

Dear Ms. Shane,

It is a true honor to address you; to write your name and know that you will hear these words.

I was introduced to your music on a hot summer night in New York City by transgender historian Susan Stryker. We were with superstar Laverne Cox, for whom you were also a discovery; we were blown away with your incredible voice, magnificent style, and exhilarating presence.

I am electrified by your voice and by your legacy.

The trans community is so stigmatized by the outside world, and yet, we turn on each other with such incredible ferocity and anger. This has been happening for 100 years, probably more. How do we reign in shade and not let the trauma we've experienced derail our efforts of working together?

What were your friends like when you were young? Were you friends with other queens + trans folks?

The state of our country is so depressing right now, how have you survived past eras of darkness?

Love,
Zackary Drucker

Dear Zackary,

Thank you for these words. I am touched.

To answer your questions. Most of my friends were adults. I knew a few teenagers, but I wasn't fussy about children. I wanted to learn.

As a rule, I was always friendly but knew we were different. I couldn't expect them to know what I was feeling. They seemed to have one thing that was important to them — getting with other men.

My friends who were drag queens didn't know how to take me. They called me Miss Fish.

I have guy friends but don't have any trans friends. I don't know any trans individuals, it's as simple as that.

As for these dark times. One must learn how the game is played and outplay them. You don't complain — you find a way to win.

When I would play the clubs in the Jim Crow south, I would talk to the manager and say I wanted to come for leisure. If the authorities came in I'd just say I was the entertainment.

As to the shade. First of all, let's be honest, are we working together or not?

Animosity and jealousy steps in. This causes a problem amongst gays, trans, etc. Who's the most glamorous and whatnot is nonsense — it's too steeped in fantasy. We have to move together.

If you live by your own rules, life is more enjoyable. If you're true to yourself, nothing can stop you.

What I'm saying to you is the way I am. Your approach will be different than mine — you've got to do it your way. You have the right to live life the way you choose as long as you're not infringing on others. If anyone tries to take this right you cannot allow that. I love who I am. I am unique — to be something so special.

The future is yours — embrace it.

Love & respect,
Ms. Jackie Shane