

= Simone Russell =

Simone Russell is a fictional character on the American soap opera *Passions*, which aired on NBC from 1999 to 2007 and on DirecTV in 2007 ? 08 . *Passions* followed the romantic and supernatural adventures in the fictional New England coastal town of Harmony .

Simone , a member of *Passions* ' Russell family , is introduced as the youngest daughter of Eve Russell and T. C. Russell , as well as the younger sister of Whitney Russell . While her early appearances center her love triangle with Chad Harris @-@ Crane and her sister Whitney , the character later receives more prominence on the show through her experience coming out as a lesbian to her family , and her relationship with Rae Thomas . The network defended the show 's treatment of Simone 's sexuality as a serious commentary on the topic .

Created by the soap 's founder and head writer James E. Reilly , the role was portrayed by three actresses over the course of the show : Lena Cardwell ( July 5 , 1999 to April 16 , 2001 ) , Chrystee Pharris ( April 17 , 2001 to April 22 , 2004 ) , and Cathy Jenéen Doe ( July 23 , 2004 ? September 4 , 2007 ) . The character was created as a part of the show 's effort to represent a full African @-@ American family and full @-@ realized African @-@ American characters on television . The exact reasons behind Cardwell 's departure remain unknown while Pharris chose to leave to pursue other acting opportunities . Doe was the third and final actress to play Simone before the character was written off the show shortly before its transition to DirecTV .

Her storyline made daytime television history by having the first instance in a soap opera of two women in bed making love . The character is also notable for being daytime TV 's first African @-@ American lesbian . At the 17th GLAAD Media Awards , the show won Outstanding Daily Drama for its portrayal of Simone 's sexual orientation . The show 's representation of LGBT topics , and Cathy Jenéen Doe 's performance as Simone , received a mixed response from critics ; Doe was the principal actress during the storylines focusing on the character 's sexuality .

= = Character creation = =

= = = Background = = =

Sheraton Kalouria , senior vice president of NBC ? s daytime programming , described the decision to create and cast a racially diverse ensemble , as seen with the inclusion of " the African American Russells and the Hispanic Lopez @-@ Fitzgeralds " in the soap 's four core families , as reflective of the show 's " truly color @-@ blind storytelling . " The cast emphasized the representation of an African @-@ American family and fully realized African @-@ American characters as the main attraction to the roles . Charles Divins , one of the actors who played Chad Harris @-@ Crane , viewed the show 's treatment of the Russells as " a strong African American family " as " refreshing . " Rodney Van Johnson praised the incorporation of a complete African @-@ American family as distinguishing *Passions* from other soap operas . He attributed the cast as bringing more positive portrayals of African @-@ Americans to daytime television :

" We are the only daytime drama with a full African @-@ American family . The Russells have a key role in the community . There aren 't just a flash in the pan . The storylines are heavy . The show has received a huge response from the African @-@ American community for that reason . "

= = = Characterization and casting = = =

Over the course of the show , Simone was played by three actresses : Lena Cardwell ( 1999 to 2001 ) , Chrystee Pharris ( 2001 to 2004 ) , and Cathy Jenéen Doe ( 2004 to 2007 ) . After seeing her audition , producers Reilly and Lisa de Cazotte considered the role ideal for Lena Cardwell . The show initially constructed the character primarily around her " major crush on street @-@ kid Chad Harris since he came to town . " Daniel R. Coleridge of TV Guide characterized Simone 's early behavior as " bitchy to her older sister , who was nothing but kind to her . " Variety 's Josef referred

to the character as a " daredevil teen . " Cast members expressed disappointment at Cardwell 's departure from the show and the re @-@ casting of Simone . Tracey Ross described Cardwell as being " very sincere , completely authentic and without malice " in her performance . Johnson viewed himself as " a father figure to her " and said their close relationship helped make the Russell family more authentic and relatable to viewers . After leaving the show , Cardwell said she " received so much fan mail , it was overwhelming " and the experience " made me feel loved and appreciated . "

When assuming the role in 2001 , Pharris said her preparation consisted of asking her friends " as many questions as I could think of about Simone , Whitney and Chad " in order to make " the character my own by putting my own life experiences in the situation " . She commented that the ability to work closely with the producers allowed her to use her own family background as inspiration for her performance as Simone . While discussing the connection to her family , she stated : " my father had a temper so I made Simone have a temper too ! " Pharris explained she did not renew her contract in order to pursue other projects .

Doe was hired for the third and final recasting after moving to Los Angeles from New York , where she was primarily offered the role of " a runaway teenager , a prostitute , a drug dealer " . Initially hesitant to assume a character already established by other actors , she shaped her performance through her friendship with Pharris ; she described Pharris as " a really [ positive ] person " who answered her questions about the character . When discussing the decision to portray Simone as a lesbian , Kalouria emphasized " sexual identity isn 't a passing fancy " and " this is where [ Simone ] is ... I can assure you we 're not going to make light of this particular topic . "

= = Storylines = =

Born in 1983 , Simone Russell is the youngest daughter of T.C. and Eve Russell , and the younger sister of Whitney Russell . Her early storylines concentrate on her reluctant participation in her friend Kay Bennett 's schemes to separate Miguel Lopez @-@ Fitzgerald from Charity Standish and her attraction to Chad @-@ Harris Crane . Chad and Whitney hide their relationship from Simone to the point where Chad pretends to be Simone 's boyfriend to keep her happy . After catching Chad and Whitney having sex , she breaks with him and tells everyone in Harmony about his relationship with her sister .

Disconnected from her sister , Simone becomes close friends with Kay 's younger sister Jessica Bennett and Miguel 's younger sister Paloma Lopez @-@ Fitzgerald and turns to them for support . Simone acts primarily in a supporting role for these two character 's storylines , such as advising Paloma to divorce her abusive husband Spike Lester and seek professional help for her drug addiction . She briefly dates John Hastings , who is the son of David Hastings . At the time , John was falsely believed to be Grace Standish 's son and the half @-@ brother of Kay and Jessica . Simone 's relationship with John ends in 2004 when he moves to Italy with David and Grace .

In the summer of 2005 , Simone comes out as a lesbian by revealing her relationship with Rae Thomas to her family . Her family reacts negatively to her sexual orientation . T.C. beats her and says he is ashamed to be her father . Eve panics and is concerned that her daughter 's reputation will suffer if the rest of Harmony learns of her sexuality . Simone 's sexuality is regarded as " a badge of shame " by the characters Simone 's great @-@ aunt , Irma Johnson , describes homosexuality as a sin and calls her " vile " and " disgusting " . Simone turns to her mother for emotional support after Rae rebukes her declarations of love by revealing that she has no interest in a committed relationship . In December 2005 , Eve , Julian , Liz , and T.C. find a video from Alistair Crane , in which he claims to have hired Rae to seduce Simone and " turn " her into a lesbian . Rae later explains that the money is intended to start a lesbian club and that she was never hired to " turn " Simone gay . As she reconciles with Rae , Simone reconnects with her family . Her father , who recently suffered from a stroke following a car accident , apologizes for his homophobic behavior toward her . Her mother also becomes more supportive of her relationship .

Viewers saw the set @-@ up for the ending of Simone 's romance with Rae through the beginning of 2007 . Rae finds out Vincent Clarkson was framing Luis Lopez @-@ Fitzgerald for his girlfriend

Fancy Crane 's rape . On February 12 , 2007 , Vincent stabs Rae to death before she can reveal his identity to Luis . Simone attempts to cope with Rae 's death by helping Jessica through her pregnancy . She invites Jessica to live in Rae 's old apartment so they can protect the baby from Spike . Eve , who was previously being blackmailed by Vincent , tells Simone the truth about Rae 's murder . Simone leaves Harmony with her sister Whitney to start a new life in New Orleans . She does not make a physical appearing during the show 's run on DirecTV or in the series finale . In July 2008 , Simone sends a letter to Kay congratulating her on her wedding to Miguel and includes a pair of earrings as the " something new . "

= = Impact and reception = =

Passions won the award for Outstanding Daily Drama at the 17th GLAAD Media Awards for its portrayal of Simone 's sexuality and her relationship with Rae . Doe accepted the award during the ceremony on the show 's behalf . The soap opera made daytime television history by having the first representation of two women in bed making love .

Simone 's storyline about coming out as a lesbian received mixed feedback from critics and media outlets . The Atlantic 's Aaron Foley connected the show 's inclusion of a black , lesbian character as a sign of " America bec [ oming ] more comfortable with seeing blacks on screen " and viewers " bec [ oming ] more comfortable with risky , sometimes hilarious storylines " . Foley commented the storyline was " short @-@ lived " . An article on Soaps.com noted that Simone would be remembered as " a character who broke down some barriers for the depiction of lesbians on daytime TV and earned the show awards and accolades from civil rights groups " . Damon Romine , media entertainment director of GLAAD ( 2005 @-@ 2009 ) , reported the introduction of gay characters makes soap operas " worth tuning in " and emphasized the show 's capability of normalizing LGBT topics with a wider audience :

" These stories have the ability to reach the many different generations of viewers who watch daytime and share with them stories of our lives , he says . What viewers are seeing is that more and more of their own neighbors and friends are dealing with these issues , and the soaps are merely reflecting the reality of the world we live in . "

Sarah Warn , former editor of entertainment website AfterEllen.com , gave the show a negative review calling the relationship " a poorly developed plot that has reduced Simone to a one @-@ dimensional character who happened to sleep with a girl . " Warn points out that viewers " haven 't had the chance to see this woman through her eyes " as the show does not attempt to fully explore her sexuality ; she expressed disappointment that Simone 's past relationships with men , and her possible bisexuality , are never addressed on the show . Despite the criticism , Warn praised the show for providing a more realistic representation of lesbian sexuality than the " one three @-@ minute scene than All My Children did in five years " .

Cathy Jenéen Doe received mixed feedback for her performance of the character . Doe was listed as a pre @-@ nominee for the Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series for the 34th Daytime Emmy Awards alongside co @-@ star Emily Harper , but was not chosen as one of the final nominees . Warn criticized Doe and Jinario for being " horribly matched as scene partners " and lacking chemistry .

Simone 's storyline received frequent comparisons by critics to the soap 's treatment of Chad 's struggle with his sexuality , and Vincent 's identification as intersex . Herndon L. Davis of Windy City Times described the representation of Simone as daytime 's first African @-@ American lesbian as overshadowed by how the show " recklessly wrote a down @-@ low storyline which involved an African @-@ American man but eventually turned it into an outrageous intersex serial killer storyline " . Davis said the soap opera tackled " daytime 's bitter issue with race " .