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Title

Cedric Harmon Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

February 4, 2011

Extant

1 hour 5 minutes and 1 transcript

Abstract

Cedric Harmon reflects on his early call to ministry, on coming out while in seminary, working for Americans United for Separation of Church and State for 13 years, founding an inclusive congregation in Washington, DC, where he was associate pastor, and starting the non-profit Many Voices as a resource to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in other Black congregations.

Biographical

Cedric Harmon is a native Midwesterner with Southern and New England influences—a surprise last child to older parents who shared with him the gift of experience and wisdom. He was a precocious youth excelling academically and religiously at a very early age. In fact, he announced a calling to ministry at age 8 and has been active in church ministry most of his life. He is a licensed and ordained Baptist minister.

His childhood familial and ministerial experiences taught him that religion is something that you discuss and explore over time. This sense of exploration led him to numerous religious communities while he was a student at Emerson College in Boston, Mass. Harmon had decided that he would delay going directly into seminary, and so he attended Emerson College and graduated with a BS in media management.

After graduation and some time working for a Boston publishing company, he moved to Washington, D.C. which has been his home every since. Initially, he found a job within the non-profit sector and decided the non-profit arena nurtured him and mirrored his religious values of a meaningful life where equality and justice mattered. Concomitantly, he felt the pull back into ministry and entered Wesley Seminary in Washington, D.C. While deciding to go to seminary he also began his first same gendered partnership. His time at Wesley also spurred him into religious activism. Cedric's deep faith calls him to do the work of justice and equality and equip

others to do the same. For thirteen years, he worked as the Associate Field Director for Religious Outreach at Americans United for Separation of Church and State, where he identified clergy, provided media training and brought them to Washington, D.C. for legislative testimony about issues of religion and government. Although he began his work with the organization in 1996, his portfolio expanded to include reproductive justice issues, welfare reform, public education, and LGBT equality.

Harmon left Americans United for Separation of Church and State in 2008 and began volunteering to organize clergy to secure marriage equality in Washington, D.C. He was already known for his writing and television appearances on human rights and social justice issues, and he serves on several boards having to do with sexuality and religion. At the same time, he became involved in the founding of an affirming and inclusive congregation in Washington, D.C. He served as associate pastor and then interim senior pastor of the congregation. Harmon recognized his career trajectory as religious organizing and activism and sees his role as pastor as a function of this activism. While serving this “radically inclusive” congregation, he also became Minister of Welcoming Resources for Many Voices. He is immensely proud that their website (www.manyvoices.org) provides liturgical and educational resources for allies and partners in the work of inclusion. Cedric is now Executive Director of Many Voices: A Black Church Movement for Gay & Transgender Justice.

Recognizing the need for a balanced life, he delights in living simply and mindfully. He loves the arts seeing them as a way to break through discrimination and oppression. Cedric enjoys his longtime friendships, cooking, being near a peaceful body of water, and going to concerts and museums. His foundational values of equality and respect are lived out in his work and hopes that humanity finds ways to relate to each other from places of love and respect.

Scope and Content

Cedric Harmon was an active part of his Black Baptist church that welcomed preaching by youth members. He came out as gay after college, and moved to Washington, DC, to find community and pursue his passion for nonprofit work. While in Wesley Seminary, he began his first same gendered partnership, and also became involved in religious activism. After working for “Americans United for Separation of Church and State” he went on to found an inclusive congregation and became director for “Many Voices: A Black Church Movement for Gay & Transgender Justice.”

This interview was conducted by Dr. Monique Moultrie, an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Georgia State University, and author of *Hidden Histories: Faith and Black Lesbian Leadership*. She conducted this interview as a consultant of LGBTQ-RAN as part of the oral histories project.

Access

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/cedric-harmon>

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Languages

Collection material is in English

Custodial History

This tape was given to LGBTQ-RAN archives by the interviewer.

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Tags

Baptist

Cook, Ann Thompson

Many Voices

Black

Clergy Activist

Racism

Washington, D.C.

Harmon, Cedric