INVESTING IN COMMUNITY: BLACK QUEER AND TRANS LEADERSHIP IN MOVEMENT BUILDING

- Council Member Andrea Jenkins, City Council Vice President, City of Minneapolis
- Maddox Guerilla, Youth Advocate
- Bishop Jha’asryel-Akquil, Youth Advocate

Black and Brown Queer and Trans people have always been at the forefront of leading progressive movements - historically with icons such as Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, and Bayard Rustin. This legacy continues with Black and Brown LGBTQ people leading the movement for justice - to defund the police and abolition of the structures and systems that continuously harm and oppress Black and Brown people and criminalize trans and LGBTQ people. It’s been young, Black, Brown, Queer, Trans people at the forefront of all of these movements, including Black Lives Matter and the current uprising. This leadership is powerful, transformative, innovative, healing, and works to dismantle white heteronormative, capitalist structures that oppress us all. The leadership of Black Queer and Trans youth is what is needed for true revolution.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Listen, uplift, and center the voices and leadership of Black queer and trans folks. This is the path to dismantling oppressive systems and liberation for all.

Q + A

What does abolition mean to you in practice and in theory?
We cannot keep putting bureaucracy over people’s lives. We’re saying abolish the police, but you also must abolish the police in our heads. You can say these things are not in the constitution or not in the funder agenda OR you can dismantle that. People’s lives need to be a priority. We can have order to make things function, but that order doesn’t have to be oppressive. Our society can go from individual to cooperative.

How can nonprofits share or give power to Black Queer and Trans leadership?
Many nonprofits have a white savior complex. A lot of times, programs are developed with a perception and not by the actual needs of the community. It’s really important to move from a policing system to a community system. This is needed for safety and how social services are delivered and designed. We must be starting with community and building out. You must unpack why you don’t trust community autonomy.

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Q+A (CONTINUED)

Abolishing the police is a multi-step process, and not something that happens overnight. What are the steps to get there, including decriminalization and de-funding practices?
There’s fear, there’s lack of understanding, and so we have to overcome our own obstacles first. But it’s a process. It means examining what we really need police to do. Much of what they do can be done by many other entities. That’s the first start. Then take those resources and invest in crime prevention – because right now police don’t prevent crime, they respond to it. We need to be invested in crime prevention-type solutions that disrupt and interrupt those things that make Black and Brown communities less safe. We need to ensure that jobs, job training opportunities, schools and more are up to the same level in broader majority communities, and we need to make sure all people have access to healthcare.

How are Black queer & trans youth activists and organizers creating change? What lessons can young people across the country learn from their efforts?
You should respect and show up for our legacy. If you use a radical person’s name, you have to be radical. Don’t put bureaucracy over people’s lives. You can’t name your building after a Black trans activist while having policies that actively displace those very people. Institutions need to reexamine themselves and go back to the drawing board. Push back against policy and funding that center disposability. These are the same models that oppress us. We need to change models and dismantle the old ones. It’s not just bringing Black queer and trans folks to the table, but helping us build our house and not just asking us to come into your house and sit at your tables. Help us build our communities, not build your institutions.

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-MADDOX GUERILLA

ACTIONS TO TAKE NOW

1. Trust and uplift Black queer and trans leadership in all facets of your life. Historically and currently, Black LGBTQ+ leadership has pushed us forward as a society and deserves respect, honor, and support.
2. Take action against white supremacy. There are lots of ways to get involved, by posting on social media, protesting, signing petitions, contacting your local officials, voting, educating yourself more about abolition, and challenging white supremacy and fragility at your organization
3. Educate yourself and others on the intersections of racism and structural systems that greatly affect our communities.

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MY NUMBER ONE HERO IS HARRIET TUBMAN...HER LAST ACT OF HEROISM AND SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY WAS TO CREATE THE HARRIET TUBMAN REST HOME FOR AGING BLACK PEOPLE – SHE INTENTIONALLY MADE THAT SPACE. REST IS IMPORTANT AND WE HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT. WE HAVE TO REST IN ORDER TO STAY IN THE BATTLE. WE HAVE TO SLOW DOWN, REGENERATE, AND REFLECT. AND THEN DREAM.

-CITY COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT ANDREA JENKINS

RESOURCES & LINKS

Octavia's Brood

Black Visions Collective

Reclaim the Block

Byp100: HOME

Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition

Trans Youth Support Network

Laverne Cox and CeCe McDonald Discuss the Epidemic of Violence Against Trans Women

Disclosure

Kimberlé Crenshaw: The urgency of intersectionality | TED Talk

The Tretter Transgender Oral History Project · University of Minnesota Libraries

Justice as Healing: Indigenous Ways

Andrea Jenkins Twitter

Maddox Guerilla on Structural Barriers: Non-Profit Industrial Complex

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