

# Womanist Theater



Reanae is a dynamic playwright and performing artist. Her critically acclaimed one-woman shows have received national attention and awards. The Virginia Tech Women's Center says, "She uses a minimum of props but those who have seen her perform has been struck by the "realness" and "immediacy" of her portrayals." Because of her uniquely woven one-woman shows she has been described by Connecticut State University Newspaper as, "one woman with a thousand voices." Her many originally written plays and performances include: **"Black Women in Transition," "Where Have All The Black Men Gone?," "Blues Women Don't Wear No Shoes," "Don't Speak My Mother's Name in Vain," "Trouble Don't Last Always," and "My Soul Got a Bruise On It", and "Blood at the Roots: African Native American Women."**

Her plays are life changing and have left a trail of transformed, restored, and healed people. She is not just another performer but a spiritual experience. The emotional, mental, and spiritual healing that takes place through the experience of her plays is phenomenal. She pours out her God-given gifts on her audiences and they are forever changed. Her plays are highly interactive and engaging.

## ■ **BLUES WOMEN DON'T WEAR NO SHOES**

"I held her in my arms. My child thin and sick with that thing called AIDS. I told her, "close your eyes, Mama is here. Close your eyes and let your spirit be at peace." That is a mother's love. You hang on when everybody else lets go! Excerpt from 'Blues Women Don't Wear No Shoes'.

This play is a poignant story about the lives of Blues Women. They come from all walks of life.

They know homelessness, AIDS, drug addiction, prostitution, and plain old everyday life. These women reveal the depths of their souls to find healing and give us the simple truths of life. Each character speaks from a point of experience and they have all been through the school of hard knocks and struggles. Weeping and laughing they tap into their deep reservoirs of hope and connect themselves into all that they were created for. These women are real, tangible, and accessible. They are modern day "Sheroes" who have made some mistakes. One by one they sing their story of being in the valley and singing the blues. They each end up confessing the truth of their lives, while liberating themselves from the blues. Finally some real women who let us know it's not about where you are but how far you've come. The journey from can't to can - that's what matters!

### **MY SOUL GOT A BRUISE ON IT**

"You think I'm dancing. No, I'm not dancing I'm breathing back in everything that has been stolen from me-my sacredness, my laughter, my love, my voice "my life." Excerpt from 'My Soul Got a Bruise On It'.

This play tackles tough and complicated issues around domestic violence, through the dynamics of racism, sexism, and classism in the lives of survivors. Each character tells their own unique and complex story as they weave together a quilt of pain, laughter, heartache, and joy. They answer some of the toughest questions abused women face today, both from themselves and society. "Why do you stay? "What If I can't make it on my own? "If I can just make him happy, maybe he won't hit me." "Why don't you just leave?" "Maybe if I just change?" "What is the price of my liberation? Is it my life?" This play forces it's audience take a look into the soul of the survivor and challenges stereotypical beliefs and views about women who suffer abuse. The characters in this play are based on real survivors of domestic violence. Their most intimate emotions are revealed and told with special care. This is a powerful testimony of women reclaiming their lives as they go through trials and tribulations to do it! At the end they all find that their lives were worth fighting for! \*\*\*Please note: Reanae interviewed Domestic Violence survivors and put their stories into characters in a very profound and real way.

### **DON'T SPEAK MY MOTHER'S NAME IN VAIN**

"Dear God, I know why black women were purposed in this world, to show the world what it means to face the odds, to show the world what it means to be strong, to look injustice in the face with dignity." Excerpt from 'Don't Speak My Mother's Name in Vain'.

"Don't Speak My Mother's Name In Vain," is a powerful one-woman show that uses interconnected vignettes, dance, and song to trace the experiences of African-American women through a wide range of "herstorical" contexts, linked by the thread of interpersonal and institutional violence. The play introduces eight characters that "herstorically" range from enslavement to present day. These characters reveal how African-American women have survived rape/sexual assault and their simultaneous oppression. Through this play Reanae tells her own story of being a rape/sexual assault survivor when she was in college. She deals with the issues of: racism, sexism, classism, slavery, the reconstruction era, the Marcus Garvey movement, the Civil Rights movement, sexual harassment, child abuse, molestation, incest, gang rape, drug addiction, hate crimes, abortion, and HEALING. The first four characters are based on stories that Reanae's grandmothers conveyed to her as well as "herstorical"

documentation and research. The second four characters are modern day African-American women who are dealing with the complex issues of rape/sexual assault in the context of generations of brutality. The play is highly interactive. It makes audiences laugh and cry as Reanae brings together the pain of joy in the lives of African-American women. Christie Munson the director of The Rape Victim Advocacy Program at the University of Iowa states, "We all laughed, cried, and even sang along with parts. She brings life, strength, and vitality to her depiction of the stories of the survival of African-American women. She is a great performer and teacher." This play is the only one of its kind in America that gives the "herstory" of African-American women and rape/sexual assault. Reanae reveals a private and emotional side of black women and herself, which is rarely seen with such an intimate topic. This play has been healing for women, men, and people from all different races, nationalities, and cultures. "Don't Speak My Mother's Name In Vain," is a must see. It brings to the surface the two most universal expressions: laughter and tears. This play also gives profound insight into the complexities of rape/sexual assault in an increasingly violent world. The character's lives are complicated and there are no clear cut answers, but as they unravel they each teach us to look within ourselves at our own prejudices, "isms," and stereotypes about different kinds of people as not revictimize those who have been hurt. Reanae shows an innate sensitivity to human suffering and pain while revealing them through lenses that help us to heal from them. This play explores layers of oppression in a fun, interactive, emotional, and highly energetic manner. Reanae forces her audience to look at the world in a new and different way, by having the audience members step out of themselves in the lives, situations, and circumstances of the characters. It opens their eyes to the differences as well as the similarities in the human experience. This play tackles tough and sensitive issues with wisdom, humor, and insight. Reanae takes the audience on an intense journey in the minds, hearts, emotions, and spirits of African-American women. At the end of their journey, Reanae tells her own story and releases a spirit of healing so that each audience member comes to the vital realization that they can break their silence and heal from their pain. At last a play that captures the essence of the human experience in its most raw and vital form!

### **AND STILL I FLY**

5,800 African-American women die of breast cancer each year! "As far as the eye can see Black women were flying. They were flying over all of it, racism, sexism, and breast cancer. Yes, it is true Black women do fly. Even over breast cancer, they fly!" Excerpt from 'And Still I Fly'.

This one-woman show deals with the complexities of African-American women and breast cancer. The characters tell their stories of being breast cancer survivors and the simultaneous oppression of racism and sexism they face in their daily lives. Through laughter and tears they bare witness and break the silence around what it means to be an African-American woman with breast cancer. Through songs, dance, and character vignettes they take the audience on an intimate journey in the hearts, minds, emotions, and spirits of African-American women who face breast cancer with courage and tenacity. This one-woman show is educational and empowering. It is a testimony of the human spirit against all odds.

### **I'M EVERY WOMAN**

"I am a jumping, dancing, clapping, stomping, singing, miracle of a woman. Now look at yourself

and see the same!" Excerpt from 'I'm Every Woman.'

This play explores the power and tenacity of women to survive in an ever-changing world. Reanae takes a thought provoking journey through diverse women's lives as they transform from caterpillars into butterflies reaching their fullest potential. As they face every social issue imaginable homelessness, breast cancer, war, sexual abuse, AIDS, and domestic violence. They learn the profound lesson of never giving up on LOVE. Each woman seeks to reach their purpose and become the change that they seek in the world. They learn the heartache of life and the miracles of life. They learn the ultimate lesson, "THE VALUE OF A WOMAN."