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Title

Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

October 20th, 2019

Extant

1 hour 56 minutes interview (four files) and 4 transcripts

Abstract

In this oral history, Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart, a queer minister through The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM) and current Director for Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs for Philadelphia discusses her work with the POWER multi-faith network and fighting to speak out after the Pulse shooting. She discusses coming to terms with her sexuality during seminary, and being married to another minister.

Biographical

Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart, a daughter of Detroit, is the Director for Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs for the city of Philadelphia. In this role, she serves as a public facing leader, liaison and subject matter expert for the Mayor's Office on local and national matters that impact diverse communities of faith. She also manages the Mayor's Commission on Interfaith Affairs.

Naomi is also an adjunct professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University, with joint affiliations with the University's Center for Peace and Justice Education and Africana Studies program. In 2019, Naomi received the Pohlhaus-Stracciolini Award for Teaching Excellence, which recognizes an adjunct faculty member at Villanova who demonstrates a commitment to the life of the mind and to the well-being of students through teaching that is intellectually stimulating, challenging, and accessible, with efforts extending beyond the classroom.

Naomi was most recently the Faith Work Director for the National LGBTQ Task Force, the country's oldest national LGBTQ justice and equality group. In that role, she coordinated the

Task Force's public faith messaging and advocacy and leadership development work in faith communities.

Before joining the Task Force, Naomi was a faith organizer for POWER, a multi-faith, multi-racial network of congregations in Southeastern and Central Pennsylvania. She also served as Co-Pastor and Minister of Music at the Wisdom's Table at St. Peter's United Church of Christ. An ordained minister, she earned the Master of Divinity degree from Lancaster Theological Seminary in 2016 and is proudly affiliated with the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries.

Naomi delights in singing with the Philadelphia Threshold Singers, an all-volunteer choir whose mission is to bring audible comfort and kindness to the bedsides of people living in hospice care. Since 2016, she has been a member of the Faith and Spiritual Affairs Advisory Board of the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Disability Services. From 2017 to 2019, she served as a mayoral appointee to the city's Commission on LGBT Affairs.

Naomi's work is included in the volume, *From Generation to Generation: A Commemorative Collection of African American Millennial Sermons from the Festival of Preachers 2010-2015* (Chalice Press, 2015). Her writing can also be seen on Medium, Religion Dispatches, and Rewire.News. She regularly preaches and teaches in diverse congregations around the country and has presented and lectured at national conferences and religious and academic institutions, including Vanderbilt University School of Divinity, Swarthmore College, Harvard University, Ithaca College, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, Wake Forest University School of Divinity, Chicago Theological Seminary, the American Academy of Religion, the United Church of Christ, and the International Council of Community Churches. In 2019, Naomi was named one of 9 LGBTQ Faith Leaders to Watch by the Center for American Progress and was included in The Root 100, an annual list of the nation's most influential African-Americans, ages 25-45.

Naomi shares her life with her wife and their curious, energetic, future-Oscar-winning teenager.

Scope and Content

In this oral history, Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart, a queer minister through The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM) and current Director for Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs for Philadelphia discusses her work with the POWER multi-faith network and fighting to speak out after the Pulse shooting. She discusses coming to terms with her sexuality during seminary, and being married to another minister.

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/naomi-washington-leapheart>.

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Languages

Collection material is in English

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Tags

Washington-Leapheart, Naomi

Black

Detroit

Clergy Activist

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

Author/editor

Philadelphia

Ecumenical

Artist/musician/poet

The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM)

