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LGBTQ Religious Archives Network

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Title

Rev. Louis Mitchell Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

October 31, 2017

Extant

1 hours, 15 minutes interview and 1 transcript

Abstract

In this oral history, Rev. Louis Mitchell, Co-founder of Transfaith™/Interfaith Working Group and the first “out” transgender-identified Board member of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, reflects on being part of Black queer communities before and after his transition. Mitchell discusses working with disenfranchised LGBTQ people in need of recovery, and his approach to activism which prioritizes providing real aid over optics.

Biographical

Rev. Louis Mitchell is a pioneering "intentional man". Known around the country and abroad as an elder, advocate, teacher, student, minister, parent and friend. He serves as the Co-founder and Executive Director of Transfaith™/Interfaith Working Group and as the Associate Minister of South Congregational Church in Springfield, MA.

Rev. Mitchell is a proud father to his daughter, Kahlo, and co-parent with her mother, Krysia L. Villon. Louis has been in recovery for over three decades and been involved in the fight for health, respect and self-determination since the early 1980s, with deep engagement in political, mental health, recovery, and church contexts.

He brings his own learned experiences, a broad range of resources, theories and studies, to offer a fresh, “on the ground”, open-hearted, holistic strategy to the work of individual and community healing, intersectional diversity planning and commitment to personal and community agency and solvency.

Some key accomplishments include:

- Profiled in the documentaries [Still Black: A Portrait of Black Transmen](#) (2008, Zeigler & Lora), *Gender Journeys: More than a Pronoun* (2016, Luke Allen) and *More than T* (2017, Silas Howard).
- Received the 2017 International Jose Julio Sarria Civil Rights Award from the Imperial Court of Western Massachusetts, the 2015 Claire Skiffington Vanguard Award from the Transgender Law Center for his long time advocacy for the disenfranchised and the 2011 Haystack Award from the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC for his work in Social Justice and Social Ministry.
- Received the President's Award from the Wells College students for his 2015 Residency on Intentional Inclusion and Building Diversity.
- Recognized as a part of the [2014 edition of the Trans 100](#), Louis was named as one of the ten leading Black Religious leaders Advancing LGBTQ Justice by BelieveOutLoud.
- Honored by [Black Trans Advocacy](#) with a Foundation Award in 2013. Established in his name, the "Louis Mitchell Foundation Award for Empowerment" acknowledges those who increase spiritual, political, or social strength through service, personal encouragement, and availability to the Black Trans Community.
- Profiled in the [LGBT Religious Archives](#) Network gallery.
- Provided keynote addresses for the 2011 Transgender Religious Leaders Summit, the 2012 Inaugural [Black Transmen, Inc.](#) Conference, and the 2012 [Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference](#).
- Served as a founding member and East Coast Regional Minister of [TransSaints](#), a ministry of [The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries](#)(TFAM).
- Served as the founding Officer for Religious Affairs for the [Transgender People of Color Coalition](#)(TPOCC).
- Served as a member of the [Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention](#) at both the regional (Pioneer Valley) and the statewide (Massachusetts) level..
- Co-founded Recovering the Promise Ministries in Springfield, MA.
- Worked with clients and staff at [Morris Home](#), a transgender-specific residential recovery house in Philadelphia, PA.
- Served as founding executive director of the Oshun women's drop-in center (San Francisco, CA).
- First "out" transgender-identified board member of the [National Gay and Lesbian Task Force](#) (now The Task Force) and a founding member of Lesbians and Gays of African Descent for Democratic Action (LGADDA).

Scope and Content

In this oral history, Rev. Louis Mitchell, Co-founder of Transfaith™/Interfaith Working Group and the first "out" transgender-identified Board member of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, reflects on being part of Black queer communities before and after his transition. Mitchell discusses working with disenfranchised LGBTQ people in need of recovery, and his approach to activism which prioritizes providing real aid over optics.

This interview was conducted by Dr. Monique Moultrie, 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/louis-l-j-mitchell>.

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Languages

Collection material is in English

Custodial History

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Tags

United Church of Christ/Congregational Church

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

Black

Clergy Activist

Trans activism

Mitchell, Louis

The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM)