

On Friday, December 2, 2011, 4:03 PM, Bishop Makalani-MaHee <bishopmahee@yahoo.com> wrote:

From The Desk Of

The Bishop S.F. Makalani-MaHee

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Dear Family and Friends,

I just recently attended the 13th Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance commemorating the violent deaths of transgender people across the world. I was absolutely blown away by the keynote address given by U.S. Congressman Alcee Hastings but for me the evening's emotional impact began several months back when on a trip to New York. While in New York, I visited the Stonewall Inn (birth place of the LGBT Movement in the U.S.) for the first time which I found odd considering that I was born, raised, came out in that City, and I had attended Stonewall 25 (celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising).

As I entered the dark and narrow bar, I felt energy course through my veins that was electric. I could still feel the energy of revolution in the midst of the cocktail social hosted by HRC (Human Rights Campaign). As I began to tour the Inn, I took special notice of the historical photographs. I saw images of people who did not conform to traditional roles, men and transgender womyn not only not afraid of, but flaunting their femininity, and I Got It! As a person who was struggling with my own gender identity, I had been afraid of being perceived as a freak (because being a black, female-bodied cross-dresser with a bald head, 37 piercings and 14 tattoos doesn't make me freaky enough!). I was afraid that presenting my truest self, as a man, would be the one thing that people could not

handle...the thing that would push people over the edge and away from me. But as I looked at those images on the wall of transgender womyn who were so daring to be themselves, at a point in time when it was much less safe to do so than now, I thought to myself that we would not be where we are if they hadn't dared to be who they are. I feel that I have a responsibility to live authentically so that the next generation can see possibilities. So, I made the decision that night to fully and publicly live in my truth no matter what.

I write this for my beloved, family, friends and my community. As I am reflectively headed toward my 40th year on this planet, I am taking stock of what I desire for this next part of my journey to look like. I realize that I can no longer live in the fear that has kept me from expressing myself fully. I invite you to join and support me as a transitioning transgender man. I get that transitioning from a black feminist dyke (of a lesbian separatist age) to Black transman (who is still a feminist!) isn't something that many who know me saw coming, but, as my Dad said, "who would really be surprised?"

I have often said that being born female-bodied and raised in a single parent household in an environment that lacked strong male representation but was rich in strong female role models probably saved my life. Because of the tenacity of the womyn I witnessed growing up, I knew that I could carve my own path and that path has lead me to a fuller understanding of myself. So, I will forever value, adore, and appreciate the power of the feminine.

I sat in the Transgender Day of Remembrance service listening to Congressman Hastings' impassioned words as he reflected on the change he has seen South Florida, and particularly Broward County as it has transitioned from segregated to progressive, and the price paid by the oppressed and their oppressors for that change. I got that oppression, in all of its forms, is inter-connected and that our actual fear of change is the very link to all forms of oppression. I also realized that whether it's conservatives who want to "protect the sanctity of marriage", or it's the feminist lesbians who have known me as a part of this community for years and have expressed

unwillingness to shift to male pronouns, the fear of change is a common link for us as a species. Please know that while there will be inevitable changes as a part of my journey and transition, I remain unceasingly committed to my values, beliefs, principles and connections. This includes my cherished connection to all who are receiving and reading this message.

In the Pledge of Allegiance, we declare a land of liberty and justice for all. Spiritually, however, I don't think we always remember that we are entitled to certain inalienable rights. As unique, divine, unrepeatable creations, we are also entitled to and deserving of joy, happiness, and fulfillment. Oftentimes, fulfillment is on the other side of change.

My family is not losing the experience of me as the daughter and sister I have been. My womyn sister/ friends are not losing the experience of me as the feminist womyn identified person I have been. The community is not losing the experience of me as the "strong dyke" I have been up until now. However I, as my now manifesting self, would value the opportunity to be known as the man I feel blessed to be becoming.

My Dad told me that he felt "it's not about who shows up at the table, but what they bring to the table" that matters. Phil Wilson, a leader I so value, said "people can't love us if they don't know us". Congressman Hastings concluded his address the other night at Transgender Day of Remembrance with a call for guts. So I answer the call of these men who I hold dear by having the guts to let people know who I am and by bringing my fullest self to the table. Thank you for joining me on this journey.

With warmth and love,

Bishop S.F. Makalani-Mahee

p.s. Here are a few answers to frequently asked questions thus far:

1. NO! You wont need to be adjusting to a new name. S.F. it is!
2. YES! Please begin using male pronouns such as he/him. They make me feel more comfortable than she/her and feel like a truer

representation of my identity.

3. I am prepared to be public about my identity as a trans man moving forward. So, it is ok for you to fill people in about my trans identity if they know me but I haven't yet had an opportunity to connect with them.



Congressman Alcee Hastings (D-FL) and I at The 13 Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance

Continue To Walk In The Light, Redefine Your Faith, And Remember It's All About The Rhythm,

Bishop

Bishop S.F. Makalani-MaHee

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