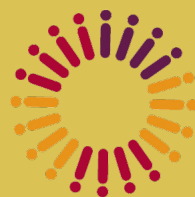


Can you imagine a community that embraces the diversity of the human family and ensures that all are treated with love, compassion, and justice?

Five-Year Roadmap Toward Justice

The Black religious community—with its historic commitment to freedom and liberation—is perfectly suited to forge a new path toward freedom and justice for gay and transgender (LGBT) people and their families. When the Black community lives into wholeness, with no-one left out or marginalized, such full expression of community will have broad impact throughout the country.



many voices

A Black Church Movement
for Gay & Transgender Justice

CHALLENGES FACING BLACK LGBT PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

As momentum builds for LGBT justice across the United States, public opinion within the African American community lags noticeably behind.

A recent survey¹ by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) found that while other racial groups have made significant advances in their support for marriage equality in the last ten years, the Black community has made underwhelming shifts. Compared to other groups,

- *Black Americans are the least likely (35%) to support same-sex marriage,*
- *They are more likely to believe that being gay or lesbian is a learned behavior (63%), and*
- *They are the most likely to believe that same-gender-loving relationships are morally wrong (69%).*

In addition, the National Transgender Discrimination Survey² found that among all transgender people, those who are Black reported the highest levels of discrimination and distress, with

- *34% reporting a household income of less than \$10,000/year,*
- *20% being HIV positive, and*
- *Nearly half having attempted suicide.*



CREATING CHANGE FROM WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Organizing within the Black community has also not kept pace. The successful marriage equality campaign in Maryland, where African Americans account for one third of the state's population, provides a useful example. The campaign titled the bill the "Civil Marriage Protection Act" and urged Black clergy to (1) carry a single civil rights message and (2) assuage the concerns of Black churchgoers. The message was this: It's only fair for all Marylanders to have the same civil rights, and don't worry, it won't apply to what we do in our churches.

The strategy used in Maryland is characteristic of organizing in the Black community by the mainly white LGBT groups. Organizers ask Black pastors to support short-term gains such as marriage equality and insist that they speak only in terms of civil rights, rather than as Christians. The pastors have not been prepared for the inevitable backlash from within their own community and when it comes, the LGBT groups have disappeared. Then, if the pastors approach the LGBT organizers, asking them to advocate for issues of concern to the Black community, such as incarceration, they're turned away.

That short-sighted approach is often harmful because it exacerbates tensions, alienates many potential supporters, and leaves the community open to appeals from groups like the National Organization for Marriage.

Organizers who take a religious approach, on the other hand, address the Black community's stated concerns by doing Bible training, which is typically designed to disprove the passages that are said to illustrate God's condemnation of homosexuality. We have found, however, that focusing entirely on Scripture doesn't get to the heart of people's resistance and often heightens it.



MANY VOICES CALLS FORTH OUR FULL HUMANITY

Many Voices' approach, by contrast, is designed to create a safe space for Black Christians to address all their concerns.

MANY VOICES:

Humanizes the issue by bringing forward the voices of Black LGBT people, who have been all too invisible in our community; and

Creates a bridge for religious leaders to the social justice issues that they already care about and are working on—poverty, employment, health, incarceration, and others—all issues that disproportionately impact Black LGBT people and their families.

Ultimately, working with Many Voices, people come to see that LGBT people are part of our churches and communities and have been all along, that they are not extraneous or foreigners to us, that they're our sisters and brothers, and that they're hurting and being harmed.

Such new understanding removes the obstacles for Black Christians, expands their grasp of the issues, and fortifies them to step forward on LGBT justice in an increasingly public way.



¹A Shifting Landscape: A Decade of Change in American Attitudes about Same-Sex Marriage and LGBT Issues, 2014

²The National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 2011

OUR

ROADMAP

Long-term change will come when the concerns of LGBT people and their families are integrated with the African American church's historic commitment to freedom and liberation.

CALLING THE BLACK CHURCH HOME

STRATEGY 1

Activate a national grassroots network in target regions of the United States.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Faith Councils are mobilizing Black LGBT and Non-LGBT Christians in each of four regions in the U.S.

Many Voices will connect African American faith and secular groups within all four regions of the United States by setting up regional Faith Councils to build a strategic volunteer network.

In collaboration with state equality organizations and other partners, the network will engage with NAACP chapters and other civil rights organizations, historically Black church denominations, and historically Black colleges and universities. Through grassroots outreach, Many Voices' expert trainers and partners will provide educational programs, dialogues, and trainings in each region, and increase dialogue and awareness about LGBT justice, human sexuality issues, and theology.



STRATEGY 2

Expand Black Americans' public support for LGBT justice to be holistically favorable of gay and transgender people and their families.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Among Black Protestants, Many Voices—in collaboration with our many partners—will:

- Reduce the conflict between religious beliefs and same-sex marriage from 61% to at least 40%;
- Reduce the belief that being gay or lesbian is a learned behavior from 63% to at least 25%;
- Reduce the belief that same-gender-loving relationships are morally wrong from 69% to at least 40%; and
- Increase Black families' acceptance of transgender members, beginning with NCTE's 2015 findings.

For these benchmarks, Many Voices will rely on ongoing research by PRRI and the National Center for Transgender Equality.

PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON MORALITY, SEXUALITY, AND GENDER

With a national grassroots infrastructure within major African American academic, advocacy, and religious spaces across the United States, Many Voices will be poised to lead and coordinate a national dialogue that focuses on (a) amplifying and shifting African American public opinion on issues of morality and the diversity of human sexuality and gender, (b) reconciling morality with an understanding of human sexuality and gender issues and (c) connecting support for LGBT justice with the many other justice concerns facing the Black community.

In-Person Educational Workshops, Seminars and Dialogues

Many Voices' expert facilitators, movement partners, and other trained professionals will provide regular workshops, seminars, dialogues, and public speaking at locations throughout the country.

Google+/Online Educational Workshop, Seminars and Dialogues

Many Voices' expert facilitators, movement partners, and other trained professionals will provide regular Google+/Online workshops, seminars, and dialogues (both public and private).

STRATEGY 3

Sustain ongoing educational and media campaigns to increase the perceived friendliness of African-American churches toward LGBT people.

According to the PRRI survey, only 31% of Americans view African American churches as friendly toward LGBT people. Yet the survey also points to a wide perception gap among Black Protestants. For example, while 35% say they favor marriage equality, only 8% say that their own church family favors it.

Such perceptions—that the people in Black churches are more oppositional than they actually are—make people less likely to engage in the very dialogue that is so essential to improve the lives of Black LGBT people and their families.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Many Voices—in collaboration with our many partners—will increase the perception of Black church support for LGBT people from 31% to 60% nationally.

Many Voices will strategically work to develop multimedia that elevate the faces, stories, and support of the Black church movement for LGBT justice—an essential factor in broadening acceptance and advocacy.

Videos

Many Voices will expand its successful video campaign that presents the lives, experiences, and stories of Black LGBT people, their families, and their faith leaders—strategically working with its Faith Councils to create videos that are geographically diverse.

Online Communications

Many Voices will provide daily social media content, regular newsletters, and partner emails to constantly learn and share information across the network. The new media content will emphasize the lives, experiences, opinions, and stories of Black LGBT people, their families, and their faith leaders.



WILL THIS ACTUALLY WORK?

We see great hope in the many religious people who desire change.

Yes, we face daunting challenges: Black LGBT people and their families are disproportionately affected by violence and discrimination in every aspect of their lives, and many Black religious people—LGBT or not—are trapped by outdated teachings. Those who long for change are still silent.

With major investments, however, the roadmap outlined here is not only ambitious but achievable. Black communities will come together, share their lives, recognize their connections, and once again step forward to advocate for justice for all people.

REQUESTING MAJOR INVESTMENTS

We are seeking major investments to enable Many Voices to expand our organizational infrastructure and create a solid foundation of grassroots support and action.

Many Voices is well respected within the LGBT movement and among Black social justice ministers who stand ready to move this agenda forward.

We ask again: Can you imagine a community that embraces the diversity of the human family and ensures that all are treated with love, compassion, and justice? When the Black community lives into wholeness, with no-one left out or marginalized, such full expression of community will have broad impact throughout the country.



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