

Sean Combs On PoliticsNation With Al Sharpton

Sean Combs was a guest on Al Sharpton's PoliticsNation show and he discusses the election, Barack Obama, his new charter school in Harlem and his last album.

Explosive New Film featuring Al Sharpton and Cleo Manago Addresses Black Men's Challenges with Manhood, Sexuality and Masculinity



New York – When Black Men's Xchange (BMX) National joined forces with the National Action Network and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement to present the community forum I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity in the Black Community this past July, everyone in attendance intuitively knew that it would be a paradigm shifting juncture. What unfolded that sweltering day in Harlem, NY inspired BMX founder and CEO, Cleo Manago, to produce a thought-provoking educational film that would resonate beyond the participants in that room.

With a panel helmed by Rev. Al Sharpton; "Our World with Black Enterprise" television host, Dr. Marc Lamont Hill; R. L'Heureux Lewis; WBAI's Esther Armah; Bishop John L. Selders

Jr. and social architect and filmmaker Cleo Manago, the conversation occasionally took heated turns and emotions were tapped. Ultimately love and respect reigned as those in attendance pushed boundaries to explore the topic of sexual diversity among Black men, and delved into issues surrounding homosexuality, bisexuality, heterosexuality, manhood and the Black community. It was a revolutionary gathering, still being discussed on Facebook.

“I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity” is the educational short film born from that affair. Produced and recently released by a team headed by Cleo Manago, “I AM A MAN” captures the fire of not only that particular evening, but ensconces it with riveting footage that conveys eye opening details about the path and perils of Black male sexuality in America and Africa. Explosive, thought provoking and myth shattering, the short delves deep into the roots of perpetuated Black anxieties about same gender loving love, addressing issues of cultural affirmation, societal isolation, black self concept and religious conditioning.

Opening with footage of Arsenio Hall’s controversial hosting of Minister Louis Farrakhan on his show, “I AM A MAN” directly confronts society’s fear and covert emasculation of the Black male persona. The 36-minute short covers a spectrum of societal factions, including the raging hyper masculinity evidenced in today’s hip-hop movement. In addition, Uganda’s obsession with an anti-homosexuality campaign is uncovered for its religious agenda with white Christianity roots, while the Black church is also unmasked for its hypocrisy. A highlight of the film is archival footage of historical Harlem Renaissance icon James Baldwin, discussing his position as a Black man in America.

“‘I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity’ is not just a film. It’s a movement,” reveals Cleo Manago. “With the recent turn of events, be it CNN’s Don Lemon’s coming out, or comedian Tracy Morgan being taken to task for his perceived

homophobic commentary, Black manhood has shown itself to be multifaceted. It's a subject matter that stares us right in the face and is not going anywhere. Our film is a springboard for further discussion and analysis. Our intent is to not only open minds but open hearts as well, because bottom line, the agenda is love and community well-being."

"I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity" is available for online viewing at <http://vimeo.com/27859721>. Connect with Manago, view the film's trailer and leave your thoughts about the film on the Facebook page "I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity" by Cleo Manago (<https://www.facebook.com/I-AM-A-MAN-Black-Manhood-Sexual-Diversity-by-Cleo-Manago>). For private organizational screenings and discussions, contact Cleo Manago at BMX National at cleomanago@gmail.com.

Al Sharpton, Marc Lamont Hill and Cleo Manago to Contribute to "I AM A MAN" Discussion in New York



New York, NY – From comedian Tracy Morgan's controversial rant to CNN's Don Lemon's coming out' to radio deejay Mister Cee's guilty plea to receiving oral sex from another man in a parked car, and now the historic legalization of same-sex marriage in New York – homosexuality is at the forefront of water cooler conversations these days. It is a particularly hot topic within the Black community, given the social, political and

cultural ramifications inherit within this community. Where as in previous generations, in order to escape oppression, some very 'light-skinned' Blacks 'passed as White,' today many same gender loving (SGL) men pass as heterosexual, hiding in plain sight, to escape the pain of being regarded as less than "real men."

In response to the brewing controversy around homosexuality and the Black community, the Black Men's Xchange (BMX) National has joined forces with the National Action Network and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement to present the community forum I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity in the Black Community on Saturday, July 16th at 2:00 p.m. at the National Action Network in New York. The National Action Network is located at 106 W. 145th St. (near Lenox Ave.) Black Men's Xchange National is the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to promoting healthy self-concept and behavior, cultural affirmation and critical consciousness among same gender loving, gay-identifying and bisexual African-descended males and allies.

The historic, multi-media event will feature film and video footage, live performances, a panel discussion and community dialogue featuring National Action Network's president, Rev. Al Sharpton, "Our World with Black Enterprise" television host, Dr. Marc Lamont Hill, and Black Men's Xchange National founder & CEO, Cleo Manago. Participants in attendance will chart a collective course for intra-community recognition covering topics on Black male diversity, sexuality, manhood, power and safety.

Recalling the signs carried by Memphis sanitation workers at the strike where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, 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. Noting a rash of highly publicized homosexual teen suicides across the country and that the highest incidence of

HIV/AIDS in the Black community is still among Black men, most of whom are homosexual and bisexual, Reverend Sharpton cites, "There is absolutely a need to have this discussion."

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."

Join BMX National and their community partners to jointly build a stronger community, where whether SGL, bisexual or heterosexual, it is safe not to "hide in plain sight" anymore. I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity in the Black Community will be a forum dedicated to insuring that all Black people can be respected and affirmed. For more information go to <http://www.facebook.com/bmxnational> .

**Star Jones, Rev. Sharpton,
Minyon Moore, & Wade
Henderson at Spirit Awards**



Washington, D.C. – A diverse selection of honorees reflected upon the significant accomplishments of The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (The National Coalition) over the past 35 years and its impact on the number of Black elected officials; then challenged the audience of over 400 to stay vigilant in addressing 21st century issues during recent Spirit of Democracy Awards Gala and 35th Anniversary Celebration in Washington, DC.

“Our esteemed honorees exemplify our theme of Leadership, Engagement, and Empowerment. Each of their remarks touched on issues ranging from the crisis in education to civil rights and the assault on labor unions,” said Melanie L. Campbell, president and CEO of The National Coalition. “This year, the 35th anniversary of the organization, our audience left with a charge to get to work so we can keep moving forward instead of backward.”

The intergenerational gala was hosted by former New York prosecutor and TV personality, Star Jones and included a tribute to the late Dr. Ronald Walters, a renowned political scientist and a founder of The National Coalition. Long-time National Coalition events manager, Ruby Pulliam, was also recognized during the event. Guests included leaders from civil rights, government, labor, and the faith communities. The 2011 Spirit Award honorees are:

Dennis Van Roekel, president, National Education Association, was presented with the Educational Innovation and Empowerment Award by Arlene Holt-Baker, the executive vice president of AFL-CIO.

Randi Weingarten, president, American Federation of Teachers, was presented with the Educational Innovation and Empowerment Award by Ms. Holt-Baker.

Yelberton Watkins, chief of staff, Congressman James Clyburn’s Office, was given the Emerging Leader Award by Mr. Lyndon Boozer, Vice President, AT & T Federal Affairs.

Wade Henderson, president and CEO, Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights was presented with the Trailblazer Award by Howard E. Woolley Senior Vice President, Strategic Alliances and Wireless Policy at Verizon Communications.

Minyon Moore, principal, Dewey Square Group was given Economic & Community Empowerment Award by Rev. Leah Daughtry, House of the Lord Church.

Rev. Al Sharpton, president, National Action Network was presented with the Chairman's Visionary Leadership Award by Melanie L. Campbell.

In commemoration of the anniversary celebration the founders of The National Coalition were recognized.

"In 1976 The National Coalition launched the first nationally coordinated coalition to register 15 million Black people to vote. Today we bear witness to the impact The National's Coalition's work has had on the number of elected officials in office," said Kevin Parker, principal, Capital Consulting Group and 35th Anniversary Spirit Host Committee Chair. "We have Black members of congress, mayor's, and the election of the first African American president of the United States, President Barack Obama. Thank you for your dedication and commitment."