



June 5, 2020

Dear CLAGS community, friends, associates, and partners,

As we embark on Pride month and a time that should be celebration and uplifting of our community, we need to remember that everyday our diverse community and its members are denigrated, vilified, and attacked on many fronts. It is important to remember that our historical struggle is not one that is separated and siloed from those of the Black community. When there is an attack on Black and Brown bodies, then there is an attack on us, our family, our friends, and our allies. As a Black gay man, I am angered and fed up, but I am also fearful of the uncertainty of the future. These are troubling times, but times that have hopefully opened the eyes of those that believe we are in a post-racist society, and stirred something in people to realize that real change and strides forward in the fight for equality have not moved much since the Civil Rights Movement. Although I may be afraid, fear cannot stop me from raising my voice and standing up against oppression and genocide. I am reminded of the words from Audre Lorde's *There is No Hierarchy of Oppressions* –

*I simply do not believe that one aspect of myself can possibly profit from the oppression of my other part of my identity. I know that my people cannot possibly profit from the oppression of any other group which seeks the right to peaceful existence. Rather we diminish ourselves by denying to others what we have shed blood to obtain for our children.*

*...The increasing attacks upon lesbians and gay men, are only an introduction to the increasing attacks upon all Black people, for wherever oppression manifests itself in this country, Black people are potential victims. And it is a standard of right-wing cynicism to encourage members of oppressed groups to act against each other, and so long as we are divided because of our particular identities we cannot join together in effective political action. Within the lesbian community I am Black, and within the Black community I am a lesbian. Any attack against Black people is a lesbian and gay issue, because I and thousands of other Black women are part of the lesbian community. Any attack against lesbians and gays is a Black issue, because thousands of lesbians and gay men are Black. There is no hierarchy of oppression.*

*...As a Black person, I know who my enemies are, and when the Ku Klux Klan goes to court in Detroit to try and force the Board of Education to remove books the Klan believes "hint at homosexuality," then I know I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only. I cannot afford to believe that freedom from intolerance is the right of only one particular group. And I cannot afford to choose between the fronts upon which I must battle these forces if discrimination, wherever they appear to destroy me. And when they appear to destroy me, it will not be long before they appear to destroy you.*

In this moment we must be vigilant and steadfast. We must collectively fight to not forget about the systemic affronts and violence hurled from a system that was not built to support

us, to embrace us, but to destroy us by attempting to wash away our identities, our cultural richness, and our pride. At CLAGS we stand in solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter and the fight for social justice for George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, Tony McDade and countless others around the world. We must forge onward, we must not forget, we must not celebrate until we can stand up and say “we all are truly free”.

As we approach 30 years, CLAGS continues to be dedicated to holding space, uplifting all others, and fighting for social change. Through our work – past, present, and future – we are committed to fighting injustice through education, critical research, and community-based activism.

I urge us all to support, care, and love each other. Through community we not only heal, but we grow stronger in our fight for recognition and parity within larger society.

Stay safe, stay strong, and stay vigilant.

Much love,

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