

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> .