite often. Her murder was my worst nightmare

Before her life was taken, were you aware she identified as transgender?

I always knew Chanel was different...special. I embraced her as she was. She came out as transgender after graduating in 2014

Have there been any developments in Chanel’s murder case?

Chanel was murdered senselessly in June 4, 2019 by a coward. He is currently in a Robeson county jail awaiting trial. He was captured the day of Chanel’s funeral, June 11, 2019.

Anything else you’d like to share with our readers?

I miss Chanel every day. My life will never be the same. Don’t take your loved ones for granted. Take advantage of every precious moment you have with them.



Girls Trip

The Freedom Center for Social Justice

A Journey into Empowerment

Embark on a transformative journey with Girls Trip, a unique program designed to empower and uplift young trans women and non-binary femmes ages 18-30. We offer a safe and supportive space for community building, learning, and growth.

Each session features dynamic panel discussions led by expert speakers, covering a diverse range of topics essential to personal and professional development. From financial literacy to self-defense and mental health, Girls Trip equips participants with valuable skills and insights to navigate life's challenges with confidence and resilience.

workshops



Mental Health



Self-Confidence



Self-Defense



Financial Literacy



Life Skills



Community Building



Health & Wellness



Job Security

SCAN TO REGISTER



Model
Johna'e Wright

Photography
by Jerry Washington
jwashproductions.com

Hair styled
by @LacedUpDolls

THE GURLS

Commentary by Johna'e Wright



OK class, let's begin with a little vocabulary lesson.

Transgender (trans-gen-der)

denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex registered for them at birth.

Cisgender (cis-gen-der)

denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex registered for them at birth; not transgender.

Cis-Het

persons who identify as the gender

they were assigned at birth and they're attracted to people of the opposite gender.

Non-Binary (non-bi-na-ry)

persons who may identify as a separate third gender all together, or identify with more than one gender or no gender at all or have a fluctuating gender identity. Gender identity is separate from sexual or romantic orientation: non-binary people have various sexual orientations.

Femme

one whose behavior and appearance are seen as traditionally feminine.

The Gurls

queer slang for effeminate or femme presenting gay men, transgender women and non-binary femmes. In this feature, I will be exclusively using the term to affectionately describe transgender women.

Now, let's unpack a popular stereotype. Women like me have mainstream careers too. Many Cis-Het people believe that all "the gurls" are sex workers. This is simply not true. Yes, survival work is some of the gurls past, might even be their present. Regardless, sex worker is not the only option for the gurls to make a living. Our futures, as trans women and non-binary femmes are limitless.

No cap, some of the gurls make it out the game alive to find less risky careers. Sadly, some do not. Some lose their lives to cowardly men trying to maintain their position in a secret society. Charlotte NC is the #2 most dangerous city in the country for Black Trans women. Charlotte was formerly #1 a few years ago. Listen, I'm not promoting or condoning the craft. It is what it is - the oldest profession in the world. I'm saying, it's already hard enough being an independent Black woman in America. Now imagine being one of the gurls. - a Trans Black woman. Statistically, the odds are stacked against us.

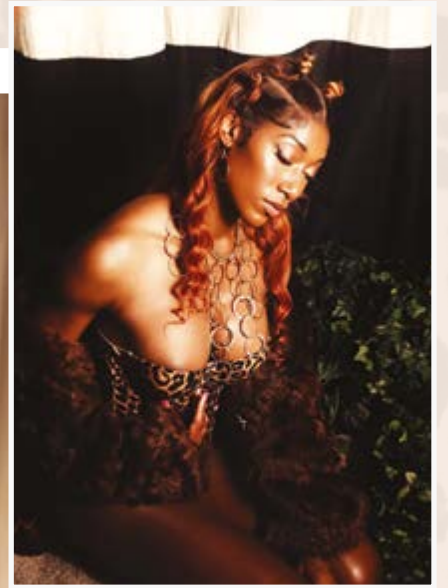
The reality is, a lot of the gurls are viewed as objects, inhuman, a fantasy, a good time or/and a fetish. Most men won't take the time to actually build a relationship with the trans woman they're involved with. Why is that?

I believe it's because these men have ulterior motives. Transitioning is very expensive. Therefore, most gurls aren't "passable." If a majority of the gurls aren't passable, then their male interests are not likely to respect them with a public date or a meeting of the guy's family or an official title - like girlfriend or wife. Many of my beloved sisters have to settle for late night rendezvous's which are just glorified booty calls. We deserve better and must not settle for that treatment.

Imagine showing up for a job interview as Jessica but all your legal documents still read David. Not having a gender marker on one's I.D. that's aligned with one's gender identity leaves the door wide open for employers to discriminate and not hire qualified gurls. Changing one's gender marker is complicated and costly. Perhaps you do get hired.

There's a high probability you'll now deal with work place harassment and a hostile working environment. This could lead to you quitting or eventually getting fired. I'm speaking from personal experience. It usually doesn't work out in the gurls favor. So you do the math, what are the odds of the gurls having to resort to survival work? I recall, years ago, even McDonald's in Fayetteville, NC





refused to hire me. So what's a gurl to do?

Quick story...I bravely enlisted in the U.S. military only for them to deny me. Before the Clinton administration's "Don't ask, Don't tell" law was implemented, there were not any laws or policies in place to protect the gurls. To my disbelief, the recruiters pulled me into their office and asked did I have any surgeries. What was my assigned sex at birth? Though in the system, they identified me as female. Told me the only way they could accept me was if I cut my hair and presented as a man. My financial situation was so grime, I actually considered their offer. Eventually I came to my senses. I knew posing as a man would only lead to harassment and possible violence.

Today is a new day! Today's opportunity for the gurls are miles better - depending on the state she lives in. Though elected officials all over the country, particularly in Southern states, have chose the Trans community as their new target, we must not surrender to their hate. We must prevail. I managed to complete three intense months of training to be apart of the federal aviation club. I'm currently a flight attendant for one of the top airline carriers in the so-called United States. This employer affirms and supports me just as I am. My life has been transformed with flight benefits. Being able to fly anywhere in the world at a moments notice is a dream come true. I now have stellar healthcare benefits. Chile, you know the gurls need their "mones" (hormone medicine) hunny.

And don't forget, I am the one and only "Johnáe Thee Egyptian Goddess" - Recording Artist, Songwriter, Entertainer,Media personality, Professional Dancer, and Model.Loved ones often remind me of my accomplishments. They ask me how I overcame so many insurmountable obstacles. I often reply, "I just kept getting up after every door closed in my face. I never gave up on life. I kept pushing forward." The gurls still have many battles to fight for equality and basic safety. But chile I'm convinced, if we all stick together, we can create a world of tolerance and equity for all. This one is for the gurls.



Do you care about the health of people identifying as LGBTQIA+/QTPOC?

JOIN OUR TEAM

NC LGBTQIA2S+ HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT



**\$25/
HOUR**

Researchers needed to conduct an online health needs assessment survey at Pride events throughout NC.

No research experience necessary.

Pride events occur weekends in June, July, August, September and October. Researchers need not be available for all dates. We need a large, robust team to cover the whole season.

Individuals identifying as LGBTQIA+/QTPOC encouraged to apply.

This is a survey by and for the LGBTQIA+/QTPOC community, led by LGBTQIA+/QTPOC community members. Contact Juliana Wilson juliana.wilson@dhhs.nc.gov.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Public Health

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TRANSPARENT

SUPPORT BLACK TRANS WOMEN IN CHARLOTTE

Transparent is a magazine unapologetically celebrating the lives of Black Trans Women in Charlotte. To be published in February, the glossy print magazine will include photo shoots, essays, personal reflections, and articles written by Charlotte-area Black Trans Women and national trans figures.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT BY MAKING A DONATION THROUGH ADVERTISING TODAY!

Full Page

\$400

8.5" x 11"

(plus 1/8" bleed)

Half Page

\$250

8" x 5.125"

Quarter Page

\$150

3.875" x 5.125"

ADVERTISING DEADLINE: Nov. 15th, 2024

To place an ad, contact StateofEmergencync@gmail.com or Jermaine Nakia Lee at jermanienakialee@gmail.com / 980.309.1318



Published by State of Emergency, a program of the Lionel Lee Jr. Center for Wellness, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Model
Kiera Cherry

Photography
by Jerry Washington
jwashproductions.com

CONCRETE JUNGLE

Kiera Cherry



Q & A *with Kiera Cherry*

What's the worst advice you've ever been given?

Ride for the ones you rock with!

Who has been the biggest influence on you?

The Lord God and the love of God have been my biggest influence.

Who was your first kiss with and did you enjoy it?

I won't name names but it was a girl. Yeah, I didn't really care for the experience. LOL

Do you believe in love at first sight?

Absolutely! I do. I believe in true love.

What was your experience in high school like?

This is a loaded question. For me, high school had its highs & lows. Unforgettable moments and some I'd rather forget. But I wouldn't trade my experience for anything.

Who was the last person you talked to on the phone?

My bestie....we talk like on the hour. They would kill me if I shared their name. I'm tempted to do it anyway.

What's one thing you would change about yourself right now?

My financial circumstances need improvement ASAP! I need to hit the lottery, no cap!

If you got to live in another country for a year, where would you live?

Thailand because they're cool with the girlz, United Kingdom or Greece are options too!

What's your favorite genre of music and why?

Take me to church with some gospel music. I was raised up listening to gospel. Listening to it is my form of meditation.

What is your 5-year life plan?

STABILITY. Secure a great job with a high salary and benefits. Relocate to a different city. Become a homeowner - a home with a good amount of land. Own a hot vehicle. Oh and, I want to have a thriving small business on the side. I want what everyone wants - to be happy and successful.



Model
Johnáe Thee Egyptian Goddess

Photography
by Jerry Washington
jwashproductions.com

Hair Styled by
@Lacedupdolls

Lyrics of LEVII'S JEANS by
Beyoncé
featuring Post Malone
From the
Cowboy Carter album

COWBOY

Scan to listen to song





SONGWRITER, RECORDING ARTIST AND MODEL

Johnáe Thee Egyptian Goddess

You call me pretty little thing
And I love to turn him on
Boy, I'll let you be my Levi's jeans
So you can hug that ass all day long
Come here, you sexy little thing
Snap a picture, bring it on
Oh, you wish you were my Levi's jeans
Way it's poppin' out your phone
Love you down to the bone

Baby, you play too much (You play too much)
Sendin' me super shots (Two shots)
I'm lookin' super hot (I'm hot)
I got the perfect pose (She snappin')
I'm a fuckin' animal (She sexy)
I'm a fuckin' centerfold (She ready)
Saddle up, I love to go (Saddle up, saddle up, saddle up, saddle up)
Too tough, no primadonna
Possess too much persona
He said, "Where you get that from, uh?
You need to meet my mama
She'd be at church all day" (All day)
"Come be my Nick at Nite" (Night, night, night, night)
"So we can run it back" (Back, back, back, back)
"And be nostalgia-like" (Like, like, like, like)
And, every time I see you, I just wanna grab you (You, you)
And I let you touch it and you can't let it loose (Oh, oh)
Mocha-choka latte caramel, oh, I act a fool
Every hour on the hour, this is waitin' for you

You call me pretty little thing
And I love to turn him on
Boy, I'll let you be my Levi's jeans
So you can hug that ass all day long

(That ass all day long)
Come here, you sexy little thing
Snap a picture, bring it on
Oh, girl, I wish I was your Levi's jeans
The way you poppin' out my phone
I love you down to the bone

Baby, you know I'm on my bullshit
(Bullshit), I'll let you ride it (Ride it)
Rodeo in your room, that shoot breaks loose with perfect timin' (Perfect timin')
Love it when you tease me in them jeans, girl, you don't need designer
And when that thing on hydroplane, baby girl, you the pilot
And I ramble on, I could go on, but I'm goin' on silent (I'm goin' on silent)
So hop out the phone and bring that shit on, 'cause I'm goin' nosedive (I'm goin' nosedive)
And every time, you know just what to do (Mm)
No one ever got me going quite like you
Baby, let me rattle that snake with my venom
Denim on denim on denim on denim
Give you high fashion in a simple white tee
Give you these blues, it's in my genes
On my sister, on Celestine
God light shinin' through the in-between
Thigh gap saddle his leather seats

Come on, you pretty little thing
Girl, I wanna take you home
You know I'd like to be your Levi's jeans (I'll be your Levi's jeans)
So I can hug that ass all day long (Oh, baby, hold me all day long)
Come here, you sexy little thing (Come here, you sexy little thing)
Snap a picture, bring it on (Snap a picture, bring it on)

Oh, girl, I wish I was your Levi's jeans
The way you poppin' out my phone
I love you down to the bone

Ooh, I love you, baby, yeah, you drive me crazy
Need you all night long, you're my Renaissance
Baby, lovin' you, that's all I see
In this crazy world, you're the best of things



Black People and PrEP

Despite accounting for 40% of new HIV diagnoses in 2021, **Black people represented 14% of PrEP users in 2022.**

Percent of New HIV Diagnoses, 2021

Percent of PrEP Users, 2022

HIV in the South

In 2021, Black people accounted for nearly half of all new HIV diagnoses in the South (49%), despite accounting for 19% of the Southern population.

49% of all new HIV diagnoses in the South

19% of Southern population

Impact on Black Women

Black women experience even greater disparities in HIV-related health outcomes than Black men. The rate of **Black women** living with diagnosed HIV was 16.6 times that of **White women** in 2021.

Black People and Viral Suppression

In 2021, fewer **Black people** living with HIV were virally suppressed than their White counterparts.

Percentage of Virally Suppressed

Rate of Viral Suppression, by Race/Ethnicity, 2021

Signs of Progress

Progress has been made, especially in testing. In 2021, **Black people had the highest percentage of people that have ever been tested for HIV (56% of any race/ethnicity)**. In comparison, the national average was just 35%.

56% of any race/ethnicity

35% national average

AIDSvU.org | X @AIDSvU | Source: AIDSvU, CDC

HIV in Black Communities

Despite making up 13% of the U.S. population, Black Americans are disproportionately impacted by HIV. In 2021, Black people made up to 40% of the over 1 million people living with HIV in the U.S. and over 40% of new HIV diagnoses in the same year.

Percent of people living with HIV, by Race/Ethnicity, 2021

Percent of new HIV diagnoses by Race/Ethnicity, 2021

● Black ● Hispanic/LatinX ● White ● Other

AIDSvU

Become a certified Community Health Worker!

- Earn your State Approved CHW Certification!
- FREE Tuition
- Mentorship from CHWTP Staff and our Recovery Support Liaisons I & II

Enroll Today
www.safeharborct.org

A Quality Comprehensive Health Center Program

How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma

Predictability
Everyone feels surprised. Trauma survivors often prefer predictability because they feel safer.

Attribution
Don't refer to the person's "abandoning, erratic, mean, behavior." Call it for what it is - trauma.

Reciprocity
Live what you also need to receive: listening, empathy, and empowerment.

Support
Be kind, loving, patient, but emotionally set limits - you have needs too!

Choice
It can be a big trigger when a survivor is denied choice and control. Offer, collaborate, and negotiate.

Space
Allow time for the survivor to calm down and have perspective. Trauma survivors often have difficulty regulating emotions and take longer to calm down.

Perspective
Be aware when said or intended "don't take responsibility for what is not yours - gently."

Recalibration
Rid "over-reactions," "over-sensitive," or "over" anything from your vocabulary.

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echo
National Center for Cultural Competence

HOW FAR?

We recently released a report on the extreme distances families of trans youth are traveling to get them the medical care they need.



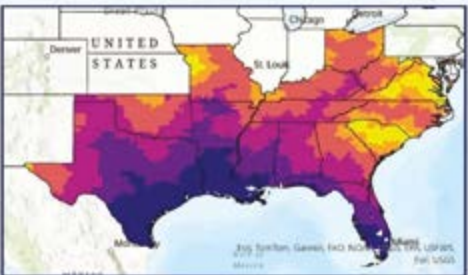
1



KEY: BAN IN EFFECT • SOME PARTS OF BAN ON HOLD BY COURT ORDER, OTHER RESTRICTIONS IN EFFECT • BAN SET TO TAKE EFFECT • BAN UNDER CONSIDERATION • RESTRICTION ON HOLD BY COURT ORDER • NO BAN

Gender-affirming care bans have passed in 24 states, and 89% of trans youth in the South can't access the healthcare they need to thrive.

2



Key

- <1 hr
- 1-2 hrs
- 2-4 hrs
- 4-6 hrs
- 6-8 hrs
- >8 hrs

For families of trans youth, these bans mean hours-long drives, or even flights, to get their child life-saving medical care – and these trips must be made 3-4 times per year.

3

Each time they are forced to travel, families are incurring myriad additional costs. Common considerations include:

- Gas
- Meals
- Hotels
- Time off work and school
- Travel at destination
- Childcare

4

Receipt for a Sample Itinerary
Driving from Louisville, KY to Pittsburgh, PA

Gas and Mileage	\$519.92
<small>Based on the IRS standard mileage rate for a 776-mile trip</small>	
Hotel Room in Pittsburgh	\$215.00
<small>Based on Kayak.com's average nightly price of a 3-star hotel in Pittsburgh in May 2024</small>	
Meals for 2 People for 2 Days	\$88.00
Total:	\$822.92

For example – for a family that needs to make this trip 4 times a year, they can expect to spend \$3,291 on just traveling to the care their child needs – not including the cost of care if insurance doesn't cover it.

5

The parent of a trans youth in Oklahoma shared this with us:

“My daughter is deeply affected every time her care is impacted. She said on the drive that having to go to another state – one that is even more conservative than our own – was humiliating and scary... The whole trip was fairly miserable, even though we were relieved to know we could continue her care, because of how all these things built up.”

6

If you are the parent of a transgender youth in a Southern state where access to gender-affirming care has been restricted, **please reach out for support**. The Southern Trans Youth Emergency Project provides:

- Up-to-date info on the landscape for trans youth medical care access
- Patient navigation services to legal out-of-state options
- Grants of \$500 to support with increased costs

www.southernequality.org/styep

CAMPAIGN FOR SOUTHERN EQUALITY | SOUTHERN TRANS YOUTH EMERGENCY PROJECT



*“I am whole. I
am finally free”*

Model

Johna'e Wright

Photography by

Jerry Washington
jwashproductions.com

Hair styled by

Timothy Gibson @
ItzKutzbyGibson

THE GIFT: PRETTY IN P I N K

A prose poem by Johna'e Wright

There exists a feminine gift that some women were born with, a feminine gift that some naturally possess. Some women despise their gift. Some women freely give their gift away. Some see their gift as a burden...some take advantage of its powers...some get taken advantage of. But it's the most precious gift that life has to offer. Some would literally risk death to possess this gift-the gift of procreation. It is the manifestation of a being, a soul that has been lying dormant inside. I made a conscious effort to make an irreversible sacrifice. This was a sacrifice necessary for me to live again, to live authentically.

The sacrifice was my rebirth. The sacrifice paved the way for me to live an abundant life. My hope was that this sacrifice would finally position me to be treated like a God damn human being. Yes, I made a loaded decision. Yes, I am finally at peace. My caregivers laid me down on a cold surgical table. No longer a seed bearer. No more appendages. Early one brisk morning just after 5:15am, I came to the resolution that there was no turning back. The pain was excruciating. My genitalia being remolded and transformed from beneath. The agony and emotional suffering often seemed unbearable. Was it worth it? Heart is racing. Hormones raging. A womb vacuum and an intricate highway of catheter tubes drain me. I had to re-learn how to walk. Adult potty training became a necessity. Prescribed was a voluminous bag full of medication. To actually feel contractions, heat flashes and night sweats constantly with no remedy. Sleepless nights.

But life didn't pause because I had exchanged one gift for another. Responsibilities still lumed. I endured the searing discomfort to manage a series of job interviews. Endured the initial depression that my caregivers had warned me about, the intense feeling of vulnerability and uncertainty. *(deep breath)* Soon I would come to realize that those episodes were a Trans version of being in labor, giving birth to my newly affirmed body. I experienced the labor associated with my destiny, my purpose, my womanhood. My affirmed womb represented my newborn baby. I am Mother of the divine creation that has long dwelled inside of me. I am whole. I am finally free. My first "birds and the



Johna'e Wright

bees talk” with my Mother cemented my daughterhood. I am a woman. This womb requires a specific instruction manual. No camouflage. I now possess that sweet, coveted gift-pretty & pink. No more awkward bathroom visits. Gender marker legally and medically aligned. My gender assignment at birth is my deepest secret. Wasn't long before I fell in love with a remarkable man. He introduced me to another level of happiness. Should I tell him? Will he forsake me if I do? Does it even matter? (*deep breathe*) He accepts me. He is willing to risk it all. But there's one lingering problem. To be in love, giving a man my new found virtue and sharing an uncanny measure of intimacy is intense. Having a hyper awareness that he's placing his seed inside my promise box. Is he subconsciously expecting a harvest? Then it dawns on me, I don't actually have the gift of procreation. Does that make me less of a woman? Hell no, but still it hurts.

I literally experience physical and phantom sensations of labor. I'm grateful for my beautiful flower. But that does not quench my disappointment. It pains me to look my beloved in his eyes and tell him that my gift can never produce an offspring. I so want to bless him with a gift of our creation. I know that's his hearts desire too.

Am I good enough to satisfy my man? He deserves all of his hearts desires. The pressure of wanting to please him with a reflection of himself shackles me. My mind is embattled. “Why God? Why wasn't I just born a cis-het woman?” Of course, I knew these limitations existed. I guess I succumb to delusions of grandeur at some point. Is it fair for me to expect him to just compromise?

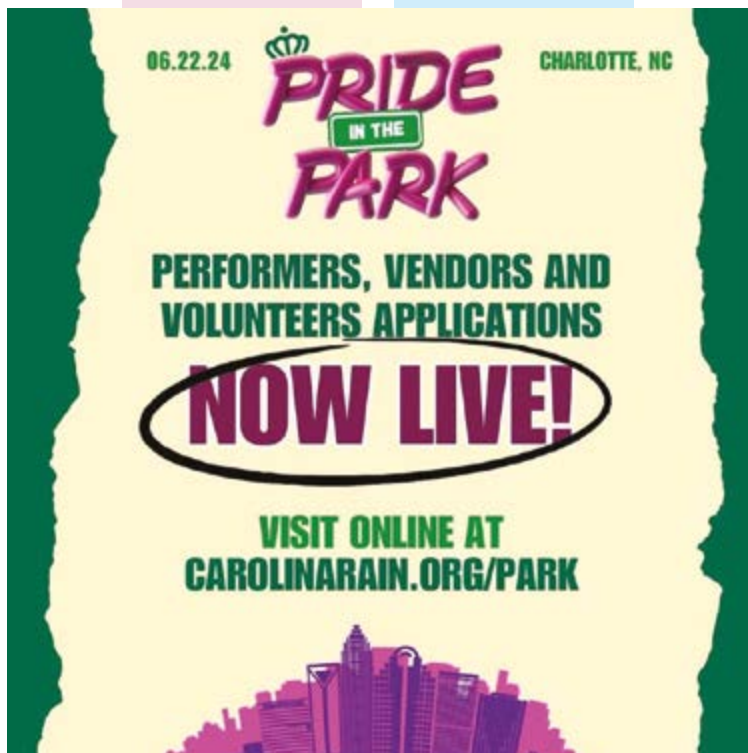
(*deep breathe*) Suddenly a peace comes over me. A still voice reminds me that Motherhood is not limited to birth. My light, my intuition and my ability to nurture define my Motherhood. I am the ying and yang. I am the sum of ALL things divine. I shall strive to make the very best of this thing called life. Giving it my best shot. Life is fleeting and short, especially for my clan. The ability to love unconditionally; to provide wisdom, guidance and understanding; to protect loved ones at all costs; to lend a helping hand; to teach; to correct; to show patience; to care, to illuminate peace and to create a safe place is my womanly duty. It is my superpower. That's what Motherhood is truly about. So to my future bundle of joy, I'm up for the challenge.

Momma got you!





“Momma got you”



06.22.24

PRIDE IN THE PARK

CHARLOTTE, NC



06.22.24

PRIDE IN THE PARK

CHARLOTTE, NC



Model
NeKeith

Photography
by Jerry Washington
jwashproductions.com



NEKE





ITHE





“Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without.”

—William Sloane Coffin Jr.



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