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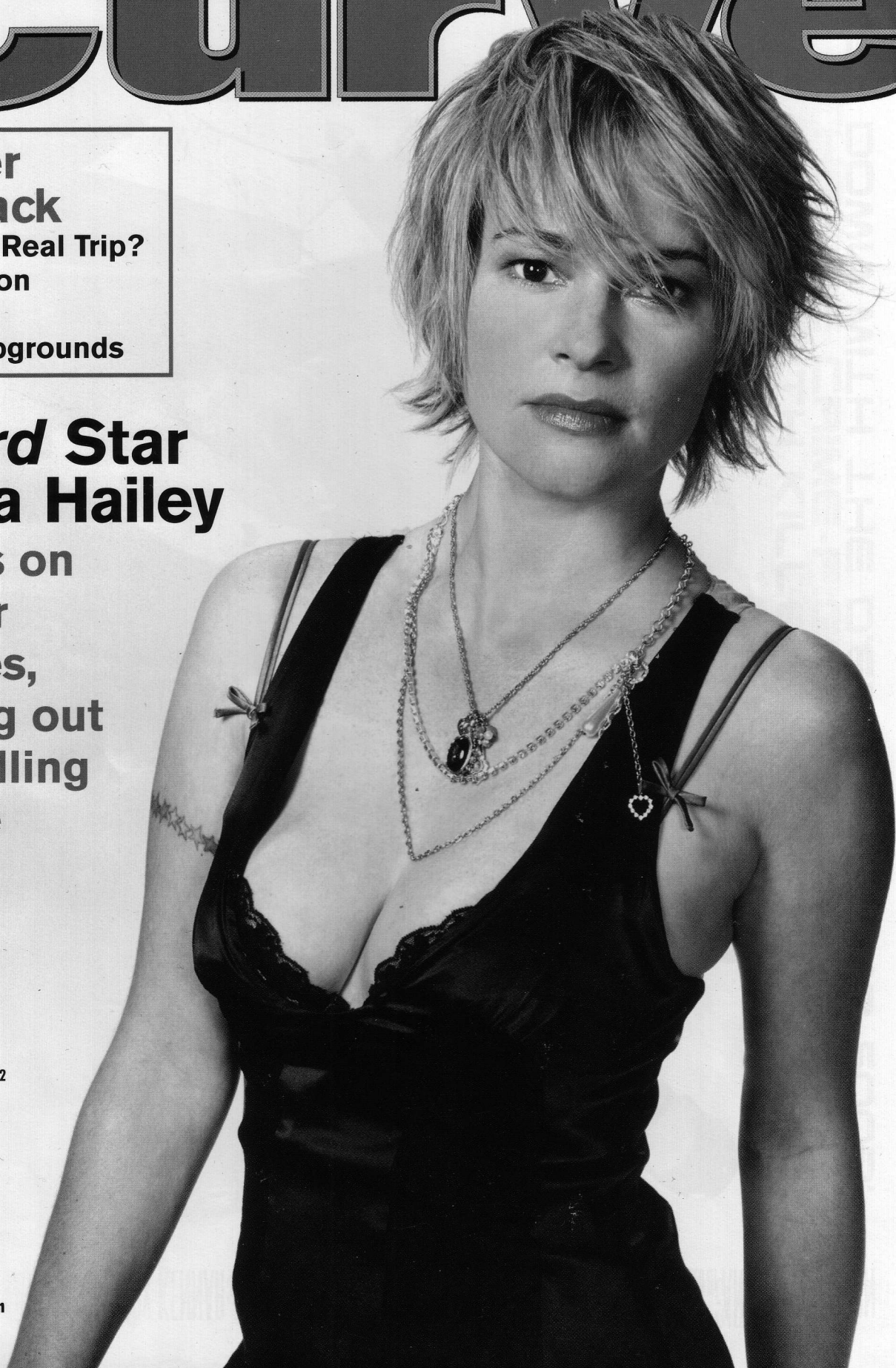
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Ten Dyke

A look at some amazing dyke activists

Watch

LONG BEFORE PRESIDENT Bush was re-elected, a remarkable surge in young queer activism began springing up across the country. We went in search of the best and brightest, only to find there are too many to fit into these pages. What we do have is an impressive and dynamic bunch that ranges from an anti-racist activist to a Catholic high school student working to provide shelters for queer youth. Given the alarming levels of anti-queer attitudes and violence in the United States, the accomplishments of these young people are all the more impressive. Keep your eye out for further news from these fiercely intelligent and determined young people.

LaJoya Johnson

22, East Lansing, Michigan

Who she is: Johnson, a student at Michigan State University, created the MSU LGBT Students of Color Scholarship in memory of Sakia Gunn, a 15-year-old African-American lesbian who was stabbed to death in 2003.

On the scholarship: "There have been a lot of LGBT people of color who had to leave school because of a lack of funds. I, too, am suffering to pay for school. ... I thought [the scholarship would be] a way to help students and also remember Sakia's name."

On race and invisibility: "I read about Sakia's murder in one or two articles – and that's it! There is a whole movie about Matthew Shepard! Nothing against Matthew Shepard, of course, but the media fails to talk about African Americans in a positive light or any light at all. ... People need to realize that racism exists everywhere, that just because you don't hear about something in the

news – like Sakia's murder – that doesn't mean it doesn't happen."

Kristin Langner

17, Waterloo, Iowa

Who she is: Langer is a Catholic high school senior involved in queer and youth liberation activism in the Midwest.

On being out at Catholic school: "My friends are very supportive of me, as are some of my teachers. My family is supportive, especially my siblings. One of the biggest needs of queer youth is meet[ing] other youth who are going through the same things. It's hard finding other queer youth."

On her work: "We need a youth shelter in this area. When you're under 18, the Department of Human Services doesn't want to put you in the shelter system, but you can't stay in any of the other shelters because of your age."

On role models: "My sister, Michelle, because of all she does for her kids. My friend Eve, who [came] out as a 13-year-old. I would never have been able to do that."

Brooklynne Thomas

22, San Francisco

Who she is: Thomas is a trans activist, burlesque performer and drag king who also works at San Francisco's Youth Gender Project.

On being a trans dyke: "There are dykes who claim I have no right to be in dyke space, that because I'm trans I don't know the pressures of being a dyke in a

straight man's world. Which is baffling! I get the same reactions when I walk down the street holding a girl's hand."

Why she's a drag king: "I was told I couldn't be a drag king because I'm MTF. This fueled a performance where I lip-synched 'You Don't Own Me,' and crowned myself king. I love to break down people's ideas about gender while making them laugh."

Her dream: "To start an all-transwomen burlesque club – a place where transwomen can show off their bodies no matter what stage of transition they are in. This could be very beneficial to destigmatizing trans bodies."

Kirya Traber

19, San Francisco

Who she is: Traber is a self-described biracial, bisexual poet and activist.

On dividing lines: "I lived in Berkeley, Calif., until I was 7, and then moved to the Mendocino Coast. In Berkeley, I was 'mixed.' My mother is white, my father is black and my friends had similar heritage. But when I moved up to Mendocino, I was one of the only black people. I've only begun to realize how the difficulties I had there were related to race. ... My experience as a bi woman has been similar."

On changing the world: "The goal should be to give people the freedom to choose whatever identity they like."

On identity: "The hardest part is dealing with the politics of identity. How I choose to identify myself and who I choose to date is seen by many as a test of the commitment, or even as a barrier, to changing the world. I think I'm a testament to the fact that limiting someone's identity can blunt the struggle rather than move it forward."

Caty Simon

23, Northampton, Mass.

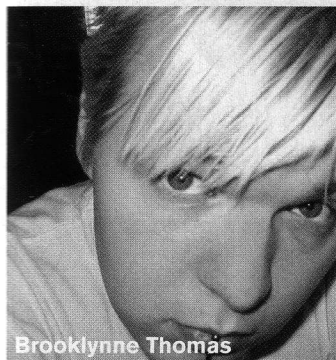
Who she is: Simon is on the Board of ARISE for Social Justice, a low-income rights organization, and is outspoken about everything from sex work to criminality.

On the intersections of sex work and class: "I was arrested for prostitution. The worst thing was how guilty they were trying to make me feel when I hadn't done anything wrong. 'Must feel really productive to arrest nonviolent offenders,' I taunted the police: 'Right now someone could actually be getting hurt!' What kind of statement are we making when a woman who marries for money is more highly regarded than a street prostitute?"

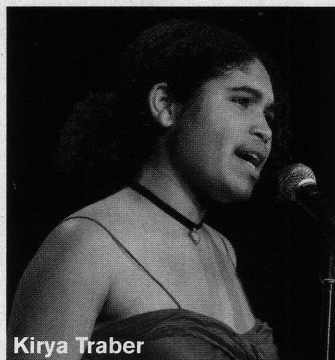
On the war on drugs: "Being a junkie has made me understand the need to stop the war on drugs, which fills our jails with nonviolent offenders ... [and] creates an AIDS epidemic because syringe access is denied. I'm not happy about my drug habit, but I'm even less pleased with the social injustice that comes with it."

Activists to

— all under the age of 25. By Gina de Vries



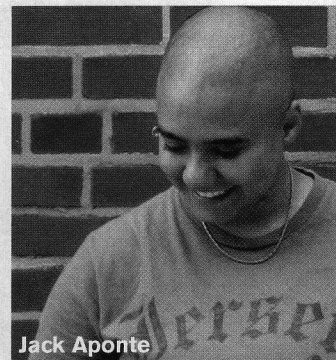
Brooklynne Thomas



Kirya Traber



Katy Simon



Jack Aponte

Fighting words: “The disability rights movement has a really smart slogan: ‘Nothing about us without us.’ That needs to go for hos and crazy people and prisoners and soldiers and all the kinds of criminals and poor people, too.”

Courtney Trouble

21, Olympia, Washington

Who she is: Trouble dances burlesque, tends bar and runs NoFauxxx.com, a feminist porn site.

On making body-positive porn: “Long before I started NoFauxxx, I wrote a zine called *Fat Girl Break Down*. It went from a small, personal printed zine to a huge, collaborative Web zine. Hundreds of people came together

on the Internet to talk about fat oppression and body positivity. [With NoFauxxx], I’ve taken the theories of fat positivity, transsexual/transgender activism and sex-worker activism to create a place where we can redefine porn.”

On what queer youth need: “More visibility as artists, equal rights, free health care, a new government and global compassion. Is that too much to ask?”

Elizabeth Lindsey

24, Philadelphia

Who she is: Lindsey wrote the “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” chapter in the 2005 edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

On queer bodies: “I was so excit-

ed that the board of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* chose a young dyke of color to write this chapter! One of the most thrilling pieces of this project for me was the response to an e-mail I sent out asking people to send in their stories. The e-mail traveled across the world, and I got no less than 200 responses, from as far away as Australia.”

On femme strength: “I perform as a [drag] queen under my pseudonym, Halle Cherry. I often perform with another femme, Gina Tonic. We try to create numbers that explore the concept of femme as a queer identity, an identity that exists separately and strongly without a masculine counterpart.”

Where to find her in 2005: “I plan to help organize Philadelphia’s first all-people-of-color drag show.”

Esther Hidalgo

22, Washington, D.C.

Who she is: Hidalgo is a sex educator who works at the Leather Rack in D.C.

On sex ed: “I work at a leather store that primarily caters to gay males. I try to educate anyone who can legally walk through the doors. Queer youth are more likely to be inexperienced or unfamiliar. A huge advantage queer youth have today is knowing the importance of safe sex. There is no excuse for not trying to be safe.”

Why we should speak up: “It’s important that people of color pro-

mote understanding within their respective cultures. Sexism and homophobia are so rampant among Hispanic cultures – I know firsthand how hard it can be – but anyone who can needs to try for all the other people whose situations don’t afford them the option.”

Lucky charms: “Youth are lucky to be coming out in an age where so much progress has been made. [We] need to battle complacency and continue the progress.”

Innocence Bello

22, Newark, Delaware

Who she is: A student at the University of Delaware, Bello teaches, writes and is active in HAVEN, the queer student group on campus.

On Delaware: “It’s lonely being queer and black in Delaware. There’s gay black girls who rush black sororities but can’t attend HAVEN meetings because they’ll be outed to the sisters. There’s gay black men who come to HAVEN but are literally ignored by other black males when they attend Black Student Union meetings.”

On frat boys and Trans Week: “When straight white boys on campus start talking about Trans Week at their frat parties, we know we’re doing something positive! In Delaware, assimilation is a survival technique. [But] all these trans folks who were hidden came out to events and showed themselves.”



Esther Hidalgo



Jack Aponte

22, Brooklyn, New York

Who she is: Aponte has been active in WOW Café Theatre, the nation’s oldest women’s theater.

Why WOW: “We produce controversial, innovative and uncensored work by artists who would otherwise be hard-pressed to find welcoming venues for their work. We are fully inclusive of trans women, but questions have arisen about whether it fits in WOW’s mission to be open to transmen and folks who ... identify as genderqueer, bigender, or genderless. ... As a genderqueer person of color, I hope WOW can become a more welcoming place for me and other folks like me.”

Why kids need support, too: “So much attention is devoted to gay marriage, and the most minimal attention is spared for queer and trans youth, usually only when they’ve been the victims of violent crimes. Even then, the attention is often paltry and disrespectful.” ■