



THE BLOOMING OF ANGEL

BY ANNABELLE MARCENO PERICIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VINCENT GOTTI

www.vincentgottiphotography.com

Model: Angel Qinan – Courtesy of APPLE Model Management

Hair: Diane Peralta

MUA: Jasmine Cardenas

Featured Fashion Designer: Veejay Floresca

Producer: Cecilio Asuncion

Photographer's Assistant: Ryan Quiza

Post Digital Work: Mariel L. Montaner

Angel identified being a transgender as long as she can remember. She finally took her leap of faith to complete her transition and transformation. Angel shares how she had to advocate for herself to make this journey, the opportunities that are opening doors for her in the modeling world, and what she sees on the horizon for the transgender community.

I first saw Angel walk the runway during Sacramento Fashion week in February and she was the first transgender model to walk the runway. “The support I received from the fashion community was inspirational,” says Angel. “I’ve always wanted to be a model but never thought it could be possible.” With her transitioning and transforming to express her true self, she knew the challenge was to try it. Angel started doing test shoots last October in Los Angeles and New York City while still working as a full time registered nurse. She eventually got connected to the Thailand-based Apple Model Management which is the world’s first modeling agency for transgender models. They just opened its new branch this summer in Los Angeles.

Cecilio Asuncion, Apple Model Management’s L.A director explains, “The agency prioritizes equal treatment for transgender models. It’s important for transgender models to be treated equally in the workplace. At Apple Model Agency you are an Apple model first, and transgender second.”

Angel credits Cecilio as a great ally to the transgender community and declares, “We are models first representing the product and we can do the job equally. I’m excited to be able to express my authentic self and be the best model I can be.”

Being born as the third son of four boys in the Philippines, Angel recalls it wasn’t easy when she first shared her transgender identity to her mom when she was 17 years old and was thinking about transitioning.

“I acted female at school until I would be at home. I attended an all boy school and co-ed college.” Her mom felt it wasn't safe for her to take that journey and stated if that was what she wanted to do, they should part ways. Angel was hurt and didn't pursue transition at that point. Even though at that particular time it didn't show, Angel knew the love and support of her family has always been there. She stayed with her family and they immigrated to New Jersey. She studied nursing, and became a registered nurse. “I now understand everything, what my mom meant about the timing,” reflects Angel. When she moved to California, she started living on her own and decided to give herself a chance and start the transition.

“I realized in order for me to really live my life and live my truth, I needed to be courageous.





Life is short. In the process of starting my transition, I called my mom and we cried on the phone. She knew. She had seen pictures on my brother's Facebook. I explained to her that I was ready to live all aspects of my life as a woman." As a registered nurse, Angel had the right connections to resources that directed her to the right people. "Safety is always my main concern and I found the right doctor for my hormone replacement therapy."

When former Olympian gold medalist Bruce Jenner interviewed with Diane Sawyer and publicly declared at the age of 65 he was finally making his transition to a being a transgender, Angel cried. (Jenner has since then been revealed on the cover of Vanity Fair's July 2015 issue as Caitlyn Jenner.) "I can relate to a lot of things that she was sharing. Most of my life I wasn't living as myself, it's only been the last three years I've been living my life. I can really relate to what she was sharing and how it took a long time for her to come to this," she says.

Angel feels the paradigm is shifting with transgenderism. As a reality T.V. personality, she is proud that Caitlyn Jenner can use that venue as an opportunity to educate and have people aware of the transgender community and what they encounter.

One of the biggest discoveries Angel credits during her transition is how she had to advocate for herself. "I really had to rely and depend on myself! Knowing who I am helped me stay true to my journey," she expresses. Her church, family and friends are a big part of her support system. Her sister Ally, who is three years older, is her biggest fan. Ally is also transitioning and Angel shares with her what she is going through with her doctor and the hormone replacement therapy. Angel's older brother is gay and youngest brother is heterosexual. Having to identify with her sibling's own sexual identity has made her a strong person.

Being able to express herself has made her future so much brighter. Angel's sense of identity has lead her to be who she is and to live her truth. "It sometimes overwhelms me how good things are. It's hard to imagine before my transition the struggles I would have to go through. Surprisingly, it hasn't been as hard as I imagined it would be," she reveals. Angel sees a bright future for the transgender community and knows there is still a lot of work to be done. "I'm proud and happy of the rights and benefits I have now and so very grateful for the people that have fought for them."

Angel is represented by SLAY Model Management. Contact her via email cecilio@slaymodels.com

