



EMPOWERED

IMPROVING LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH

The Black Heroes in our Community

By Alexis Cornn

As we enter into Black History Month, it's important to learn about some of our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (LGBTQ+) advocates. The individuals mentioned in this article are a small portion of those who left major impacts within the LGBTQ+ community, American literature, and American politics.

FannyAnn Eddy was an LGBTQ+ rights activist in post-civil war Sierra Leone. She started the Sierra Leone Lesbian and Gay Association in 2002. Eddy traveled across the world, addressed the United Nations (UN), and advocated for the passing of the Brazilian Resolution at the UN, which addressed human rights and sexual orientation and was backed by 20 countries.



Marsha P. Johnson was a transgender rights activist. She was popular in the New York gay, art, transgender, and activist communities between the 1960s and 1990s. She was one of the first people to fight back against the police during the 1969 Stonewall Inn riots. Her trademark 'Pay It No Mind,' came into existence after she told a judge that was the meaning of the "P" in her name. In the early 70s, Marsha, along with Sylvia Rivera, founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), which provided food, clothing, and housing to transgender and non-gender conforming youth in NYC. This was one of the first organizations to advocate and support this population.



James Baldwin was an author, activist, playwright, and essayist. He was one of the first people to explore

the intersections of race, class, and sexuality in fiction. He provided a voice for black men and wrote about the struggles in highly acclaimed essays and speeches. Baldwin was active in the civil rights movement, and he helped mobilize and motivate African Americans to fight for their civil rights. His best works of fiction were also some of the first pieces of literature that addressed the clear and outright examination of same-sex relationships. He left a lasting mark on American literature, society, and politics.

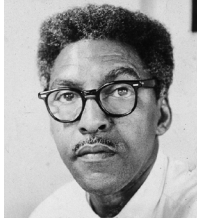


Simone Bell is the first openly lesbian African American to serve in a state legislature. She served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 2009 to 2015. During those three sessions in the House, she advocated for social justice and human rights, keeping a specific focus on women, children, seniors, and the economically disadvantaged. She also focused on LGBTQ+ and HIV issues through her work with the Atlanta Lesbian Health Initiative and Lambda Legal, where she mobilized the LGBTQ+ community to increase rights around healthcare, safe schools, housing, and relationship status recognition. She continues to advocate for the LGBTQ+ community and their protection. She's also a mentor for LGBTQ+ youth interested in government. →



BLACK HEROES *continued*

Bayard Rustin was an activist and a pivotal figure in the Civil Rights Movement. He was often seen as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s right-hand man. Rustin was also openly gay. From his very early years, he was taught about nonviolence and peace. He was passionate about combating racial disparities. He was brought in to help organize with Dr. King. This role encountered many complications due to the knowledge that Rustin was gay. Dr. King and other leaders of the movement would sometimes support



him and sometimes they would oust him. However, his contributions are priceless. Rustin's entire life's work was dedicated to nonviolence and the fight for civil rights. In 2013, President Barack Obama posthumously dedicated to him the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

These individuals were advocates for LGBTQ+ rights in their respective communities, times, and for society as a whole. There are many others just like them fighting and advocating for the rights of LGBTQ+ members daily. Let's not forget to shine spotlights on them as we move forward through the year.

ENVISION:YOU IN THE NEWS**5 HEALTHY TIPS ...for how to be an ally to Black LGBTQ+ people**

- 1 Listen to them;** whether or not you have either identity, everyone has a different, valid, experience and if they don't mind sharing with you then let them speak freely.
- 2 Make sure to include Black trans people;** Black trans people are some of our most marginalized, overlooked populations. You're not representative of Black LGBTQ+ if you fail to acknowledge and include Black trans individuals.
- 3 Create spaces that are inclusive to Black LGBTQ+ people;** oftentimes Black LGBTQ+ folx are expected to access spaces that are LGBTQ+ yet anti-black. Make sure you're challenging anti-LGBTQ+ AND anti-black mindsets when you create affirming spaces.
- 4 Don't ask Black LGBTQ+ folks questions you can learn yourself;** asking someone of lived experience may seem simple to you. Keep in mind you are asking them to share personal and sometimes sensitive information - which is none of your business. There's a lot of information out there on Black LGBTQ+ individuals, take some time to check out those resources
- 5 Support Black-owned businesses and fundraisers;** by supporting black owned businesses and spaces, you can help bridge gaps Black LGBTQ+ face as opposed to white folx.

[LEARN MORE](#)**COMMUNITY PARTNER**

This month, we are pleased to highlight **Out Boulder County**, who first opened in 2004 as a year-round community center for LGBTQ+ folks in the Boulder area and organizers of Boulder Pride. In addition to the **incredible range of programming** they offer at their new facility and in the



community, Out Boulder County is Envision:You's host site and partner for our Q is for Questioning workshops taking place in Boulder County. We could not do this work without partners like Out Boulder County - follow them on Instagram [@outboulder!](#)