

She Said

COMPILED BY HOWARD ISRAEL

"I don't care about sports. I can't wait to check out all the parties and the great lesbian scene and being around a lot of great girls."

- Kelly Costa, commenting on the recent NCAA Women's Final Four Tournament in Tampa, FL, showcasing the nation's best women's basketball match-ups, Tampa Tribune, April 4, 2008.

"To say any NCAA championship appeals to a certain percentage of a particular segment of the population, especially without any scientific backing, is without merit. The truth is each tournament appeals to a core group of fans but that core is as diverse as the American population itself."

- a statement released by National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in response to the media coverage of Tampa as the "national epicenter for gay women", outsports.com, April 6, 2008.

"I'm thrilled to join the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce team and ready to get to work. I share the NGLCC's passion for business growth and development within the LGBT community and I look forward to playing a role in moving these important initiatives forward."

- Richard Ellis, VP of Communications for McDonald's USA, recently elected The National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) board of directors, in a press NGLCC release, March 12, 2008.

"McDonald's gave an undisclosed amount of money to the NGLCC in return for being recognized as a major promoter of the homosexual agenda. The chamber then placed Ellis on its board of directors. You have to buy your way onto the board. In other words, McDonald's paid money to be a member of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce...I think it's going to hurt them pretty bad...a boycott of McDonald's is always a possibility in a situation like this."

- Don Wildmon, chairman of the American Family Association, in a national e-mail alert, commenting on McDonald's Corporation's support of the NGLCC, April 3, 2008.

"It's important that everyone feels they can bring their entire self to work. It is your choice to be self-identified or not at Whirlpool. It's about creating a culture where it's OK and safe to self-identify: it's not going to jeopardize your career path in any way."

- Mark McLane, global director of diversity and inclusion at Whirlpool Corporation, quoted in Laura Nguyen's blog, FHOuFront.com, March 31, 2008.

"Our families seek first to understand, and then to be understood, as we break bread and converse with families and leaders at each church. It is our sincere hope that the American Family Outing can be a healing step toward reconciliation."

- Jeff Lutes, executive director of Soulforce, in an appeal to six mega-churches called an 'American Family Outing', sent letters to six mega-churches which embrace the biblical condemnation of homosexuality, Gay City News, April 3, 2008.



Asmara Ruth Afework taking in the work of photographer Charlie T at Affirmations Thursday. BTL photo: Andrew Potter

Photographer Charlie T shows LGBT community 'Just As We Are'

Exhibit opens to great response, at Affirmations through early May

BY JESSICA CARRERAS

FERDALE- When Charzette "Charlie T" Torrence first started taking pictures of her friends, she had no idea what it would end up amounting to. But now, her "Just As We Are" exhibit, an array of highly personal black and white photos of LGBT leaders, performers, artists, educators and activists, has erupted.

For Torrence, it was just a way to express who the gay community really was comprised of – a sort of response to images in the media of crazy, sex-loving, partying LGBT men and women. "I did 'Just As We Are' because in the past, the topic came up on gay images in the media," the photographer recalls. "Fun loving, wild – that's how the media portrays us."

So Torrence set out to prove the stereotypes wrong. Now, her show, which has spent the past two and a half years on display at various locations in New York, has come to the Affirmations Community Center in Ferndale. The exhibit, which received fiscal sponsorship from the New York Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center, opened on April 4 at Affirmations and will run through early May.

Torrence returns to Detroit with a local legacy behind her. She was the first African American graduate from Detroit's College of Creative Studies photography program in the early '90s, and took some of the first professional photos for *Hotter Than July* in the late '90s. Since then, her photography has been

"The only way we can change things is to show positive images of ourselves. I did this (project) on a dream of a possibility to change one step at a time."

-Charzette Torrence

featured in *Black Enterprise*, *Code*, *Essence* and other publications. But nothing could compare to her current project.

"Just As We Are" opened Friday night in the Pittmann-Puckett Art Gallery to a large crowd who came to see the renowned Detroit-born and raised photographer's latest creations. The event was punctuated by a poignant panel discussion about "Our Gay Image in the Media." The panel was moderated by Johnny Jenkins, Jr. of the Arcus Foundation, and included the voices of Affirmations Executive Director Leslie Thompson, Andrea Wilson of SPICE, radio personality Madisun Leigh and FOX 2 anchor Charles Pugh.

The exhibit is comprised of 36 black and white portraits, which line the walls next to descriptions of the subject and their reaction to the project. The participants are diverse, including professional stuntwoman Rose Sias, dancer Michael Leon Thomas, porn star Bobby Blake, Columbia University sociology professor Mignon R. Moore and PlanetOut's Director of Online Media Josh Tager, who was photo-

graphed by his fireplace with his cats.

In the middle of the gallery wall, a picture of Detroit activist and pioneer in the city's lesbian movement June Washington stands out amongst the other photos. Unlike the other sharply-focused shots of smiling faces, Washington's photo is slightly blurred, with the pen- sive subject looking away from the camera.

"I'm always deep in thought in Martha's Vineyard," Washington says of the photo's location. The photo was taken on a beach and in it, Washington seems to be over 6 feet tall, though in real life, she stands more than a foot below that. "She (Charlie T) was below me looking up," she explains of her belied stature.

But to viewers, it is more the regal stance she takes, as though she is staring out at her kingdom, lost in thought. "When you go to the vineyard, it's not pretentious at all," Washington continues. "They don't care about who you are or how you dress. You can find yourself there."

The accepting mentality fits right into