

# “From Rodney King to Jordan Davis, When Will Black People Learn?” by Cleo Manago



Cleo Manago, CEO and founder of the Black Men's Xchange (BMX)

From **Rodney King**, to **Trayvon Martin**, **Oscar Grant** and now **Jordan Davis**, Black communities have responded with hope while waiting for justice, only to be surprised again and again when justice did not come. The cycle never seems to change. At some point, it becomes important to examine why.

Unfortunately in my lifetime I have yet to see evidence of any fundamental change regarding the treacherous wrath of White control and racism within institutional, criminal justice, academic, media or other central contexts. In my worldview, disproportionately compromising, incarcerating or killing innocent, unarmed Black people is an American pastime that has never dissipated. The recent, cold-blooded murders of young Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, and the slap on the hand given to their murderers, is simply more media profiled versions of this American past-time.

Most incidences do not make the national stage however. **George Zimmerman** and **Michael Dunn**, among other killers of unarmed Black people, symbolically represent a legacy of White power protection based, deadly preemptive strikes on young Black people, especially males. Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, among other innocent Black people murdered over centuries, symbolically represent the consequences of a perceived threat to White power, racism-based control and entitlement-thinking.

Any hopeful investment or belief that any of this will just

change is dangerous and debilitating to actual change. Four hundred years plus of Black enslavement, dehumanization and cruelty – by Whites with delusions-of-superiority – still creates a dangerous dynamic and energy between Black and White people. Retribution from Black people is defensively feared among Whites but the litany of examples – like Trayvon and Jordan – will not stop until Black people gain the capacity to actively fight for, value, respect and protect the lives of Black people.

For real defense, Black people must begin to value, nurture, prepare, independently build with, invest in and affirm other Black people. And, THIS is the biggest challenge Black people have. This particular challenge is even bigger than direct racism.

Centuries of yet healed scar tissue and trauma, fueled by racism and instigated Black on Black violence has to be intentionally understood, contextualized and effectively addressed. Little sustainable or reliable Black progress can occur until this is done. Black people must stop believing that race-irrelevant equity and equality has occurred based on symbolic representation (i.e. the election of a Black president) or because they acquired a decent salary or a nice home.

Black people must actively recognize appeasements that guide them toward premature states of relief, surrender and material satisfaction. These often successfully divert Black acknowledgment of the risk and still raging problems and casualties resulting from institutionalized White supremacy. Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, among thousands, were and are vulnerable because their people are prematurely complacent, hopeful and distracted.

Real change only comes for people under attack when conditions change, or when they stop thinking and acting in ways conducive to being attacked. The murder of innocent Black

people (including by other Black people) will not change until we change. Unwarranted elements of surprise and surrender will keep innocent Black people at risk.

Cleo Manago is a socio-political analyst, behavioral health expert, film documentarian and founder of the African, American Advocacy, Support-Services & Survival Institute (or AmASSI) Centers for Wellness, Education & Culture and Black Men's Xchange (BMX)National. He can be reached at [BMXNational@gmail.com](mailto:BMXNational@gmail.com).

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## **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](mailto:BMXNational@gmail.com) or call at 888-472-2837.

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## **“Do you ‘Cee’ what I see?”: An Ahistorical Collision Between Hip-Hop, “Manhood,” Silence and Sexuality by Cleo Manago**



Cleo Manago

By now you may have heard about the recent scandal surrounding Mister Cee, a well-known hip-hop DJ in New York City. Mister Cee was “caught” on tape soliciting a cross-dressing male posing as a prostitute. Upon Mister Cee’s recognition that the conversation was made public, he quickly resigned from his prized DJ post. Soon after, he rescinded his resignation, and tearfully confessed his essentially homosexual desires.

The entire incident causes me to ask, “Are we preventing or promoting the emergence of other “DJ Mister Cees” in society to “come in” to self-acceptance? And who is more detrimental? A hip hop homosexual on the down low or one that is out and openly vicious? And how does any of this improve issues concerning sexuality within our community?”

In short, as it stands, Mister Cee is a Black male who while attempting to discreetly fulfill his desires, was strategically ambushed and set-up by a self-appointed, backbiting homosexual. Was anybody victimized during this incident? No. DJ Mister Cee was minding his own business along with a consenting adult. Yet, there are social constructs and paradigms that transform what DJ Mister Cee likely assumed was a private matter, into prey for the consumption of ironically voracious reputation predators.

That this is a scandal at all, one created by a gay-identifying Black male, is a consequence of intra-community disdain and misdirected rage – driven by a [White gay] blueprint on how homosexuals/bisexuals should act and identify. Same-gender-loving (SGL) or bisexual Black males who do not buy into this identity paradigm and/or don an “I identify as gay” T-shirt (so to speak), can be subject to brutal treatment; especially by homosexual Black males who do take on “gay identity culture” as their own.



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A now widely viewed YouTube video on Bimbo Winehouse TV provides a case-in-point. The video displays a Black male, clearly gay identified, who seems to relish in his disdain and ridicule of DJ Mister Cee. Seemingly, with gleeful

satisfaction, Bimbo Winehouse sways and sings while he taunts with words that include “Shout out to all you ‘down-low’ men out there. Shout out to all you ‘down-low’ celebrities. You hiding in that closet of who you truly are. Honey! You running from who you are. You gay.”

A reasonable question posed to Bimbo Winehouse might be, “And how will your antics and ridicule resolve the so-called “down-low” issue?” Yet, problem-solving rarely appears atop of the agenda. Instead, the mentality tends to be: Either you are with us as an ally or against us as an enemy.

Bimbo Winehouse demonstrates a cut-throat viciousness and peer-insensitivity rampant in Black gay identified sub-cultures. It is driven by oppression and pain resulting from a community having yet to find its way in culturally resonant healing or historically informed ways. These days, with homosexuality being so prominently displayed, one might think that homosexuality has lost its controversy.

Yet, this is not necessarily the case within the Black, desperate-to-be-seen as “masculine” and “hard” dominated sub-cultures like Hip Hop. While the White gay community tends to set the pace for perceptions of what homosexuality is and is not, Black culture, history, experience and context has not. The now 500-year story and reality behind Black male identity anxiety around self-concept, culture, and homosexual expression – remains clandestine.

The lack of understanding and engagement of this experience and journey leads to a perpetual state of confusion and disorientation about and among SGL Black males. This institutionalized invisibility also contributes to this population’s unique and perpetual inability to manage and resolve its still disproportionate HIV incidence problem.

My advice to same-gender-loving (SGL), bisexual and experimenting Black males is to focus on healing and

compassion for each other and organizing and building a more functional and constructive community. Concretely, there is very little space provided in America, even in Black communities, which compels Black males in particular, including DJ Mister Cee, to feel safe presenting all that they personally are to society.

My advice to society at-large, especially the Black community, is to affirm creation of breathing room for the diversity that has always existed among humanity. This must include room for the spectrum of gender expression that has always been with us, that is often contorted and abusively contained within desperately patriarchal social mind prisons.

We can do better than we have; and we must if we are ever to acquire a just and constructively free society that, among other things, discontinues the creation of DJ Mister Cee-like scandals. The real scandal is not Mister Cee's public outing, but the overall public perception of the diversity around Black male sexuality issues. Do you 'Cee' what I see? I'm hoping that one day we will see more compassion, understanding and decency from all parties involved.

Cleo Manago is founder and CEO of the Black Men's Xchange (BMX) (<http://www.bmxnational.org/>), the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to promoting healthy self-concept and behavior among diverse males of African-descent.

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## **Don Lemon is Just Doing his**



# Job! Objectors are Barking Up the Wrong Tree by Cleo Manago



Cleo Manago

In 2010, during a radio interview, former CNN anchor Rick Sanchez, a Latino, called “The Daily Show’s” Jon Stewart a “bigot” and intimated that CNN was “run by Jews.” Swiftly, in response to Jewish outrage about his comments, Sanchez was fired. Former CNN pundit Roland Martin would later be “let go” by CNN because White people who make up close to 100% of gay leadership complained about Mr. Martin and did not like him.

At the moment, many Black people are outraged by comments from CNN anchor Don Lemon. Lemon apparently “sided” with Bill O’Reilly, a known racist and White supremacist, during his typical anti-Black and ill-informed rant about Black people on his talk show. Of course Don Lemon offending Black people will not result in his being fired by CNN. As a matter of fact, Lemon has been featured on other high-profile talk shows to explain himself. Neither Sanchez, nor Martin were afforded these opportunities. That is because White folks like and are comfortable with Lemon. And (right now) what White folks like – Jewish or otherwise – White folks get.

Lemon proved his undying love and loyalty to White people some time ago, particularly when dedicating his memoirs to a White male, after coming out as gay-identifying in 2011. Offending Black people, like murdering a 100% innocent Black child (Trayvon Martin) is not offensive in America or among media bosses. The United States’ media manufactures Black dismissing, dehumanizing, anti-Black, and White protecting and accommodationist thinking.

Again, this tendency in America directly contributed to Trayvon Martin's cold-blooded murderer being found not guilty. This same thinking occurs and is internalized among Black people too. Without deliberate means, it can be difficult to avoid. It is not a rarity to locate a Black American who sees other Black people through the lens of a White racist. Even among Black people, the widely used term "nigga" came from racist White people.



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Armstrong Williams, Larry Elders, Rev. Jesse Lee Peters, Clarence Thomas, just to name a few, are often given a platform specifically to low rate Black people. Yet Black people are almost never given a primetime platform to do the opposite. Most of America's systems are designed to be White comfort zones, or to be non-threatening to White people.

Typically, success for Black and Latino people, in corporate America for example, involves if they have the capacity to walk, talk and act in ways that comfort White folks. In America, being Black and actually loving yourself and your community without question is a challenge for many. Yet, having that disposition can get you more rewards, White associates, jobs and approval.

The recent hoopla about Don Lemon's "race" comments divert from the fact that there are few to no Black males in high profile television positions like his, because of White racism and control. What other Black men in Lemon's position (an anchor on a major network) have we heard from at-all regarding their views of the Black community? None. When was the last time you've heard a high-profile media personality go into any

detail, let's say, about the impact of racism and the media on Black people? Never. How many other daily televised Black male anchors have given an analysis of life in Black communities, since the Zimmerman trial (let alone before)? None.

Don Lemon is just doing his job, and was selected as one who would be good at it. And, he is. Lemon is just another ambitious, non-threatening, White accommodationist Black male who gets to be on camera because White CNN executives are comfortable with him.

Complaining about Don Lemon, and not holding his racist bosses accountable, again, you are barking up the wrong tree. Protest racism in America's media. It does much greater damage to Black people than Don Lemon does.

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