Hate Crimes Skyrocketing Against Same-Gender-Loving People of Color

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The Tragic Consequence of Being an Anonymous Minority Statistic!

It is common knowledge that at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, gay men in many countries were frequently singled out and targeted for physical abuse. Why? Because they were seen to be responsible for the spread of HIV. This view was fueled by sensational reporting in the press that became progressively homophobic.

This homophobia was reflected in newspaper headlines such as “Alert Over ’Gay Plague’,” and “’Gay Plague’ May Lead to Blood Ban on Homosexuals!” Those and others like them were essentially a form of “yellow journalism” that demonized the gay community even more! As a result, U.S. groups monitoring homophobic violence reported an increase in incidents when public awareness about AIDS in America heightened in the 1980s. Today, this targeted abuse seems very unlikely to end in the near future (especially in America), especially since the CDC recently announced in a stunning report that young people in the United States are at persistent risk of HIV infection. This risk is particularly high for minority and ethnic youth, ages 13 to 29.

Currently, homophobia is not only a national concern. The intolerance it breeds also continues to be a major international barrier to ending the global AIDS epidemic and hate crimes against same-gender-loving people. In many countries, such as Uganda and Ghana, stigma and discrimination prevent men who have sex with men from accessing vital HIV prevention, treatment and care services. Without a doubt, if we are ever going to prevail over the AIDS virus, tackling and combating homophobia must become an essential priority in order to encourage individuals (who fear for their safety) to get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, which are on also on the rise.

Every so often, however, there’s a glimmer of hope. This year, the United Nations passed a resolution--hailed as historic--that endorsed the rights of gay, lesbian and transgender people for the first time ever. The resolution expressed grave concern about acts of violence and discrimination committed against individuals in all regions of the world because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. While it is tempting to point a finger at other countries, such as Uganda and Ghana, and condemn them for their extreme homophobic acts and heinous crimes against same-gender-loving people, we must also realize that “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

Simply put, even though we pride ourselves on living in a technically and socially advanced democratic society and the United Nations was instrumental in proposing their Resolution, in many ways we are hypocrites! For many years, America has allowed bigots and religious extremists to enshrine countless unethical laws that illegally deny same-gender-loving people equal rights, life, liberty and the pursuit of

happiness (in almost every state) in our own constitution.

Many religious leaders and right-wing politicians use the Bible to justify their outlandish actions. What's more, many also feel absolutely no remorse for their homophobic statements that fuel attacks on innocent people of all sexual orientations. Just as racist bigots in the Civil Rights era used scripture to justify their heinous attacks and social oppression of black people and women, these leaders use similar tactics. Can't people see the same pattern being repeated here? Nowhere is this attitude more prevalent than in our current political climate. As presidential candidates debate, many extol divisive and inflammatory rhetoric. In doing so, they pander to the most extreme elements in the electorate as they campaign on a desperate quest to solicit and garner conservative votes.

Is it any wonder then that the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' researchers recently published a report that noted a 23 percent increase in murders of LGBT and HIV-affected people in the United States, the second highest yearly total ever recorded?

According to the Advocate:

Twenty-seven LGBT people and HIV-affected people were killed in 2010, according to the latest numbers from the NCAVP. Total incidents of violence, which include victims who survived, were up 13% from 2009 to 2010. The statistics found that LGBT people of color and transgender women were subject to a disproportionate number of attacks--70% of the 27 murders in 2010 were LGBT and HIV-affected people of color, while transgender women made up 44% of the murder victims.

In order to understand the cause of these disturbing attacks that disproportionately affect LGBT minorities, one need only recall the disturbing interview with J.L. King, author of the controversial book On The Down Low: A Journey into the Lives of Straight Black Men Who Sleep with Men, and the former queen of daytime television, Oprah Winfrey. The interview was an alarming, bold confession of what life was like for him, a Black man on living life on the down low. King immediately garnered national fame and became a trusted, self-proclaimed HIV prevention activist and educator to the nation (especially Black America). The show was promoted by a sensational trailer that warned viewers, "It's a shocker. It's called on the 'Down Low': Men with wives and girlfriends secretly having sex with other men.

Immediately after that interview, a series of articles published in Essence, Vibe, and the Washington Post attempted to expose a secret sexual cultural phenomenon called "the Down Low." Although those articles caused somewhat of a stir, I agree with Johari Osaze Jabir, an artist and African-American studies lecturer, that none were as troubling as one that appeared on Sunday, August 3, 2003 in the New York Times Magazine cover page article entitled "Double Lives On The Down Low." Written by journalist Benoit Lewis, the work sent a shock wave through the African-American community as the article aired some very dirty laundry. Jabir properly noted that while the previous articles in Black publications were written and read by black people, Benoit's piece, displayed on the cover of the Sunday magazine for the entire world to see, had far more impact!

Among the story's many shocking insights, the article revealed that after 25 years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic not only had HIV infection rates steadily climbed for African-American women, but black religious institutions, in particular, created and supported homophobia within black communities. The result of this homophobia, according to the article was the birth of a subculture of dishonesty and denial with respect to black masculinity, desire, and sexuality. In addition, this subculture sabotaged any attempts at HIV prevention and/or treatment, the article said.

In my popular new book Love Won't Let Me Be Silent, I pointed out the tremendous negative influence that hip hop has had on the nation (in regards to the LGBT community) as a whole. Many are reluctant to admit this, but the denial is particularly vehement in the African-American community. Even today, although much of the homophobic language has been toned down in contemporary rap lyrics, there are cleverly disguised subliminal homophobic messages that still make it absolutely clear that being gay is totally unacceptable and definitely not manly!Personally, I feel that most hip-hop artists will never truly fully embrace same-gender-loving people publicly. What's more, some gay and lesbian hip-hop artists conceal their orientation, as Terrence Dean, author of Hiding Within Hip-Hop, asserts. Clearly, these and many other factors all contribute to the rise in attacks against both HIV-positive and -negative same-gender-loving people, Because I have ministered in the black church for over 40 years, I am very aware of how their refusal to address issues such as HIV/AIDS and the fact that there are thousands of same-gender-loving people within its congregations has gravely crippled us. But there is one more commonly overlooked culprit. The African American community has hundreds of local newspapers and online publications that frequently omit many pertinent issues concerning the gay community, with the exception of such extraordinary black newspapers as the New England Informer and the New Pittsburgh Courier. (Full disclosure: Both papers have also published my blog content and columns.)

But too many black newspapers don't possess the journalistic integrity to follow the outstanding leadership demonstrated by these two exceptional papers. These other black publications depend heavily on financial support from religious institutions. This means indirectly and, perhaps, unfortunately, these papers must shoulder some of the responsibility for the spread of the virus. Why? Because of innumerable anti-gay sermons preached from their pulpits. Ironically, the original purpose of the free press was to inform and educate their readership about vital issues that affect and impact the lives of its readership. But when black newspapers ignore and overlook the importance of pertinent issues that impact the lives of gay and straight African-Americans, they tacitly approve and condone acts of hatred and homophobia.

One example of this is the incident concerning Rev. Rick Warren, well- as witnessed by the case of Christian evangelical minister Rev. Rick Warren, Martin Ssempa's mentor. Ssempa was the chairman of the anti-homosexuality task force in Uganda who attempted to solicit Warren's advice when devising horrific homophobic laws in his administration's "Kill The Gays" bill. Rev. Warren, who had previously made his anti-gay feelings known from the pulpit, never responded to Ssempa. Perhaps this was because when Ssempa revealed his "Kill the Gays" bill, the magnitude of how evil and oppressive this legislation was, was revealed! Rev. Warren attempted political and spiritual damage control by issuing conciliatory videos pleading for tolerance and putting distance between himself and Ssempa. But Rev. Warren never issued an outright condemnation of Ssempa's bill. Instead, he issued a comment that his calling did not include interfering in the political process of other nations.

But in my opinion, Rev. Warren's position may still be viewed as a personal endorsement of Ssempa's genocidal bill. It brought to mind the words of British statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke who prophetically said, "All evil needs to triumph is for good men to do nothing!" The same can be said about newspapers that ignore their original mandate to speak truth to power and prefer to place their love of money above the public good.

We, as a nation must evolve. We must move forward and we must embrace the more noble aspects of our humanity. Needless to say, it won't be easy; it never is! Nor is living easy, particularly for HIV individuals who are being assaulted, as you read this, or all the transgender women who are being murdered, or the thousands in the LGBT community, white and black, male and female, who desperately

and simply want to live as God created all his children to live--happily and freely because we were all made in His image!

by Terry Angel Mason, Global Author & Intl. Columnist
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THE VIDEO YOU MUST SEE!

Marsha Ambrosius sings about these crimes against humanity - Far Away

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Three days after penning this article two black men were murdered in Iowa and Mississippi:

James Craig Anderson -- Brutally Murdered in Mississippi

Marcellus Richard Andrews -- Brutally Murdered In Iowa

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