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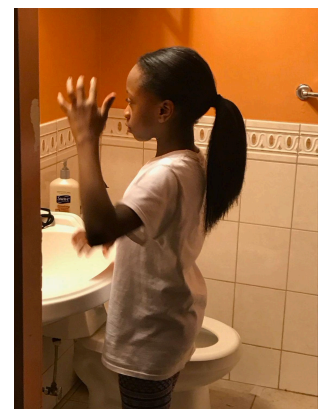
The Trials and Tribulations of a Queer Black Woman

Growing up in a world where marginalized beliefs were covered up and hidden; it was



hard to comprehend why I was so different. I never had a guide or someone to give me advice whenever I felt lost and displaced. There were times when I was at my lowest point not knowing how to feel, or why I didn't fit into the ideal child, the ideal way. Multiple times throughout my life I have felt disoriented or stuck and I didn't know who to go to for advice.

At times I would have to watch all the other kids fit in and understand each other while I would sit on the outside looking in. I couldn't understand what all the hype was about when it came to talking about boys and their crushes, so I found myself picking random boys to like so I could feel included in the conversation. However, since there was no representation in the cartoons I watched, the movies I saw, the books I read, even just the people around me, I didn't know what was the actual root to the problem I was having. To make matters worse, I never even heard a single thing about the LGBTQ+ community in my own home. It took me years to even know that there were other people like me thinking the same things.



When I started middle school, I began to see and learn about different things. I started hearing more about the community, but not enough or in the way that could help and educate me. For example, as I started to learn about girls liking girls, it all had to do with bisexual girls being sexualized by straight boys. In addition to that, at the time I had no knowledge of lesbians, so I only knew that girls who like girls can only be bisexuals whose purpose is to please heterosexual men. After being taught that, I had no intention to be bisexual or a part of the community to begin with simply because, at that age, I thought the reason I had those feelings is because I secretly wanted to please the male gaze. That ended up pushing me away from wanting to go through that journey of finding out what I identified as or even figuring out that there was more to the community than I was shown back then.

Eventually, after not being able to hide from the pressing questions and curiosities that haunted me, I decided to start walking on that path again. Doing my research, I started to learn



more and more about the community; my horizons began to expand. I remember searching up things like “what is lgbt,” “what is the difference between gender and sex,” and so much more. I was so desperate to find out more so I can at least have proper closure if it turned out that I was actually the only one feeling this way; if I ended up being the weird one. However, I was met with the complete opposite of what I was expecting. I instead learned about the different sexualities, genders, spectrums, etc., and I was finally able to start exploring the community and the people in it. I began to explore my sexuality, my gender; everything that had been put in a box during those previous years. I went through, as well as contemplated, multiple changes with my gender trying to find out what fit me. I went from non-binary, to transgender, to agender,

back to non-binary; and the list goes on and on. During that time, my gender identity continued to change because I could never find something that fitted me, and I didn't know how broad the gender spectrum was, on and off of it, to find the label that suits me to this day.

Focusing more on my sexuality, during the end of middle school and the beginning of high school, I mainly identified as bisexual. The reason behind this was because I believed I was still somewhat attracted to men, even if it was to the smallest degree. It also didn't help that I genuinely didn't have any openly lesbian women around me that I could go to for advice, or to just ask the questions that had been burning inside of me. Everywhere I looked I saw bisexual girls saying how liking men is normal and it's rare to genuinely be a lesbian. To make matters worse, as not only a person of color, but a woman of color, we are constantly questioned when it comes to sexuality and gender; at times it can even go so far as being asked to "prove it," and that is only one of many struggles that people of color in the community face. So I was



constantly told that I definitely still like men and that I am just following a "trend." This in turn made me validate that side of me even more and look past the obvious red flags I had when it came to liking boys. To elaborate more on that, when it came to liking and dating men, I would only look for them to give me attention. I never cared about getting to know them as a person in a romantic way; it only stayed on a friend level. I never took those relationships, and situationships, seriously; or as serious as I took them when it was with women.

Even though it was an obvious, bright red flag when it happened, it was still so normalized with people chalking it up to me just not connecting with men as I do with women. As a result, I kept labeling myself as bisexual thinking that it was normal and I still was attracted to men. However, I still knew something was off, so I tried to do more research to figure out



what was making me question my identity every single day. I started looking up the different sexualities and trying to figure out which one fitted me. I experimented with bisexuality, pansexuality, etc., trying to see which one might fit me better and make me question myself less. After a couple years of sticking with bisexuality, I started researching again; I could never settle down and be satisfied with that sexual

orientation because it just felt so wrong when I referred to it as the sexuality I identified as.

During my research, I came across a group of people talking about their experiences dealing with heteronormativity. I had never heard of this term before, so I had to look it up and the definition I found was this, “denoting or relating to a world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation.” After learning the definition, the things they were saying became so clear. I not only understood what they meant, but I also could relate to the experiences they were giving. After reading through those comments it made me start applying those experiences to myself and comparing them to my own. I started to realize that the only reason



why I was so unsatisfied with my current identity at the time is because it was not me. I was being controlled by the heteronormative society both directly and indirectly, and it had been controlling me for the first 15 years of my life; holding me back from discovering my true identity. During my sophomore year of high school, I finally started identifying as a lesbian. At first it was extremely nerve wracking to do so because of how

much backlash I would, and did, get, but I eventually was able to be completely open about it.

This new found confidence in my sexuality led me to discover the gender identity that fit me best

which is gender fluidity. I realized that I wasn't just questioning my gender identity almost everyday simply because I was unsure about what fit me. The reason was that I didn't like to be put into a box in what I could identify as, so when I came upon some articles explaining gender fluidity, I immediately resonated with the term. That was 2 years ago and I have been thriving as a proud black genderfluid lesbian ever since then.

In conclusion, the journey of being a queer black woman, and a lesbian black woman at that, was definitely hard for me. I had to deal with heteronormative values stunting my growth as a queer person, racist and discriminatory practices distracting me from my real identity, and I also had to endure many instances that threatened to make me go back in that closet and hide forever. However, I was able to overcome all of those obstacles over the years and be able to get to the point I am at today.



Even though I still have to deal with the occasional identity crisis, as well as the everyday hate for just existing, I still am glad that I went through that character development back then and I am still growing as a person to this day.