



## Jewel Thais-Williams, M.S.O.M Lifetime Achievement Award



At a time when black patrons had to show I.D. to enter white-owned gay clubs, sometimes even two pieces of I.D., **Jewel Thais-Williams** took it upon herself to open The Catch One in Los Angeles. The year was 1972, making the Catch One the oldest black-owned gay and lesbian club in the country. Countless friendships have been established, relationships formed, memories made and a few break-ups caused, over the course of 40 years, at the Catch One.

Bitten by the entrepreneurial bug at age 9 while working in her uncle's corner grocery store, Jewel spent the early years of her adult life working her way out of a job. After many years of going to school part-time and working various and sundry jobs, Jewel decided to complete college at UCLA. This meant she would have to work around a full day of classes. Self-employment proved to be the answer for Jewel and also the beginning of a journey to make her dreams come true."

Her first business, a women's clothing boutique went well until the 1970-71 recession hit. Jewel learned that during economic downturns, women stop buying things for themselves. She then looked for a recession proof business. After looking at many opportunities, she saw an advertisement that a local bar was for sale. In addition to having no bartending or bar business skills, her situation was further challenged by the fact that in 1972, California law banned women from tending bars. Jewel bought the bar anyway and the rest, as they say, is history.

Jewel's energy and community service have extended well beyond the Catch One. Jewel co-founded the Minority AIDS Project, the Imani Unidos Food Pantry in South Los Angeles and Rue's House, the first housing facility for women with AIDS and their children in the United States. She also served on the Board of AIDS Project Los Angeles. In 2001, Jewel founded The Village Health Foundation to provide affordable, accessible, and effective professional services in complementary medicine to the community.

Jewel's vision to offer a place for black gays and lesbians to socialize during a period when both homophobia and racial discrimination limited their social opportunities cements her place in the annals of American LGBTQ History.

Better Brothers Los Angeles and The DIVA Foundation are proud to present Jewel Thais-Williams with the inaugural ***Lifetime Achievement Truth Award***.