

The Intersection of Blackness, Queerness, and Masculinity

Definitions

Queer: An overall term for any person a part of the LGBT+ community.

Cis-het: Short for cis-gendered heterosexual; any person whose gender aligns with the sex they were born as, and are attracted to people of the opposite sex.

Queerphobia: The hatred, disgust, or discomfort with queer people.

Patriarchy: A system where men are dominant/hold authority in all parts of society.

Homophobia in the Black community

Homophobia is a common ideology found within the Black community. This belief comes from religion, society, or personal prejudiced values. Black homophobia assumes that cis-het Black people are the only victims of white supremacist institutions, when in reality it affects all people.

Black homophobia also pits the community against each other. The Black queer struggle should be considered in Black liberation discourse to avoid the further division in the community. Failure to do so extends oppression to another group while the Black community themselves are also oppressed.

What causes homophobia to continue?

- “Do what you want as long as I don’t have to see it”
 - This mindset forces queer people to hide who they are for the comfort of others
- Religion
 - Used as a weapon against Black queer folks, just as a racist uses religion against a Black person
- Conventional masculinity

Masculinity’s role in creating and perpetuating homophobia

Since the freedom of Black people in the 19th century, masculinity is seen as the pathway to respect and equality for Black peoples’ This began in the Reconstruction Era when the community faced new economic and legal struggles.

Black masculinity is proven by:

- Frequent sexual activity
- Power or success, specifically in white societal terms
- Exertion of confidence
- Being a provider for a wife and children
- Competition or fighting

Masculinity was used as a tool to be seen as equal to white society, but has evolved into a tool to oppress members of the Black community. Masculinity is a rejection of anything that is not feminine, and those things are expected to be subordinate to masculine things. This leads to queerphobia.

For example, a man who doesn’t want to have sex with multiple women is labeled as gay, or a man who does not want to engage in an exhibition of competition or violence is a “bitch” or a “pussy”. These are

all terms associated with women and queer people, and is framed as the negative outcome of not being masculine.

The Black community's reception of Black feminism and Black woman's autonomy over their sexuality parallels their attitude about gender and sexuality in general. Homophobia is a manifestation of sexual oppression, which is about gender roles (who can and cannot do what); queerness disrupts those roles and is deemed negative.

The Black, queer, experience

Queer people, specifically gay men, have to hide their identity in an effort to adhere to traditional masculinity. They fear and face rejection and violence from their community. Black queer people are forced to straddle their need for community in a racialized society with the queerness in a community that is not accepting. Black queer people's very existence challenges the white supremacist ideology that Black liberation fights against.

Disintegration

Disintegration is the societal trade off that comes with adopting and uplifting all forms of Blackness, specifically women and queer people. Our society relies on the subordination of anything or anyone that does not feed masculinity and male dominance (patriarchy). If the Black community abandons those ideas and supports everyone who is Black, regardless of what additional identities they hold, they will be disintegrated from broad society.

Gomez, Jewelle, and Barbara Smith. "Talking about It: Homophobia in the Black Community."

Feminist Review, no. 34 (1990): 47-55. Accessed February 12, 2021.

doi:10.2307/1395304.

Green, Kai M. "In the Life: On Black Queer Kinship." *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 7,

no. 1 (2019): 98-101. Accessed February 12, 2021.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/womgenfamcol.7.1.0098>.

LARUE, ROBERT. "Real/Talk: Glenn Ligon's Re-Membering of Queerness in (Post-) Black Discourse." *The Comparatist* 42 (2018): 80-97. Accessed February 12, 2021.

doi:10.2307/26533649.

Strayhorn, Terrell L., and Derrick L. Tillman-Kelly. "Queering Masculinity: Manhood and Black Gay Men in College." *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* 1, no. 2 (2013): 83-110.

Accessed February 12, 2021. doi:10.2979/spectrum.1.2.83.