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I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity in the Black Community



In response to the brewing controversy around Black Harlem church leaders' outcry against the Same Gender Loving (SGL) Liberation Movement, **Reverend Al Sharpton** and the **National Action Network** has joined forces with **The Black Men's Xchange National** and the **Malcolm X Grassroots Movement** to conduct a community forum on Black male diversity, sexuality, manhood, power and safety. Participants will chart a collective course for intra-community recognition at **I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity in the Black Community** on **Saturday, July 16th at 2 PM** at the **National Action Network**, located at **106 W. 145th St.** (near Lenox Ave.)

The multi-media event will feature film and video footage, live performances, a panel discussion and community dialogue. The panel will feature **National Action Network President, Al Sharpton**, **"Our World" TV Show Host, Marc Lamont Hill**, and **Black Men's Xchange National Founder & CEO, Cleo Manago**.

Recalling the signs carried by Memphis sanitation workers at the strike during which Martin Luther King was assassinated, used here, **I AM A MAN** is an affirmation of the common struggle of Black men, and a call for the inclusion of the SGL men among the collective. Reverend Sharpton said, "There is absolutely

a need to have this discussion because, if I recall [correctly], in the early days of the Civil Rights movement, Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin were demonized because of that."

In previous generations, in order to escape oppression, some very 'light-skinned' Blacks 'passed as White.' Today many SGL men pass as heterosexual, hiding in plain sight, to escape the pain of being regarded as less than "real men."

Over the last year, a rash of highly publicized homosexual teen suicides transpired across the country. Yet again, the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the Black community is among Black men, most of whom are homosexual and bisexual. Some also identify as heterosexual.

These and other currents are evidence of injury in Black communities nationwide. In response to these traumas, The Black Men's Xchange National, The National Action Network and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement are calling the community together in a forum around its collective healing. Says Cleo Manago, "For generations, the Black community has been so preoccupied with survival in America, or assimilation, we have rarely stepped out of this to figure ourselves out, or rationally address our perceived differences with each other. This forum is one of those rare opportunities on an essential issue."

Black Men's Xchange NY Co-founder, John-Martin Green insists, "This human rights struggle – for diverse Black men to be fully present, respectfully representing our range – can only be won as we muster our courage as a community to face our fears and end misunderstandings that produce unhealthy behaviors and division among us. Any among us who feel compelled to hide any part(s) of ourselves are diminished in our capacity as freedom fighters on behalf of the collective. If we will function cohesively as a community in the continuing fight for human rights, we must recognize, as the saying goes, until all are free, no one is free."

Join in building a stronger, safer community where hiding in plain sight is unnecessary because SGL, bisexual and heterosexual Black people are all respected and affirmed at **I AM A MAN**.



Rev. Al. Sharpton



Cleo Manago



Marc Lamont Hill