



# CENTRAL VALLEY SCHOLARS

## KAMARIA NANCE

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Kamaria is beautiful, brave,  
and powerful womxn. Her story,  
and the ones like hers,  
have been erased and she is  
here to show that Black  
Trans Womxn Matter.

# THE FIRST LGBTQ+ SCHOLARSHIP

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BLACK TRANS WOMXN IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

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# KAMARIA NANCE

## Black Trans Womxn Matter



Kamaria Nance was born and raised in Fresno, CA by a single mother. As far as she can remember, Kamaria has always felt uncomfortable with her dead name, "Brandon," and the male pronouns she was assigned at birth. Kamaria demonstrated trouble focusing in school, but because of her family's financial status, and lack of support in her community, she was unable to receive possible resources to assist her. After the 4th grade Kamaria was pulled from her life in Fresno and thrown into Killeen, TX, where more problems emerged following her mother's second marriage.

**Kamaria in her room, posing with her two favorite singers Beyonce and Ariana Grande.**



Kamaria returned to Fresno to finish the 6th grade and quickly became depressed from struggling grades, conflicted self identity, and being one of the few African American students on her

Kamaria explained her experience as different, "There was a lot of prejudice, I was treated different than other kids in terms of social interactions."

While struggling with puberty, discovering her sexuality, and not allowed to school activities, Kamaria hit a major low after being suspended for being caught using the girl's restroom. After being given a second chance, Kamaria hoped to find solace in books and performing arts.

In 2012, Kamaria was enrolled into Clovis East High School and enrolled in drama classes where she found a passion for theater and individuals who accepted her for differences. Overtime Kamaria began to find confidence in herself; participating in High School productions, trying out for the cheer team receiving the "Wolf Pack Pride" award, and eventually taking on the role of ASB commissioner of spirit her senior year.

She began to occasionally wear makeup and girl's clothing in her classes, even wearing dresses and heels to school dances. Although she was alone in her expression she found comfort through her peers and the faculty.

**"There is no Trans Community in the Central Valley, especially a community of Black Trans Womxn."**

**-KAMARIA NANCE**

She described that she had never came out to her parents due to fear, but she did come out to her community of teachers and peers at school. "I really didn't think about any repercussions, this is just how I feel and I'm adamant about how I feel."

"When I initially got into high school, I definitely noticed that I definitely liked wearing makeup, always wanted to present feminine and just because of my upbringing and me having the understanding that I was male, I never wanted to outwardly present that way at home. In a way it was always that way, I always preferred the dress over the suit, the dolls, but I never equated that to me being a woman because I never had any knowledge of what a trans person was."



**Kamaria holding her Trans Flag proudly.**



**Kamaria at her senior prom.**

Despite reveling in her achievements, she still left lost and confused about her life's direction. After a series of failed art school auditions following her graduation Kamaria enrolled at Fresno City College as a Theater Major.

Kamaria initially started her college career at high point. Working heavily to excel in her classes and preparing to transfer to a four year college, but adverse situations crept back into her life. Kamaria fell back into a rough place after the separation of her parents. It was difficult to focus on her mental health while being employed and a student full-time. Kamaria began to struggle in classes, with finances, and self identity. Over the years the expectation of being a cis-Black male began to effect her. She debated if career choice was what she really wanted. With her on the brink of it all, having daily breakdowns and struggling to perform her basic responsibilities, Kamaria found her solution.

Although Kamaria found a community of Gay and Lesbian individuals of color while attending Fresno City College, trans persons were nearly obsolete. Kamaria feared the possibility of being trans not only because of the social changes and financial responsibilities, but also because of the fact that Black Trans Women continue to be victims of violence and social scrutiny. Kamaria talked about how trans women are represented in the media and the impact it had on her.

"In the media, representation is really bad in terms of trans women. You're either a sex worker, or you're a victim, or you're a deceiver, a predator, a pedophile. There's no good representation of trans women in the media."

A month before her 22nd birthday Kamaria decided that living in fear was not going to help alleviate pain. With the help of her trans co-worker Kamaria was able to find resources to help her transition and she began to go to therapy to work out the problems she felt were holding her back. Now in her final semester at Fresno City College and preparing to transfer to a four year university, she feels confident in a new way and prepared more than ever to take steps towards her bachelor's degree.

Kamaria would like other LGBTQ+ students to believe in second chances, and third chances, and fourth chances, [...]. Kamaria's journey to being her authentic-self was a difficult one, however, Kamaria describes her experience as "entirely worth it, every ounce of it is worth it. I get to wake up and actually recognize myself."



**Kamaria as a young child.**



She would like other LGBTQ+ people to know that the circumstances they go through do not define them, but simply establish the conflicts towards their journey to success and to take pride in your difference and uniqueness because your path may inspire others to take that chance as well.



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**“Marsha P. Johnson is an individual at the head of Stonewall. She was out there and glamorous and really stood in her Transness and her Blackness. She died mysteriously in New York and the NYPD have failed to identify who killed her or how she died. She was really a testament to not only the fight for trans womxn but LGBTQ+ rights. So many people think of Stonewall and just think of gay men but there was so much more. In fact for history the head of queerness has been people who are at the outskirts, it has been trans womxn outside of our normal ideas of boundaries.”**

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**-KAMARIA NANCE**