

Black Men's Xchange Celebrates 25 Years with New State-of-the-Art Community Space in Washington DC



Washington, D.C. – Black Men's Xchange (BMX), the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to the empowerment of diverse Black males, recently celebrated its 25th year anniversary with a festive gathering at their new, state-of-the-art community space in Northeast DC. The event was co-sponsored in partnership with celebrated D.C. staple Al Sura, Inc., a non-profit public charity foundation.

In addition to unveiling their beautiful new location, the esteemed organization, which acknowledges diversity in class, philosophy, sexuality and spiritual practice, noted the occasion as one of particular significance. The 25th anniversary marked the beginning of new leadership development; the welcoming back of former returning members; and an introduction to associates eager to learn more about and join the BMX team.

Cleo Manago, BMX founder and CEO, addressed the energetic crowd and noted, "This event is more than just an open house. We are here to reassure the community that BMX is not just firmly planted in DC, but is fresh, improved and excited about hearing the communities' voice, their concerns and ideas." Manago added, "The large crowd here today indicates the importance of BMX to this community. We are 25 years old, yet we still welcome transformation. It creates opportunity for introspection and problem-solving along with new blood and new people to affirm and learn from."

Facilitated by Darryl L C Moch, an Al Sura Inc. board member and local activist, a vigorous dialogue took place between curious community members and the many veterans of BMX in attendance. The interchange was respectful and illuminating. A clear highlight of the afternoon was the debut of the luxurious, new area where BMX's popular Black men's gatherings will take place. Enthused visitors openly commented on the splendor and tranquility of the new space, a sharp contrast to the badly lit library basement where meetings had been held over the past year.

Also introduced was the stunning new website recently launched by the BMX DC chapter at <http://www.bmxdc.org> and the FaceBook fan page which secured close to 900 'likes' in three days at <https://www.facebook.com/BMXchangeDC> .

The Black Men's Xchange (BMX), a national 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, is the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to promoting healthy self-concept, constructive decision-making, functional relationships between Black men, critical thinking and cultural affirmation (CTCA) and leadership development among diverse African descendant-males and allies. The mission of BMX is to affirm, heal, educate, unify, and advocate social-justice for diverse Black males while providing tools for self-determination, community responsibility, self-actualization, well-being and the prevention of health threats.

Starting Saturday February 1st, 2014, the BMX Black Men's gatherings will take place on a bi-monthly basis at 1160 1ST Street, NE, Suite 235 in Washington, DC at First and M Street.

For more BMX information, email BMXNational@gmail.com or call at 888-472-2837.

Black Men's Xchange Advances the Agenda with New Howard University Chapter and Black MSM HIV Policy Summit



BMX Launches on Howard University Campus

Washington, DC – As a response to the growing needs of same-gender-loving (SGL) and bi-sexual black men, Black Men's Xchange (BMX) National remains in the forefront as an organization aggressively advancing an agenda that addresses issues pertinent to the overall health and well-beingness of the Black community at large. In addition to the establishment of a new BMX chapter on the historic campus of Howard University, Black Men's Xchange (BMX) National designed, coordinated and conceived the "Innovations in Black MSM Policy and Advocacy Summit" recently held in New York.

With financial support from the Ford Foundation, the summit gathering included Brotherhood, Inc., the Hetrick Martin Institute where the event was held and Jamaal Clue of The National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD). Collaborators engaged, examined and analyzed policy and advocacy issues focusing on Black men, HIV policy, prevention and care.



Gathering at Black MSM

Policy and Advocacy Summit

"The summit played a crucial role in dissecting the current HIV policy paradigm in relation to Black men. Current policy is built upon a system that has not been responsive to the needs of Black men; a system plagued by institutional racism," cites John-Martin Green, leader of the BMX chapter in NYC.

"Among a number of strategies, the summit posed the question: How will we address health issues uniquely faced by Black men – for example – HIV, if we do not have 'indigenous and culturally embedded' black men at the forefront of this struggle? We expect that it is in this question of leadership that we will find the answers and the approaches we need to reframe the paradigm," adds Michael James Foster, Chief Operations Officer of Black Men's Xchange National.

The implementation of their new Washington DC based chapter is another important cornerstone for BMX. Offers BMX founder Cleo Manago, "We have been concerned for some time regarding issues among same gender loving and bi-sexual black men in the Washington DC area. Though several DC residents attend our Baltimore chapter, we had been receiving calls over the years for a chapter to be established in the capital. When local community activist Kevin Sanders contacted us asking if he could start a BMX chapter there, we felt it was time to make it a reality."

The Washington DC chapter of BMX is poised to implement weekly empowerment and educational gatherings to be held in partnership with Howard University. The chapter will also convene community forums and town hall meetings. In addition, there are plans in place to work with local organizations who are interested in serving black men more effectively toward helping to resolve health and wellness disparities facing African-Americans in the DC area.

Manago also informs that his study, the Critical Thinking and

Cultural Affirmation (CTCA), will be utilized to assist with the unparalleled HIV AIDS crisis facing diverse black men in the area. CTCA is a culturally informed preventive health strategy that addresses positive mental, sexual and community health, encouraging self-actualization, cultural empowerment and responsibility.

The Black Men's Xchange (BMX) 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 (SGL), gay-identifying and bisexual African-descended males, and allies. 2012 has seen the organization continue to press forward and make great strides within the Black community.

Black Men's Xchange has chapters in Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Harlem/New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta and the Bay Area. With 20 years of experience and success at healing, empowering, unifying and transforming young and adult black men's lives toward constructive decision-making, behavior change and wellness, BMX looks forward to continuing to impact the Black community at large. For more information, go to BMX National at <http://www.bmxnational.org> .

Black Men's Xchange National Issues Statement of Support per Tracy Morgan's Controversial Comments

WASHINGTON, DC – Cleo Manago, National Director of the Black Men's Xchange (<http://www.bmxny.org/>), the nation's oldest and

largest community-based movement devoted to advocacy and empowerment for same gender loving (SGL), bisexual and gay-identifying African-descended males, issued the following statement about the Media coverage of Tracy Morgan's most recent controversial comments:



Cleo Manago, Director of
Black Men's Exchange
National

"As national director of one of the oldest and largest movements devoted to empowering same gender loving (SGL), bisexual and gay-identifying African-descended males, I would like to make it very clear that in no way do I condone any verbal or physical attacks against any group. However, the media coverage and subsequent outrage by some Gay and Lesbian groups to Tracy Morgan's so-called gay-bashing rant during his stand-up routine in Nashville exposes the cultural incompetence and racially biased tunnel-vision that still exists in America.



Comedian Tracy
Morgan

During his comedy routine Morgan, a comedian and comedic television personality, reportedly said "[my son] better talk to me like a man and not in a gay voice or I'll pull out a knife and stab that little nigger to death."

Morgan is an exaggerating insult comic, no different or worse than Lisa Lampinelli or Joan Rivers, who once referred to First-Lady Michelle Obama as "Blackey O" (as opposed to Jackie O Kennedy.) Regardless of Lampinelli's and Rivers' often brutally race-based jokes, both are still highly regarded in the same community now after Morgan's job.

Further evidence of media bias is the fact that Morgan also referred to his son as a 'little nigga' he would stab. This was perhaps the most destructive passage among Morgan's comments. His comedic focus was not on homosexuality, but on bullying, [Black] masculinity and manhood. Morgan correlated having a 'gay voice' with being vulnerable or feminine, a common perspective in communities of color. This includes among homosexuals, many who will lower the tone of their voice for more acceptance among each other.

A cultural interpretation of Morgan words could be, 'My son better not allow himself to be bullied (like a bitch). He better be a strong [Black] man, and not weak, or there will be consequences.' Morgan is a comedian. Of course he has no intentions of stabbing his son. Yet he is also a Black male comedian, with Black male American experience. In response to Morgan's Nashville tirade, the level of outcry among Blacks, including those who identify as gay, has been relatively minor. Likely because many were able to culturally interpret Morgan's comments.

TV-One talk show host, Roland Martin supported Morgan writing, 'Why is comedian and "30 Rock" star Tracy Morgan issuing a mea culpa for saying nasty, vicious and vile things during a stand-up routine? Isn't that par for the course of a comedian?' The CNN analyst also explained that he criticized Michael Richards' tirade because it was directed at a specific audience member and unrelated to his routine [1].

To many Black people Tracey Morgan's epithets, "[my son] better talk to me like a man and not in a gay voice," represent notions stemming directly from masculinity self-consciousness and compensatory behaviors rampant in many Black communities. These are consequences of internalized oppression resulting from a long history in America of oppression toward Black men. Having the highest rates of unemployment, criminalization, and death by police brutality (Sean Bell, Oscar Grant, Amadou Diallo, Rodney King, etc.) for centuries

has had logical consequences. Where Tracey Morgan is from, in New York, unemployment rates among Black men is up to 50%!

Under these circumstances, mastery of public or verbal displays of Black hyper masculinity and bravado can become a precious commodity even among homosexual Black men. Since material stability and physical safety can be rare some Black males find social capital instead in their ability to insult or threaten violence, no matter how self-destructive, self-hating, and anti-Black the decision. What the headlines should have read was "Black male Comedian Tracy Morgan goes on a classic, male insecurity based, anti-feminine, self-hate ridden tirade."

While much has been made in the media, both mainstream and gay, about the "homophobic" nature of Mr. Morgan's comments, no reporting or news analysis has covered Mr. Morgan's statements of violence towards his son, or reference to him as a "little nigga." While media analysis and opinion makers are worried that Mr. Morgan may be endorsing or at the very least encouraging hatred towards gay-identifying people, they are not similarly concerned that he may be endorsing or trivializing violence towards the most vulnerable of Black people – Black children. By using the Phrase "...stab that little nigger to death," Mr. Morgan clearly was making an anti-Black comment. But for white controlled mainstream media this clearly is not an important issue.

Some examples of leading gay publications, media and policy voice commentary and headlines around Mr. Morgan's words include, Ed Kennedy at afterelton.com, who called Mr. Morgan's comments a, "...despicable homophobic "comedy" rant..."[2]. Justin Jannise, at popnography.com, an out.com outlet said, "Apparently, Morgan started with the usual homophobic vitriol..."[3]. While Cheyenne Jackson, an openly gay co-star on 30 Rock on which Mr. Morgan also stars, has said, "I am disgusted and appalled by Tracy Morgan's homophobic rant...The devastating repercussions of hate-filled language manifest in

very real ways for today's LGBTQ[4]." Evan Hurst at Truth Wins Out, a non-profit organization that fights anti-LGBT religious extremism, put out a press release with the headline "Truth Wins Out Calls On Comedian Tracy Morgan to Respond to Allegations of Anti-Gay Tirade Onstage at Nashville Show[5]." Aaron McQuade at GLAAD, Gays & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation said online that "Morgan's right to admit that violence against LGBT young people is not funny in any context. Now he needs to understand why...GLAAD has offered to arrange a meeting between Morgan and a family whose LGBT son or daughter has been the victim of severe violence because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity[6]."

If we analyze and take literally words uttered during comedy routines references to Michelle Obama as Blackey O and President Obama as not being the first Black man to have to clean up a White man's mess (referring to Obama following George W. Bush) – these comments could wreak havoc on the self-esteem of African Americans. As Roland Martin stated, during their stand-up routines Chris Rock understood why OJ killed Nicole, Robin Williams denounced his wife for being ugly, and Bernie Mac threatened to take a hammer to a kid, all to roaring applause. No one called 911 on Bernie Mac for encouraging child abuse.

The Black Men's Xchange National does not condone any language or energy that promotes violence and agrees that Tracey should cease any behavior that does not affirm and lift the spirit of all people, particularly his people, Black people. But, given the normal practice of insult comedy in America, how peculiar it is that Tracey Morgan is being targeted for an indeed problematic but otherwise ignored form of entertainment?

If the media and White Gay and Lesbian groups are taking Mr. Morgan's words at face value why has there been no mention of the remark about 'stabbing the little nigga to death?'"