

Leather Scene

by Cain Berlinger

This is a first in the series of interviews with the men and women of color who have done their share to promote the diversity and inclusiveness of the leather community. This month brings you my interview with 1996 International Ms. Leather, Genelle Moore, the sister of International Mr. Leather 1984, Ron Moore.

Cain Berlinger: How did it feel to win the IMsL title?

Genelle Moore: At first I was totally shocked, amazed, and totally numb. I went through a stage where I sat back and thought to myself "wow I won." I realized what an important role I was playing in the history of Leatherdom. It's a great feeling

I wanted to connect with as many people as possible in one year; to educate people about the leather community and its various factions. The bottom line is that we are a group of articulate, creative and intelligent individuals.

CB: Some of the advice given to you was not to take 'it' (the title) too seriously. What do they mean by that?

GM: ... not to get wrapped up in other people's agendas and politics; and the politics of the sash. I had a job to complete but I didn't want to lose sight of having fun and connecting with people.

CB: What gave you the courage to try for IMsL?

GM: It was the support of my community, family and friends that gave me the confidence to step forward. I was raised to do the best that I can and to reach for the stars. I never even thought twice that I shouldn't run, once I made the decision to seek the title.

CB: What advice would you give to women wanting to be a part of the women's Leather community?

GM: Get involved. Join a



club, a group, participate in local events and network with others

CB: Who were/are your role models in the Community?

GM: They would be my brother Ron Moore and (author) Dr. Gayle Rubin, because they're the pioneers, who were very strong, brave and powerful people, who were constantly breaking new ground. These are traits I greatly admire in others, and hope to emulate in myself. I have many other role models who share these traits outside of the Community.

CB: A lot of attention has been given to the spouses of title holders coining the phrase "sash widow/er"

GM: My partner, Kathy's role as a sash widow was one of support, at home and on the road. She kept me focused and energized, helping me to laugh when I wanted to cry. She attended as many events as possible with me.

CB: Any final thoughts?

GM: To all that attended IMsL 1997: it meant a great deal to have had your support. Try to attend future IMsLs. I was honored to be the IMsL for 1997 and hope I can get to know as many of you as possible in the future.

THY CUP RUNNETH OVER

Murder

by Lynnell
Stephani Long

For the past several months I have read articles about Transexual women being bashed, raped or murdered. Whether it's in Chicago or somewhere else doesn't matter. What matters is it seems it's open season on Transsexuals. The recent murder of Barretta Williams and the attempted murder of her roommate Pebbles, for some reason hit home.

Maybe it's because it happened on the South Side of Chicago, where I grew up. Maybe it's because Barretta picked these guys up at [a club] where I used to visit every weekend, or maybe it's because I just got tired of ignoring that Black Transexual women are being murdered more often and no one is saying anything.

Maybe it's because when Matthew Shephard was killed people talked about it for months, and continue to talk about it today. But we all know the truth. The truth is Transexuals are dispensable. If a Transexual gets murdered people think, "She must have been deceiving men, and one of them got fed up."

I think Barretta and others like her were killed and it went unreported, or mentioned briefly, because people still allow themselves to be ignorant to Trans issues.

I get envious when I see how the gay and lesbian community stands up against the uprise of gay bashing. After a Transexual woman is killed I wait for someone to have a candlelight vigil or an anti-bashing demonstration. But nothing. Nothing!

At a recent It's Time, Illinois meeting, Lorraine Sade came out to ask for donations to help the only survivor of the viscous attack, Pebbles. I use her nickname Pebbles because the police fear the murderers might come back to finish the job. When it was mentioned at ITI that a Black Transgendered person is bashed every weekend, they were



stunned. Of course those statistics are based on hearsay because most Trans bashings go unreported. I would like to direct my anger toward the gay & lesbian community because they support their own. I would like to direct my dismay towards the activists that work hard to fight to end the bashings on Halsted Street because Halsted Street travels all the way to the South Side and no one is there protecting my sista's from bashings. But the truth is I'm angry with the Trans Community for not coming together and standing against this hatred. I'm angry because most people in the Trans Community are too busy shaking their ass on stage, trying to blend in to society, partying or just don't give a damn. Those of us who care enough to say or do something are few in numbers.

Lorraine Sade Baskerville came to me and asked if there is something we can do. I wanted to tell her sure, we could march down Halsted, we could demonstrate at the Daley Center or we can support the Black Transgendered organizations in Chicago. The truth is marching down Boys Town won't help. Demonstrating downtown won't mean a thing to the people too busy trying to get to work. What we need to do, what needs to happen is the Black community needs to be educated on the Trans Community. Those that don't oppress us can support us. If we were to demonstrate or march it should be in our own community, since it is our own brotha's and sista's that are killing us; Physically and mentally.

I found it difficult to get caught up with the drama at Michigan Womyn's Festival, when my sista's are being murdered or left for

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Tommy Ross is the new miss Continental, crowned Labor Day Weekend in the annual Miss Continental Contest. Photos by Israel Wright



LYNNELL from 22

dead. Did you know when Barretta Williams and her roommate Pebbles were shot, the only reason Pebbles survived is because she was smart enough to play dead? I don't have the time to write an article on women-born-women only spaces. I don't have time to fight separatists that keep oppressing my Trans sista's & brotha's. I do have time to say the Transgendered Community needs your help.

What can you do? You can be open-minded enough to learn to understand us. You can be willing to forget the stereotypes that plague our community. You can open the doors to your organizations and become Trans inclusive. You can treat us like we are human.

They say charity begins at home, but the Transgendered Community doesn't have a home. We don't have a North Halsted Street or a Girl Bar. We don't

have the Belmont Rocks or Hollywood Beach. We don't even have rights to protect us. All we have is each other, and most are too busy to give a damn. It's scary to think that my sista's & brotha's are being murdered because we are different, and we all know it's easy to kill someone who's different from you. The men that shot those two Trans women didn't see their beauty. They didn't recognize their struggle. To them they were two men that dressed as women. To me they are two women that were learning to live as their true selves. The bastards that killed Barretta were gang members and for one of them it was their initiation to the gang to shoot those two sista's. I pray for us all because when they get tired of killing the trannies, they may start killing the faggots & dykes. Then will anyone take notice?

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LINES

Oct. 1999, Vol. 4, No. 9 Free/\$2 outside Chicago EXPRESSIONS FROM BLACK GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDERED LIFE

Terrain of Freedom

Exhibit includes historic sculpture by John Quincy Adams Ward, *The Freedman*, (1863) considered the first realistic representation of an African American cast in bronze. Part of the 'American Art and the Civil War' exhibit at the Art Institute, thru Nov. 28.



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