

Jayla Wright Monologue Script

My name is Jayla Wright. I was assigned male at birth; my parents named me Jamal Wright. I am a 24-year-old woman of color. I realized at the age of 8 or so I felt more comfortable in my sisters' clothes than in mine; I have two sisters and I always felt like one of them. I loved the pretend makeup they had, the nail polish, the gorgeous clothes, the sequins, dolls... I loved all of it. I was often disciplined for wearing makeup and dresses. My parents would scold me and tell me to stop "acting like a girl"; I kept trying to tell them "I am a girl."

I have been on my own since I was 17. My family was not willing to accept me for who I am and essentially asked me to leave. Not many people understand the feelings one has when their parents and/or families do not provide unconditional love. I have been estranged from my entire family since the night I left. Religion and going to church was an important part of my childhood but sadly, I have not returned since I was forced to leave home. I would consider myself faithful, but not actively involved.

I am fortunate to live in a large metropolitan city, where if I needed, I could lay low. While living on the streets, I met some really amazing people. I live with a few friends; we found a great apartment building and many of our neighbors are kind and welcoming.

I am very close with a neighbor (Alice), and she is a mother-figure to me. She invites my friends and me over for holidays and weekly meals. Alice has provided us with the love and support of a mother. She accepts me for who I am and encourages me to be my most authentic self. We drink tea, share books, go shopping, watch television, and go for walks. Having Alice in our lives has provided us with a feeling of belonging and of being wanted... valued as a person.

Some of my friends are also trans women; not only does this more than double our wardrobe... but it is nice not to feel guilty for who I am. My friends are my family, and they are spectacular. My friends describe me as fashionable and determined. I am often labeled as the "older sister" or the "mother" of the group. But in reality, we all look out for each other. Many of us are sex workers, which is how a few of us met.

Yes, I am a sex worker, but this does not define me. Unfortunately, the discrimination I have encountered trying to find work is disgusting and unbelievable. This type of work is unsafe, which is why we are so close; we all look out for one another.

Being a trans woman of color is extremely scary; more trans women of color are murdered compared to other trans women and we are often targeted only because of who we are. People frequently try to make us feel embarrassed or ashamed for merely existing, but we are still people just like they are. What these people fail to realize is, we are resilient. I am resilient. We have survived and overcome more than anyone would ever give us credit for. I am proud of who I am, regardless of what others think of me.