

A time line of the Black Gay Men's Leadership Council...

- September 15, 2005 At a community meeting, several Black men expressed the need for a local entity, dedicated to finding ways to improve the lives of Black men who have sex with men (MSM)-
-UNAPOLOGETICALLY. Less than a week later, a list serve was created where individuals could suggest "next steps" and share information pertinent to the lives of Black MSM.
- October 6, 2005 The "action group" had its first meeting at the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation, a local research institution, to discuss ideas for an organizational structure, setting priorities, and scheduling future meetings.
- October 20, 2005 At a community meeting, the "coalition" of Black gay men learned of a city-funded, media campaign to increase HIV testing among Black MSM. The process appeared to disenfranchise the experiences and expertise of Black gay men. Immediately, the "coalition" began plans to develop a response to the local health department and intervene in the process. Their goal was to have community input incorporated in the city's media campaign.
- November 7, 2005 After several meetings and conversations with local health department officials, the "consortium of Black gay men" sent a letter to senior staff members of the health department and the Mayor of Philadelphia. The letter expressed their communal anger over the proposed media campaign, and demanded a meeting to share their ideas. Eight Black gay men signed the letter.
- December 9, 2005 The "consortium of Black gay men" met with the local health department to express the 'November 7' letter. At that meeting, the officials from the health department agreed to incorporate community input in the development of the campaign.
- January 20, 2006 At the "consortium's" meeting, members decided to finalize a name and mission statement reflective of their goals and commitment to Black MSM.
- February 1, 2006 'Black Gay Men's Leadership Council' (BGMLC) was selected as the group's name. Their mission statement: "to use advocacy, education and community collaborations to empower Philadelphia's diverse communities of Black gay men, by focusing on their social and political advancement and health and wellness needs, while developing local, regional and national leaders." The founding members of this organization are: **Robert K. Burns, Lee Carson, Nayck Feliz, Jacinto Grant, Michael Hinson, Jr., Kevin Trimell Jones, Ace Robinson & Tyrone Smith.**
- February 8, 2006 After two months of providing feedback to the local health department, members of "The Council" decided to limit their involvement in the health department's media campaign; the campaign was moving forward as planned by the health department, without the input previously solicited from "The Council".
- March 14, 2006 In an attempt to help foster community relationships within the Black LGBT community, the BGMLC hosted its first Professional Black LGBT networking event.

March 24, 2006 The BGMLC was approached by Philadelphia Health Management Corporation to work in a consultant capacity on a potential CDC grant application; the goal of the application was to develop a group level, HIV prevention intervention for Black gay men. The Council agreed to consult with them if they got the grant.

April 28, 2006 As one of the first events of Philadelphia Black Gay Pride, the BGMLC held a community discussion, entitled: "The Safety of the Black LGBT Community: A Matter of Civil Rights". Nearly 75 community members attended this event. The panel consisted of members from the city's police department, youth who have experienced unfair police harassment & a social psychologist who talked about the impact of discrimination. The Panel was moderated by Lorraine Ballard Morill, the Director for community affairs for Clear Channel Communications. This event was co-sponsored with The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), OutFront, Philadelphia Black Pride, Inc., and the Philadelphia branch of the NAACP.

April 28, 2006 BGMLC debuted its 'palm cards' that provided instructions for community members should they be stopped by the police. The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), OutFront, Philadelphia Black Pride, Inc., and the Philadelphia branch of the NAACP provided support and sponsorship of .The "If stopped by the police don't panic!" palm cards.

April 29, 2006 BGMLC hosted a 'Black LGBT Professional Networking Event' during Philadelphia's Black Gay Pride celebrations.

May 9, 2006 Lee Carson was named as the first Chair of the BGMLC.

June 16, 2006 Robert K. Burns was named as the Treasurer of the BGMLC, and Nayck Feliz was named as its Secretary.

July 13, 2006 After seeing the images created by the health department's media campaign and gathering the opinions of community members, the BGMLC sent a letter to Carmen Paris, Philadelphia's interim Health Commissioner, expressing concerns on the "Have YOU been hit?" campaign. The Council felt that the media images (having Black men in crosshairs) did more harm to communities affected by HIV and gun violence. The Council requested a meeting to discuss these concerns.

July 25, 2006 The BGMLC began recruiting individuals for membership.

August 3, 2006 The BGMLC claimed a success in getting the "Have YOU been hit?" campaign's harmful media images removed, and the abrupt ending the campaign. They also secured a meeting time with Philadelphia's Interim Health Commissioner.

August 8, 2006 The BGMLC made national news after a story was featured on the front page of the August 8th Philadelphia Inquirer. News outlets as far as San Diego covered the story. Within two weeks, over 400 websites of media organizations featured the story. It was also featured as an article on Keith Boykin's Blog.

August 22, 2006 Members of the BGMLC met with Philadelphia's interim Health Commissioner, Carmen Paris to discuss our concerns with the testing campaign and to provide them with ideas on how to develop the skills and leadership potential in Philadelphia's LGBT community. She was receptive to our

ideas and proposals for the implementation of these ideas are set to be submitted to her by the end of September 2006.

August 23, 2006

Lee Carson, Chair of the BGMLC was given a two-hour time slot on Dr. Lucille Ijoy's radio show on WURD 900 AM. He shared about the Health Department's removal of the HIV testing campaign as a result of our advocacy efforts and answered questions of the callers. Doing this community based radio show, which has a large minority following was an important step in addressing homophobia in Black communities and getting productive conversation started between the Black gay and Black heterosexual community.

September 6, 2006

The BGMLC selected Institute for Social Medicine and Community Health (ISMCH) as it's first fiscal agent.

September 26, 2006

The BGMLC was invited to speak on a panel in NYC on effective social marketing geared toward MSM. BGMLC member Kevin Trimell Jones represented the group on the panel and shared our experience with the health department's "Have YOU Been Hit?" campaign here in Philadelphia.

September 26, 2006

The BGMLC co-sponsored a bus with OutFront! to Harrisburg, PA to join Mayor John Street's rally in Harrisburg for stricter gun laws. There were over 30 LGBT advocates on our bus, all of which met with the various legislators both locally and at the state level.

September 28, 2006

At the LGBT professional networking event on the evening of September 28th, one of the attendees won a drawing sponsored by the Delaware Valley Legacy Fund, in which they would give a \$250 mini grant to a charity of the winners choice. The winner chose the BGMLC as the recipient, making that the first official "grant" we received.

September 29, 2006

The BGMLC submitted two proposals to the Interim Health Commissioner, Carmen Paris. Both proposals were for initiatives to improve health outcomes for Black gay men.

October 10, 2006

The BGMLC submitted a letter of support for the School District of Philadelphia's decision to make October Gay and Lesbian History Month in which they added to their official school year calendar. The school district met opposition to this decision, but LGBT advocates, including the BGMLC provided visible support for this decision.

October 12, 2006

The BGMLC held it's first new members orientation, which took place at PHMC. During this meeting the three committees of the organization were formed. Those committees were, Health and Wellness, Politics and Leadership, and the Events Planning Committee.

October 18, 2006

The School Reform Commission (SRC) met again on this date to hear testimony from the community on the inclusion of Gay and Lesbian History month to the school calendar. Kevin Trimell Jones represented the BGMLC at this hearing, giving a powerful testimony alongside other LGBT's in support of the SRC's decision.

October 20, 2006

BGMLC received a letter from Interim Health Commissioner, Carmen Paris, that the city's AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO) will fund our proposal for a Black Gay Research Summit. In addition, the Health Department will work with the BGMLC in tandem with other gay health leaders to address health disparities among gay men in the City of Philadelphia.

BGMLC's monthly signature event, "The Social Hour" was featured in HX Magazine for the first time.

- October 29, 2006 Michael Hinson and Lee Carson were interviewed on Loraine Ballard-Morrill's radio show to talk about the work of the BGMLC and discuss issues facing Black gay men in Philly.
- November 6, 2006 The BGMLC held the first part of it's first strategic planning meeting, which took place at Mazzone Center.
- November 9, 2006 The BGMLC partnered with Philadelphia Health Management Corp. (PHMC) and the Office of the Mayor on a community event called "Be Social. Be Socially Aware!". This event held at City Hall, was targeted toward Black men who have sex with men in Philadelphia to disseminate the findings from Philadelphia's largest research study ever done on the lives of Black MSM called the Black Men's Health Survey. The event was ground breaking and largely successful with over 80 people in attendance.
- November 13, 2006 The second part of BGMLC's strategic meeting was held at Mazzone.
- November 15, 2006 The BGMLC hired its first staff person, a logistics coordinator to help with the planning of events to take place in the next several months.
- December 1, 2006 The BGMLC participated in an event for World AIDS Day that was put on by Broad Street Ministry and the Sapphire Fund. Nearly 20 local organizations were involved, and we were listed among them on their press release. The event, entitled "Commemorate. Educate. Re-dedicate," was to remember the lives lost to HIV/AIDS, as well as to celebrate the lives of people living with the disease. There were performances and art exhibitions, and a few BGMLC members performed a poem written by Michael Hinson named "1 in 3." The performance was very well received. Local newspapers and TV evening news covered the event.
- December 1, 2006 The Philadelphia Gay News (FGN) approached the BGMLC about writing a regular column on issues happening in the Black gay community. Our debut article came out in the week of December 1, 2006 issue. The article titled "Community Organizing: Continuing the legacy" talked about the history of Black gay men's organizing in Philadelphia and how the BGMLC is continuing that legacy, building upon the work of our predecessor organizations.
- December 21, 2006 Mayoral candidate Michael Nutter came to the BGMLC networking event at Griffin Cafe. Mr. Nutter spoke about his support for the Black Gay community. As other candidates make themselves known, the BGMLC will invite them to share their views.
- December 30, 2006 The Health and Wellness Committee of the BGMLC, in collaboration with The COLOURS Organization, Inc. hosted a Kwanzaa Celebration at the African American Museum in Philadelphia. There were live performances (including members of the BGMLC), food and refreshments, and a Kwanzaa ceremony led by Desiree' Neal and Michael Hinson, Jr. There were approximately 160 attendees, and Kevin Trimell Jones, Chair of the Health and Wellness Committee developed a health assessment survey that was administered to the attendees of this event.
- January 15, 2007 Members of the BGMLC participated in the MLK day of service hosted by the International Federation of Black

Prides. Volunteers helped feed approximately 300 homeless individuals at the Arch Street Methodist Church.

January 22, 2007

During the BGMLC's general meeting, members agreed on modifying the board structure to include the following positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and 3 other non-officer positions. After deliberations, the following persons were nominated to fill those positions as follows: Lee Carson, President of the Board; Ace Robinson, Vice-President; Jacinto Grant, Secretary; Robert K. Burns, Treasurer; Tyrone Smith, 1st non-officer; Jamaal Garnett, 2nd non-officer; and Malik Whiteman, 3rd non-officer.

February 7, 2007

BGMLC members, Ed Brokenbrough, Tyrone Smith and Jacinto Grant held their first intergenerational mentorship session with adolescents of The Attic Youth Center's "Boy's Room" group. This first group, intentionally held during Black History Month talked about the contributions of historical and present day Black LGBT figures and how their contributions have led to a new generation of LGBT's. A 6-month work plan was developed for this initiative targeted at building youth leadership and asset development.

February 9, 2007

BGMLC's second article in the Philadelphia Gay News was published. The article was written by Malik Whiteman and talked about the important contributions of two notable Black figures: Audre Lorde and Ron Oden.

February 10, 2007

At Unity Fellowship Church's one-year anniversary, BGMLC was the recipient of Unity Philadelphia's first ever Community Service Award.

February 16-18, 2007

BGMLC and the AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (the City of Philadelphia, Department of Public Health) sponsored a three-day retreat for 34 gay and bisexual men. The goal of the retreat was to develop a strategic plan for addressing gay men's health and wellness needs, and cultivating leadership within Philadelphia's gay community. The BGMLC also released "The Kwanzaa Health and Wellness Assessment," which was developed from data collected at their December 30th Kwanzaa Celebration (sponsored by the BGMLC and Philadelphia's COLOURS Organization, Inc.). This report highlights the dire-need to use a wholistic approach for addressing health issues of Black gay men.

March 14-18, 2007

With funding from the AIDS Activities Coordinating Office, the BGMLC sponsored 3 major events as part of the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Health Summit.

March 14th: The BGMLC convened a research summit titled "Black Beyond Boundaries", which featured cutting edge research conducted on the lives of Black gay men including the impact of childhood sexual abuse, sexual behavior among African American men 50+, the impact of depression, homophobia and racism on Black LGBT's and more. Over 50 people attended this institute and it was well received.

March 16th: The BGMLC sponsored a morning plenary session that focused on the health disparities that exist in Black LGBT communities and what we need to do to begin closing the gap in these disparities. This plenary was moderated by BGMLC member Damon L. Humes and speakers were Mark McLarurin (Executive Director of the New York State Black Gay Network), Mandy Carter (long time Lesbian civil rights activist), Aaminah Morrison (local trans activist) and Harlan Shaw (local youth activist).

March 16th: In the evening, we sponsored a reception for the conference attendees. We decided to give the audience a taste of Ballroom culture, one of the unique subcultures in the Black gay community. This exhibition, moderated by Damon L. Humes, the legendary overall house father and co-founder of the House of Manolo Blahnik, featured dance performances and an explanation of the ballroom culture.

April 5, 2007

The Black Gay Men's Leadership Council, Outfront, Liberty City Democrats and the Log Cabin Republicans co-sponsored a Mayoral forum titled "The Rustin Forum for Philadelphia's Future". This forum named after famous Black gay man and civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, was the first of its kind ever done in Philadelphia for a Mayor's race. Three of the six Mayoral hopefuls attended the event to speak to the LGBT community: State Rep. Dwight Evans, former city councilman Michael Nutter and Congressman, Chaka Fattah. During this event a video project completed by Chris Barlett and videographer Peter Lien was debuted. The film captured interviews with several local LGBT leaders and community members who expressed their views on what they think the next mayor should know about the LGBT community. Approximately 100 LGBT's of diverse ethnicities attended.

April 26, 2007

The BGMLC partnered with the National Black Gay Men's Advocacy Coalition (NBGMAC), Philadelphia Black Gay Pride and the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry to hold a town hall meeting on the state of HIV among Black gay men. This town hall meeting is one of several that NBGMAC is doing around the country to inform Black gay men and our allies about their policy document that shares their plan to improve funding and services in an effort to decrease the disproportionate rate of HIV infection among Black gay men. This event was held at the historic, Black owned and operated Freedom Theatre.

April 27-29, 2007

These dates marked the premier of the Black LGBT Archivists Society's premier event: "A Journey in Pride: Representations of Philadelphia's Black Gay History". This exhibit was displayed throughout all three days of the 8th annual Philadelphia Black Gay Pride celebration. The BGMLC was recognized for our contribution to making this exhibit possible. The Archivist Society is founded and curated by Kevin Trimell Jones.

April 28, 2007

BGMLC member, Edward Brockenbrough, co-facilitated two workshops during Black gay pride. The first was titled "The enemy within: Black gay men and Femiphobia" and the second "Life on the net: love, lies and lessons".

April 28, 2007

During Black Gay pride, BGMLC member and founding member Tyrone Smith was honored as a legend during the Legends Awards Ball and Dinner. His award was presented to him by up and coming leader and BGMLC member/founding member Kevin Trimell Jones. Lee Carson, BGMLC president/founding member was selected as an up coming leader also and presented an award to Roslyn Wilkins, mother of Nizah Morris, a trans woman who was murdered in December of 2002.

April 29 & 30, 2007

The BGMLC was acknowledged verbally in the show and in the program booklet of Zane Bookers premier show "Ebony, Bronze & Beige: The Philadelphia Show", for our ongoing support of his efforts to bridge HIV awareness and prevention to theatre. This multi media performance featured commentary from BGMLC members Michael Hinson, Tyrone Smith and Rev. Jeffery Haskins. Zane's theatre company is called Smoke, Lilies & Jade Arts Initiative.