

MEET OUR 10 SEXIEST SINGLES

E-MAIL THEM!  
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# EBONY

**50**  
Work-Ready  
Fashion  
Finds

The  
**Decline**  
of the  
**Elite**  
**Black**  
**Athlete**

*By Kevin Powell*

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GET IT IN!  
**Tailgating**  
**101**

**Sets the**  
**Record**  
**Straight**

Rumors? Checked.  
Demons? Fought.  
Soul Mate? Found.

EBONY DEBATE

**SAME-SEX MARRIAGE:**  
A SIN OR A RIGHT?



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LEFT: The family (l. to r.), Josiah Treadwell, 3; Jantia Mitchell, 23; Jeremiah Bobbitt, 13, holding Princess; Terry Treadwell; Azaiah Bobbitt, 11; and Iesha McConnell, outside their home. ABOVE: Enjoying game night.

my husband, and Terry was breaking up with her partner,” Iesha explains. “About a year later, after we got to know each other, it eventually led to something.”

Iesha and Terry had a commitment ceremony in September 2005. Three years ago, the couple welcomed Josiah, conceived via Iesha and artificial insemination. “Terry and I thought Josiah would complete our family,” says Iesha. “We are extremely happy.”

As is the case with Iesha and Terry, most in the African-American LGBT community live in the larger Black communities and not in upscale “gayborhoods” such as West Hollywood. “Most Black same-sex couples are economically disadvantaged,” says Gates. “Black women raising children in a same-sex couple make an average of \$26,000 annually.” Terry and Iesha truly are lucky. Apple (Terry’s employer) offers health care benefits for same-sex partners of employees;

most companies do not.

The situation becomes even more precarious for couples in the South. Currently, six states and the District of Columbia offer same-sex marriage. Not one is in the South, and basic legal protections for the families of gay and lesbian employees are generally not available.

“Our attorney said to put both our names on everything,” Terry explains, “so we both can have access in case anything happens.”

Iesha and Terry wanted children together from the beginning of their relationship. Nine years ago, their older daughter Jantia, now 23, was adopted as a result of that desire. But unmarried couples cannot legally adopt children in North Carolina, which meant Iesha had to adopt their daughter as a single parent. That also means Terry cannot legally adopt 3-year-old Josiah. Despite the obstacles, the couple says they are more determined than ever to succeed. “We are a family, and we love each other deeply,” Terry says. “We are making it work.”

# Making It Work

BLACK SAME-SEX COUPLES RAISING KIDS IN THE SOUTH *By* ROD MCCULLOM

Iesha McConnell and Terry Treadwell have been together for 10 years, are raising three children together and are much like any other family in their suburban Charlotte, N.C., community.

“We’re in love,” says Terry, 45, who has a booming voice. “We work hard and worry about our children. We have the same struggles as everybody else.”

The only difference between this couple and their neighbors: Iesha and Terry are women.

Ask the average person to describe homosexual parents, and he or she is likely to volunteer the image of an affluent White gay male couple in California raising an adopted child. But the truth is much closer to Iesha and Terry’s family.

Black gay and lesbian parents “raise children at two to three times the rate” of their White counterparts, according to Gary Gates, a demographer at the UCLA School of Law. Iesha and Terry fit the pattern to a T. Their children at home are Azaiah, 11; Jeremiah, 13; and Josiah, 3.

“I got married at 18,” Iesha explains. “Azaiah and Jeremiah are from my previous marriage. I thought that was the path for me—having a husband, getting married. That didn’t work out so well.”

Terry also raised two children, but with her previous female partner. In fact, Iesha and Terry connected through their children.

Terry coaches several athletic teams, and Iesha’s sons were players. “We both were going through struggles. I was breaking up with

## The Stats:

**The U.S. Census Bureau** estimates there are 581,000 same-sex couples. Bureau findings also indicate that those couples raising children are likely to live in the South and be African-American.

*Rod McCullom, a former columnist for The Advocate, blogs on LGBT news, pop culture and politics at the award-winning Rod20.com.*



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