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Black Nations/Queer Nations Conference

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Black Nations/Queer Nations Conference



CATHY COHEN

Black lesbian and gay men have made significant accomplishments but continue to confront a number of urgent challenges, such as AIDS, unemployment, racism, and homophobia. Our future survival turns on our ability to break new ground toward overcoming these challenges. It is therefore necessary for us to dialogue, debate, and develop new strategies of resistance and community education that will advance the politics of lesbian and gay people of African descent, our communities, and society as a whole. To this end, we will sponsor an unprecedented three-day conference.

Black Nations/Queer Nations will be held March 9-11 at the CUNY Graduate Center. Planning for this international event originated at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies. The planning committee consists of academics, activists, and cultural workers from the metropolitan area.

This conference represents a commitment to laying the groundwork for fruitful interaction among diverse constituencies within both the African diaspora and the queer community, and to continuing the kind of political organizing we know is necessary to bring us forcefully into the 21st century. The conference seeks to bring together — for the first time ever — as many as 1,000 service providers, cultural workers, activists, academicians, students, and others in our communities to talk and plan with each other in a social, educational, and political atmosphere.

The anticipated accomplishment of this path-breaking event are to: develop national networks and organizations of lesbian and gay men of African descent; map agendas to bring their interests to the center of a broad African-American agenda; identify strategies for strengthening and continuing organizing in black communities; develop video, audio, and reading materials for use as resources in a wide range of social, political, and educational settings.

The conference is organized around, but not limited to, the following issues: political organizing in the black queer community; health, AIDS, death and dying; black feminism as a catalyst for change; immigration, migration, and the state regulations of sexualities; heterosexism of black scholarship; homoerotics and Africa; growing up queer in the African diaspora; queer sexualities and the politics of parenting; queer sexualities and black youth culture; spiritual beliefs and practices; and art, culture, politics, and sexuality.

Black Nations/Queer Nations will feature a multi-faceted agenda and a rigorous schedule. A cultural event will kick off the first evening (March 9th) of the conference. The following Friday afternoon will consist of an opening plenary and a variety of work sessions. A video screening and reception will be held on Friday evening. The second plenary session will start the last morning of the conference. After a break for lunch, the afternoon work sessions will begin. A roundtable wrap-up session will conclude the afternoon workshops and give participants an opportunity to come together, exchange ideas, and make connections among the topics discussed over the two conference workdays. The Mobilization discussion will bring closure to the official proceeding of the conference, but will, at the same time, begin the building of the foundation for future discussions and organizing, as attendees reflect on their experiences and share in a dialogue to determine strategies around ways to progress the struggle of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people of African descent. The entire conference will be documented and copies will be made available to national and international lesbian and gay, and other progressive organizations.

Black Nations/Queer Nations presenters include Angela Davis, Samuel Delany, Raul Ferrera-Balanquet, Coco Fusco, Essex Hemphill, Isaac Julien, Wahneema Lubiano, Don Murphy, Michelle Parkerson, Mab Segrest, Ivy Young, Simon Nkoli, Barbara Smith, Elias Farajaje-Jones, Kobena Mercer, Anthony Appiah, Urvashi Vaid, and Jacqui Alexander.

For registration information, call 212.642.2923. The contact people for this event are David Maurrasse and Joscelyn Sargent.

By Cathy Cohen, CLAGS Board Member and member of the Black Nations/Queer Nations organizing committee