



**ANNIVERSARY  
NEWSLETTER**



# A MESSAGE FROM THE **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



TransWave Jamaica has emerged as the leading organization that specifically advocates for and on behalf of the trans community here in Jamaica. We celebrate three years of visibility, awareness and advocacy, I reflect on the path that took us here and what lies ahead. We salute individuals who had long before created the foundation of our work – with their own personal agency and stories of struggle, strife and success. We honour the impact of their visibility and their personal advocacy in forming the movement we have now come into.

In the first three years of our work, we sought to reimagine the way the trans community has been perceived by celebrating our resilience and diversity and telling our own unique stories. Our stories, our voices, our bodies, our resilience and our dreams have always been rich, but too often we have been made out to be caricatures. We have challenged the media's representation of our community by creating our own platform while working to build a team of trans advocates that are ready to advocate for the full rights and inclusion of trans people.

Over the next few years, we will be working on growing and fueling our Trans Ambassador programme to ensure that there is adequate and diverse trans representation by passionate trans advocates as we tackle a range of issues - including gender identity legislation, access to trans sensitive and trans inclusive healthcare services and social and educational support. We envision a Jamaica where all trans persons are able reach their full potential without barriers that prevent them from affirming and celebrating their very existence. We're ready to play our part!

**NEISH MCLEAN**

# MESSAGE FROM OUR PARTNERS



Congratulations to TransWave on three wonderful years of advocacy and representation for people of trans experience as well as those who are non-gender conforming and intersex! Thank you for being so bold and fearless in your work to increase visibility of the trans community and raising awareness about people's lived experiences, their rights, needs and priorities within and outside the LGBT community. You have done tremendously well to ensure greater inclusion of and mainstreaming of the T in the local LGBT movement. We are better because of you. Together, we can trans-form Jamaica!

**J-FLAG**



Equality Youth Jamaica would like to extend our congratulations to Transwave on their 3rd anniversary. The existence and work of Transwave Jamaica is an important contribution to the advocacy landscape, broadening conversations beyond Lesbian Gay and Bisexual identities but the variation of gender identities that exist within the community. We look forward to the years ahead for this organization and the tremendous work that their dedicated staff and volunteers have in store for us.

**Equality Youth**



Happy third-anniversary Transwave! It is an honour to be featured in your newsletter- WE-Change gladly supports any occasion to herald your accomplishments. It has been an honour to observe and partake in your organisation's growth over the past three years and WE commit to more years of supporting your advocacy. Understanding the pitfalls of small organisations, your team should be commended for its sustained growth, continued strides and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of persons of trans experience in Jamaica. As you transition into more robust advocacy, it is our hope that Transwave continues to leave an indelible mark on the advocacy and activism spaces as it continues to centre transgender people in national discourse and development.

**We-Change**



JYAN wishes a hearty congratulations to TransWave which is celebrating 3 years of advocacy. We are excited to have witnessed the immense progress made by TransWave and look forward to your continued growth and success. The TransWave team has paved the way for trans advocacy in Jamaica, creating spaces for trans visibility and championing and celebrating the diversity and fortitude of the Trans community. Your dedication and hard work, even in the face of adversity, are an inspiration. Cheers to your success!

**JYAN**



Congratulations to TransWave Jamaica on three successful years as the first trans-focused advocacy and community organisation in Jamaica! We are proud to count TransWave among our grantee partners and to support the organisation's vital work engaging with the trans and gender non-conforming community, increasing visibility of people of trans and GNC experience, and advocating on behalf of trans people across Jamaica and the Caribbean. Here's to many more years of incredible work! Congratulations again on your third-year anniversary!

**GiveOut**

# MESSAGE CORNER

The first Trans event that I got the courage to come to was the Tshirt and Soca Lyme. I was in awe being around so many people who I could relate to although I was still fairly closeted about my gender fluidity. I went as a WE Ambassador, but I truly came out for myself. From this event I started to form some of the most significant friendships that I have now, and be more comfortable with my gender identity. - Luna

Everyone and every moment is and was a memory, proud and fundamental to my development in being apart of something more than just myself. The support group is always my 'look forward to' because it helps me to gain knowledge and understanding about issues, dreams, visions, skills, interests and abilities towards self, society and others around us. Much love and respect to the TransWave team and our awesome Psychologist for bringing awesome topics that always have us eager to discuss and have full interactions. - Jourdan

Awww, there are so much memories I have with you guys - from our support groups to our day to day interactions. I think the most memorable one would be our residential advocacy training when we did Advocacy After Dark and we were able to express all our coping techniques. It helped to revisit mine and try other types as well. It helped me so much to be able to be vocal, not only with my family but with my friends as well. - Andre

I enjoy being around other persons like myself. I enjoyed all the lovely and meaningful sessions that TransWave put together for trans persons from all walks of life. The organization helped me a lot to believe in myself, to go for what I want, to love myself first and to just be true to who you are. It's nice to see both trans men and trans women come out to the support group and I hope it continues to grow. - Paris

There are so many memories but most of all the best one for me is when I participated in the Labour Day Clean Up activity. I had so much fun helping out and giving to the community and also interacting with fellow members of TransWave and others. - Mona

Well for me, just being able to be around persons who respect me for who I am and being able to cheer and enjoy each event. Because of this organization I learn so much that I didn't know and I'm looking forward to many more wonderful experiences. - Lando

Every event held is a memory retained and cherished. Just to be among persons who share the same desire and to be amongst like-minded individuals. Where two or more are gathered there too shall I be. I love our events! - Lee

We were watching "The Danish Girl" as a part of TransWave's movie night and the screen came tumbling down at the most perfect time. It was super hilarious and the best movie night ever! - Zion



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## GETTING SOME PHYSICAL “THERAPY”

by Xaiden Davis



Xaiden Davis

As a trans-identified individual I can safely say that the biggest enemy we face is not the one outside, but the person we see when we look in the mirror. Society has brainwashed us into thinking that we must look a certain way, no matter how you identify and that causes a fair amount of us to hate the way we look. The side effects of this poison include depression and anxiety; in other words, we tend to go through bouts when all we want to do is lock ourselves away from the world, in the fear of others seeing us how we see ourselves. This is the start of a toxic spiral that no one should have to endure. One way to combat this is by being active.

There are many scientific studies that have been conducted to prove that physical activity of any kind relieves the symptoms of depression. You are more likely to feel better about yourself, more likely to be able to face whoever is in the mirror and you will be better able to focus. When you do these activities with others, it creates an environment where friends become family and in a world where being transgender means that you will most likely struggle to find acceptance, being around others who are either going through/have gone through the similar issues is therapeutic and gives you hope. It is nothing short of beautiful.

TransActive is on a mission to create safe spaces where regular physical activity is possible and we are able to do it with other members of the community. There are a million and one excuses I’m sure we all could find to delay any activity, but you are worth it



# TRANS Health & Wellness CONFERENCE



Renae Green

On May 21, 2018, Transwave Jamaica and its partners held the first ever Trans Health and Wellness Conference. As the first of its kind within the Caribbean, the conference will go down in history as a momentous day for the trans community. The conference was both trans led and trans focused and featured panel discussions and presentations from members of the community. The event was supported not just by members of the community but also allies, academia, healthcare professionals, representatives of government and others.

The panelists and presenters represented the diversity that exists within the community and spoke on issues such as sexual and reproductive health, media and visibility, transitioning and other forms of trans specific health care, and data gaps within the region. One panelist Ms. Ashley Gorden or Ash Slay as she is affectionately called spoke about what it's like to be an openly trans woman living in Jamaica in the public eye, Ashley being a known fashion blogger spoke about how she navigates spaces as well as the challenges and triumphs she has gained. This for many trans persons present was truly inspiring as it shows that it is not impossible for the community to live and navigate spaces within Jamaica.

The conference gave us a great look at what is being done in Jamaica, and what can be possible for the Caribbean with regards to trans inclusive and trans sensitive healthcare as well as holistic wellness initiatives. As a community, we are hopeful that the efforts of all of us will result in policy and legislative changes that afford full rights and inclusion to all trans people.



# COMING HOME



Joie Lou Shakur (right)

Finding space to be as a trans, queer or gender non-conforming Jamaican is often times a struggle. Some of us leave, for different reasons. What is it like though, returning home - to community? Here's Joie's story

TWJ: Tell us about yourself? (Name, Pronoun, How do you identify)

JS: My name is Joie Lou Shakur. I use they/them/their pronouns and I am a trans non-binary Jamaican person currently living in the U.S. South.

TWJ: What was it like for you growing up in Jamaica?

JS: Growing up in Jamaica was beautiful and difficult. In a lot of ways I know I was raised by this island and especially the ocean. As it relates to my youth and being queer in Jamaica, I'm thankful to say that though my gender has been fluid and changing my whole life, I didn't have any negative experiences in Jamaica related to my queerness and/or gender. If anything, I'd say while growing up in Jamaica I never even considered my gender or sexuality. I have clear memories of sharing intimacy as a teen that I now recognize and label as queer and I also remember consistently passing for different genders, but I didn't experience hostility for either of these things. At the time, I was just being myself, the self that I knew I was, and fortunately those around me thought about my existence the same way.

TWJ: At what age did you leave and what has that been like for you?

JS: At age 14 I left Jamaica on a high school volleyball scholarship. Migrating to the U.S was very difficult for me because of the environment that I migrated into. It was violent in a lot of ways and queerness was no exception. This was the first time that I was being confronted about my gender or sexuality, or even being forced to take on a label. I remember being confused and not understanding why I was being labeled as queer or being called derogatory names because I was not dating anyone.

TWJ: What has been your relationship with Jamaica since leaving?

JS: Since leaving, I've come back home once before this year. Initially it was the financial struggle that kept me away but around age 20 I came out as queer and started exploring my sexuality and gender. The general sentiment that I received was that I could never go back home to Jamaica, an island that many U.S Americans touted as being "the most homophobic place in the world". After first coming out as queer in the U.S, I was hesitant and afraid but I came back home to Jamaica. I used to carry around a lot of shame associated with being a queer Jamaican person because I let myself believe the lie that this was not a possible reality, being queer and Jamaican. However, for the past couple years I've been in the process of reclaiming and holding both of these identities simultaneously and with pride.

TWJ: Before your trip home, what were your fears, hopes and expectations?

JS: Before coming home this time around, I had a lot more fears because I was coming back after already starting to physically and socially transition. I wasn't quite sure how people would respond to my transition but I had high hopes of being welcomed, and received by my family with sentiments of belongingness. I had a few family members share that before knowing and witnessing me being visibly trans in our family setting, they would have been one of the people to harm or talk badly about trans people that they saw in passing. Family members continued to share that they have also made more personal commitments to cease causing such harm to queer and trans people that they do not know.



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# COMING HOME

TWJ: How was your experience at Pride?

JS: Oh my! Being at Pride this year was like coming home right when my mom's spread of oxtail and rice and peas is just getting off the stove! Pride was hot, ready, and delicious! I got to attend the Breakfast Party at Pride 2018 and I truly could not have felt more proud, more excited, and more at home. Pride 2018 surrounded me with so many queer and trans Jamaicans who were being flawlessly queer, trans, and majestic! This was exactly what I needed to remind me of my beauty and divinity. We are a sacred group of people and our power and freedom is indeed threatening to many. For this reason and many others, it was absolutely necessary for me to experience queer and trans expression that are inherently Jamaican and to also witness what parts of my Jamaican culture are undeniably folded into my fully trans, queer, powerfully free being.

TWJ: How has Pride impacted your view of Jamaica?

JS: Being at Pride 2018 in Jamaica gave me such a deep appreciation for Black trans and queer folks who live on the island and have worked so hard to carve out space where queer and trans Jamaicans can be visibly their full selves. I know that we all would not be at this current place in history without their work and the sacrifice of folks who came before them in this global struggle. I salute organizations like TransWave, JFLAG, and every single queer and trans Jamaican. When I think of Jamaica I know that there is still lots of work to be done to guarantee full rights for queer and trans Jamaicans. However, I am simultaneously reminded that there is and has always been an undeniably powerful group of warriors back home fighting for the rights and safeties of all people, and particularly for the rights and safeties of queer and trans Jamaicans both at home and abroad. I feel a deep sense of gratitude to these folks because I know that they made this path that I now travel on.

Check out more about Joie Lou Shakur at [joieloushakur.com](http://joieloushakur.com) or [@joieloushakur](https://www.instagram.com/joieloushakur) on IG and FB!



Above: Joie enjoying their time in Jamaica during the PrideJA Breakfast Party



# PAVING THE WAY FORWARD TRANS **AMBASSADORS**



MX Williams

On May 28, 2018, TransWave Jamaica appointed 5 ambassadors as part of their programming to ensure organizational sustainability. The five ambassadors are Anika Walsh, Donique Givans, Jourdan Phillips, Xaiden Davis and myself. Ambassadors are armed with skills from social media, to events planning and management to writing and community mobilization

The TEACH Training from the 28th to the 30th of May, 2018, helped me to improve my skills in designing programmes and events for the organization, grant writing, and developing our teamwork capacity while improving on presentation competences. At the end of the training, I was prepared to take on the work as an ambassador.

Primarily, I have been focused on social media for TransWave, whether it is posting content, developing content and scanning the web for content to post to cater to our growing audience on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. In this role I have been able to interact more with our community and learn more by reading stories in order to see more of what is out there. I am particularly excited for the future of TransWave's social media as it becomes more streamlined to meet the needs of trans and gender non-conforming Jamaicans and persons of trans experience regionally or internationally. Social media has always been a means of telling our stories and I believe that digital spaces allow us to exist and be our authentic selves while doing so.

I am currently working on events like the fashion show that will be fun and I hope that persons within the community and allies enjoy the show.

The future of TransWave is bright from my perspective as an ambassador and I promise to make my mark. Cheers to 3 years of monumental work, happy anniversary TransWave!



# A MENTAL MOMENT



Dorraine Cox

## FINDING SAFE SPACES & SUPPORT

by Dorraine Cox

The etiology of transgender experiences remains unknown. Whether or not gender identity is the result primarily of nature or nurture is still up for debate. Persons whose gender and sex align are born into a world that is more or less socially constructed for them, but imagine when one's internal sense of gender does not match one's genetic gender, body or gender role?

### WHAT THEN?

Many people of trans experience often present with gender dysphoria, a mental disorder characterised by unhappiness with one's given gender. I have also found in my practice that these persons are also more likely to demonstrate other mental health problems, primarily in the area of internalising symptomatology, for example, depression or anxiety.

As the coordinator of Transwave's support group, I have had the privilege of hearing the challenges, concerns and needs of the community from its members. Civil society organisations should be commended for the work they have been doing in sensitising healthcare workers but much work still remains in educating not only professionals but also society at large in order to overcome the discrimination and stigma that still exist for transgender people. Advocacy efforts and educational campaigns should be encouraged especially in schools and corporate Jamaica, as tolerance of differences can go a far way in reducing the psychological trauma that many people of trans experience battle with on a daily basis.



- Transphobic Words**  
Calling someone a Tranny or 'too butch to be a girl' etc. demeans and trivialises the wide variety of experiences held by those who identify as transgender. If you see this type of transphobic language being used, challenge it.
- Coming Out**  
A gender identity is personal. If someone chooses to come out to you as trans, this means they trust you. Make sure to honour that trust by checking with them before telling anyone else as they may not want others to know.
- Real Name?**  
Asking someone what their real name is implies that their chosen name is in some way invalid or not real. In the same way, asking someone what their 'real' gender is disrespects their own gender identity.
- How To Be A Trans Ally**
- Just Ask!**  
It is important to respect the names and pronouns that people prefer. If you are unsure, simply ask: 'What are your preferred pronouns?'
- Show Your Support!**  
Make sure to show your support for your trans friends by challenging transphobia when you see it.
- Gender Identity is not Sexual Identity**  
Remember that, no matter how someone identifies their own gender, they may still identify with any sexual identity. Everyone has a sexual and a gender identity, and they are separate and distinct from each other.

# FASHION FORWARD

Bold. Brave. Fearless. We cover our scars with garbs and fashion smiles from sorrow. We celebrate our diversity - breaking through seams, bursting with colour, style and creativity. We showcase ourselves - look at us - moving forward, fashionably.

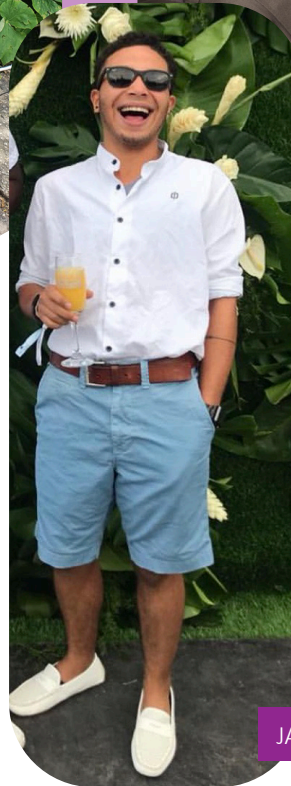


CHYNA - TRENDSETTER



FJ - SMOOTH AND SUAVE

ANIKA - FLUIDLY NATURAL



JAXSON - EFFORTLESS SWAG

PARIS - COLOUR BURST