

# Breaking Through Boundaries

Three women who don't let anything stop them. **By Sheryl Kay**



## Queer Crip Politics

**Loree Erickson** was raised in small town, rural Virginia. This erotic film director and disabled activist seeks to defy traditional labels and today she likes to call herself a femme gimp queer activist. “Femme is not tied to a lesbian identity, rather a queer identity,” says Erickson, who lives in Toronto. “Queer, to me, is an identity committed to dismantling the gender binary, fighting against the marginalization of all people, animals and the environment, hot transgressive sex and imagining new possibilities.”

As a member of Damn 2025, Erickson fights for radical disability politics and radical access by restructuring communities *with* people so that all people are included. She’s also a member of Acsexxxable—a group that promotes and creates sex- and disability-positive spaces for all people, regardless of

race, ability and trans experiences.

One of her recent projects that is garnering international attention is *WANT*, a nine-minute erotic and provocative film starring Erickson. “Making porn is one of the best things I’ve ever done,” she said. “On a political level, it allowed me to make a movie that would not only offer a moment of recognition of how sexy queer crips could be, but also a way to tell others how I wanted to be seen.”

## It’s a Race Thing

Her involvement in a study of attitudes toward black lesbians in the ’80s at Georgetown University propelled **Dr. Lisa Bowleg** into a career as a researcher, initially specializing in HIV/AIDS legislation and policy. Today, as an associate professor at Drexel University, Bowleg studies the experience of stress

caused by racism, heterosexism and sexism, and her work indicates that many of the issues that LGBT African Americans face are uniquely different from the ones that many white middle-class LGBT activists typically espouse as important. “Until we engage in larger discussions to enhance understanding about black LGBT [people’s] lives and experiences, and where we place our political priorities, I suspect that this disconnect between the black LGBT community and the predominantly white LGBT community will persist,” Bowleg says.

Nevertheless, Bowleg has high hopes, especially with President Barack Obama’s revolutionary plan to unite all the federal agencies to specifically address the disproportionate incidence and prevalence of HIV/AIDS among racial and ethnic minorities. She makes special mention of Obama’s

statement noting how homophobic attitudes in black communities work against preventing HIV transmission. "Obama has already made a significant and important symbolic difference in acknowledging how much more we need to do to address HIV/AIDS in the United States," she says.

**Reviving Activism**

As a queer Puerto Rican and sex abuse survivor, Zulma Oliveras knows all about being marginalized, making her an ideal advocate for those who are not yet able to tell their own stories.

Oliveras grew up thinking the civil rights movement died with Martin Luther King. But when she moved to San Francisco 10 years ago, she saw other activist groups organizing and making headway.

Since then, Oliveras has indeed stood on many a soap box. As an active member of MASA (*Mujeres de Ambiente Sociales y Activas*, or Queer Latinas for Social Change), Oliveras' focus is to help queer Latina women get access to medical and other health services, and to teach them empowerment and resilience. And she's spent the last nine years as a core member of the Dyke March in San Francisco. "It's allowed me to grow as a lesbian, as an activist and to struggle against those who just can't stand the Dyke March," she says.

Although she is not crazy about the model of marriage adapted from the hetero world, she did support the lesbian community by educating others on defeating Proposition 8.

"Ignorant people just don't want to see that we are one people and we deserve the same love and the same rights as any other human being," Oliveras says. "Maybe the government fears too many women will be taking over property and having more rights, which can destroy their white patriarchy...I hope so." ■



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