

# The Fight to Be Free

*Perfection on the outside can mean confusion within.*

## Story Premise

This story is about a 16-year old girl named Jessica Adams. She is a beautiful African American girl that just so happened to be born into the right family. Her father is a doctor and her mother a college professor, which is rare in the African American community in the 1970's. Jessica has the perfect life, according to those around her. There is only one thing. She has a huge secret. She is a lesbian! She has tried to tell her family, but her father, who knows will not allow her to. He believes that homosexuality is a mental illness and thinks that people will look down on them. To him image is everything, and he refuse for her to mess up the families' reputation that he worked so hard to build.

## Historical Background Information

This story is taking place in the 1970's in Prince George's (PG) County Md. PG County was one of the last places to integrate, the races were divided no only in the schools but also in location, since realtors pointed people to the areas where they "belonged". This is also during a strong point in the women's movement. There were the radicals, the moderns, and the liberals, who all wanted equality, but went about it in several different ways. The radicals were the ones who believed that all women were lesbians. They were the ones most talked about with their rallies of burning bras and talking down on men.

In the 1970's homosexuality was no longer looked at as a mental illness, at least not on print although it still was not publically accepted. The radicals were not only fighting for women's equality but for the acceptance of lesbians. This did not sit well with the elder women in the movement or any of the other groups because they didn't stand for the same thing. They didn't appreciate being associated with them and publically dissociated themselves from them.

## **Main Character(s)**

Jessica Adams, is a 16-year old beautiful African American girl who was born on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1958 in Bladensburg, a city in Prince George's County Maryland, where she has lived her entire life. She stands at 5'5, 125 lbs. As a cheerleader she is very athletic, with long dark brown hair and honey brown eyes. Her skin the color of milk chocolate she is the envy of many of her peers. She is into high fashion, always trying to stay ahead of fashion. Although in front of her father she wears the romantic style of the 70's, when she is away from him she enjoys the glam or punk look, loving a good pair of jeans.

Jessica knew from a young age that she was not like others. Although is was looked down in her family, she has always had a thing for a beautiful woman. She never was boy crazy and although she has a boyfriend (the star quarterback of the football team), she would rather be in the company of females. Although the center of the popular crowd, because of this secret she feels alone. Unable to reveal the real her, sometimes she comes off as mean, making others fear her, which adds more to people dying to be around her.

As Jessica becomes older she has become sneaky and quiet, as she is moving around to find out who she is and how she can come out without any consequence. She hates the way women are downgraded and begins to rebel against male authorities. She knows that this upsets her father as image to him is everything, but she hates to lie to herself about who she is and why she is that way.



## **Supporting Characters**

**Frederick Adams**, the father of Jessica. At 47 years old he has been through a lot in his life, from living in the ghettos, to being beaten and chased because of his skin to watching his father hanged because of a misunderstanding. His family believes that he is being hard on them, but he is only scared of losing his family in a world where being black is a count against you, he doesn't want them to have to add anything else to that. They felt it was being mean or unfair, where he only saw it as being protective.

**Rebecca Adams**, Jessica's mother is not who she thinks she is. As a teenager Rebecca joined the women's movement, but they did it differently. They weren't disrespectful. They believed in going to work as women, with perfect makeup and hair in the latest fashions to make a statement. They paraded in front of government buildings with picket signs, but all the time being a woman. She understands Jessica being in the movement and even supports it where her husband does not; she only wishes that Jessica would be more of a lady about.

**Ashley Dandridge** is a friend of Jessica that she met at a rally. At 19 years old, Ashley is not afraid of whom she is. She is a full out lesbian and proud of it. Losing her parents at a young age and being bounced from foster to home to foster home probably added to the reason why she didn't care what people think. Ashley is a face of the radical movement, going to other rallies as a way to recruit more to stand up.

**Joshua Manning** has been Jessica's boyfriend for three years. They met in elementary school and were best friends from the beginning. Josh has always wanted to be more than friends and finally got the nerve to ask her out in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Although his friends tell him he is crazy for devoting his life to one girl, he can't imagine being with someone other than his first crush. He knows that she is going through something and tries to be there for her, but she always pushes him away, which only makes it more exciting.

## Locations



***Prince George's County, Maryland*** although currently is the richest black county, in the 1970's was behind on racial equality. The schools although legally were not separated were not yet integrated due to school zones. Realtors made sure to send blacks to their side of the county and white's to there. Therefore keeping the schools segregated. It wasn't until late 70's when this was disallowed and the county was mixed. Many of the black families that stayed in PG County MD were middle class families, although there were different levels. The county although right next to Washington DC, had a majority of people with mindsets of those in the south. They fought hard to keep the county segregated, while that leaders tried to stay up to date with DC.

Bladensburg, MD



Bladensburg is a small black town where Jessica and her family reside, as one of the few black municipals in PG County. It was once a tobacco farm, where African American was a slave of the trade. When slavery was abolished and the slaves were set free, Bladensburg was one of the towns where there was a school built for African Americans, (one of twelve in PG county). This is where although they are in a black town filled with middle class African Americans; they are one of the few that are respected as individuals. Their family has a home that was built specifically for them, another luxury that black families were not usually afforded.

#### Fairmont Heights High School



In the 1970's this was the one high school were African Americans went to school. This is the place where Jessica, a cheerleader is included in the top important people. As an

honor roll student she prides herself on her education. Although not given the best opportunities going to an all black school she is awarded some because of whom her father is. Giving her opportunities to some times mix with other white students to better her chances at a better opportunity in college. Fairmont Heights today is a Seventh Day Adventist Church.

### **Additional World Information:**

In my world, there is a strict Christian belief in all African Americans. They do not believe in or acknowledge homosexuality. They turn their backs on those who claim to be involved in that lifestyle. There are many rallies about women's rights and equality some also standing up for lesbians. Jessica feels shut out because of one girl who is openly gay at the school who goes through backlash and abuse for it. This causes Jessica to be extra quiet and sometimes leads the attacks on the girl, although she feels bad for the girl. There are plenty others, but they are all afraid, because of the violent past and nature against all we come out.

Social acceptance is also a big issue in this world. Parents who are finally out of the ghettos do not want to go back. There is a secret society of black professionals who discuss details of helping those with family members who do not live up to the community's expectations. As a leader of this society, Jessica's father has the most to lose if she openly acts upon her desires. This pushes her and her father further apart.

Jessica's mother, also in the movement, tries to take her daughter to her meetings where she can't fight a different way. A way that became outdated with the new set of feminist. Not open to listen to the new waves ideas and issues, this group shuts off young people, closing the door for Jessica to understand the reasons behind her mother's behavior and disposition.

### **Story Synopsis**

This story tells the tale of a black lesbian in the 70's where that is not accepted. Dying to fit in and make her parents happy she denies who she is all while suffering in the misery of her true self. She is trying to understand whom she is as she links up with a new "radical" friend who can tell her the bits and pieces that make her who she is. She is enthralled by this lifestyle and slowly begins disobeying her parents and sneaking around to be around this friend whom they do not approve of.

All along with failed communication her parents are trying to protect her from a life of pain and abuse for being different. Growing up black is hard enough, but adding homosexuality in the mix makes it worse.

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Prince George's County Pic

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