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'Something' to say: An interview with gay author Eddie S. Pierce

By Gregg Shapiro on February 1, 2012 in Books · 0 Comments

About author



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Eddie S. Pierce. Photo: Rainbow Room Publishing.

Since the untimely passing of writer E. Lynn Harris, there has been a void in the gay, African-American literary community. The arrival of Chicago-based Eddie S. Pierce and his debut novel "Love: Something Infinite" could change all that. The story of writer Seron, who returns to his Chicago birthplace from

his home in Las Vegas, to see his family and come face to face with his dying ex-lover Calvin, provides insight into the specific struggles in the lives of African-American gay men, and one man in particular. I spoke with Eddie about his work in early 2012.

Gregg Shapiro: I want to begin by asking you about the title of "Love: Something Infinite." Was it your intention for there to be a double-meaning, as in love being something infinite and loving something infinite?

Eddie S. Pierce: The title was meant to be a description of love's longevity. It speaks to the idea that when one is loved the emotion and sensation appears to have always been and you may believe that it will never end. It also alludes to my idea that when love of oneself, their God, their partner, family and friends are in place, it flows continuously.

GS: Like the one Seron's mother kept, is there a notebook somewhere of "crude short stories and early poems" written during your early childhood and youth?

ESP: Actually there are a number of three ring binders, notebooks, etc. At that stage in my life I wrote on average one story a week but they were only about one to three pages in length and to borrow the phrase "somewhat crude" [laughs]. No dialogue to speak of. Not very descriptive. Even an attempt at illustration, which makes me laugh looking back on it all [laughs].

GS: With this being your first novel, do you think it was inevitable that Seron would be a writer?

ESP: The story began as a cathartic exercise in which I was attempting to write my own hopes, dreams, fears and frustrations. Since the central character is based on my life it did seem inevitable that he be a writer.

GS: Even though you consider yourself to be primarily a writer of fiction and prose, there are eight poems interwoven throughout the book. What was your intention for including them in the novel?

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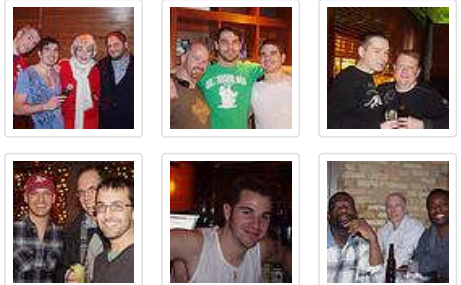
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Which of these Chicago LGBT-supportive foundations have you donated money to within the last three years?

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- Center on Halsted
- Chicago AIDS Foundation
- Equality Illinois
- EdgeAlliance

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ESP: The poems are intended to add emphasis to the emotions expressed within the chapters of prose. Also I wanted to try something different to make my novel stand out more.

GS: On page 42, Seron talks about making the “life choice not to ever marry.” With civil unions and gay marriage becoming more commonplace, do you think that would have an effect on changing his mind, in spite of the failed straight marriages that he personally witnessed?

ESP: Perhaps. But this statement was more so a reflection of how much he respected the union of marriage to the point that he would not enter into it for fear of it not being successful.

GS: In the chapter where we are introduced to Seron’s younger sister Regina, Seron is careful to check out Regina’s boyfriend Jonathan to determine if he might be a “DL bisexual brother.” Is that something that you would do for a sister, blood relation or otherwise?

ESP: The opportunity hasn’t presented itself and honestly I don’t think I would in most cases. I’m not entirely sure how I would accomplish it, but I hope I’d manage to strike a balance between respecting the secrets of the man, the choices and judgment of the woman and my desire to protect my loved ones. I don’t believe anyone should be forced “out of the closet” but I don’t respect selfishness and dishonesty especially when it harms another person.

GS: Are the women in the “Where My Girls At” chapter based on female friends in your own life?

ESP: Yes, these four female friends are composite characters based on numerous persons in my life.

GS: Can you please say something about your take on the relationship between gay men and straight women?

ESP: I’m hesitant to speak on the relationships between gay men and straight women in general. In my personal experiences, my female friends literally knew me as a person first and later as a gay man. That is how I honestly believe they continue to perceive me. A person who is their friend and “oh yeah” he’s gay as well. I sincerely hope that someday that is how we all relate to each other, as people first.

GS: You make reference to several songs throughout the novel and even write that Seron’s “treacherous memory conspires” with music. What is the role that music plays and has played in your life?

ESP: Music has been a constant presence in my life. It permeates and accompanies so many occasions and moments big or small. That being said it also triggers memories and has often taken me back to painfully periods in my life and as well as times of great joy. If my life were a movie it would most definitely have a soundtrack.

GS: Throughout the novel you write about being publicly gay, specifically on pages 21, 31 and 80. Please say something about that subject.

ESP: These passages illustrate the pressure that Seron, and numerous other same gender loving individuals have felt or continue to feel they are under to hide their sexual preferences. It is mentioned several times to give the reader an idea of how constant and prevalent this weight is. I hope that the readers also get a sense of how operating under this stressor, much like any they themselves might consistently labor under, can effect virtually every aspect of a person’s life. Most importantly it speaks to the idea that living a double life can compromise one’s self esteem.

GS: The novel also deals with HIV and responsibility.

ESP: As I stated previously this work began as something that was meant to fulfill a personal need, self expression. The more I wrote, the more the purpose of the novel evolved into something I felt might help someone else. Seron makes some serious mistakes and some very bad choices. Having unprotected sex which leads to HIV, the end of a relationship and a host of emotional issues is just one of many. If just one reader can avoid any one of Seron’s pitfalls by



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living vicariously through him this novel will be more of a success than I could have hoped for.

GS: The book ends with a preview of the follow-up novel "Love: From Behind." When do you expect that book to be available to readers?

ESP: My target release date for "Love: From Behind" is November 12, 2012, the anniversary of this novel's release.

Tags: African-American, Black History Month, gay, HIV

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Late Night FDL: Miscellany February 1, 2012
I am in Tucson, Arizona for the huge gem, mineral, fossil and precious stones and whatever else expos/shows, and to visit Occupy Tucson which is staging several anti-bank rallies this week. I love gems and minerals, geodes, agates, and fossils, but it kinda bums me out to see so much of Nature's beauty churned for a buck. [...]





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