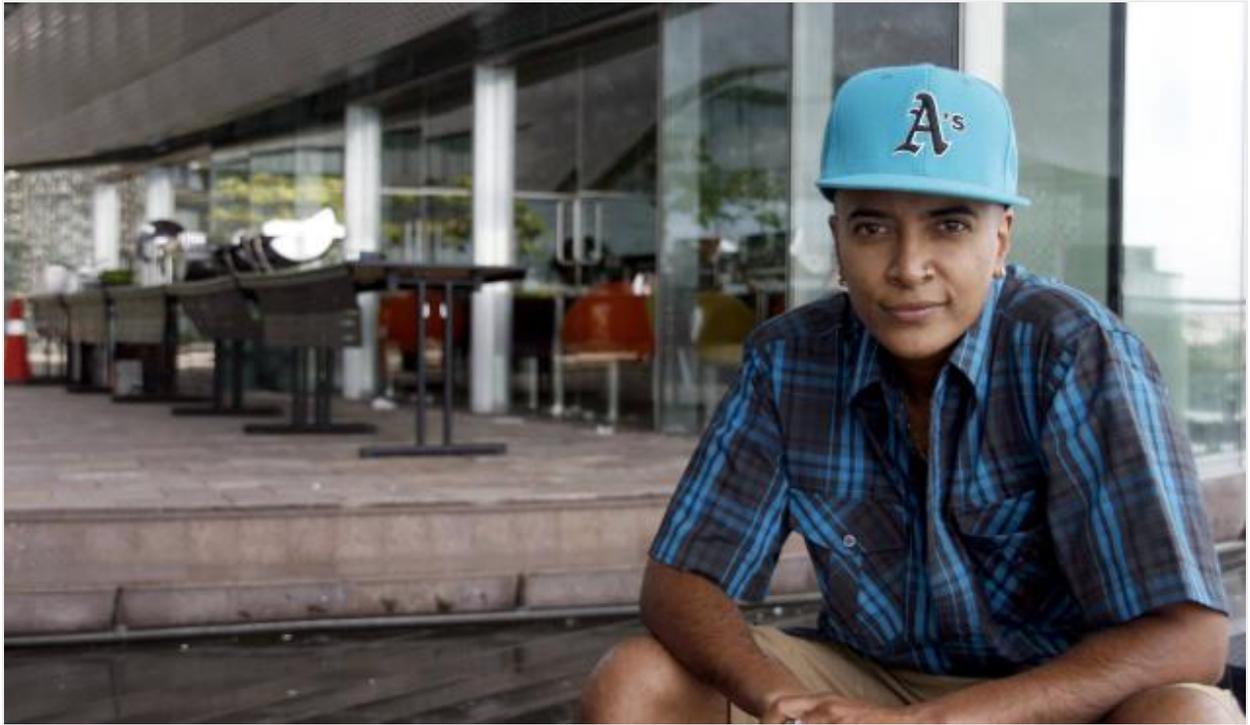


## What a D'Light!

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VISHNUPRIYA BHANDARAM 9/9/2012



THE HINDU

D'LO at The Park's New Festival PHOTO: M. SUBHASH

### *D'Lo's performances weave into a narrative of 'coming out' stories*

Dressed in a checked blue shirt, khaki shorts and a blue rapper cap, D'Lo's presence is marked by an acute sense of humour coupled with an undertone of a disconcerting personal history. A queer transsexual American from Srilanka, D'Lo's identity is vested in being a performer. "I do theatre, hip-hop, spoken word, stand-up comedy and more, but quintessentially I am a performer," he says. D'Lo was in town to perform at The Park's New Festival organised by Prakriti Foundation.

D'Lo grew up in a traditional immigrant family. Did his family come around to his sexuality? D'Lo says that his parents have seen his solo shows, after a point he stopped inviting them. Why? "They probably didn't get it. I know now that they love me and we have a good

relationship but their discomfort doesn't allow me to be fierce with my work in order to make my own community aware of the things I am trying to talk about. I am not trying to cater my material to their liking, so it's better this way," he says. The show is made up of D'Lo's personal story of how he became what he did through a narrative of coming out stories. He laughs and says, "You know everybody thinks, you only have to come out once. You can't. You have to keep coming out, it never ends." The show encapsulates the story of how D'Lo navigated the world and delves into his relationship with his family. Has he ever broken down on stage, given the personal nature of his narrative? "No," he says promptly. "This is theatre. You process through all of that before you take it to the stage. You do all of the breakdowns and get to the stage. I am not trying to have a pity party," he explains.

D'Lo's intimate theatre engages comedy. Comedy too, he says is tragedy viewed in time. "Most comedians say that because the funny part is the end. You had to do a lot of work to get to the place where you can joke about it," he says. The story for a lot of queer people, he says is that they are not just faced with adversity but also with an immense amount of intolerance, "We get doors slammed on our faces, by our family, by the world." In community with other queer people, he says that sharing such stories is painful, "But when you are in a room with a bunch of people like you, the stuff gets outrageously funny," he claims. "It's so bizarre and we are just walking with love and we can't fathom anyone being shooed away from our life because of gender and sexuality," he adds. But comedy isn't about seeing the brighter side, he says. He goes on to mention that there in fact is no brighter side. "There is no brighter side for somebody whose parents have kicked them out of the house and they are left alone: to fend for themselves and without love, or even access to it," he says. D'Lo sums it up beautifully, "It's about choosing to see darkness but still being able to cull out humour."