

Amsterdam, July 1995

Dear Rashida,

I hope this card and note finds you well. I didn't get a chance to see you or speak with you before I left America. And lately you have been on my mind. So I thought I should write you.

Rashida, I need to let you know just how much knowing and working with you over those five or more years has meant to me. You "jumped" right into this work right from the beginning with no questions asked. You saw the need and went about the work. And you and I both know that not very many African Americans, both straight and gay, would have "picked up that sword" then. And even fewer wanted to deal with Black Gay men. But it didn't matter to you. You always saw us as people, too. And for that I will always be grateful. Your support for the Task Force and for what we were trying to achieve as Black Gay men and other Gay men of color ~~wavered~~. But more than that, I have always appreciated your wisdom, advice and your good, old fashion 'friendship'. I remember times often either after one of those many meetings at CDC, or at the many conferences, when we had time to gather and sit down to "chill", I would always enjoy soaking in your wisdom and knowledge. Rashida, I thank you for being a part of my life!

As you know, Amsterdam has a very large Arab and Muslim community and I see many women with beautiful head veils and I think of you. I always also loved the way your veil would lay across the crown of your head and come down to sculpture your beautiful face and fall gently over your shoulder. Giving you such a radiant and regal look. I have seen many beautiful ones here and I am going to get one that I hope you will like and send it to you soon. So if you could send me your address I could send it directly to you and not like I am sending this letter. You can mail it or fax it to our home. Fax # is the same as phone#.

Anyway, you may or may not know that a side issue for moving to Amsterdam, with my health and physical energy on a decline in the last year, and having met Wolfgang during the International Conference here, ~~fall~~ deeply and madly in love, I knew I had no other choice, since our government would not allow him to live with me there. the second most important issue for me was to write, write about my experience of living with, and working in AIDS. About all of the loss and grief I have known. And the many incredible people, like you, that I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with to deal with horrible nightmare. I want to tell our story, our history, and ~~and~~ leave it for white gay men to tell. Either they would not tell the truth, or just continue to exclude us. I want to empower and inspire younger Black Gays, as I was by the work of Joe Beam, Marlon Riggs,

Craig Harris and many, many more, too many to mention because I still feel the pain. But unfortunately, since I have been here, my health has been on a 'fast track' down. I am sitting here in the Amsterdam Medical Center, writing to you while I am getting infused with Ganciclovir for CMV. I was here for 28 days in January/February this year for PCP, another bacterial pneumonia, severe neuropathy, much of which I recovered from, except for the neuropathy. I have to use a walking cane, and I walk like an old man. Also still dealing with my rectal abcess for which I had three surgeries in San Francisco and one here in December 94. It causes pain with walking also. I am waiting for a culture for TB, which is taking 8 weeks. I am very clear that my hour glass is running out. And all of these things have slowed me down in my writing. But I am chipping away at it as much as I can with my energy fluctuations. I never know how long I can work on it on any given day. and this is where I need your help, once again. Can you send me information about 'Bebashi', the early years. The original goals and mission statement, the successes and major achievements and the failures. I want to talk about how African Americans had to fight racism, homophobia, and the government for everything we got. And it is still not much better, since those early days. How African American CBOs had to take a dime and stretch it to a dollar. and I feel that we do need to empower many more African Americans to get involved with this work. The survival of our community depends on it. Even though we are, as I have often said, 'already carrying a full plate'. and the federal budgets, targeting social programs, we will be the most affected. and the least protected. We must continue to do it for ourselves. Unlike white mainstream organisations, which have large reserves, unrestricted funds, using top talent, stars and personalities for major fundraisers, including many of our own.

So, as my eyes are getting heavy, it is 1.55 am here right now, I feel I must close. But any assistance you could give me would be greatly appreciated. And also please send me your address, so I can mail the scarve, as soon I find the right one. I have seen a couple, but I want to look around a little more.

Our address is: Rustenburgerstraat 255 hs
1073 GC Amsterdam
Netherlands

phone/fax: 011-31-20-664.4602

Again, hope that you and yours are all fine and well, looking forward to hear from you soon, especially since I feel that I am working under the gun.

Take care, be well

"Always yours in the struggle"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reggie". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial letter 'R' and a cursive 'e'.

PS. Gil is sending information on the early days of NCBLG, Phill is giving info on the early days of the Leadership Forum, and Al Cunningham is helping to edit. If there are others you feel I should contact, please let me know.