

“Pariah” (2007/2011): Race, Gender, and Sexual Identity

**Barbara LeSavoy, PhD, Director, Women and Gender Studies Program,
The College at Brockport, blesavoy@brockport.edu**

Pandora Brinkley, BS, May 2012, McNair Scholar, The College at Brockport

Pariah (Puy-rah-y-huh):

1. a person without status. 2. a rejected member of society. 3. an outcast



Writer/Director Dee Rees: Autobiographical coming of age narrative ... Captures coming out as Lesbian, Black, Middle Class, Urban Youth in Opposition to Family/Church Norms.

Themes:

Identity, Place, Race, Sex, Gender, Sexual Identity, Culture, Religion

- ✚ Church symbolic of empowerment/strength in African American culture and community .. A pillar of strength before and after slavery. Paradoxically, a potential space of conflict... can inhibit religious freedom among LGBTQ
- ✚ Sexual identity hidden to maintain family and community relationships.
- ✚ Strict religious interpretations can add to homophobia/ internalized racism/sexism in African American community/family and institutionalized racism externally constructed imposed on race/sex/culture

FREEDOM

“As Black women we have the right and responsibility to define ourselves and seek our allies...we have the right to recognize each other without fear and to love where we choose. Both lesbian and heterosexual Black women today share a history of bonding and strength to which our sexual identities and our other differences must not blind us.” (Lorde, 1984)

Selected Bibliography

- Asanti, T. (1996). Black lesbians, religion & racism. *Lesbian News*, p. 27.
- Asanti, T.-S. (1998). Coming out in the Black community. *Lesbian News*, p. 26.
- Battle, J., Cohen, C. J., Warren, D., Ferguson, G., & Audam, S. (2002). *Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud: Black pride survey 2000*. New York, NY: The Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.
- Bing, V. M. (2004). Out of the closet but still in hiding: Conflicts and identity issues for a Black-white biracial lesbian. *Women & Therapy*, 185-201.
- Chaney, C., & Patrick, L. (2011). The invisibility of LGBT individuals in Black mega churches: Political and social implications. *Journal of African American Studies*, 199-217.
- De Veaux, A. (2004). *Warrior poet: A biography of Audre Lorde*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Faderman, L. (1992). *Odd girls and twilight lovers*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Greene, B. (2000). African American lesbian and bisexual women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 239-249.
- Harris, A. (2009). Marginalization by the marginalized: Race, homophobia, heterosexism, and "the problem of the 21st century." *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 430-448.
- Hollibaugh, A. (2005). The price of love. *New Labor Forum*, 89-94.
- Lorde, A. (1982). *Zami: A new spelling of my name*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.
- Lorde, A. (1988). *A burst of light: Essays by Audre Lorde*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books.
- Miller, S. J. (2011). African-American lesbian identity management and identity development in the context of family and community. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 547-563.
- Rafkin, L. (1996). *Different daughters*. Pittsburgh, PA: Cleis Press Inc.
- Ramsey, F., Hill, D. M., & Kellam, C. (2010). *Black lesbians matter*. Zuna Institute.
- Rivera-Fuentes, C. (2007). Sister outsider: An enduring vision embracing myself, my sister and the 'other.' *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 179-187.
- Ward, E. G. (2005). Homophobia, hypermasculinity and the U.S. Black church. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 493-504.