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FEATURES

PATTI LABELLE AT THE FORREST

LABELLE POWER UNLEASHES LOTS OF LOVE

"An Evening with Patti LaBelle" at the Forrest Theatre, 1114 Walnut St., through Feb. 28.

By **JONATHAN TAKIFF**
Daily News Staff Writer

There's hydroelectric power. There's atomic power. And there's Patti LaBelle power — a force of nature as powerful as the torrents of Niagara Falls or the turbines of Three Mile Island.

Unleashed in concert at the Forrest Theatre last night, for an opening night audience as pent-up with enthusiasm and love as the singer herself seemed to be, Patti proved there really is "No Place Like Home" to experience her electrifying sound and personality.

Is there any singer on earth who gives more of herself? Unlike. From her anguiring of things to come with "In the Air Tonight" (yes, the Genesis biggie) to her signature finale, "Over the Rainbow," Patti made each number seem like it was the best, the dearest, the only song in the world, and made us believe it, too.

Why, even at the end she refused to quit, continuing to wail on with "Rainbow" after the curtain fell and the house lights came up and the crowd had begun filtering out into the night! To be sure, all who witness this lady's show in the next 2½ weeks will take home some of the music's good spirit and her joyous benedictions.

More intimate than LaBelle's last hometown concert run at the Shubert three years ago, the Forrest gig finds this 25-year singing veteran working simply (and effectively) with her strong eight-piece band conducted by James "Budd" Ellison and backup vocal trio, the Sweeties. Just a couple of flashy costume changes and a laser light effect or two provide the visual enhancements.

No, there isn't a gospel choir, violin section or breakdancers, as the singer employed at the Shubert.

But given the way Earth Mother LaBelle now works her audience into the show — warmly luring them to the stage apron with her fluttering outstretched hands and her tears on "You Are My Friend," posing for their pictures to show her "New Attitude," even inviting a few young men up on stage to dance and sing along with her classic "Lady Marmalade" — she doesn't need any extras. For the whole theater is Patti's stage, and everyone in it is a player.

High points are hard to pick out when nearly every song's a full-blown showstopper. But this listener was especially impressed by LaBelle's sublime *a cappella* harmonies with the Sweeties on the gospel classic "How Great Thou Art." And I was tickled pink by her giddy rock oldies medley of Elvis Presley's "Blue



Patti LaBelle and fan reach toward each other during concert



Woman stands near the poster of LaBelle at the Forrest

Suede Shoes" and Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti."

All of her ballad performances were sublimely dramatic, of course, with Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" and Ashford and Simpson's "There's a Winner in You" best capturing the essence of LaBelle's philosophy about life and music — that a positive attitude and a lot of love makes all the difference, makes anything possible.

I couldn't help noticing that LaBelle did not roll around on the floor or sing flat on her back, as she had in past shows. Perhaps the entertainer felt constricted by her exotically tight, leg-flashing gowns (designed by Tony Chase and Felicia Farrar) or by her bird-like, winged hairdo.

Or has LaBelle finally taken to heart some criticism that her performances topple over the edge from fashionable frenzy into uncontrollable hysteria?

No matter. The bottom line was that everything she sang or touched last night seemed right, seemed full-powered yet in her control. Even when an ardent and slightly witty male admirer refused to leave the stage, Patti kept her sense of humor, never blew her cool, made it all seem part of the master plan.



Philadelphia fans Beau McCall and Saifuddin Muhammad (right) adorn the lobby before the show

Staff Photography by Rick Bowmer

Philadelphia Daily News clipping (digital print), 1987. From the Beau McCall Collection, Stonewall National Museum, Archives, & Library.

This is a clipping from the article titled *Patti LaBelle at the Forrest*, used in the collage, *Beau and Saifuddin Muhammad I*.

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→ Back Back, Back In The Cell
u u u u u u

Arriving to the Recipient

In a rush

joined by the cuffs

Being treated Rufft Rough

Please don't ARREST me

Why must you ~~under~~ dress me

Your EYE molest me

Oh shit what now

Bracelets, bracelet, I.D. bracelets

All of sudden there's an ink attack

" " " my finger are block

my vision is doubled

Flash cube trouble

Oh no not you

not another Interview

Is there a chance

I can out on R.O.R.

Can a bit make bail

We note your Reflections

" " " de fection

Complication

Label me be

Isolation

Set me free

Incrimination

Why me

Destination



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Among black people, AIDS is taking a heavier toll

By Vanessa Williams
Inquirer Staff Writer

He discovered a network of other gays with whom to socialize. Then last year, at the age of 23, he learned that he had AIDS, and the anonymity he had been seeking turned to isolation. His aunt asked him to move out, he was fired from his job, he dropped out of school, his friends stopped coming by to see him.

Now, too ill to go out, he passes his days alone in his basement apartment in Center City. AIDS, a disease that has stricken more than 17,800 Americans, is at-

tacking black people at a disproportionate rate. And some black people are angered that those in charge of AIDS public education did not sound the alarm sooner about the deadly disease's effect on the black community.

About half of the 267 Philadelphia residents who have contracted AIDS in the last five years are black, although black residents make up only 38 percent of the city's population, according to the Philadelphia Health Department. Statistics from the federal Centers for Disease Control

(CDC) show that nationally, black people make up 12 percent of the population but 23 percent of all AIDS sufferers. Hispanics, who make up 14 percent of the national AIDS cases, are also disproportionately represented.



Goode, flanked by city officials, takes questions at news conference; he refused to respond directly to MOVE commission's criticism

Goode says he wouldn't be indicted in grand jury inquiry on MOVE

By Russell Cooke and William W. Sutton Jr.
Inquirer Staff Writers

Mayor Goode, while refusing to directly answer the MOVE commission's harsh criticism of his administration, yesterday said that he would not be indicted if a grand jury investigates the city's handling of the May 13 siege on Osage Avenue.

Goode conceded only that he had made some mistakes and displayed "instances of poor judgment" in approving the police assault on a row house occupied by seven adult MOVE members and a half-dozen children.

The mayor refused to respond directly to questions concerning the MOVE commission's finding that he and his top aides were "grossly negligent," displayed a "reckless disregard for life and property" in planning and executing the siege, and "clearly risked the lives" of the five children who died when a police bomb dropped from a helicopter ignited a devastating fire that day.

2d MOVE panel report assails coroner's office

By Michael E. Ruane
Inquirer Staff Writer

The Philadelphia medical examiner's office is overworked, understaffed and some top employees are underpaid, according to a report released yesterday by the MOVE commission.

Astronauts' remains are under study

By Mike Leary
Inquirer Staff Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — A team of military pathologists yesterday began examining some remains of the crew of the space shuttle Challenger that were recovered by Navy divers from the craft's shattered cockpit on the ocean floor, according to sources familiar with the search.



Gov. Thornburgh Urges quick action by state House

The pathologists, working for the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington, D.C., started arriving here on Sunday, the sources said, and began preliminary examinations yesterday of the remains of the seven crew members — described as fragments of bodies. The remains were brought to the military hospital at nearby Patrick Air Force Base before dawn on Sunday.

Senate OKs convention center bill

By Vernon Loeb and William W. Sutton Jr.
Inquirer Staff Writers

The state Senate yesterday overwhelmingly approved legislation that would create a nine-member authority to build and operate the proposed \$455 million Center City convention center, clearing the way for final legislative approval of the project as early as next month.



The first taskforce for full rest of Milan are feminine without being vulgar, with emphasis on the waist and derrick. People, Page 1-D.

In quiet Cherry Hill, a Marcos and his retinue made their homes.



The house on Capshire Drive is in a court dispute

Recalling Marcos' son and guards as neighbors

By Laura Quinn
Inquirer Staff Writer

For the most part, Mark Tandoourjan was saying the famous Filipinos who lived in his neighborhood in Cherry Hill kept to themselves. Occasionally, he would see the son of Ferdinand E. Marcos walking with a girlfriend.

"We really didn't care that he was Marcos," Tandoourjan, 26, said yesterday. "It was just the fact that so many people were living there. They had a hell of a lot of people there."

Over the years, the presence of Marcos Jr. and his entourage in the quiet development of spacious single-family homes sparked a variety of reactions, ranging from indifference to a hostile petition drive to complaints about chickens in the back yard of the guards' house. Finally, last year, the Filipinos left the two houses, and one of the properties was sold. But the other one has become part of the growing dispute over the senior Marcos' real estate holdings in this country.

Court limits tax authority of states for waste cleanup

By Aaron Epstein
Inquirer Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court yesterday restricted the authority of states to tax oil, chemical and other businesses to help pay the cost of cleaning up hazardous wastes.

Weather & Index

Showers possible this morning. Partly sunny this afternoon. High in the lower to mid-60s. Clear tonight. Low in the mid-30s. Increasingly cloudy tomorrow. High about 50. Full weather report, Page 10-E.

Ray Milland, 78, who won an Academy Award as best actor of 1945 for his portrayal of an alcoholic young writer in "The Lost Weekend," has died of cancer. **Obituary**, Page 11-B.

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Among black people, AIDS is taking a heavier toll

AIDS, from 1-4
tional efforts and media reports were primarily focused on gay white men. As a result, they say, black people were left with the impression that AIDS was a white man's disease and did not take precautions, such as using condoms and choosing sexual partners more carefully.

"Thank about it. Those prominent articles about AIDS in Time, Newsweek and on network TV never showed any black AIDS victims or health professionals," said Wesley Addison, a former disease intervention specialist with the CDC who last year co-founded Blacks Educating Blacks about Sexual Health Issues (BEBASH), a local group that holds seminars on sexual-health topics.

Adds David Fair, secretary/treasurer of the predominantly black Local 1199C of the Hospital and Health Care Workers of America: "Efforts to educate have not been made among nonwhite people at risk." Fair said that organized crusades by public and private groups have "so far relied totally on gay networks, which are all white."

Peppi Highsmith, who for 10 years has been the bartender at the Smart Place, a popular Center City bar, told black gays, said with his patrons still consider their skin color a shield against AIDS.

"What I hear is a lot of them believe that it's a white man's disease," Highsmith said recently. During the last two years, he said, five regulars of the bar have died from AIDS.

Dr. Nicholas Ifft, president of the Philadelphia AIDS Task Force, the group that has led the effort for AIDS education in Philadelphia, said he was concerned about the disease because there is no effective treatment or cure for the disease.

"The only thing you can do is to reduce your risk by prevention," he said. "But if a group feels it is not at risk, it will do nothing to protect itself."

Ifft, a physician who specializes in treating AIDS patients, acknowledged that the task force was late in its efforts to reach the black community. But he also expressed frustration that black gays, doctors and community spokesmen have been reluctant to take the lead in educating the community about the disease.

Instead, said Robert McGrier, a black gay rights advocate, black people are learning about AIDS "from the brothers who are dying."

Health experts are not sure why AIDS is taking such a heavy toll on black people. Dr. Wayne Groves, chief of infectious diseases at Howard University Hospital in Washington and formerly with the CDC, said his research has shown no genetic reason why blacks should be at greater risk than other racial groups.

Rather, experts theorize that demographic and environmental factors are to blame, especially the fact that AIDS is concentrated in large cities where many black people live.

More than half of the AIDS cases in the United States are concentrated in five cities — New York, Los Angeles, Newark, N.J., San Francisco, and Miami. Dr. Robert G. Sherrin, director of the disease control division in the city Health Department, noted that each of these cities, with the exception of San Francisco, has large black populations. The eight-county Philadelphia area, with 389 cases, ranks ninth nationally. Of these, nearly 63 percent have died, according to the health department.

Doctors and public health officials also point out that blacks are generally hit harder by major diseases because of ineffective health care and health education.

Anderson, of BEBASH, noted that mortality rates for 1985 showed that blacks were at greater risk than whites for many major diseases. For example, for every 100 whites who died of cancer, 119 blacks died; for every 100 whites who died of tuberculosis, 550 blacks died; and for every 100 whites who died of diabetes, 153 blacks died.

In addition to the high rate of AIDS among black gays, the rate of other sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis and gonorrhea, is two to three times higher among gay black men than gay white men, according to the city health department.

A recent study by the Philadelphia Health Federation showed that sections of the city with a high concentration of poor and minorities have a shortage of doctors and that many doctors overall did not accept Medicaid patients or those without insurance.

Black gays have additional prob-

lems finding health care. Dr. Brett Cassese, a physician at Thomas Jefferson University Medical College who treats gay patients, said gay men need doctors they can trust and "who are not going to get freaked out" about a patient's sexuality.

"It has been pointed out to me that ... no black physician has been identified as providing health care specifically to black gays," Cassese said. "The doctor has to have credibility. What you need to do is tell the people to change the way they are living their lives and that takes a lot of persuasion," he said.

Don Ransome, a former head of Black and White Men Together, an interracial gay rights organization, agrees that health care is a problem for black gays. Many still go to their family doctors and the doctor doesn't know — or doesn't acknowledge — their lifestyle," he said. "I've encouraged my friends to come out to their doctors or to change doctors."

Ransome said he receives care from a gay physician who does tests and examinations above and beyond the routine physical examination. He also said that when the AIDS epidemic broke out, "I went to my doctor, got a complete checkup and said what can I do to protect myself."

Although it is a problem in Philadelphia, contaminated needles have been a major source of AIDS for blacks in other parts of the country.

Dr. Harold Jaffe, chief of epidemiology at the CDC, notes that of the approximately 4,500 black people nationally who have contracted AIDS, 45 percent are homosexual and 35 percent contracted the disease through intravenous drug use. By contrast, only 5 percent of whites with AIDS are intravenous drug users.

In New Jersey, 52 percent of AIDS cases reported to date involve intravenous drug use, most of them concentrated in the heavily black North Jersey cities of Paterson, Newark and Jersey City, according to the state Health Department.

Sherrin of the Philadelphia Health Department said officials are cautiously relieved that the number of drug cases in the city is low because drug addicts are the hardest of any risk group to reach. Of all AIDS cases in the city, only 13 have been attributed solely to intravenous drug use; 19 others involved gays or bisexuals who also used drugs.

Ifft said medical experts can only theorize about why blacks are hit harder by AIDS. But, he said, he fears that the lack of education about the disease in the black community is likely to be a factor in the future.

"We do not want to see where suddenly blacks are claiming 40 percent of the national cases because white men have heard the message and reduced their risk and black gay men have done nothing," Ifft said.

Ifft talked recently about how the Philadelphia AIDS Task Force missed the target of reaching the black community, despite a \$400,000 education campaign.

When the task force was formed in 1982, it disseminated information about the disease through bars, publications and businesses, mostly in Center City, Ifft said.

Later, he said, Ransome and other black members of the task force pointed out to him that few black gays circulate in the Center City gay community. Rather, black gays view themselves as part of the black community — they live in those neighborhoods, attend churches there and circulate in predominantly black social circles.

"We realized what we had to do was use the normal channels for getting messages out to the black community," Ifft said. But when the task force went to the larger black community, it was not warmly received.

One of the first steps the task force took in early 1984 was to produce a series of posters, displayed on SEPTA buses and trains, warning of the threat of AIDS. One poster had a picture of a black man. Others had white, Hispanic and female faces.

Almost immediately, Ifft said, the task force's telephone lines were deluged with calls from black people upset by the posters.

Ifft remembers one call in particular. "It was from a woman who identified herself as a black and a nurse. She said, 'How dare you put a black face on an AIDS poster when everybody knows that only 1 percent of the cases are black — and those are Haitians.'" (The CDC has dropped Haitians from its list of high-risk

groups.)

The largest library in the world has had in fiscal 1986 a budget of \$28.5 million reduced to \$20.3 million in recent months as a result of the congressional campaign to reduce federal budget deficits. Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin responded by ordering a wide array of cuts in services, including closing the library's reading rooms during weekday evenings, except Wednesday, and on Sundays and federal holidays.



Don Ransome, of AIDS task force, wants better education efforts

(The Philadelphia Inquirer / ED HILL)

AIDS groups.) Bob Kohmescher, education specialist in the CDC's division of sexually transmitted diseases, said other cities also have reported difficulty in reaching black and Hispanic people with AIDS education.

"It has been a concern in all project areas throughout the country, trying to reach minorities, not just blacks, but Hispanics as well," said Kohmescher.

Blacks and Hispanics "don't have the same sort of social networks to work through that you do in the white/gay community and that makes getting messages out very difficult," he said.

Recently, Mayor Goode joined the education effort with a filmed public service announcement urging those at risk of contracting AIDS to be cautious and to call the task force.

Suzanne Badoux, director of the Mayor's Commission on Sexual Minorities, said the announcements began airing on local television stations earlier this year. And while the mayor speaks to all groups, Badoux said, using Goode is a way to tacitly address the black community.

"Another major project aimed at the black community was a rap record produced by the task force with money from the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The record, "Respect Yourself," warned listeners that anybody — "be you a butcher, a baker, a candlestick maker" — is susceptible to AIDS.

But the record, which was produced in Philadelphia at a cost of \$13,477, received more air play in other cities than here, task force officials said. Ransome said he thought its explicit lyrics turned off listeners. McGrier, a former member of the task force, said he felt the

one prominent black clergyman, or someone very prominent ... someone who has credibility in the community ... do a public service announcement, in addition to the mayor. But we're too hung up on what's right or wrong. Don't tell me about being morally correct when people are dying."

The Rev. Albert F. Campbell, pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church in West Philadelphia, acknowledged that AIDS is a difficult issue for the church to address because the disease has predominantly affected people involved in activities that the church considers immoral. But after attending a forum on AIDS last fall, Mr. Campbell said he became convinced that the black community should be better educated about AIDS and that the black church should take a leading role.

Mr. Campbell said he is considering holding a program for his church members, who number 2,800, to provide information about AIDS.

"I believe the black church has an awesome responsibility to be informed and in turn inform the community on issues that impact on their lives, and AIDS happens to be an issue that we have to address," Mr. Campbell said. "We also have to develop a theology for [AIDS] other than that of Jerry Falwell's, which says that AIDS is divine retribution for misconduct. Just because the high-risk groups are gays and drug users, we cannot become bigoted toward these folks, because they are human and loved by God."

When Angela walks into the Smart Place, she is greeted with hugs and hellos and treated to free rounds of drinks. She says she likes to come to the bar because men buy her drinks without trying to pick her up. "I can just have a good time," said Angela, who said she is not gay.

But AIDS has made an impact on this small, inconspicuous bar at Ninth and Arch Streets, where friends used to greet each other with kisses.

Since the AIDS outbreak, he said recently, "They still hug, but they don't kiss."

A young gay man sitting nearby agreed. "You're afraid to meet people. Normally you would greet people with a kiss. Now they turn their heads," he said. "If somebody coughs, they step back. It doesn't dawn on them that maybe you got something caught in your throat. The first thing that comes to their minds is AIDS."

The change in the atmosphere at the Smart Place is an indication that black people are aware of AIDS, but health experts are still concerned that they do not know enough to adequately protect themselves against the disease.

Angela, who asked that her last name not be used, said she is concerned that her male gay friends rely on hearsay rather than expert information on AIDS.

"It's like when you were growing up and you heard about sex on the radio, you were going to the nurse at school or to your parents to get the right information," she said.

The lack of understanding about AIDS among black gays is evident in some of the comments that Highsmith hears from his station behind the bar at the Smart Place.

"They think it's mainly on the West Coast ... The majority of them don't go to the bathrooms, so they feel they won't come into contact with it. ... And they say they're not doing heavy drugs ... Then there are those who believe it only occurs with those who are into kinky sex. ... And some believe it's just a scare tactic to keep them from practicing their sexual desires."

Highsmith said seminars have been held at the Smart Place and that literature about AIDS is made available to the patrons at the bar, but he does not know how many read it or practice some of the safeguards suggested by health experts, including reducing sexual encounters with strangers and using condoms. He also acknowledged that some "just don't give a damn."

Angela also expressed frustration with some of her gay friends who brush off AIDS information or deliberately choose to ignore it.

Dorian, a small-framed 29-year-old with a boyish face, said he doesn't know much about the disease other than what he hears or reads in the media. He said that he uses a condom but that other gay men do not like to use the protective gear.

"It's like going to bed with a bandage," complained one man at the bar.

Dorian's feelings seem to sum up those of many on the gay scene. "I take precautions, but I'm not worried about it — if it's going to get you, it's going to get you."

Posters of slender leotard-clad figures on pointed toes decorate a wall of his small Center City apartment, which is simply furnished with a bed, coffee table and two wicker chairs. Most of the time the chairs remain empty because the young man from Virginia rarely gets visitors.

He said that he spends a lot of time trying to figure out where he might have caught his disease that has so drastically changed his life.

"I knew I was at risk because I was gay, but I never thought I would get it because I wasn't having sex with a lot of people. He said that he knew that condoms could further reduce his risk, but he didn't like to use them.

Most days, he said, it takes all of his energy to drag his tall, skinny body out of bed and fix breakfast. "I feel weak and sick all the time," he complained, running his fingers through his tousled curly permed hair. AIDS, his doctor said, has caused him to contract a brain infection. His head throbs constantly and he has become forgetful. His dark, large eyes are reddened by his illness, and he frequently lets out long sighs of exhaustion.

"Sometimes he gets impatient with killing for death and thinks about writing himself. ... But," he said, "I just don't have the energy."

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Patrons of library sit in to protest early closings

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Angry students, writers and scholars held a noisy sit-down demonstration in the reading room of the Library of Congress yesterday to protest budget cuts that have forced elimination of the library's traditional evening hours.

At 5:30 p.m., when the library's doors were scheduled to close under a new austerity plan, about 100 protesters remained at their desks, donning black armbands and applauded the first of a series of speeches demanding that the library remain open, as usual, until 9:30 p.m.

"President Reagan wants to turn the body politic into a mentally retarded body and that's why I'm here," shouted one speaker from the top of the high circular desk in the center of the ornate chamber. "Power to the People!"

Library officials made no move to eject the protesters, who cheered, pounded their desks and clapped their books open and shut as speakers read their delivered anti-Reagan tirades. They vowed to stay until 9:30 p.m.

Associate librarian Donald Curran said that "it's our practice to avoid unnecessary confrontation," and that the demonstrators would be allowed to stay if they remained peaceful and caused no damage.

The largest library in the world has had in fiscal 1986 a budget of \$28.5 million reduced to \$20.3 million in recent months as a result of the congressional campaign to reduce federal budget deficits. Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin responded by ordering a wide array of cuts in services, including closing the library's reading rooms during weekday evenings, except Wednesday, and on Sundays and federal holidays.

SUNRISE
SEPTEMBER 2, 1957

SUNSET
JANUARY 28, 2020



CELEBRATION OF LIFE
Tracy
GORDON

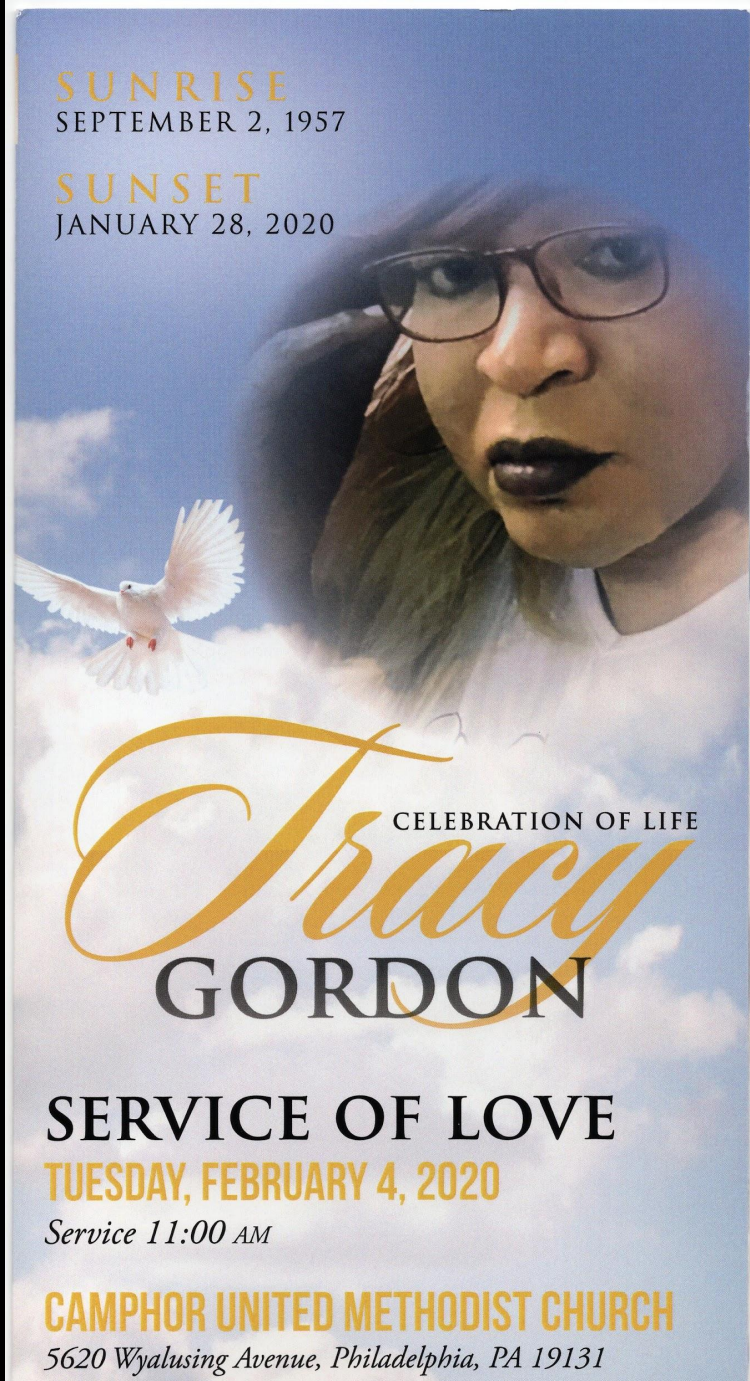
SERVICE OF LOVE

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020

Service 11:00 AM

CAMPBOR UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Funeral program for Tracy Gordon (aka Tracy Monroe), 2020. From the Beau McCall Collection, Stonewall National Museum, Archives, & Library.

Sadly, Monroe died the day before McCall began working on his debut artists' book *REWIND: MEMORIES ON REPEAT*. Her funeral program lists her surname: Gordon. But McCall refers to her in this project with the last name she chose for herself: Monroe. Tracy chose the last name as a nod to one of her favorite queer icons, Marilyn Monroe.

Life Story

On January 28, 2020, *Tracy Gordon* slipped away to be with the Lord. Tracy was born September 2, 1957, in Philadelphia, PA unto Garold & Thelma Gordon.

Tracy was educated in the Philadelphia Public School System. Tracy brought joy to a lot of us with her smile, love, and kindness. When Tracy came into a room, everybody knew it. Tracy was a giving person. She gave freely to who ever needed it.

Tracy was a very understanding person; you could come to her with your problems, and with one conversation, you would leave with not only a solution, but a brand new look on life and a smile. With a tilt of her head and one her humerus witty comments, you could consider yourself FIXED.

Tracy had unconditional love for her family, loyalty for her friends, and a undeniable passion for her music. With big dreams of fame and glamour, Tracy moved to New York to start a long journey of excitement, new friendships and most of all to enjoy her lifestyle and start her own business, with ups and downs and turn arounds.

Tracy finally started to see her dream slowly come to life, with a host of song writers music producers, singers and other talented musicians, STRANGE BEAUTY PRODUCTIONS WAS BORN

Happy with the success of her passion, Tracy often shared with her family and friends. Although living in another state, Tracy had a tight relationship with her family, and often kept in contact through phone calls and visits. Tracy was the center of attention at every party; with her witty sense of humor, she could make you laugh no matter what kind of mood you were in.

Tracy was a big fan of some of the greatest singers like Diana Ross and Billie holiday, but one of her favorite artists she loved to mimic was blonde, and she was GREAT at it. Tracy loved to entertain; "*singing can cure anything.*" she would say, and as long as she had a microphone in her hand, EVERYTHING WAS ALRIGHT.

She was preceded in death by her sister Thelma and brother Randall. Tracy leaves to cherish her memories: three sisters, Betsy, Gerri, and Jackie; four brothers, Harold, Garold, Andrew, and David; two sons-in-law, Billy and Mike, and a host of nieces, nephews, great nieces, great nephews, other relatives and friends. She also leaves behind a dear best friend, Lisa Williams, that held a bond with her that was an unbreakable sister.

Tracy will always be in our hearts.

Family Tributes

*With happiness and sorrow we can say Aunt Tracy, you are loved
Please watch over us from the heavens above
You'll have a safe place, where you can rest and your songs can roam
God needed one more angel so he called his child home.
We wish we had more time, and if it was up to us,
your passing would wait
But you can't stop the inevitable,
besides God already opened his golden gates.
You will be remembered as a diva so glamorous yet fierce
Well use those loving memories to hold back our tears*

Love, LaSean and Ericka

NO MORE SORROW

*Let's celebrate TRACY, who lived life great
My tears are from joy your pain is done
The battle is over my love , you won
Excuse my sadness, it comes once in while ,
Because I'll never see again, that beautiful smile
Or other things , because your gone
Like watching Betty Davis until the dawn,
I'm happy your pain and hurt now cease
I love you aunt TRACY so Rest In Peace*

Love, Donna & Sean

OUR INSPIRATION

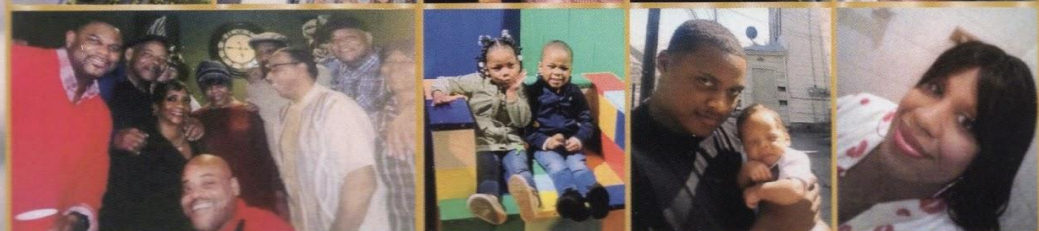
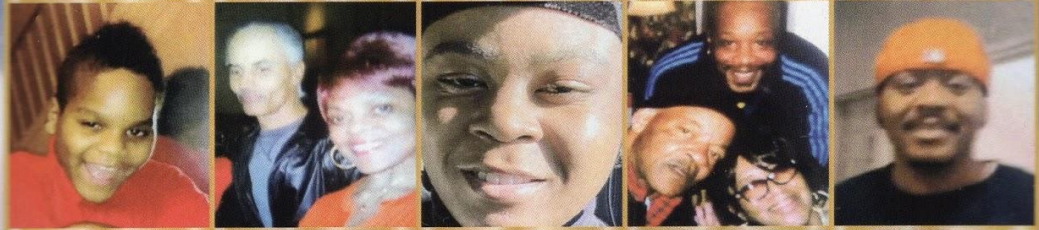
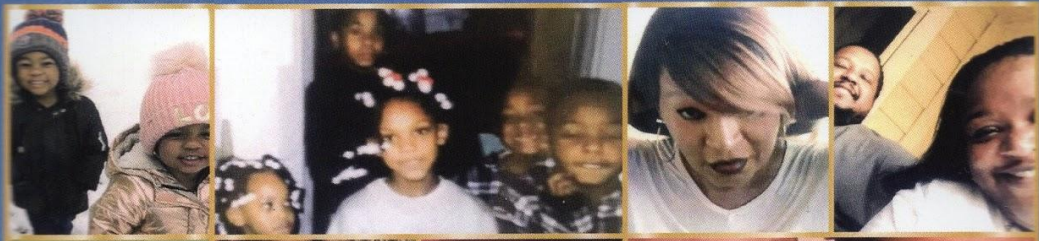
*Since a little girl you spoke inspiration into my life.
Our whole lives you told your nieces what we are worth,
Beautiful and strong, reminding us when we lost hope. Tracy our
love for you will never wither. We will always remember your voice
Beautiful, strong and worth it. We will miss you here on earth but
do believe in spirit you'll always be in your nieces heart.*

Love always, Pam

AUNT T.

*I love you
I will always remember you
Thank you for being a special aunt and friend,*

Love, Brian



Order Of Service

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READING OF OBITUARY

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RECESSIONAL

INTERMENT

PRIVATE



*I reckon I miss you
and I probably always will
this is so hard to get over
like swallowing a bitter pill*

*I reckon I shouldn't be crying
because this is not how you'd want it to be
knowing you're in your eternal home
now singing with glee*

*I reckon you are looking down on us
probably proud of us all
you always told me how God would hold me
and never let me fall
I reckon I have to get through this*

*I must try to be strong
on the outside you can't tell it
but on the inside something is very wrong*

*I reckon I'll be sad for a while
but soon I'll realize I'll see you one day up there
don't think I stopped missing you
don't think I don't care*

*we've had so many good times
tons of laughs as well
the memories are all coming back to me now
like a wonderful spell*

*girlie I hope you know
you will be missed a lot
you were loved by so many
you'll never be forgotten!!*

***Love You and miss you always,
Kisha***



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A FEW GOOD MOVIES: 'VOICE' CRITICS PICK 'EM FOR 1992 (P.51)

the village

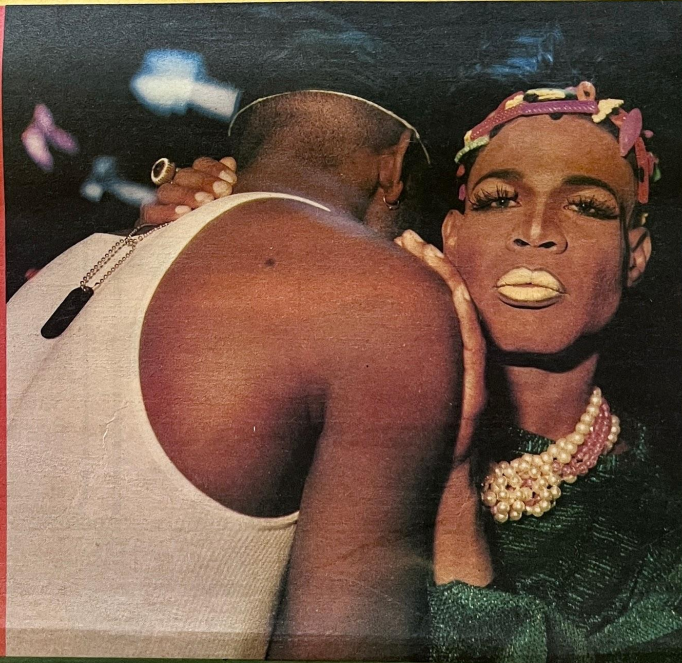
VOICE

G.O.P. QUIZ

How Many Republicans
Does It Take To Screw Up
the Country? (P.26)

BATTY BOYS IN BABYLON

**West Indian
Gay
Culture
Comes
Out in
Brooklyn.
And So
Does
Violence.**



BY PETER NOEL, P.29

C.T. WEINER

The Village Voice clipping, 1993. From the Beau McCall Collection, Stonewall National Museum, Archives, & Library.

This is the Village Voice article titled *Batty Boys in Babylon*, used in the collage, *Moi Renee III*. Here, Renee discusses the anti-queer violence he experienced.



C. T. WEMPLE

BATTY BOYS IN BABYLON

CAN GAY WEST INDIANS SURVIVE THE 'BOOM BYE BYE' POSSES?

BY PETER NOEL WITH ROBERT MARRIOTT

"If a man is thinking of homosexuality, he's thinking of disease and wrongdoings, so God Almighty himself hates homosexuals. In Jamaica, if a homosexual is being found in the community, then we stone him to death."

—Shabba Ranks

"He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone."

—"God Almighty himself"

EIGHT YEARS AGO IN THE slums of Trench Town, Jamaica, a would-be murderer named Slicksta threw the first stone at Douche, a homosexual who loved to drag in *poom-poom* shorts and emulate the swagger of a rude batty woman.

"I stoned 'im. I beat 'im with sticks. I'm proud of it," Slicksta growls as he recalls

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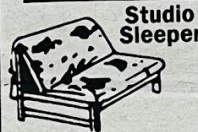
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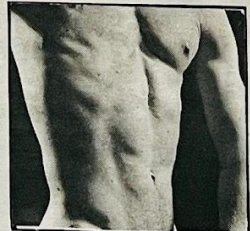
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My TRANSFORMATION

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the incident for a reporter and friends while browsing in Ethiopian Taste, a record shop on Nostrand Avenue.

The ambush occurred the day Slicksta was being initiated into a rudebwoy posse that roamed the alleyways of the island's shanty towns in search of the much reviled batty bwoys, as homosexuals are known. In these tin-can *dungles*, it's a mark of manhood to assault or even snuff a batty bwoy in cold blood.

The only real family dirt-poor Jamaican youths like Slicksta have is the Trench Town rudebwoys, descendants of "Johnny-Too-Bads" and "steppin' razors" of the '60s—the West Indian version of gangsta homeboys. But rudebwoys are more than just "niggaz with attitude" running wild. Their posses are highly structured organizations, often led by a Don, the equivalent of a Mafia boss—and they can be as violent as L.A.'s Crips and Bloods. Their recruits, who signify with fustian patois, range from handsome waifs to snaggle-toothed "jungleness bad bwoys" and haunted *gundeleros* with their fingers on the trigger of a Mac-10, an Uzi, or a M-16.

Any rudebwoy wannabe would object to being called homophobic, insisting that he has no fear of homosexuals. He feels only rage. He would maim or kill in order to achieve his objective: the capture of a batty bwoy to guarantee rank in the posse.

With the attack on Douche still vivid in his memory, Slicksta bites the lyrics of a Buju Banton song—"Man haffi de'd fi mek man live"—and savors Douche's agony with raw and uninhibited relish. "As I was beatin' 'im, I told 'im, 'Douche, y'u shouldn't be like dat.' Then I beat 'im. I stoned 'im. I beat 'im an' I stoned 'im. I beat 'im till 'im bawl, 'Murder!' I stoned 'im till 'im get away."

In Jamaica, hunting batty bwoys is as instinctive as the craving for *sry fish an' bammy*, a national dish. The mere sight of them can trigger the bedlam of a witch hunt. When the toaster (rapper) Hammer Mouth discovers two gay men in a garage—"hook up an' ah kiss like... meangy dog"—he hollers: "Run dem outa di yard." Murder them, advises another toaster, Bunny General. "Kill dem one by one. Murder dem till dem fi change dem plan."

According to local legend, the batty bwoy is a cruising vampire who sucks the blood of slum dwellers, called *suffaraks*. He will "chew y'u neck like ah Wrigley." He's a *duppy*—an evil ghost from Sodom and Gomorrah—not a human being.

In the deeply religious West Indian culture, many people still cling to Old World ethics. Their beliefs, morals, and suspicions are rooted in the canons of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, whose teachings on homosexuality are even more virulent in the former colonies than in Europe or America. In the West Indies, a priest who spots a confessed sodomite during the 40 days of Lent might single him out before the congregation and banish him with a sprinkle of holy water, or a recitation of the 14 stations of the cross. Many Jamaican Catholics believe they can atone for their sins by informing on gay or lesbian parishioners.

"Jamaicans are the most homophobic people in the Caribbean," asserts gay playwright Godfrey Sealy, who lives in Trinidad. "I've traveled to Jamaica and I know what it is like. They refuse to accept the fact that people are homosexual. Anyone found out to be so can be killed."

"Let's not stigmatize Jamaica," says Dr. Marco Mason, a Brooklyn-based Panama-

Some names and physical descriptions have been changed at the request of the subjects. The authors acknowledge: The Rastafarians by Leonard E. Barrett Sr.; Creole Talk of Trinidad and Tobago by C.R. Outley; Lloyd Williams, N.I.C.A. Kingston; Virginia Turner, The Jamaican Weekly Gleaner (North American edition); Lizard Loebman, Reggae Report; Dawad Phillip, The Daily Challenge; Dr. Carlos Russell and Toni Hinton; Mali Olatunji; Ben Mapp; Julian Dibbell; and Donna Minkowitz.

nian sociologist. "Homophobia permeates the region. It is something that is Trinidadian. It is something that is Barbadian. It is part of the culture of the Caribbean. Homosexuality is taboo."

But taboos feed obsessions and obsessions create curiosity. In the West Indies there are many ways to broach the forbidden. Dancehall—the new "hard-kicking, raw and wild" style of reggae—contains references to all manner of sexual prohibitions, including fellatio: "No ice-cream sound." As for cunninglingus: "How a man fi live inna 'oman hole like ah crab?" On the other hand, it's perfectly acceptable to "hear di y'ung gyal ah bawl when she get up tuh nine inch tall."

In Trinidad, the gay man is a *buller*, the lesbian a *zami queen* cursed with a *jumbie*, an evil spirit sent by an *obeah man*, the master of black magic. *Bullers* and *zami queens* can only be made straight—so the legend goes—when the *obeah man* himself is lured with bark, calabash, Julie mango, and angel hair and trapped in a rum bottle under a silk-cotton tree. The spirit of a *soucouyant*—usually an old woman who turns herself into a ball of fire and passes through a keyhole to suck one's blood—can also be beaten out of a *zami queen* with a *cocoyea broom*. But many West Indians—especially devout followers of the Rastafari faith—do not favor exorcism. They believe in the medieval punishments of stoning and burning. The batty bwoy, particularly, must be hunted down and killed.

So the stoning of Douche was "biblical," and killing him would have been the ultimate rite of passage for Slicksta, who was only 13 at the time. It's unlikely that Douche would report the attack for fear of further persecution by the police. Even well-known victims of gay bashing won't find justice in this Third World paradise. Between 1983 and 1988, many suspected homosexuals were stabbed or shot dead in Kingston. Among the more prominent victims were a physician, the principal of a prestigious boys school, a professor, an executive of the Caribbean Council of Churches, and a priest from Boston who was killed in his rectory. None of their assailants was convicted.

Buggery, however, is a felony in Jamaica, where police sometimes raid the homes of suspected sodomites. A deputy minister was arrested during one such raid last month, and charged with "aiding and abetting" a schoolteacher and his friend "found having sexual intercourse." The worst punishment of all was the embarrassment of seeing their names in the Kingston papers.

Since tourism is the island's main industry, gay visitors frolic without fear of the police. But the rudebwoy posses are not so tolerant of "blue-eyed devils." Heed Hammer Mouth's warning: "Bwoy y'u nuh fi test de murderer/Bwoy y'u nuh fi cross di border/Ah gwaan lick y'u doun ah groun'."

The situation in New York is not much better. The city's Human Rights Commission does not break down bias-crime statistics by ethnicity, so there's no way to measure the danger for gay West Indians on the streets of Babylon.

But Slicksta has emigrated to America. He's come to *Foreign* like an avenging angel on a winged horse breathing fire through its nose, eager to "chant down" Babylon, the great Satan that breeds *duppies*, *jumbies*, and *soucouyants*. Whites need not fear his wrath; he hunts only West Indians. And in Brooklyn, Slicksta says, Douche is everywhere.

"I did it again on Empire and Bedford," he confesses, a bloodthirsty look in his eyes. "I saw a homo named Wilfred. I said, 'BOOyahka! BOOyahka! [the simulated echo of a gunshot, used as a salutation or death threat.] Batty bwoy, divert.' An' I stoned 'im. Dere is no rights fi batty bwoy. Ah lie, sah?"

"Y'u nah lie," answers his friend Passion, a 21-year-old Panamanian dancehall DJ who once played antigay reggae in Manhattan's Underground club, "jes tuh dis dem mama man an' batty bwoy." White gay men and their West Indian lovers bolted from the club. "Dey only have rights accordin' tuh Babylon society," says Passion, reaching for a popular dancehall 45.

"You ain't never heard of one great faggot prophet. Man, beat dem wid cable wire. Mih do it on mih block in Crown Heights aall di time."

"Papa San [a dancehall prophet] say, 'Put dem 'pon stick an' bu'n dem,'" a Trini Rasta scoffs, looking askance. "Jah kill ah whole city for dat."

Slicksta flashes a smile and waves the jacket cover of Bujú Banton's *Mr. Mention* as if it were a flaming crucifix. "Look 'pon 'im 'ere," he beckons, admiring the coy but deadly profile of the 20-year-old *duppy conqueror* whose hit song, "Boom Bye Bye" advocates the execution of gay men.

Among rudeboys in Babylon, Bujú is a dancehall Don. He is the narcissistic "stamina daddy," a paramour who makes "gyl

TWO MEN WITH DREADLOCKS HUG EACH OTHER. NOT AN UNLIKELY SCENE IN NEW YORK EXCEPT THAT THESE ARE CHILDREN OF THE WEST INDIES.

ben' doun backways an' accept di peg." The worship of his *womb turner* and conquest of the *punani* (bussv) are the subjects of his burlesque boasts. Bashing the batty bwoy as he did in "Boom Bye Bye" is, as Freud put it, the "libidinal complement to the egoism . . . of self-preservation."

"What Bujú is sayin' is dat dem [homosexuals] vex with *punani*," according to Slicksta. He insists that the reporter listen to the ultimate insult to the batty bwoy: "Can y'u please tell me," he toasts, "what 'appen with y'u an' di *punani*? Batty bwoy, why y'u sex-up Johnny? You're triple-freaky, sexin' man inna bottom aall night long. Kill di batty-fucker dem, one by one."

"How de fuck you could jes kill ah man?" I ask.

"Easy." Whiskey Bop Johnnie Walker, another Jamaican DJ, interrupts. "Batty bwoy haffi de'd 'cause dem ah eat di bread from Sodom an' Gomorrah."

Combine this Old World intolerance with New World homeboy *kulcha*, and the batty bwoy in Babylon is placed in a precarious position. As Bujú has instructed "all di New York crew," if any homosexual makes a pass at them, "is like, boom . . . inna batty bwoy 'ead" because "Brooklyn gyal" and "rudebwoy nuh promote no nasty man, dem haffi de'd."

CONFESSIONS OF A BATTY-BWOY HUNTER

Papa Bongo, a Grenadian ragamuffin with a nine-inch scar on his left cheek, checks his .380 magnum, kisses it, then tucks it into his waistband. He begins to tell the story of a *zami queen* he pistol-whipped in a Brooklyn dance hall for calling him "faggot" in the presence of his rudeboys, but he stops in midsentence as a friend, with the cartridge of an M-1 rifle in one hand, lowers the volume on Natty B's "Puss," a homily on the sins of oral sex.

"Meh 'ave ah new name fi aall di bow-cat dem/When y'u see dem y'u fi point 'pon dem/Cause dem ah puss, 'cause dem ah eat under frock/Dem ah puss, 'cause dem nah stop suck cock. . . /Y'u come inna meh face with di hair inna y'u teeth/Y'u mouth, it smell like di renkin' meat."

"What is dat ah hearin'?" asks Bongo, whose homophobia is hair-trigger sensitive to prompts from anti-gay and lesbian toasts. "Lick it up," he orders his friend, who raises the volume. They chorus with Natty B: "Me an' Pimple . . . sight two

bwoy 'ug up inna dance hall/So one ah dem 'ead inna di next one lap/So Pimple back he 'mattie fi go lick two shot/Di bwoy dem say, 'Wait!' an' make big splash. . ."

The words are all too familiar to Papa Bongo. He wants to "massacre all ah dem. Ah whole heap ah posses should be huntin'"—all dem Jamaicans, Trinidadians, Grenadians, Bajans, an' Guyanese batty bwoys an' lesbians go dead."

"So what happen tuh de *zami queen* who call yuh ah faggot?"

"Man, ah beat 'er mercilessly in she head," Bongo recalls. "It's ah word ah doh like. It leave ah lastin' stain on yuh."

A stain—like the stench of vomit and Old Oak Rum on the breath of his father, a stevedore who'd come home drunk, rip off his overalls, and beat Bongo and his mother. These days, the mere touch of a batty bwoy is enough to send Bongo running for his cutlass, which he used as a child to fend off his father. Did the *buller* who tried to touch Bongo at a fashion show in Flatbush have rum on his breath? This queer wearing Western chaps that exposed his batty—did he remind Bongo of his father?

"Ah wanted to kill him immediately," Bongo recalls. "Ah tell him not to touch me. But he touch me again, an' ah start to beat de batty bwoy like there was no tomorrow. If ah wasn't among so many West Indians who know meh, ah woulda shoot dis faggot in he head. 'Boom!' Like Bujú say. 'Bye bye.'"

The next day, Bongo went to see his barber. "Ah was asking how long 'til he get tuh me when dis batty bwoy squeeze himself between us an' rub he cock against meh friend ass. People pull us off of him. From that moment on, ah declare war on dem. Anywhay ah see dem is big stone an' bullet."

Some nights, Bongo and his rudies will wander about, high on "Vat 19" rum and Guinness Stout, hunting batty bwoys. They stand outside West Indian dance halls in Flatbush, Crown Heights, or Jamaica, Queens, waiting to pounce. Right now, they plan to beat a bisexual man who is having an affair with one of their women. "She, ah eh go mention she name, jes like contaminated food now," Bongo says. "She have AIDS as far as we concern. We eh go kill 'er. She kill sheself aheady."

"All yuh go kill de man?" I ask Bongo, who once set a house on fire in Grenada when he and a group of friends discovered two homosexuals having sex. "If he dead from all de licks," Bongo snaps, "then dat's de way it shoul da happen."

Another target of the vigilantes is a posse of gay Jamaicans from Queens who drive around in expensive cars, wear huge gold necklaces, and pretend to be drug dealers. "All ah dem gay," Bongo claims. "Dey make dey money by sellin' theyselt tuh rich white men. De rich men, dem is de 'oman, an' de batty bwoys is de studs."

One Friday, Bongo tried desperately to get through to *The Richard Bey Show* on Channel 9. The topic was gays in the military. "Ah wanted Richard Bey tuh know exactly what de gay soldiers did to de youts of Grenada," Bongo says angrily. He wanted to talk about the soldiers stationed in the rural district where he grew up. "De youts never see so much white men before. De white men had de guns. Dey had de power." Bongo believes the *lébé* (rumor) that some of the highest ranking officers were gay. "When de youts didn't succumb willingly, dey *man-rape* dem."

THE BATTY BWOY WHO FOUGHT BACK

It's dawn on Sunday. Most West Indians are ready to leave for early mass. But at The Shelter, a dank, cavernous underground in Tribeca, a loudmouthed Jamaican androgynous named Moei Renée is swinging his head to and fro, cocking his ass and twisting his hips with the grace of a Yoruban priestess possessed by an Orisha. He is wearing a body-fitted Emilio Pucci dress, black lace stockings held in place by garters, and Calvin Klein black suede pumps. His hair is festooned with colorful barrettes to imitate that West Indian *pickney* look.

"I am not a drag queen," he insists. And



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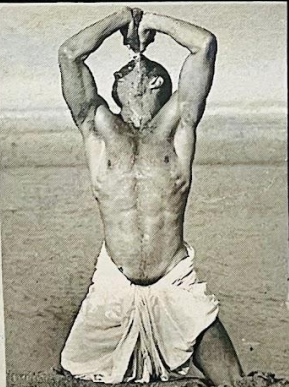
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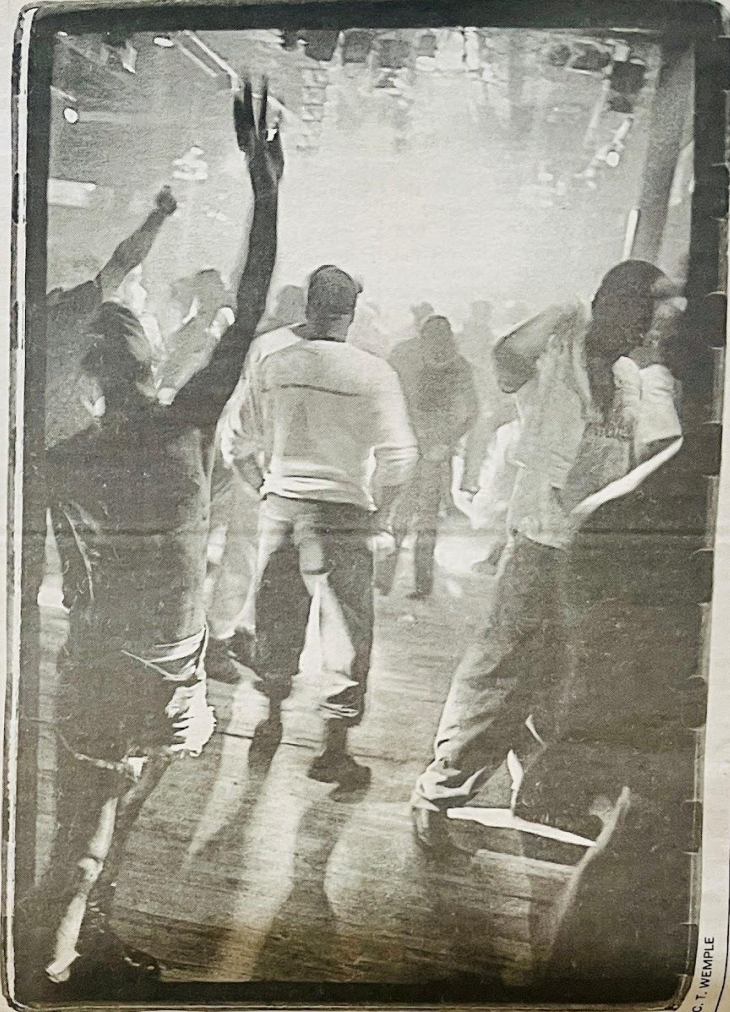


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VOICE January 12, 1993



At The Shelter, a loudmouthed Jamaican androgyne can cock his ass and twist his hips like a Yoruban priestess possessed by an Orisha.

in fact, there's an edge of defiance in his apparel. He looks like a dance hall version of *Ole Mas* [a burlesque of master/slave cuture] on *Jour Overt* morning [the start of Trinidad's carnival]. But his colors are pure Rasta: Red for the blood of Jamaican martyrs, black for his African ancestors, green for the fertile land and the hope of victory over oppression. And pink for his pride. "I'd go back to Jamaica dressed like this," Renée dares. "I have a cult following."

But the singer, songwriter, dancer, actor, and comedian has not visited his homeland in more than 20 years. In Jamaica today, Moi Renée would be the perfect target of the Trench Town rudeboys. If they ever ran into him on the streets of Kingston, they might "sen fi di matie an' di Uzi," as Buju Banton advises.

There was a time in Jamaica when Moi Renée, a shy, bedraggled *Dandy Shandy* playing nine-year-old, used to claw his brothers and sisters for calling him "oman man" and "Mother Long Tongue." At the age of 11, he got into a fight with another boy. "He called me a batty man and we got into a fight. He ripped my shirt and stained it with his foot."

In 1971, Renée and his family emigrated to Philadelphia. He arrived in Babylon with the soiled shirt. The footprint of the batty-boy basher still haunted him. It came alive, kicking and stomping him every time he asserted his gayness. But there was nothing Renée could do to suppress that part of him.

"My first crush was on a black kid in my junior high school class named Keith," he recalls. "I was in love with Keith. He was so beautiful." The makeup on his face begins to crack as he recalls how Keith died. He was shot to death by a relative who "didn't like what he was. It was the greatest loss of my life."

It seemed as if every "Yankee boy" wanted to leave a footprint on his gay ass. "While I was still in junior high school the most embarrassing situation of my entire life occurred. I was accosted by a group of

black boys and ordered at knifepoint to have oral sex with one of them. Of course I did it with reservation. I didn't want anyone to know, but the boys told and it got out into the school, and I was the big tease that semester. They were calling me homo, gay boy, and 'Faggot, faggot, you come from Jamaica and you're a faggot.'"

The taunting followed him to high school. One day, he ran into Vernon, the boy he'd been forced to blow. He heard those hurtful words again, but this time he lunged at his tormentor, stabbing him with a pencil. Renée had learned something about how to deal with bully boys in Babylon. The words didn't hurt him anymore.

Renée's life would become a series of struggles with potential assassins. One night, he was on his way to Mommy's, a gay club in downtown Philly, when two men approached him, asked for a dime, and when he said he didn't have one, called him a "Jamaican pussy." One of them, a muscular fella, slammed Renée in the back of his head. "I looked at him very calmly and said, 'You stand right here and I will be right back,'" Renée recalls. He'd seen a pretzel cart with a pipe iron propping up the wheel. Renée wasn't going for a pencil this time. He grabbed the pipe iron and began to pummel the stranger who had come out of the darkness like a *duppy conqueror*. He faded back into the night, tossing his afro pick at Renée.

In 1979, Renée moved to New York, to get away from his tormentors and increase his options. Here, a rangy West Indian man in Doc Martens and a designer frock could have a career. Renée has been a towel boy at the Continental Baths, a window designer at B. Dalton, and lately a *chanteuse* with his own single, "Miss Honey." He continues to test the tolerance level of West Indian heterosexuals by swishing through Flatbush. "If I feel like walking with a switch or behaving openly effeminate I do it," he boasts. "There are laws on the books here that people in my position should not be discriminated against. I feel proud to go out and be myself."

C. T. WEMPLE

UNDERCOVER LOVERS

It's late at Gill's Paradise, a safe house in Crown Heights where batty bwoys gather on Tuesday nights. Gill's introduces itself in burgundy letters daubed against a floodlit yellow facade. On a wall of the building is a mural depicting a Rasta crouching and petting a tiger in the shade of a palm tree. Some say he's taming the Conquering Lion of Judah. The symbolism springs to life on the crowded dance floor as two men with dreadlocks hug each other and bounce to the bass line of Tiger's "Come Again."

Not an unlikely scene in New York except that these are children of the West Indies *stick on like ants* and batty-riding in the face of the dominant culture. Other young men in baseball caps and Polo gear kiss, grind, and *wine* (a rhythmic pelvic motion) to the "hard and stiff" toasts of Shabba Ranks. Banjy boys check and re-check each other out in the corners of the room, while in the center of the floor, a hip-swinging Indo-Guyanese flames on.

The beat changes and soca music booms from the sound system. Everybody is jumping up to Crazy's "Take ah Man," a controversial song that has become an anthem of the gay West Indian underground. Now, its chorus becomes a sing-along: "She say, 'If yuh cyar get ah wooman, take ah man.'"

But they've come to Gill's searching for more than a man—and more than just a place to *shake dey kangkalang* like *jagabats* (whores). Under cover of disco darkness, they can *ramagé* (posture). In this hole, a *mamapoule* can be a rudebwoy. Or he can make his oppressor look like a *blasted koon-oomoonoo* (damn fool).

The DJ slips on Buju Banton's "Bogle"—"de wickedest dance from outa J-A,"—and the crowd is hyped. They contort their faces in a blowsy *pappyshow* (parody) of Shabba Ranks's funnel-nosed grimace and Buju's fatal attraction. Slouching and prancing like *court jesters* with a *snap-queen* attitude, they *burlesque* the peculiarities of the Bogle, as if this dance were invented by a gay *gundelero*.

"Fling y'u han' inna di air," Buju instructs, "then y'u rock an' y'u dip/Move tuh di drum an' mek y'u body kick/Step farwod an' come-up back quick."

"BOOyahka! BOOyahka!" the revelers shout back, their fingers extended in the shape of pistols, shooting up the night. "BOOyahka! BOOyahka!" But none of these batty bwoys "get up an' run,"—Buju's advice to gay men if they don't want to be shot. They're drawn to the rudebwoy *stylee*: to its power, its allure, its recklessness—its resistance to oppression. For them, the Bogle is not a show of aggression but of cultural connection despite rejection.

But the fantasy is short lived. One by one, these Ba'd Johns drop their "guns." All of a sudden, BOOyahka seems too real a threat. How can they make fun of such terror? How can they dance to the executioner's song?

At Gill's Paradise and other such clubs, gay and lesbian West Indians "may appear invisible because it is impossible to live safe and affirming lives," according to Colin Robinson, a Trini who is cochair of Gay Men of African Descent. "Many of us, like me, 'cross over' into the relative safety of the African American gay community where we become 'Black Gay Men'... We don't challenge our own communities and families. We laugh along with the *buller man* jokes [and] bite our lips at the hatred our mother casually displays at the dinner table for the people she doesn't know are us."

Desmond's mother never told such jokes at the dinner table. A traditional Guyanese mother would never discuss any aspect of sex with her children—not even with her Yankified 17-year-old son. But Desmond's stepfather, an Antiguan, felt no urge to suppress his disdain for *auntie-men*. He had his suspicions about Desmond's sexuality. One Saturday morning, he searched his stepson's dresser drawer and found some condoms. Desmond was shattered—his mother must not know. He told his stepfather that he'd bought the condoms because he was "bonin'" several hotties. The step-

father was not convinced.

A few minutes later, he interrupted a conversation between Desmond and his mother. "Me think you *pickney* ha' sum'n fu tell you," the stepfather snarled. For months, he'd been dogging the youth's every move. The badgering made Desmond's stomach wamble. He headed for the bathroom but the stepfather followed him and there he confronted Desmond again.

"Me find dis flyer inna you pocket," the stepfather growled. He produced a promo for The Men's Room with a photo of a naked man groping his dick. "Me min call dem an' dem tell me dat ah one big *auntie-man* place. Me tell dem, 'If you ever let a minor into your club again I would do whatever I have to do.'"

"What you talkin' 'bout?" asked Desmond, throwing his hands in the air. "Step off! Why you on ma jock?"

"Tell you muma," his stepfather demanded.

Desmond dallied in the bathroom for two hours before coming out to face her. "Is wha' goin' on?" she asked.

The stepfather interrupted: "Me think you *pickney* ah one big *auntie-man*."

"Desmond, dis true?" she asked. Her son looked away. Something in him wanted her to know. "I ain't nevu' slept with no man before," he mumbled. "But I *do* find them attractive."

IN JAMAICA, HUNTING GAY MEN IS AS INSTINCTIVE AS THE CRAVING FOR FRY FISH AN' BAMMY. THE MERE SIGHT OF THEM CAN TRIGGER A WITCH-HUNT.

His mother was the only woman Desmond trusted. He would talk to her about everything else except this. But now she stared at him in disbelief. The silence between them was an embarrassment he had never imagined.

"You think you could change?" his mother whispered. "Becuz as long as yuh livin' under me roof yuh gon can do dat."

Had this scene unfolded in Guyana, Desmond's mother might have made immedi-

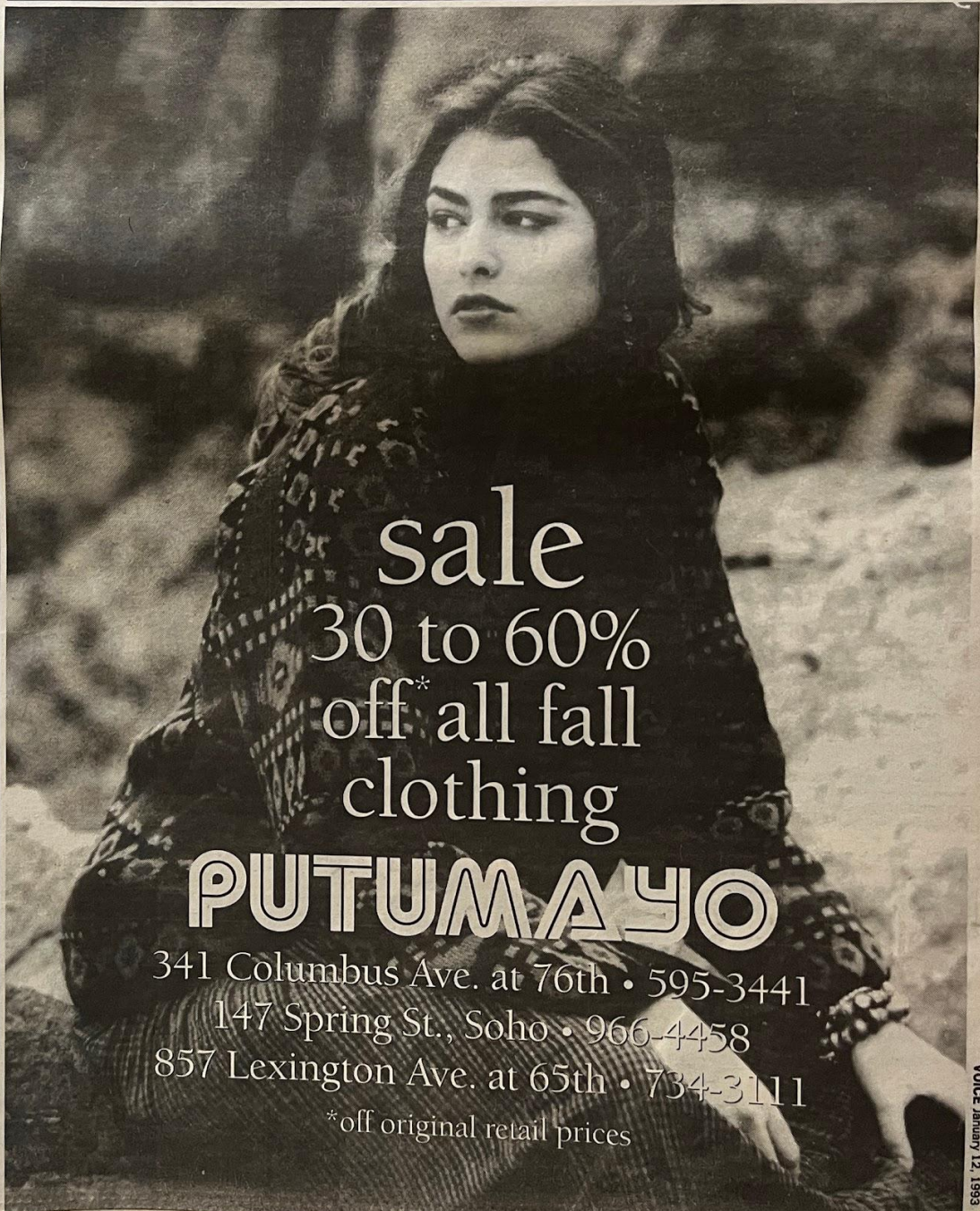
ate plans to drive the *obeah* from her son. But because they were living in Babylon, the youth was sent to a psychiatrist. Therapy, however, did not prompt the devil to depart. In fact, Desmond soon became engrossed in a relationship. "I was still in school and I was working part-time, but I would come home every morning at six. My stepfather was always on my case."

On the morning of his 18th birthday, Desmond came home late. His mother had waited up for him. She was dressed for church. "You gon can do dat an' live here," she said sadly.

Desmond reached for his teddy bear. "Guess what?" he blurted, glaring at his stepfather. "I'm outta here."

Few West Indian mothers ever find out about their gay sons and daughters. "No," says Mayaro, a 24-year-old Trini who is a regular at Gill's, "my family don't know. Dey would kick meh outa de house or try tuh beat meh straight."

Four months ago, however, Lopinot, another 21-year-old "middle-class Trini," bared his secret to his mother, a devout Catholic. "It was hard for her because of all the religious mythology around homosexuality in Trinidad. But I had to make my mother understand that Lopinot now is still the same Lopinot from before she knew I was gay. I had to make her understand that



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it was still me."

Moi Renée understands their pain. He mourned his first love, Keith, alone. He learned to fight the bashers on his own. Even though his family has always "known," they've never talked openly about his life, until Renée called up his brother Naphtali to wish him a happy birthday.

They had not spoken in years. Naphtali is a member of the Twelve Tribes of Israci, an offshoot of the Rastafari movement. The Twelve Tribes is built around reggae, the music of the King. Bob Marley was their "chief singer and player of instrument." The sect, known as the Uptown Rastas, embraces *di black petty-booshwah* who were afraid to go into the ghetto to join the Vintage Rastas. It has chapters in Babylon and even accepts whites as members. But no Twelve Tribes member claims to "deal at a higher level of consciousness" would be caught dead accepting birthday greetings from a homosexual. Even from his own brother.

"I an' I nah want no happy birthday greetings from y'u," Renée recalls Naphtali telling him. "Y'u still into dat faggotism? If y'u still ah batty man, me nah want talk tuh y'u."

"That's my business," Renée choked. Under the anger, he kept thinking of his brother as a baby, and it made him want to sob. "When you were a child," he asked at last, "who do you think took care of you?"

The brother hung up.

In the West Indies, Twelve Tribes won't speak to their homosexual siblings. But here in Babylon, many devotees are rebelling against the strictures of their religion. Some have embraced gay friends and relatives. Others have discovered that they are gay.

LOST IN BABYLON

Yula seemed annoyed by the winny of the iron horse as it chugged through the belly of the beast. But the petite woman who sat across from her was a momentary distraction. The sister, whom she'd later come to know as Winsome, was dressed in a flowing white cotton dress hemmed with red, green, and gold sashes. Her matted dreadlocks were wrapped in a coarse white hairnet that identified her as a member of the Twelve Tribes.

Yula was a rebel Rasta born in Babylon. She was dressed in blue jeans and a white T-shirt. Other Rastas, disapproving of such attire, would go out of their way to condemn her. "Sistren," they would snap, "why y'u wearin' pants?" Accompanying that would be a Biblical rebuke—"Get thee hence, Satan"—because Yula "look good but t'un bad." Her mannish swagger gave her away as a *bow-cat*—a woman who would *nyam any niggle* (eat pussy) and re-

fuse to *bumflick 'pon an dick*. Yula tore her eyes from Winsome, looked at the ads for decongestants and hemorrhoid remedies, and tried to make her mind go blank.

The two women avoided further eye contact until the train stopped at Astor Place. Yula raced up to the street. She was standing at the corner contemplating her next move when she felt a gentle tap on her right shoulder. She spun around and came face to face with the woman she'd been trying to dodge.

"Sistren," Winsome asked the stranger in her Jamaican accent, "evah 'ear 'bout Pandora Box?" Yula nodded, dumbfounded. "Could y'u tell I an' I 'ow tuh get there?"

"Why?" Yula asked gruffly. "I an' I jes wah go there," Winsome squeaked. But she was looking for more than directions.

"Why ask me?" "I an' I trust y'u 'cause di sistren is ah Dread."

"Do you know what kind of club this is?" Winsome giggled, girlishly. "You asked the right person," Yula said. That seemed obvious to Winsome.

"You straight up Rasta?" Yula asked her. Winsome nodded yes.

Yula knew that there were gay Jah-fearing Rastas, but she had never met one. Suddenly, there were dozens of questions she wanted to ask—like how a lesbian

could be a member of a sect that can justify the stoning of any member exposed as a homosexual. "Is jes sex," Winsome said abruptly. "I an' I 'ave sex any way I an' I feel like."

YULA KNEW THERE WERE GAY JAH-FEARING RASTAS, BUT SHE HAD NEVER MET ONE. THERE WERE DOZENS OF QUESTIONS SHE WANTED TO ASK.

Winsome told Yula that she wanted to get married and have children but that she'd had sexual feelings for women all of her life. Yula had no such domestic fantasies: she'd always known what she was. "Femme in the streets, butch in the sheets," was her assessment of Winsome.

At Pandora's Box, Winsome's eyes opened wide, soaking in an ambience she could only have imagined back home. Here, she saw women of all shapes and sizes—most of them black—stalking and slinking or dancing on the tiny crowded floor. As Winsome stood against a wall, Yula made her move. "I just came up on her and I kissed her. And after that it was like, 'When am I going to see you again?' We made love the next weekend. She initiated the whole thing. It was her first full-blown homosexual encounter. I asked her, 'Are you sure you're telling me the truth?' She was very passionate. She knew what to do."

But Winsome confined her lust to their private encounters. "She told me that she was living with friends. Nobody should know. 'No, dey can't find out,' she kept saying. 'If dey find out, I an' I will be stoned.'"

"How do you deal with it?" she asked Winsome.

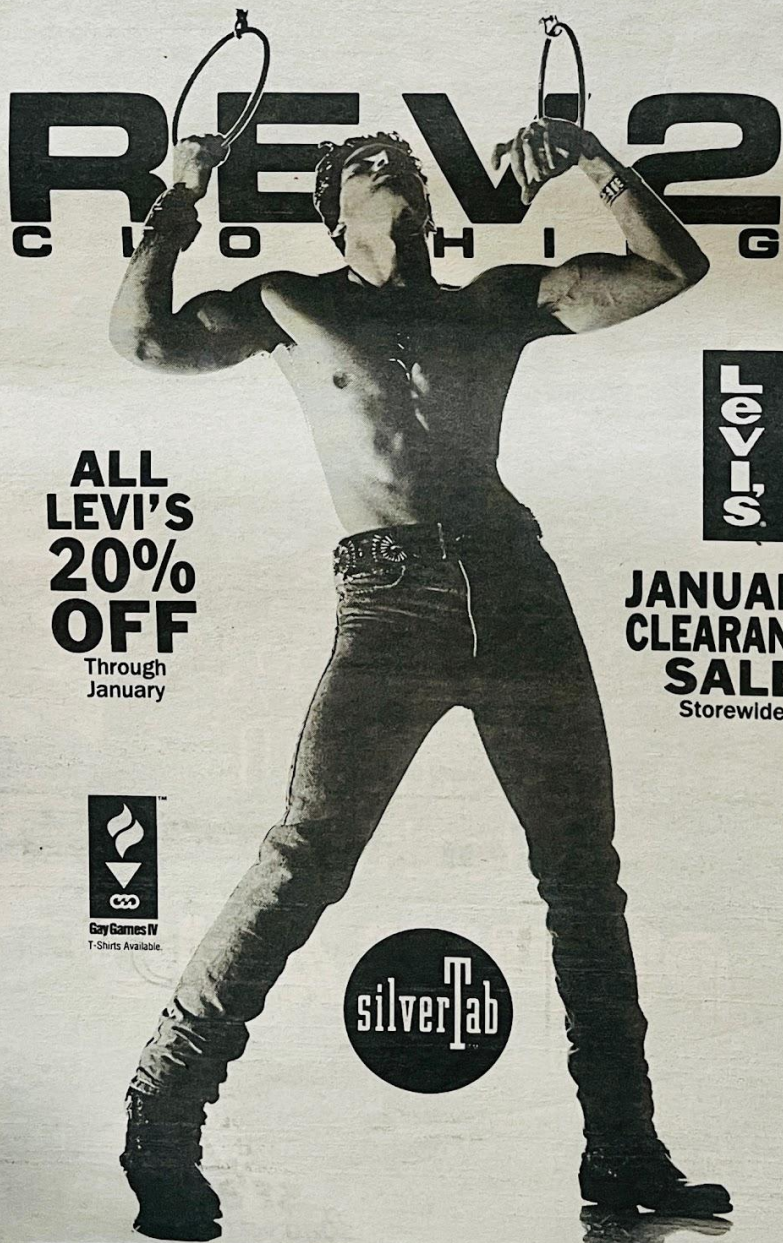
There was terror in her eyes: "Dey can't find out," she begged.

"Well, you have to come to terms with something," Yula insisted. "You exist and I exist. There have to be others like us, just like there are gay Christians and gay Jews. There *must* be gay Rastafarians. Let's make an Order."

In the end, the two women agreed to keep their relationship a secret. But something in their mien made even the smallest gesture of affection seem suspicious. One day, they were accosted by a dope-dealing Trini Rasta, who saw them walking hand in hand, like nuns. "He took one look at the both of us and he went off. He said, 'All yuh is ah disgrace tuh Rastafari. Cut off allyuh locks. Somebody should cut off allyuh locks.' I remember Winsome shouting back in patois, 'Y'u don't know I an' I relationship with Jah an' Selassie!! How can y'u judge I an' I?'"

No one had to judge Ambakaila. She'd condemned herself long ago. Drawn to women for all of her adult life, the *picki-head* tomboy struggled to bury those feelings beneath an even stronger attraction to men. But at the age of 30, Ambakaila met Marabella, her *doo-doo darlin'*, her first love. Their passionate affair knew no bounds, except to their *mauvais langue* neighbors in a close-knit fishing village in Trinidad. The constant finger-pointing and *shooshoin'* (tongue-wagging) destroyed their relationship, but not Ambakaila's feelings toward Marabella.

Ambakaila's *tabanca* (longing) for Marabella made her love-crazy. The only way to rid her heart of this *tololo*, or love-jones, was to get away. She fled to Babylon.



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MURDER, HE WROTE

The real "nightmare of the suffaraks" is not blood-sucking homosexuals. It is the *Gun t'ing* that has claimed so many Jamaican lives in recent years. "Gun t'ing," the toaster Hopeton Lindo cries, "is ah serious somethin'. Di youds dem nowadays not jokin'—especially when dem sniff dat white t'ing. Dey don't care who y'u are or where y'u from; di simplest t'ing is jes blam! Blam! Blam!"

Dancehall Dons such as Buju Banton lionize "gun murdaraks" and covet their notoriety. In "Man Fi De'd"—his warning to all informants who "chat out mi bizness"—Buju and his rudies are "no gun punka." In fact, he suggests that one informant "tell 'im famalee an' frien' fi prepare 'im Nine Night 'cause if mi buck 'im ah day, or if mi buck 'im ah night, mi can bet y'u I'll win—it nah go be ah pretty sight." In other words, "jes mek dem no we nah save no lead; gunshot fi buss-up inna informer 'ead."

Many dancehall enthusiasts, who "labba dem mouth like ah radio station," say Buju is just "woofin'"—or voicing the harsh realities of *jungleness*. But his obsession with the gun culture evokes more than idle threats. It's a synthesis of male posturing, sexual paranoia, and a political tradition that dates back to 1865, when a heavily armed Jamaican preacher, Paul Bogle, led the Morant Bay rebellion. That uprising helped end the tyranny of the British plantocracy.

Young rudies pattern their rebellious ways on Bogle's defiance. In fact, they've named their gun-posturing dance the Bogle after this freedom fighter. But this spirit of resistance became warped during the '80s, when Edward Seaga—a/k/a "CIAga"—came to power with an American-backed right-wing government. Armed posses suppressed dissent, and the tradition of political violence became enmeshed with criminality. Bob Marley's admonition to Jamaican youth, never to forget Paul Bogle and "where you stand in the struggle," was forgotten as cavalier black-on-black violence exploded—in the ghettos and the music.

These "sound bwoys" of fury have put dancehall reggae, a traditional folk form, through virulent changes. "Dancehall is a different kind of phenomenon today," says Gladston Wilson, program director of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation. "It has drawn on some of the most vulgar elements in society in terms of talk, dress, attitude to each other, and it tends to speak in very violent language. Bob Marley talked about chasing 'those crazy baldheads outta town' because of injustice. People thought Marley was a revolutionary in a Marxist sense. He turned Haile Selassie's speech into a song called 'War.' But he wasn't saying you need to take up guns and shoot people."

Buju—who scoffs, "Mih nah laugh wid people, man. Mih kill people an' drink blood"—is too powerful an entertainer not to be taken seriously.

Last year, the toaster unraveled the moral fabric of a color-conscious Jamaican society with "Love Mih Brownin'," a song extolling the virtues of light-skinned women. Buju calls it "a likkle conflict," but Simon Buckland of *Reggae Report* writes that Buju "came under a lot of criticism [from] a number of recorded responses, the most notorious of which was Nardo Ranks's 'Them a Bleach,' a ditty... that directly lays the blame for black girls trying to bleach out their skin at the feet of Buju Banton."

The criticism forced Buju back into the studio to record "Love Black Woman." But the damage had already been done. "Times dere I was immature," he told Buckland. "Now I'm moving up, 'coming a man, so the vibes and material now is different, y'unnerstan'? If you listen the tracks from then and now, you'll recognize the big difference."

The "big difference" was that Buju Banton now suffered from batty-bwoyon-the-brain, the dread of gays that compelled him—"a young man raised in the Caribbean"—to write "Boom Bye Bye." Last summer, it was not uncommon to hear the lyrics being chanted like a mantra with intense cultural pride in Jamaica, the "small community" for whom he says the song was intended. Soon its notoriety spread to West Indian enclaves in Crown Heights, Flatbush, and Bedford-Stuyvesant. The song could not have emerged at a worse time: a new alliance was being forged between dancehall's gun-boasting rudebwoys and the gangsta strains of hip-hop, which also expresses cultural pride through an almost playful ultraviolence.

"Boom Bye Bye"'s ominous message to gays was almost concealed behind a mask of banality, in which humor and violence intertwined: "Two man hitch up an' ah hug up an' ah lay down inna bed/hug up one another/an' ah feel up leg.../shoot dem now, come mek we shot dem."

By then Buju had left his small community. And by his own account, he "traveled the world" and saw the "positive [emphasis his] impact" that his music had in "diverse cities such as Tokyo, London, and New York." But Buju didn't fully understand the meaning of the words *diversity* and *tolerance* until the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) boldly defined them for him.

On October 21, GLAAD joined forces with Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD) to decode Buju Banton's bullet-riddled patois. The two groups embarked on a media campaign to have "Boom Bye Bye" removed from the playlists of radio stations WBLS and WRKS. Three days later, a front-page headline in the *New York Post* declared Buju's song "HATE MUSIC."

Buju, the rudebwoy with the "crocodile 'eart an' iguana stomach," says he meant no harm. "The antigay sentiment expressed in the lyric was, and continues to be, very much a part of the Caribbean culture," he reiterated. Buju's response has triggered a heated debate over whether homophobia—and even gay bashing—are imbedded in West Indian tradition, and if they are, whether artists like Buju merely reflect the culture when they express contempt for homosexuality. (Buju has refused repeated requests for interviews from North American media; he was unavailable for comment to the *Voice*.)

Despite a ban on antigay dancehall by radio stations, many Jamaicans here and *backyard* insist these dancehall rudies remain true to the culture. Batty-bwoy hunters and gun murdaraks, they claim, are alter egos. They quote Shabba Ranks to shut you up: "I know mi roots an' culture/Murdarah! It is music mi charge fah/Murdarah!"

Dr. Luther Blake, a Jamaican-born political and educational consultant, who lives in Brooklyn, foresees "a change of attitude" toward homosexuals in the next generation of West Indians.

"They will eventually change," Blake asserts, "just as many things in the Caribbean have changed. Whoever thought 30 years ago there would be a black power movement in the Caribbean? That's happened. They may be 10 to 15 years behind this country, but eventually there will be an openly gay movement. You may end up seeing gay bars in certain places like Jamaica, a concept that seems completely radical now. When West Indians begin to see gay people as just people and not some kind of aberration then they'll learn to deal with them."

—P.N. & R.M.

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"Ah never wanted tuh live in America," Ambakaila recalls. But she decided that a *zami queen* did not deserve to be in Trinidad. She belonged in Babylon, with all the other sinners. "America was my way of punishin' mehself," she explains. "Boy, ah wanted to purge mehself, just bathe mehself in ashes. America was my sackcloth an' ashes."

Three years had passed since Ambakaila's arrival in Brooklyn, three years since her last encounter with Marabella. Ambakaila had begun to believe that God washed her conscience of all guilt. "Ah tell mehself, 'After three years of heterosexual love makin', I eh go have ah problem with dis again.' Ah went back tuh meh Baptist religion an' ah feel dat ah was like totally cured. Boy, it was three years ah jes prayers, praying real hard to God, tuh take dis t'ing away, whatever it was. Ah tell de Lord, 'Okay, ah go admit ah have ah attraction fuh women. Now take dat feelin' away nah because ah know dat it wrong. Please take it away.'"

But the feeling endured and it exploded the day Ambakaila met Sally Jean, a white woman who she insists is the spitting image of her lover Marabella. Sally Jean is openly gay and very active in her church. "She tell me dat she never felt closer tuh God. She say God talk tuh she an' tell she, 'It's all right. I accept you as you are. I am okay with you being a homosexual.'"

Ambakaila and Sally Jean became lovers, and slowly Babylon culture began to work its way with her. "She take meh aroun' tuh ah gay community center, gay bars, DT's Fat Cat: de landmarks. She tell me dat I should get tuh know other gay people an' dat ah was not alone in what ah goin' through."

Sally Jean introduced Ambakaila to Identity House, a gay counseling service. At first, she resisted attending the group sessions. "Ah wanted tuh talk tuh somebody. Meh own people, Trinidadians. But ah couldn't see mehself sharin' dis so-called secret wid dem. Ah jes make up meh mind one Friday evenin' an' ah went to ah group session. I get to find out dat it had plenty other people like me who have identity crisis. Dat is what I goin' through, an identity crisis. Ah lotta people come tuh de sessions an' find out dat all dey really had was ah homosexual experience. Ah lotta dem find out dat dey bi, some find out dat dey gay, an' ah lotta dem find out dat dey straight. Dey find out 'bout dis thing in dem."

Ambakaila has attended three sessions. "De crisis more intense now if yuh ask me. Ah almost certain dat ah not gay, becuz ah does still lie down on meh bed an' fantasize 'bout takin' de biggest *totey* [dick] in town, even with all dis identity crisis ah goin' through. But then ah cyar remember evah havin' so strong ah feelin' fuh ah man as ah

had fuh Marabella an' Sally Jean. So what does dat make meh?"

"I tryin' tuh find answers tuh dis problem by handlin' it in ah vertical way: Me an' meh God. Up an' down. Ah try de horizontal method an' ah come tuh realize dat nobody in de Christian community would evah tell meh dat it's right an' ah could be gay an' godfearin'. An' nobody in de gay community would evah tell meh dat ah can't do both. Everybody would have dey strong arguments. Ah jes feel like ah in de center an' people from both sides pullin' meh, jes tearin' meh apart."

COULD YOU BE LOVED?

I was one Trini to whom Ambakaila could confide. After all, I was her co-pere, she my ma-comere. She was grim-faced and still wrestling with her maddening *tololo* the night she arrived unexpectedly at my Harlem apartment.

"Who dead?" I asked as Ambakaila brushed past me and dove onto the bed. I lay down beside her. "Girl, what happen? Yuh mudda dead? Yuh fadda dead?" She covered her head with pillows and began to bawl.

"Like somebody put *maljoe* on meh," she sputtered. "Everytime ah try to get on wid meh life de devil does come back like ah tick in meh *kakahole*."

Ambakaila was frightening me. "Yuh have AIDS?" I pressed. . . .

"Nah," she replied abruptly. "What ah have more woss than AIDS."

"Cancer?"

"Stop fuckin' wid meh," she said angrily. "I jes ready fuh de *Labasse* [the city dump]."

I told Ambakaila that she needed a "bush bath or ah dip in de salt" to wash away the *maljoe*. But she'd already tried to cleanse her svelte body with blue soap, Florida water, and lavender.

"John John [my home name], all de *bacchanal* yuh use to hear 'bout me an' Marabella is de truth."

I had no inkling of what Ambakaila was talking about until she said it in plain English: "Marabella and I were lovers."

"And . . ." I said, anticipating more details.

" . . . An' ah feelin' shame an' dutty. Ah want tuh bathe."

"Gyul, make de sign of de cross in yuh mouth."

"Yuh think yuh could still love meh like yuh did 10 minutes ago?"

"What kinda stupidness yuh askin' meh? Yuh soun' like ah scratch-up Bob Marley record: 'Could You Be Loved?' Cud yuh be-e-e luv? Ah still yuh *compeh*."

I had never seen Ambakaila cry. I'd never seen tears gush so violently from anybody's eyes. She handed me a ream of letters from Marabella, tearjerkers calculated to induce the most excruciating guilt and jealousy. I felt like tearing them up and siccing a *jumbie* on the author. In Trinidad, I would have made a *cook* and said a *Nove-na* for my friend. But here in Boo York, we fell asleep weeping in each other's arms.

The next morning, after she'd left, I phoned my brother Michael, who lives in "Crooklyn." I didn't know how to tell the *maco* (gossiper) that his suspicions about Ambakaila had been right all along. I could almost hear him lapsing into one of his *malkadies*, or fits, about my association with *bullers* and *zami queens*—"an' dat fag-got newspaper" I work for.

"Here nah," I said to get his attention. "Ah bringin' Ambakaila tuh yuh party an' ah doh want yuh to play 'Boom Bye Bye.'" "What she have tuh do wid Buju Banton?"

"Ent yuh say yuh ent want no homosexual in yuh house?"

There was a strained silence. For once in his life, the *maco* was witless. "Bring she," he huffed. "She come like famalee tuh me."

But Michael, who had introduced me to Bob Marley's message of "One Love," did not want me to bring any more of my gay friends. He didn't want them around his two impressionable boys.

Michael reminded me that, back in John John, the neighborhood in Port-of-Spain where we grew up, our grandmother had to protect four brothers from being hit on by a well-known homosexual called Mikey Mike. He told me I was the naive one because, while he and the other children would taunt Mikey Mike, I would hold lengthy talks with him.

"Mikey Mike nevah touch me," I told Michael.

"Becuz our grandmother woulda take night and make day for he ass if he bull we."

Michael agreed not to play "Boom Bye Bye" in Ambakaila's presence. "But ah go play it when she gone. Ah go play dah song jes fuh yuh skin."

Oh how I wanted to see the look on Michael's face when Ambakaila appeared. But she stood me up—and so did my daughter's favorite uncle, a fashion designer and Willi Smith devotee. So when Michael put his favorite record on, no one objected. My 11-year-old, Zanelia, who had heard this song on the radio, jumped up and chirped: "Boom bye bye inna batty bwoy 'ead. Rudebwoy nuh promote no nasty man dem haffi de'd."

She couldn't comprehend the meaning of the words, but she understood the look on my face. "This song is about your uncle," I explained. "It's about killing your uncle." There was an awkward silence as the tears streaked down her cheeks. Then she spoke: "Sorry, uncl. Bye bye, Buju."

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