Blaring Saddles

Playwright Imani Harrington asks questions till she's horse

February 1, 1997 By Evelyn C. White

Her role models are playwrights Lorraine Hansberry and Ntozake Shange. She gives due credit to Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams. But ask Imani Harrington to name her greatest source of inspiration, and she'll give you an answer that will make your jaw drop.

"Actually, it's horses," says 38-year-old Harrington with a wry smile. "When I was a little girl, I rode horses every weekend with my father. Horses don't care what you look like, how much money you have, whether you're HIV positive or negative. Horses have taught me about acceptance. They don't make judgments, and that's a very important theme in my work."

As a playwright, poet, actor and dancer, Harrington has long been a force in the San Francisco arts scene. These days, she's generating a special kind of buzz, thanks to *Love & Danger*, her powerful play about AIDS. Written for five women, the poetic, abstract drama has been heralded as a landmark work in the tradition of Shange's '70s Broadway hit, *For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*.

"The play evolved out of my need to deal with the reality of being positive and to counter the resistance to seeing the female visage of AIDS," says Harrington, who has been living with HIV since 1987. "I wanted to examine what makes us stay in the fear and frenzy of AIDS instead of creating greater reservoirs of self-love and acceptance."

Harrington describes a scene in the play in which the characters deal directly with the hopelessness and despair AIDS can evoke. They chant: "I've been fucked by ignorance, maimed by shame and battered by another person's reality." Unburdened, they move on, echoing what Harrington says she has found to be quintessential lessons of the disease: "Who will you love? Who can you love? How will you love?"

"HIV really forces us to think about what constitutes life, love and connection," Harrington says. "It makes us get clear about our values and how to make the best use of our energy."

As she awaits the production of her play, Harrington keeps busy writing, educating people of color about HIV, and grooming Tiffany and Dimples, the equine mother-daughter duo she recently purchased on a whim.

“I was driving on a country road,” Harrington says with a hearty laugh. “And the next thing I knew, I was out of my car and arranging to buy these two horses grazing in the pasture.”

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Blaring-Saddles-1692-3557