

**When Love Wins Out**  
**by Craig Washington**

*"If you really want to make a statement then lets show up with our campaign for healthy living as out proud gay men of color."*

*-- Maurice Cook*

*"Your crown has been bought and paid for. All you must do is put it on your head."*

*-- James Baldwin*

So catch this. I am coming off I-85 north at the Edgewood Avenue exit, when I notice a smiling goateed Black man featured on the billboard to my left. As I looked more closely to see why this handsome gentlemen looked so very happy, I read the caption "I questioned homosexuality" and my stomach churned. I did not have to read the rest of the text to surmise the message. But when I saw the lines, "change is possible" and "love won out" followed by [www.exodus.org](http://www.exodus.org), my heart clenched into a fist. Because I knew in that moment, it was on. And in that instant I felt not only the depth of the wound but the precise angling of the weapon as it ripped through my spirit.

My sagacious friend Ulester remarked that we who live in the bullseye of domestic terrorism are drained by the day-to-day insults to our soul. While they may range from paper cuts to mortal wounds, each one rends the flesh and saps our vitality. The energy that we require to live in wellness of mind, body and spirit is leeches by such onslaughts. So it is imperative that each of us tend to ourselves and each other knowing that in this white supremacist patriarchy as Audre Lorde wrote "we were never meant to survive."

I have read and forwarded announcements about Saturday's demonstration in protest of the LWO conference. I believe the counter action is an appropriate response because it exposes the sham. The ex-gay movement not only beckons individuals to repress their innate nature through the coercion of Christian shame and redemption. It also sanctions cultural and institutional homophobia by "changing" the victims of bigotry instead of challenging the bigots and the institutions that subjugate. Visit the Focus on the Family site and see how many of its staff look like the happy Black man. These folks are seasoned manipulators of racism and homophobia. They obviously spent some time on this campaign in terms of who to reach, when to strike, and what to call it. Was there ever a name so false as "Love Won Out"? Don't you love these ironic monikers that

make societal poisons sound like remedies?

So how do we respond to the recent attacks on our identity and our bodies in Atlanta? It seems that we are approaching a critical crossroad in our path toward liberation. We can no longer afford to fight in the same ways and expect different outcomes. As I support the protest and honor those who pulled it together, I must also insist that we develop new goals. Goals that will help us build the kinds of communities whose members feel like they belong. I submit that many who elect to be "converted" are not only running to what they perceive as hope and refuge from persecution. Some are running away from the isolation they experience because they are too fat too femme not butch enough, too butch, not old enough, or way too old. In arrogance, we judge others for not having the fortitude to live openly as they are. That billboard serves as a warning sign. It signifies or at least queries our complicity in its mess. As those who are different from the majority, gays often squander the opportunity to use our difference and model possibilities of life unleashed from the constraints of gender. Instead we conceal that difference and mimic hetero norms to prove ourselves worthy of that which we deserve just as we are.

Many brothas dissociate from the gender outlaws to dodge the aim of homophobes who don't particularly care if we wear tims when we take it up the ass. Their survivalist behaviors summon our pity or our ridicule but rarely our compassion. When do we as Black gay/same gender loving men commit ourselves to working together to unmask the masquerade of masculinity? When we can show each other the way toward self-recovery, we will no longer bow and scrape begging entrance to the dysfunctional fraternity of our wounded heterosexual brothers. We incrementally create the world that we have forsaken for the path of least resistance.

We are so quick to encourage our closeted to come out but we must be willing to embrace them as divided souls seeking wholeness. What do we offer to those who risk the loss of family, mate, employment, status, and more? The most effective way to counter the insidious tactics of the ex-gay tricksters is to actually make good on their false promises. Yes "change is possible" when you have a vision, when you can see the possibility before it is realized. We might try by using the miracle question approach and ask what how would we be if all of our oppression was eradicated overnight. Then we focus on those positive ways of being and encourage the values and behaviors that

the miracle made possible. We will need to speak words that inspire and acts that nurture long before they feel natural because we would be doing a new thing. Thus begins our exodus. When we can tell our young in 2017 that Atlanta's lgbt multicultural center was founded 10 years ago in response to an ex gay conference, than we can say that love really did win out. Love wins out when positive images of Black transgendered, lesbians and gays are posted in Black neighborhoods throughout the city too busy too hate. When we have established an effective hate crimes bill because all of the groups that need protection collaborated with integrity, then love will have won out. Love wins Out when we generate more support, more love, and more sustenance to which we can all come out.