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they want YOU to
know about love.

YOU BETTA WORK!

BY: KIMBERLY BOUYER

RuPaul and Georges LeBar: Even in a male tuxedo, the famous drag queen will NEVER “Sashay Away!” RuPaul’s tuxedo style is golden boldness. The shimmering floral jacket with its accents of black velvet on the lapels and pockets compliments Georges’ all-black tailored look. The married couple also flaunts very similar black designer shoes. Wearing large-rimmed eyewear and a simple necklace accessory while holding a black satin clutch, RuPaul is ready for an evening out with his husband.

RuPaul: That’s right, Shantay! You’re Carmen from head to toe! RuPaul’s black sequin mermaid gown with the cascading fire-orange red roses is sultry glam. Black mesh fabric drapes over the coordinating red fishtail bottom. The side swept platinum blonde hairstyle (yes, with the trademark rose near the ear) channels Dorothy Dandridge from the ether. Imitating the 1950s fiery vixen, RuPaul completes the iconic style with flawless make-up and large, sparkly hoop earrings.





Niicy Nash and Jessica Betts: Do we have a Love Jones? Amorously clawing each other, the Black married couple adorned their sofa like a beautiful Christmas ornament! Niicy's fire brick red gown upgrades the neutral-colored room. The bling on her leather anklet coordinates with Jessica's swagger. Jessica wears all-black androgynous fashion with eye-catching jewelry at the neckline.

Wanda Sykes and Alex Sykes:

Our beloved couple. Wanda dons the red carpet with a fun and flirty cocktail dress in mauve sequin. The deep plunging v-line, peep-toe pumps, and modest accessories complete the look. Alex's ivory suit with the black rhinestone detail at the waist compliments her silver clutch and strappy, evening sandals.



Milan Christopher and Miles Brock:

The Love & Hip-Hop couples' acts of mutual love are disappearing, but their fashion lives on! When the rap lyrics were in sync, they cruised the scene in relaxed jeans, backward caps, and of course, the hip-hop bling. Both Milan and Miles sport the casual urban streetwear in flattering shades of burgundy. But Miles spits his own beat with an olive-colored t-shirt.



Billy Porter: Keep playing the red carpet like it's a sport of the gods! Billy's black, velvet tuxedo-gown radiates unisex charm. The cropped tuxedo jacket, black bowtie, and white tailored shirt with ruffled cuffs adorns the bodice. Below the waistline, Billy stuns us with a dramatic ball gown silhouette.



Billy Porter and Adam Smith: We know you do “sissy with a heart of gold” really well, Billy. But your male flare is just as spectacular! Billy's formal wear in monochromatic hues of gray and champagne dazzle the red carpet. The silk cape with the glitzy embellishments adds flamboyance to the traditional look. Adam, too, is a fashionista with his magenta pink bowtie, customizing his classic ensemble.

Janelle Monáe and Tessa Thompson: Janelle harmonizes with Tessa, wearing a sexy, black bra underneath her chiffon blouse. She also flashes a little thigh in the polka dot pencil skirt. The high fashion statement, of course, is not complete without sassy accessories and her signature pageboy hat. Tessa strikes her goddess pose in a backless, chiffon gown. The black-trimmed ruffles around the neck, arms, and wrists hail from the enchanted kingdom of glamour!





OUR LOVE HAS ITS EYES ON GOD

CELEBRATING THE SAME-SEX WEDDING IN THE BLACK LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

BY: KIMBERLY BOUYER

The traditional wedding fashion meets modern accessory flair. The earthy, boho headpiece with the elegant white gown adds a splash of haute couture. The shimmering head wrap and the long sleeve dress with lace detailing the sleeves and bodice complete the bridal ensemble.

The bridegrooms don a classic look that never goes out of style. The tailored tuxedos in white with the black fabric trim strike the perfect balance. The coordinating neckwear and white calla lily boutonnieres on the black lapels dazzle the wedding day.

THE TEA - TYREE WATKINS

A Picture is Worth a 1,000 Words

I spy with my little eye Family Matters actor, Darius McCrary, also known as Superhead's ex, with his arms around Sidney Starr, a transgender woman. Starr released the pic of the two of them, which caused tongues to wag about a potential romance. Everyone is asking if the actor is the transgender rapper's new boo. However, Mr. McCrary is saying, "Not so fast. You didn't see what you think you saw." He denies these allegations and maintains that he is very much a heterosexual man who loves women. I guess he means all women, except for the transgender ones.



Blind Item

Which sexy television actor has the world believing he is as heterosexual as they come and has an active dating life with women? The reality is that homeboy uses his female co-stars as beards by putting out false stories of romance when he really knows that men are more his type. I ain't hatin'. Do you boo!

See pg. 16 for sources

Is He for Real?

Former rapper, reality TV star, and podcaster, Joe Budden, has come out! Maybe? He specifically said he was bisexual during his recent podcast in which he discussed his thoughts on the LGBTQ community.



Could this be true? Is there a chance we could soon see Lil Nas X and Joe Budden walking hand in hand on the red carpet? One can only hope.

Who is Claiming Whom?

During a concert, Jaden Smith, Will and Jada's son, told the crowd that Tyler The Creator was his boyfriend. His exact words were, "Tyler The Creator is my motherfucking boyfriend! It's true! Tyler The Creator is my fucking boyfriend. If you take anything away from this fucking show, that's what you take away!" So, Jaden clearly claims Tyler The Creator, but the rapper's response wasn't a yes or no. It was more like, "Ha-ha, nigga you be crazy!"



Door shut firmly.
No light, no eyes, no hate.
Silent.
Safe.
Suffocating.

Door shut firmly.
No one has to know,
What lies in the dark.
Silent.
Safe.
Suffocating.

Perfect smile. Perfect family.
Perfect.
Perfect.
Perfect.
Perfect-
ly suffocating.

Hiding ourselves in safe places,
Closed tightly, small and unseen.

Afraid of the world,
Afraid of the eyes,
Afraid of the words,
Afraid of the judgment,
Afraid of the pain,
Afraid of the hands,
Afraid of a wrathful god or God,

All things that cut deeply.

Here in the closet,
Door shut firmly.
Where no light, no eyes, no hate

Where no one but the darkness can reach.

Silent.
Safe.
Suffocating.



A SAFE PLACE

By: Tori Manning



LOVE IS LOVE - BROOKES WASHINGTON

Black queer love exists. It breathes and feels and rejoices just like any love out there. However, we know that queer love, especially for women of color, has not always been accepted within the black community. "Black lesbians have ties to an African-American community that is often non-accepting of homosexuality" (Mays et al.). Furthermore, black lesbians could face "racism, sexism, and homophobia" when encountering others in and outside of the gay community (Mays et al.).

That is why Social Coffee has decided to focus and embrace our sisters in same-sex relationships now more than ever. Social Coffee's Brookes Washington sat down with her sister, Nicole Washington, to discuss what black queer love meant to her and her partner, Dinnelle Cormier.

Q: What is your definition of love, and do you think black love is different?

A: My definition of love is unconditional love through the good, the bad, and the ugly. And yes! I do believe black love is different because it gives off a different kind of essence. Of course, all love is wonderful, but black love has an almost unexplainable power. Our culture and ancestry allow us to love, speak, sing, dance and communicate in many ways. Black love is just unique!

Q: What has being in a relationship with a woman taught you about yourself?

A: Being in a relationship with a woman has taught me self-love, emotions, and insecurities can be appreciated.

Because when I was in heterosexual relationships, the men I was with were not open to those types of discussions. Most of them definitely did not make my insecurities better. But, of course, I'm speaking from my own experiences because some women may go through the same in lesbian relationships.

Q: How do you view your sexuality?

A: I view my sexuality as "open." In terms of being open to love, anyone who accepts it and appreciates it.

Tell us your love story.

Nicole's Story: My lesbian love story starts in late 2014 at a local hospital in New Orleans. We were both working in the same field, just in two different places within the building. One day, I went to her area to borrow some supplies, and she was standing on a ladder, stocking. She was engaging in conversation with a coworker, and then I saw her smile, and I was crushed in a good way, of course. And on another day, not long after, she visited my area and I was not shy. I started the conversation, and

“Of course, all love is wonderful, but black love has an almost unexplainable power.”

from that moment on, we were inseparable. Yes, we had our issues, just like any other couple, but we were connected in an out of body or on another planet kind of way. Today, we are stronger than we were back then, and I pray that we continue on our journey of love.

Q: If there is one thing you'd like the audience to know about the beauty of your love, please tell!

A: I would like the outside audience to know that love is really love. It's not just a great post for social media. The beauty that comes with love changes daily because every day, I have learned something new. Or learned to appreciate the past and learn from it to become better in my future. To all the readers, I've learned to appreciate and protect the beauty within my love, and so should you.

*See pg. 16 for sources

Throughout history, the LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual) community have tried to fight the oppression that has been taught and spoken about them from damaging misinformation and damaging stories from those who are simply homophobic. "In the late 1960s, as social attitudes about sexuality became more liberal, the concept of radical challenge to gay and lesbian oppression became more visible. Inspired by the aggressive tactics of other political activists such as anti-war protestors and the Black Power movement, gay and lesbian activists were willing to move beyond the generally polite efforts of the homophile organizations" (Coon 26).

Sexuality, gender differences, and orientations

are topics that are difficult for many to still wrap their minds around, let alone accept and celebrate those differences. There may be "ample literature on anti-gay and gender bias as they impact educational settings in general ... less attention has been given to these matters as they affect Black students" (Majied 151). Yes, LGBTQIA+ history is taught in certain ways, and young adults can easily look up to members of that community, but the Black LGBTQIA+ members are rarely ever spoken about or included in history lessons of any kind. History books, lesson plans, and even literature leave out the pivotal roles that Black LGBTQIA+ people have played throughout America's history. How is anyone in the Black community supposed to have someone to look up to when they aren't taught about some of the most



**"IT IS NOT OUR DIFFERENCES
THAT DIVIDE US. IT IS OUR
INABILITY TO RECOGNIZE,
ACCEPT, AND CELEBRATE
THOSE DIFFERENCES."**

- AUDRE LORDE

important people in history who have made a significant difference in other people's lives?

BLACK LGBTQIA+ DISCRIMINATION & REPRESENTATION

BY: WERONIKA RACZEK, LAUREN DOLESE, & EVAN BUTLER

There were and are many pivotal Black activists that have helped start a movement and added to the activism for the LGBTQIA+ community. A timeline posted on NBC News' website starts with Gladys Bentley (1907-1960), who was a "gender-bending performer during the Harlem Renaissance." According to a belated obituary published in 2019, The New York Times said Bentley, who died in 1960 at the age of 52, was 'Harlem's most famous lesbian' in the 1930s and "among the best known black entertainers in the United States." Then there was Bayard Rustin (1912-1987). He was an LGBTQ and civil rights activist best known for being a key advisor to Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Rustin was the one who "organized the 1963 March on Washington and was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom." It wasn't until 2020 that Gov. Gavin Newsom pardoned Rustin for his arrest in 1953, when he was found having sex with two men in a parked car in Pasadena. Rustin served 50 days in Los Angeles County jail and had to register as a sex offender. In pardoning Rustin, Newsom noted how LGBTQ people were unjustly punished for their sexuality by U.S. law enforcement at the time of Rustin's arrest. There was James Baldwin (1924-1987), "who was best known for

his 1955 collection of essays, 'Notes of a Native Son,' and his groundbreaking 1956 novel 'Giovanni's Room,' which depicts the themes of homosexuality and bisexuality." Audre Lorde (1934-1992) described herself as a "black, lesbian, feminist, mother, poet, warrior." She made lasting contributions in the fields of feminist theory, critical race studies and queer theory through her pedagogy and writing. Ernestine Eckstein (1941-1992) was a leader in the New York chapter of Daughter of Bilitis. She was the first lesbian civil and political rights organization in the United States. The list goes on filled with amazing people who fought for LGBTQIA+ rights, but we aren't taught enough about these amazing individuals.

While everyone fought for the opportunity to be treated equally, Black Americans struggled and still struggle today to find themselves as equal. In Kamilah Majied's article, "The Impact of Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression Bias on African American Students," she says, "Part of the legacy of slavery and racism in America is the distorted conceptualization of Black sexuality which has been promoted and internalized by Black people (Hill Collins 2004). Therefore, sexual orientation and gender expression bias have a unique presentation in Black educational settings. In fact, such settings are often confounded by the combination of stereotypic views of what it means to be Black and to be gay. For these reasons, it is worthwhile to consider how Black youth are impacted by sexual orientation issues and conceptualization of Black sexuality" (152).

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Even with all of these amazing Black activists, the Black people struggle with being open with who they are as individuals. Not only do Black Americans have to deal with the constant oppression and racism, they now have to hide who they are from the world just because of the fear of more oppression and racism. In an interview with NBC News, director of the National Black Justice Coalition David J. Johns said, "Racism combined with the forces of stigma, phobia, discrimination and bias associated with gender and sexuality have too often erased the contributions of members of our community."

There was a study done in 2007 that used data from the National School Climate Survey. It revealed that 80% of students of color reported hearing homophobic remarks made in school, while 60% of students of color reported that they were being verbally harassed because of their gender expression (Diaz and Kosciw, 2009). Only 38% of African American students who have experienced homophobia and harassment have reported these incidents and of that 38%, most of the students felt that these issues were not addressed effectively enough by authorities. The study also found that 33% of African American students reported having been sadly subjected to physical violence simply over their sexual orientation.

It's important that we start adding the important Black pioneers and Black activists who have done so much for the Black LGBTQIA+ community. These people have helped others within their community feel more accepted and welcomed, not be fearful for their lives.

Moving beyond the past and the experiences of Black LGBTQIA+ cultural icons, recent studies have shown clear links between racial and sexual orientation discrimination in all aspects of life. Beyond childhood experiences, the discrimination these individuals face carries over into employment, healthcare, housing, and public spaces. White supremacy and heteronormativity make living their lives and their truths more challenging than anyone deserves. The unique experience of being both Black and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community leads to a much higher chance of discrimination. Non-Black members of this community may be able to or chose to conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity from those who may commit violence or discrimination against them, but being first and foremost judged by the color of your skin leaves no space for this.

In a 2020 study by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, it was showed that "24% of Black LGBTQ adults experienced sexual orientation-based

discrimination as a customer in a store, bar or restaurant in the last three years" while "46% of Black transgender adults experienced gender identity-based discrimination" (Morales). Another study, also conducted in 2020, by the Center for American Progress showed that 25% of "Black LGBTQ individuals reported experiencing discrimination" during encounters with the police versus only 13% of "white LGBTQ respondents." When it comes to employment related discrimination Black LGBTQIA+ participants reported higher rates of discrimination affecting "their ability to be hired to some degree," "their ability to retain employment," as well as their "decisions about where to work in order to avoid discrimination" compared to their white peers (Mahowald). These employment related issues paired with discrimination by lending institutions have led to higher rates of poverty, homelessness, and overall financial struggles among Black LGBTQIA+ individuals. Unsurprisingly, experiencing discrimination and violence on so many fronts impact the mental health and physical well-being of Black LGBTQIA+ people. Compared to the 88% of white people who have reported how "discrimination has negatively affected their psychological well-being," a whopping 95% of Black members of the community reported the same

"THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCE OF BEING BOTH BLACK AND A MEMBER OF THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY LEADS TO A MUCH HIGHER CHANCE OF DISCRIMINATION."

(Mahowald). Higher numbers are reported for Black individuals than white when it comes to the same effect on spiritual well-being and physical.

This discrimination is not limited to heteronormative spaces. Black individuals as well as other people of color, face discrimination within the LGBTQIA+ community. Besides racist treatment from white members of the LGBTQIA+ community, pushes within the community for rights like marriage equality have been cited as luxuries compared to what survival. Isaiah Wilson, leader of the National Black Justice Coalition has stated "When you're continuing as a community to face discrimination, harassment, even violence...marriage is a luxury. Surviving, being able to participate in community, being able to provide for our families — if I can't do that, who's thinking about a marriage certificate?" (Prichep). Safety and protection from racial discrimination, along with protection from gender-identity and sexual orientation-based discrimination, are rightfully at forefront of Black members of the LGBTQIA+'s minds. Worrying about any rights beyond the right to live and exist without the threat of violence sounds like a luxury.

As noted by The New York Times article, "Black Trans Women Seek More Space in the Movement They Helped Start" many of those who pioneered what is often referred to as the "gay rights movement" were transgender Black women, who were left out of the progress. Isabella Grullón Paz and Maggie Astor note that the more recent Black

In 2020, following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Dominique Fells, Riah Milton, and Tony McDade, the separation between the two movements diminished. So many Black transgender women are killed each year "...that the American Medical Association has declared it an epidemic" (Paz and Astoe). Following the various 2020 protests, "...donations to grass-roots organizations that help trans [B]lack people, bail funds and individual fund-raisers [surged]," allowing the conversation about the Black trans experience to continue even further. Hopefully, this attention to Black trans violence and discrimination will continue.

Marsha P. Johnson, the mother of the Black LGBTQIA+ movement, said it best: "As long as gay people don't have their rights all across America, there's no reason for celebration". No doubt that things for this community have changed a bit since Johnson was alive. Since her death in 1992, Massachusetts became the first state in the United States to legalize gay marriage (2004), a San Franciscan federal judge decides that gay and lesbian people have the constitutional right to marry (2010), and Obergefell v. Hodges made the U.S. Supreme Court declare that same-sex marriage be legal in all 50 states (2015). Although these are giant milestones for the LGBTQIA+ community, are these enough? What does this mean for how this community is represented in movies, music, television, etc.?

Let's start with the most recent human representation in hip

hop media. One of the biggest names in music right now is Lil Nas X. At 22, he achieved international fame and was atop the Hot 100 Billboard charts with his single, "Old Town Road." Since his success, he has been deemed one of "The 25 Most Influential People" by Time magazine and appeared on the Forbes "30 under 30" list in 2020. Lil Nas X is also the only artist to come out as gay while performing at the top of the charts and the only Black LGBTQIA+ artist to receive a Country Music Association award. Apart from his success, Lil Nas X has been the butt of many homophobic rants, accusations, and arguments.

One feud that stands out is between Lil Nas X and Louisiana rapper, Boosie. On twitter, Lil Boosie tweeted out: "U A WHOLE B---- PLAYING WITH A GANGSTA SMH U CAN KEEP SUCKING D--- N GETTIN F---ED N YOUR A-- N PEACE N #uhateyourself I WOULD TOO IF I WAS YOU LOL NASx IF YOU #commitsuicide YOU WOULD DO THIS WORLD A HUGE FAVOR NOBODY WANTS U HERE..." in response to Nas' sarcastic tweet about a new song with the rapper. Despite the success, advocacy, and charity work Lil Nas X has provided to the LGBTQIA+ community, there is still backlash when it comes to his Black community.

Now, let's go back in time a little bit. We are in the year 1934, visiting Harlem, New York. This is the home of Audre Lorde, a Civil Rights activist, feminist, and proud member of the Black LGBTQIA+ community. Her work focused on her anger at the communities and she became an influential figure when she

published her fourth book of poetry, *Coal*. In "Audre Lorde's Expansive Influence on Black Lesbians: Jewelle Gomez, Cheryl Clarke, and Kate Rushin," Denise L. Fitzer says, "Lorde rarely speaks about racism, sexism, or homophobia separately; they are an omnipresent part of herself, and therefore, she is unable to rank oppressions. Society, however, urges people in many ways to prioritize identities." This statement obviously still rings true today. It is impossible to rank oppressions due to societal pressures and prejudices. What we can do as a society is enable a space where communities like these are represented in the correct and appropriate way.

It is no surprise that the LGBTQIA+ community has faced scrutiny for quite some time. Since 1934, things have become somewhat easier for this community although they still face many challenges with homophobia, racism, and inequality ideals. Representation has changed in the sense that sexuality has become approachable and less taboo. Media has made it easier to express one's sexuality and race. On the other side of the coin, though, it makes it that much easier to spread hate. Back to my original question, are those milestones enough? How can we move forward in order to ensure that this community gets the recognition and representation they deserve? And with those questions, I leave you.

*See pg. 15 for sources

LOVE FROM HATE

BY: MONICA INGLE

When we see LGBTQ, what do we see
Love and a world that has hope to be
Something like hope for the next generation.
A place where love is prevalent over hate,
Where who you love does not define who you are,
But what you stand for. A world where despite
Your sexual orientation, you will be treated equally.

We hear Christians quote, "If a man also lie with
Mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of
Them have committed an abomination; they
Shall surely be put to death; their blood shall
Be upon them" (Lev 20:13). However, how many
Of them follow the laws of the old testament?
It is the OLD TESTAMENT for a reason. Made moot
By the blood and water that flowed from Christ's
Wounded side.

When in actuality, the blood of Christ covers all.
Christ is the way the truth and the life and no man can
Come unto the father except through him. Christians
Commonly forget that the water spilled from Christ's side
Covers ALL who accept him. Not just the straight people.
For we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Sin is sin, and God's love is love. Those who believe are
Covered in his blood; ready for the day that we must
All face the Father and answer for the things we have
Done. For every knee will bow and every tongue will confess
That Christ is Lord.

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BY: BROOKES WASHINGTON

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KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE

**HAPPILY EVER AFTER, IS IT TOO GOOD TO
BE TRUE? FIND OUT AT SOCIAL COFFEE!**

Also don't forget that if you get bored or just need some more Social Coffee in your life you can always go back and read our past issues. The news may not be new but the topics are timeless.

