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Title

Rev. Crone Goddess Magora Kennedy Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

March 8, 2023

Extant

2 hours 1 minute interview (three files) and 1 transcript

Abstract

In this oral history, Reverend Crone Goddess Magora Kennedy, a black lesbian activist, discusses her involvement in the Stonewall riots, as well as being a member of the original Black Panthers. Kennedy was ordained crone in 2012 and founded Revelations Now, African Goddess Temple, a nondenominational church.

Biographical

Reverend Crone Goddess Magora Kennedy was born on September 22, 1938 in Albany, New York. She is known for her LGBTQ civil rights activism in the Stonewall uprising. She was featured in a PBS special, CURED. Alongside her work in the LGTBQ civil rights movement, she was also a member of the Black Panther party and was involved in the civil rights and women's rights movements.

Kennedy was raised in Saratoga Springs, New York, by her father, who was Caribbean, and her mother, who was Native American and Black. She was raised in a Baptist and Methodist Church. She was a good singer and sang in the choir at both churches. Kennedy was very inquisitive at a young age and often asked questions during the youth church group meeting. Learning and education were important in these early years. Her grandmother was the head deaconess and was on the Mother Board. This is the beginning of her activism.

She was aware of her sexual orientation at an early age and was outed at 14 years old because of the crushes she had on other girls. Once her mother found out about her homosexuality, she gave Kennedy a choice of marrying a man or to be institutionalized at the Utica State Hospital. Kennedy used fake identification to take the U.S. Air Force entrance exam. She was accepted

and shipped Waco, Texas to begin training. Her mother tracked her down in two weeks and brought her back to be wed.

Her first marriage was to a man who was 21 years her senior. The marriage was consummated but was annulled shortly after her age was discovered by the police. Her first husband was physically abusive with her, which led to the police being called to their home after three months of marriage because of domestic violence; he had cut her. When the police arrived, they asked Kennedy her age and were shocked to find out she was only 14 years old. Kennedy married a second time to a bisexual man. They met during their childhood. He was serving time in the Army and needed a cover so he would not get kicked out of the military. They called each other "cover boy" and "cover girl," since they were both hiding their sexual orientation in the marriage. They both had their own partners while married. Kennedy raised five children. Their arrangement ended and so did their marriage when she left him after a physically violent argument. After leaving her husband, she worked as a singer, dancer, an emcee, and a comedian in Canada for several months out of the year.

While in Canada in the late 1950s and early 1960s, she had a calling on her life. She was getting ready to perform at a club and there was a blackout during showtime. Audience members saw a light around her while she was on the stage. At that moment, she knew that she would have to serve in the church and the show business part of her life was over. This was her last performance. Everyone around her saw a change in her behavior and she began to walk in her calling, knowing that this would be an uphill battle due to women not being accepted to preach or lead in church.

She underwent a trial sermon in front of the Baptist Association Board in Albany, New York in order to fully walk into her calling and to be certified as a preacher. The men on the board did not take her seriously while she was doing the mock sermon. She only had support from her pastor of her local church initially, but after her trial sermon, the other board members welcomed her into the church to preach. The same light that surrounded her in Canada on her last night of performance showed up during her trial sermon and she was accepted and officially ordained. She began preaching at local churches.

In the 1950s she served as a minister of the Universal Life Church and secretary of the Boston Black Action Committee. She also served at the Holy Cross Church of God in Christ, in Roxbury, Massachusetts, but was asked to leave when they discovered that she was a lesbian. She refused to be in the closet and wanted to live out loud in her life. She had a partner and they were raising their children together.

Kennedy was a part of the Boston and New Haven Black Panther Party chapter in 1968, which was motivated by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She was an out lesbian while being a part of the Black Panther Party. But before anyone could throw her out for being gay, she decided to leave her service to the Black Panther Party. She refused to go back into the closet for anyone. She audited classes at Boston University through the Upward Bound program and audited classes at Yale Divinity School. Her education was supported through her activism and the various groups she was involved in. She was able to attend different college courses through the women's groups that she was involved in.

While driving to Provincetown in June 1969, she heard on the radio that riots had broken out in Greenwich Village and turned her car around to join the uprising. It was the same time that Judy Garland had died and everyone was celebrating her life and lamenting her loss. That is when

the cops decided to raid the Stonewall Inn in New York City. An increased interest in Kennedy's legacy has been due to her participation in interviews and exhibits about the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising and in the PBS documentary, CURED. She is the former Chaplain of the Stonewall Veterans Association and is involved with the National Action Network, under the leadership of Rev. Al Sharpton.

Kennedy has a book describing her philosophy on life called, This Goddess Has Landed: Does She Have a Message for You! Kennedy was initiated as a Goddess in 2001 by Rev. Goddess Charmaine of The People's Temple. She started Revelations Now as a lecture series on African Goddess history and Goddess Awareness online in 2003. Shortly after the African Goddess series, she started her own temple called Revelations Now African Goddess Temple. The temple is nondenominational, they honor the Father, Mother, and Jesus and is under the religious teachings of the African Goddess. Her temple has been a strong pillar in her community for over 15 years.

A legacy that Rev. Crone Goddess Magora Kennedy wants to impart onto others the importance of inclusivity. It is important that everyone be treated as equals and that women are up where they belong, whether on the frontlines of marches or on the pulpit. And finally, she reminds those around her that God Goddess loves each and everyone one of us just the way we are.

Scope and Content

In this oral history, Reverend Crone Goddess Magora Kennedy, a black lesbian activist, discusses her involvement in the Stone Wall riots, as well as being a member of the original Black Panthers. Kennedy was ordained crone in 2012 and founded Revelations Now, African Goddess Temple, a nondenominational church.

This interview was conducted by Mark Bowman, the executive director of LGBT-RAN. He holds a Master of Divinity degree from Boston University School of Theology and has played a key leadership role in establishing a number of religious ventures and programs.

Access

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Languages

Collection material is in English

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Kennedy, Magora