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Title

Wanda Floyd Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

July 5, 2025

Extant

61 minute interview and 1 transcript

Abstract

In this oral history, Wanda Floyd described founding Imani MCC, the first Black-directed MCC congregation in 1997 and its successful continuation in Durham, N.C. She was pivotal in founding People of African Descent within MCC.

Biographical

Rev. Wanda Floyd, long-time Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) pastor and activist, was born in Henderson, North Carolina to a large family consisting of her mother, father, and five siblings. Floyd grew up very involved in her small Southern Baptist church, having roles in the usher board, choir, and youth ministries. At the age of twelve, she got saved and baptized, and knew then and there that the church would always be a part of her life.

Floyd had an inkling that she was “different” from as early as the third grade, when a teacher scolded her for being too affectionate with her female classmates. An accomplished student throughout her formative years, she would go on to attend North Carolina State University and graduate with her B.A. in sociology in 1982. College is where Floyd would come out as a lesbian. Because her church was one that centered the message of God being the embodiment of love, she did not have to struggle to reconcile her faith and identity. However, she did recognize the need for a place where she could feel wholly herself, a place where she did not feel out of place.

St. John’s MCC in Raleigh, North Carolina was where Floyd began her pastoral training. It was from this training that she was enabled to start a church of her very own. Durham, NC would become the birthplace for Imani MCC. In 1997, with nothing more than \$780 and twelve other

people, Imani was founded because Floyd saw the need for an inclusive church. The church still stands today, and recently celebrated over 25 years of service to the community. Floyd was officially ordained in 1999, at a District Conference in Augusta, Georgia.

In addition to pastoring her own church, Floyd has also held a variety of roles within the MCC, including Southern District lay representative, and clergy representative, lay delegate for the church, chair of the regional elder nominating team, founding pastor of a church and transitional pastor. Floyd has also been involved in groups such as "Faith, Fellowship and Order" and the Human Rights Campaign.

Throughout her time with MCC, Floyd had the opportunity to be a part of the People of African Descent (PAD) within MCC. These conferences are spaces where those who identify as African Americans, within MCC, can come and be with other African Americans for a weekend of workshops, worship and fellowship. Her first conference was in 1998, and since that time, she has only missed two out of the over ten held within MCC. During the conferences, Floyd served as the volunteer coordinator ensuring there were people to help in worship, workshops, hospitality and other areas of conferences. In 2008 at the "On The Move" conference she received the "Trailblazer Award" given as a founding pastor of only two other predominantly African American churches in MCC.

Floyd has also been a participant of the "Souls a' Fire" conferences which started at the Pacific School of Religion and continues to this day. This conference gathers each year to celebrate the achievements of African American faith leaders, who are queer, within the United States. Her roles consisted of being a part of panel discussions, workshops and other areas.

While serving as pastor of Imani MCC, Floyd was asked to co-chair the second Welcome our Witness conference, along with Marco Grimaldo, which was held at the University of Pennsylvania in 2003. The conference brought together several hundreds of persons from all over the United States who were a part of the Welcoming Church Movement for a weekend of worship, celebration and training.

During her time as an activist for the LGBTQIA+ community, she has served on the board of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), Lesbian Health Project, Lambda Youth Network and Resource Center for Women & Ministry in the South as well as her being featured in several books and publications: *Their Own Receive Them Not: African Americans Lesbians and Gays in the Black Church* by Horace Griffin, *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* by Dr. Traci West, *Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity* by editors G. Winston James and Lisa Moore and featured in articles in *The Independent* newspaper and "South of the Garden". Floyd is also part of the Gay and Lesbian recorded archives at Duke University, Durham, NC and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. She has also been a speaker on Gay and Lesbian issues at North Carolina State University; North Carolina Central University; University of Northern Las Vegas.

Floyd also served as co-chair for the North Carolina Religious Coalition for Marriage Equality which had a profound effect on legalizing same-sex marriage in North Carolina.

In the midst of personal tragedy involving the death of a significant other, Floyd turned to writing poetry as a form of therapy. Her musings on life, death, and love would later be published in a book of poetry titled *A Love Lost: A Queer Journey of Grief*.

A current resident of Las Vegas, Floyd is striving toward being content with everything in her life and living without judgment or challenges; she wants to retire and impact others simply through living her life. She abides by the philosophy that “We’re all here to help at least one other person.”

(This biographical statement written by Dorya Mason from an interview with Wanda Floyd and edited by Floyd.)

Biography Date: July 2023

Scope and Content

In this oral history, Wanda Floyd described her upbringing in a loving Baptist Church which she left when she decided to be open about her lesbian identity. She discussed founding Imani MCC, the first Black-directed MCC congregation in 1997 and its successful continuation in Durham, N.C. She described her leadership roles within MCC and founding People of African Descent within MCC. In addition, she noted the pivotal role that she played in the North Carolina Religious Coalition for Marriage Equality which succeeded in legalizing marriage for same sex partners in North Carolina.

This interview was conducted by Dr. Doris Malkmus as LGBTQ-RAN archivist as part of a series of oral histories at the MCC General Conference in 2025.

Access

Open to all researchers at <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/wanda-floyd>.

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Languages

Collection material is in English

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Tags

Metropolitan Community Church, clergy activist, Raleigh, N.C., Black Church