

Andrea Jenkins

2014 TJFP Panelist

The poem "eighteen" was born out of a desire to encapsulate some of the experiences trans women of color deal with daily. It attempts to replicate the complicated nature of this identity by describing the joys and pain that some of us in the community have to navigate.

eighteen

18 hours since her last meal, her head is spinning with desperation,
hyper-sexualized body looks good, but the five o'clock shadow is nine hours over
the limit and her wig is beginning to look matted

she was 18 when she left home, college was life on the streets
the school day was long, seemed like it never ended, many nights spent on
sticky trick's sofas, days spent as a social activist, marching, lobbying, organizing

18 Trans women of color gathering for an outpouring of self love, Laverne Cox
said that "loving a Trans woman of color is a revolutionary act"
sistas are doing it for themselves...

walking the streets of Bangkok, Thailand, 18 hours before a life-altering
surgery, body didn't evolve the way she dreamed of in her tiny bed, inside of
a shared bedroom that proved to be unsafe

her mind flashed back to that birth certificate, assigned male at birth
socialized in a patriarchal world, yet unable to fully relate to the constant
challenge of trying to live her truth in an upside down reality

18 times she threw out all of her women's clothing, known in the community
as the purge, ridding oneself of all the reminders of the transgression she's
contemplated by the day, annually, for as long as she can remember

doctors prescribe birth control pills for women for approximately 18 days a month, but
some Trans women take estrogen everyday, the desired effects never really come
though, still she remains faithful to the goddess

18 candles on Transgender Day of Remembrance, 18 Trans women of color murdered
and not always by those who hate them, but by men who have made love and shared
love with them, but want to keep these secrets in the dark

S/O TO 18 TRANS SISTAS OUT THERE DOING THE DAMN THANG,
CHERNO BIKO, LOURDES ASHLEY HUNTER, ARIANNA LINT, CECILIA CHUNG,
VALERIE SPENCER, ASHLEY LOVE, ANGELICA ROSS,

ARYKAH CARTER, MONICA ROBERTS, MISS MAJOR!, JANET MOCK, LAVERNE
COX, TRACEE MCDANIEL, ANGELICA ROSS, CECE MCDONALD, PARADISE
LASHAY, REHEMA MERTINEZ, JUNE REMUS

it's been 18 years since this journey began, a long way from the days of fear and
loathing, and although her life might seem charmed to outsiders, she knows that her
Trans brothers and sisters are struggling out there, so she tells their story

everywhere she's invited, the Mayo Clinic, the Program in Human Sexuality-All Gender Health Seminars, the Women's Foundation, Ramsey County, the Human Rights Campaign Dinner, the Centers For Disease Control, Macalester College,

the Arcus Foundation, the University of Minnesota Medical School, Hamline University, the Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition, Metropolitan State University, Trans Ohio, the Minneapolis Urban League,

HRSA (the Health Resources and Service Administration), the Taskforce Creating Change Conference, and everywhere else she goes, visibility is key to changing the narrative that shapes this poem

the tables are rapidly turning, attention is being paid, Time Magazine put a Trans woman of color on the cover and said The Transgender Movement was at the "Tipping Point: America's Next Civil Rights Frontier," and while that's true

18 Trans women of color will likely be arrested tonight, processed and locked up with the male population or placed in solitary for their own protection, becoming more victims to the prison industrial complex

that thrives on poor, black bodies, to fuel the monetization of black labor, for corporate interests, how does she get through this madness? She remembers those 18 hours of hunger, those 18 years of struggle, the 18 Trans sistas

showing each other love, she remembers the 18 hours strolling around Bangkok, the 18 times she purged, and the 18 lives honored on TDOR, the 18 different places where she's shared their story of brilliance, resilience and beauty.



Andrea Jenkins, 2014 TJFP Panelist