

In Your Homes

By Craig Washington

"they got two more last week
this time with fists
this time with hands
this time with knives
this time with guns"

Marvin K. White "Three Last Month"

Last Monday I got a call from Keith Boykin asking if I had heard about two recent anti-gay beatings in Atlanta over the past weekend. My friend [Malik Williams](#) speedily found the Southern Voice blog to confirm and I was appalled but not in the least shocked. The current cultural climate is fierce and chilly for gay men across the country so I had no reason to harbor illusions of sanctuary in the Bible belt.

Atlanta is distinguished as a progressive oasis within the conservative tundra known as Georgia. That is the peach state that has no hate crimes law because House of Representatives declawed the bill by removing all protected classes rather than allowing sexual orientation to be added along with race, gender, religion, national origin. Our lawmakers would rather have no targeted groups protected than let fags and lesbos under the umbrella.

Gays here have no state protection from violence or job discrimination in a "right to work" state, which actually means any private employer can fire you if they don't like the cut of your homo-sexshul giblets. So if brothas can be beaten senseless or chased to their death in New York City, the birthplace of the gay movement, then we have no reason to feel safe anywhere, including "the city that's too busy to hate."

In the wee hours of Sunday morning, Oct. 22, James Carter, a 29 year old Black gay man was brutally kicked and punched by a group of young men Carter described as being between 17 and 19 years old. His friend R'heim Turner was pistol whipped into unconsciousness. The attack took place just outside the GE Tower apartment complex where Carter resides in the Mechanicsville neighborhood of southwest Atlanta.

"I just felt fist and feet from every direction and that's when I heard 'Get yo faggot ass down' and 'Bitch' this and 'bitch' that," Carter recalled. On Friday night, Oct. 20, a 28-year old white gay man who did not want to be

identified was pushed to the ground and taunted with anti-gay epithets in front of his complex on Cheshire Bridge, a gay friendly area known for its legendary clubs. This all in one weekend in one of the most heralded gay destinations in the world.

This comes far too close on the heels of the recent beating of our legendary diva Kevin Aviance and the murder of Michael Sandy which was dubbed a gay Howard Beach hate crime. In three of these incidents, Black gay men were attacked either near their home or in an area deemed hospitable to gays. The perpetrators that attacked Carter and Turner were young Black men, our young brothers.

They are coming for us in our own homes and little gayborhoods, as [Pat Parker prophesized](#). So I am not surprised but I am saddened and fearful. I am afraid because for years now I have heard fellow activists bemoan the complacency of Black gay men whether it regards AIDS, religious oppression, or anti-gay violence. Such complaints were often followed by the casual prediction that we will not act until we are being slaughtered on the streets.

Well it seems that neck breaking time may be upon us, but that is not what arrests my breath. I am afraid because I have no evidence that this will move us to do much more than observe or wonder what [Keith Boykin](#), [Jasmyne Cannick](#) and [Phill Wilson](#) gonna do and then hand in our scores and critiques. As if we were both the active subject and passive viewer of our own "survivor" reality show.

Several Black gay men who live at GE Towers told a reporter that Carter must have been flirting with his attackers. They doubt Carter's residency at GE because he would have "known better." When I hear victim-blaming from members of the victim's target group instead of outrage or email blasts that rival the frequency of "Wassup N Atl," I am not encouraged. When I heard another gay brother respond, "there are some queens that I might beat and call them 'queen' or 'sissy' as I beat them, too" I was reminded that the hatred of our abusers will not distract us from our own self hatred, which is even more intimate and thus effective. Until we relinquish the patriarchal values that divide us and require gay men to "man up" by scorning the feminine within us -- the same values that require straight men to "man up" by brutalizing women and all gay men regardless of masculine performance -- we will not be ready for any revolution. We will merely continue to run in circles while we are being clubbed.

A standing principle of social change is that people must be sparked by a common cause or threat in order to launch and sustain a movement. While we have no lack of the latter, we have not been able to find or identify the former. We have not found our voice or our passion for anything more than social and sexual networking, which is simply not enough. Many of our leaders have relinquished activism or relocated because they were not appreciated by the very communities they fought for while underpaid and overworked. I wonder if one leader whom we recently lost might have made different choices had she experienced the abiding love of fellow Black queer folk.

On Monday, I will call Officer Darlene Harris, the LGBT liaison for the Atlanta Police Department and ask her about the status of the investigation. I expect that there will be a public forum to address this and other developing local concerns. I cannot say that I do not care how many of us will be there. But at this point, I am convinced only that I must do my best to be there. To show up and show out if necessary, whether in the company of a hundred or a handful of the usual suspects.

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