

MESSAGE

Spring 2025



**In the Meantime
Community
lives
here**



inthemeantimemen.org

CONTENTS

4 TRUTH

By Jeffrey C. King

6 THE FIRE THIS TIME

By Dorothy Randall Gray

8 A CURIOUS APPROACH TO FREEDOM

By Hassan Alton

10 MEDITERRANEAN BAKED TILAPIA

By The Lifestyle Maven

15 THE POWER DUO

By Coach Skip

18 WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE?

By Sampson McCormick

24 TOUCH STARVATION AMONG MEN

By Trevor James

30 EXPLORING THE WORLD WITH PRIDE

By Gregory Patterson

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Jeffrey C. King

PHOTOGRAPHY: Avery Belser

ART DIRECTOR: Alan Bell

ON THE COVER: Hassan Alton

Message is published quarterly by In The Meantime Men's Group, Inc., 2146 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90018-2039. Mailing address: P.O. Box 29861, Los Angeles, CA 90029-0861, 323-733-4868, inthemeantimemen@aol.com, www.inthemeantimemen.org, Facebook @ inthemeantimemen

© 2025 In The Meantime Men's Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of ITMT. Publication of the name or photograph of a person does not indicate the sexual orientation or HIV status of the person or necessarily constitute an endorsement of ITMT or its policies. Message is designed for educational purposes only and is not engaged in rendering medical advice or professional services. Some photographs in this publication use professional models.

TRU



Jeffrey C. King is Founder and Executive Director of In The Meantime Men's Group.



BY JEFFREY C. KING, THE SAGE

This edition of MESSAGE, *Lifestyle Publication* is dedicated to soul healing and truth telling. We've also got some delicious healthy recipes for your consideration. It's your life. Live it well.

As I contemplate the significance of Spring as a time of renewal and transformation, I am being called to stand in the TRUTH. Beyond the inflated egos, power moves and greed, there exist the TRUTH. Truth telling is not grounded in debunking what others are saying. As I immerse myself in communion with the divine, bring into the realm of existence the universal spiritual truth and the evidence of God working in and through me.

I refuse to spend these precious years of my life responding to the false profits. The fake news created to inflict fear into the minds and hearts of the insulated and the vulnerable will not dictate my day. I will continue to rise above, and sometimes shelter below the negative vibrations of hate-mongering. I will nestle in the secret place of the most-high and center myself in the knowingness that GOD is everything. I will rise each day and with eyes closed giving thanks for divine intuition that leads me, comforts me, and protects me especially in the darkness.

When I look at myself in the mirror, I will confirm that I am in fact created in the very image and likeness of God, Itself. I see into myself and affirm that all is well. I know that all things are working for my divine good. As I am made whole, I am able to give from the overflow. And So It Is.





THE FIRE THIS TIME

BY DOROTHY RANDALL GRAY

It took awhile before Rev. Curt D. Thomas could bring himself to revisit the charred remains of the place he had grown up in and loved. The devastating Eaton Canyon fires had destroyed the homes and hopes of thousands in Altadena and Pasadena, leaving behind only ash and memories.

Rev. Thomas parked his car and stared at entire neighborhoods that had been leveled to the ground—his grandmother’s house gone. He remembered streets he’d played in, Black owned stores and restaurants, and neighbors who looked out for each other. “It felt as if I was in a war zone!”

He took a long, deep breath, held onto those memories, then drove off to continue what he has been doing every day—helping others rebuild their lives after losing everything.

“That first night the wind was just horrific! Never saw anything like it. Neighbors created an evacuation map and started a chat thread. My mother had refused to evacuate until the fires got too close. Then, a neighbor finally got her to leave.”

Six families from his Renewed Church of Los Angeles lost their homes, and many others approached him asking for help. With the support of his active church family, the MarSell Wellness Center, and Amazon, Rev. Thomas was able to give out \$10,000 in hundred dollar gift cards to community members, enabling them to purchase items they deemed necessary. He regularly sits with neighborhood residents providing compassion and consolation for their grief, helping to create inventories of lost possessions, and encouraging them to rebuild.

In his capacity as a housing director for TruEvolution, Rev. Thomas was able to offer invaluable housing resources, particularly vital for numerous renters also made homeless by the firestorm.

But fires were not the only destructive element Rev. Thomas has dealt with.

“It was super important for me to establish a place that would help our LGBTQ+ community devastated by mistreatment, discrimination and ‘church hurt’ .”

14 years ago he founded the Renewed Church of Los Angeles. He is now its senior pastor, and a vibrant voice for the LGBTQ+ spiritual community. He is also a board member of Momma’s House, a 22-bed transitional living facility.

Rev. Thomas advises people to be sensitive to and compassionate with people who have suffered through major disasters, like fires, and traumatic changes in their living situations. He also stresses the importance of faith.

“Faith is the foundation of everything. It’s my guard rail, my umpire, pushing me forward when I’m running bases.”

Dorothy Randall Gray is an artist, activist, poet, master teacher, and the author of the best-selling book Soul Between the Lines (Avon Books, 1998).

A CURIOUS APPROACH TO FREEDOM



BY HASSAN OLTON

When I was told this month's theme was **Freedom**, I asked God, "What would you have me say about this?" The answer came as an intuitive direction: ask others what freedom means to them. Surprisingly, many struggled to define it. However, three distinct responses stood out:

One person said, **"To have choice without consequences."**
Another responded, **"It's not real. It's bait used to get me to do what you want me to do."** And lastly, someone shared, **"To experience peace in all areas of life."**

This made me wonder—is **freedom unique to each individual, shaped like a relationship?** If so, all I can do is share my own experience and hope it resonates with someone else.

For me, **freedom is from self, and I could not have found it without God.** The more I got to know God, the more I understood myself. And what I've come to realize is that **I was already free—I just didn't believe it.** There was always, and will always be, an excuse to feel incapable of doing something, going somewhere, or becoming someone. But I now see that **true limitation is internal, not external.**

People used to tell me, **"The truth will set you free, but first, it'll piss you off."** The truth can feel threatening, and what I've come to learn is that the reason it pisses me off is because it challenges a limiting belief I hold in my subconscious—one that was grounded in a weak foundation.

So the next time something happens that makes you angry, ask yourself: **"Why am I mad?"**

But this time, leave out any mention of an external person, place, or thing.

People often say, **"Be realistic,"** but what is reality if not our own beliefs shaping it? We are conditioned to accept a programmed version of freedom, but how many of us have truly defined it for ourselves?

So I ask: **Why aren't you happy where you are?**
Why do you care what others think? Could the barriers keeping you from the life you dream of exist within you? And if so, what are the limiting beliefs you need to break free from?

In conclusion, know that you are already free. **Freedom is a state of being, not an action; there's nothing to do but everything to be. Therefore, be free; not because you can but because you are.**

Hassan Olton is an Artist, Just Faithfully Exploring The Unknown



zesty

MEDITERRANEAN-STYLE

**BAKED
TILAPIA**

BY THE LIFESTYLE MAVEN

An easy recipe for one of the dishes I make that always gets a standing ovation and requests for encores is my Zesty Baked Tilapia Mediterranean-Style. It is pretty easy to make baked fish recipe, can be prepped ahead of time and assembled “lickety-split”! What makes it so fragrant and tasty is that it is infused with flavor both from the top and the bottom and this style of baking keeps the fish moist throughout. I made it the other day and thought I’d share the recipe with you.

For this, I used ingredients from the Target Stores brand Market Pantry. You will need:

- Market Pantry Tilapia Filets
- 1 lb. Market Pantry® Tilapia Fillets (or 4-6 pieces)
- One large tomato or two medium tomatoes, sliced crosswise
- Grated zest and juice of two lemons
- Two tablespoons Market Pantry® chopped Kalamata olives
- ½ cup Market Pantry® mayonnaise
- ½ cup Market Pantry® grated Parmesan cheese
- One tablespoon olive oil
- Sea Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste



Preheat the oven to 375°F. Lay the sliced tomatoes in a rectangular glass dish and sprinkle with the chopped olives and lemon zest and drizzle with olive oil.

Season the fillets with salt and pepper and lay them over the bed of sliced tomatoes, olives and lemon zest and set aside. In a small bowl, mix the mayonnaise and Parmesan cheese together with some of the lemon juice. Add just enough lemon juice to achieve a pleasant balance



Sliced tomatoes sprinkled with chopped Kalamata olives and lemon zest.

of flavors, and a medium-thick consistency. Start with two tablespoons of lemon juice. Coat each fillet with the mixture and bake for about 20 minutes, or until the topping turns a golden brown.

When I'm entertaining, I usually assemble the dish and prepare the mixture, wrap them in plastic film and keep them in the refrigerator. While my guests are having cocktails, I coat the fish with the topping and put in the oven right away. It's best served fresh out the oven. This dish should taste citrusy on

the top with the olive flavor as the middle note, and the cheese and mayonnaise following in close order, but less distinct. The rather bland fish is infused with the lemon zest and olives from below and the lemon in the topping, giving it that piquant taste. The citrus flavor is tempered by the tomatoes and the cheese and mayonnaise. The topping also helps keep the fish moist and seals in all the flavors.

I have served this with couscous and vegetables, a brown and wild rice medley, saffron rice as well as rosemary roasted potatoes and it works well. Whatever you choose to serve with this should not be too flavorful or acidic—there can only be one star at this table! My favorite wine to pair with this tends to be a Pinot Grigio, but a Chardonnay works just as well.

Try it and let me know how you like it—more importantly, how your guests like it! I can't wait to get your feedback!



Tilapia fillets topped with a mixture of mayo, cheese and lemon juice.



The Lifestyle Maven™ is an epicurean, event producer, fashion-isto, writer, style maven, world adventurer and activist. From royal African lineage and a long line of diplomats, he has lived in six countries on four continents, visited more than 36 countries and speaks six languages. With a charming perspective that reflects his British, French, Russian and African influences, he is a true citizen of the world. He has an innate sense of style, perfected by experience, exposure and travel, which makes Ayité is the perfect lifestyle personality. As a personality and lifestyle brand, The Lifestyle Maven™ brings to you a trans-cultural style revolution, merging cultures through a shared appreciation for style. The Lifestyle Maven™ is the quintessence of the new generation of multiculturalist—modern, world-traveled, cosmopolitan, your inveterate metrosexual and trend-setter).

SAVE THE DATE

Freedom

In The Meantime

ANNUAL

Juneteenth/Pre-Pride Celebration

Saturday, June 14, 2025

3 pm to 8 pm

KISO, DTLA

107 E. 9th St.

Los Angeles 90013

Complimentary
Adult Beverages
BBQ Bites

Dancing
Spades Tournament

LA Summer Attire Suggested
Uber Suggested

A FREE Community Event
#freedomis



Free STD Screening & Treatment,
HIV Testing & Linkage to HIV Care



Extended Hours



2146 W ADAMS BLVD

Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri: 12pm-8pm

Sat: 9:30am-5:30pm

free**STD**check.org



PUBLIC HEALTH
DIVISION



THE POWER DUO

OMEGA-3s, VITAMIN D, AND EXERCISE FOR AGING LIKE A PRO

Hey guys! Coach Skip here, with another bit of Health and Fitness information! The Power Duo: Omega-3s, Vitamin D, and Exercise for Aging Like a Pro. Aging is inevitable, but how you age? That's in your control.

Science shows that if you want to keep your body strong, your mind sharp, and your joints moving like they did a couple of decades ago, you need to start paying serious attention to two essential nutrients: Omega-3s and Vitamin D.

Now, before you roll your eyes and think, “Great, another lecture on supplements,” hear me out. We’re not just talking about popping some fish oil pills and sitting on the couch. Nope. We’re talking about pairing these powerhouse nutrients with regular exercise to keep you feeling younger, longer.

WHY OMEGA-3s ARE LIKE WD-40 FOR YOUR BODY



Ever feel like your joints are staging a protest every time you get out of bed? That’s where Omega-3s come in. These essential fatty acids, found in fatty fish like salmon, walnuts, and flaxseeds, work as natural anti-inflammatories. Inflammation is one of the biggest culprits behind joint pain, stiffness, and even chronic conditions like arthritis. Studies show that Omega-3s can help reduce inflammation and keep your joints lubricated so you can move more easily.

But it’s not just about your joints. Your brain loves Omega-3s, too. Research has shown that they help improve memory, cognitive function, and even mood. Considering that brain fog and forgetfulness tend to creep up with age, adding Omega-3s to your diet is like giving your brain a daily tune-up.

VITAMIN D: THE UNDERRATED SUPERHERO



If Omega-3s are the lubrication for your joints, Vitamin D is the cement keeping your bones strong. As we age, our ability to absorb calcium decreases, making us more susceptible to fractures and osteoporosis. Vitamin D helps your body actually use the calcium you consume, keeping your bones dense and resilient.

The problem? Most people don’t get nearly enough of it. Unless you spend a lot of time in the sun (without sunscreen, which, let’s be honest, isn’t the best idea), chances are you’re not getting optimal Vitamin D levels. Deficiency has been linked to everything from weakened immunity to depression.

The solution? Supplementing with Vitamin D and, even better, combining it with exercise. Weight-bearing activities like walking, resistance training, and even yoga help your bones stay strong, and when paired with Vitamin D, the benefits multiply.

WHY EXERCISE TIES IT ALL TOGETHER

You could have the best diet and supplement routine in the world, but if you're not moving your body, you're not going to get the full benefits. Exercise helps Omega-3s do their job by improving circulation, reducing inflammation, and keeping your heart healthy. It also helps Vitamin D work more effectively by stimulating bone growth and maintaining muscle mass, which is crucial for balance and preventing falls as you age.



And let's not forget about the real reason to exercise: It makes you feel good. Those post-workout endorphins are nature's way of telling you, "Hey, you're doing something right!" Plus, strength training and cardio don't just keep your body fit—they keep your brain young, too.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Aging doesn't have to mean slowing down. With the right nutrition and regular exercise, you can stay active, sharp, and feeling great for decades to come. So, start adding more Omega-3s to your diet, make sure you're getting enough Vitamin D, and get moving. Your future self will thank you. And if you need more motivation, just remember this: The best way to defy aging isn't expensive creams or fancy treatments—it's what you put in your body and how you use it. Now, go lift some weights and eat some salmon. Science says it's the secret to staying young.



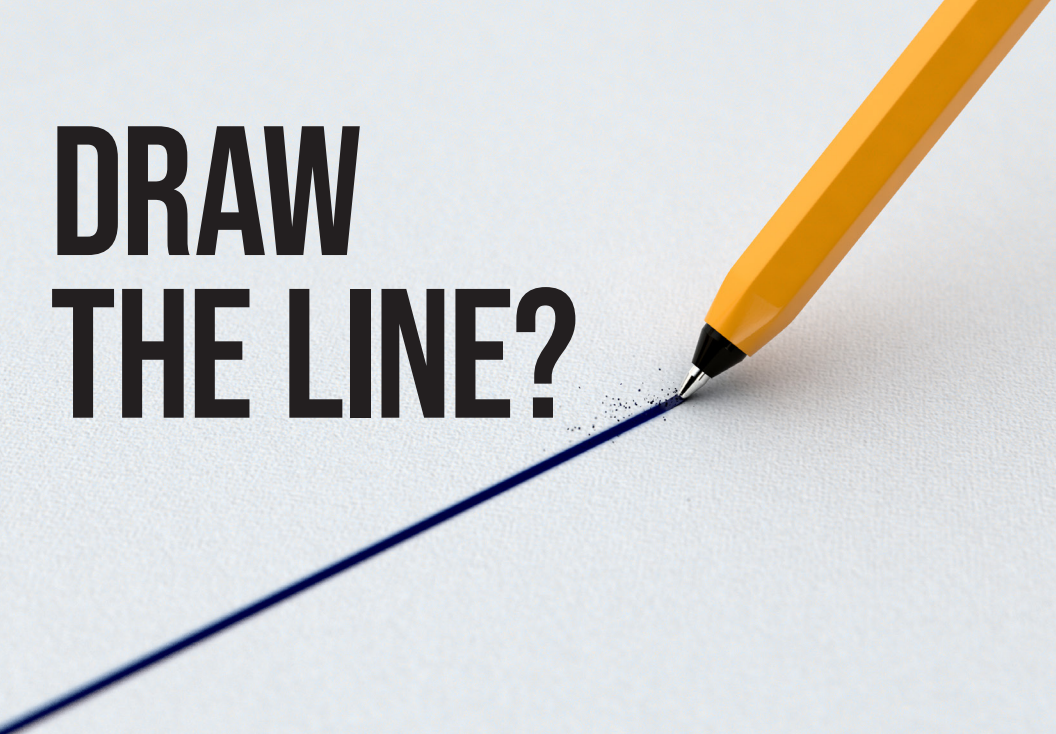
Mareo Mukes is a 58-year-old personal fitness and nutrition coach with over a decade of experience in the industry. Based in West Hollywood, California, he serves as a personal fitness coach at Equinox, where he is dedicated to helping clients achieve their fitness goals. Mareo is also the CEO of COACH(ee), a platform that connects clients with personal trainers. He is a certified functional strength coach, focusing on building strength and wellness for his clients. Active on social media, Mareo shares fitness content on platforms like TikTok, where he operates under the handle @skipfit50s, and YouTube, where he provides guidance to men and women over 50 seeking to improve their health and fitness. His journey has

been marked by resilience, including a return to heavy weightlifting six months post-hip surgery at the age of 55. Mareo's commitment to fitness and wellness continues to inspire and motivate individuals striving for healthier lifestyles. Questions, comments, and/or suggestions? Please contact him at Skipfit9@gmail.com or HMU on IG @MareoMukes, www.trevorjamesla.com.

**WHERE
DO WE**



DRAW THE LINE?

A yellow pencil is positioned diagonally in the upper right corner of the page. It has just finished drawing a solid blue line that starts from the left edge of the page and extends towards the right, ending just below the tip of the pencil. The line is a vibrant blue and has a slightly textured appearance, as if drawn with a dry brush or a fine pencil. The pencil itself is a bright yellow with a black eraser and a black ferrule. The background is a light, neutral gray.

BY SAMPSON McCORMICK

We all have days that we will never forget, that stick out in our minds and will always be easy to recall no matter how much time passes. In this case, March 4, 2023 will always stand out as one of those days. That was a morning that flew by. I remember standing in my wardrobe closet tapping my chin, trying to figure out what to wear while muttering cuss words under my breath in the direction of the iPhone alarm blaring loudly with the reminder to be in place for an interview segment on FOX Soul in about 15 minutes. Although it helps to be well planned, there's a certain thrill that comes along with waiting until the near last minute to get ready. The adrenaline makes whatever needs to be done that much more intense.

Now, with about 12 minutes left, the wool sweater thrown across the center rack seemed to be the ideal option. Since it was going to be a virtual segment, I decided not to wear pants—no one knows the difference on these virtual calls. Although it was always a personal aim to do insightful and well-articulated interviews and media segments, there comes a point where it's so second nature that one no longer thinks about anything beyond the conversation that will occur, or what results may come of any of these media appearances. This was especially one of those times...the thought also never occurred how controversial this segment would end up being.

With a couple of minutes to spare, I slid onto the sitting stool in front of my ring light station and logged onto the studio call to a warm greeting from the segment producers. By this time, I'd been a guest on different FOX Soul programming over half a dozen times. My commentary on sexuality, how black people experience, explore and are learning, what we should understand about sexuality, how our understanding of sexuality is impacted by religion and stigma, race, the black church and the black LGBTQ community was always well received there; and anywhere I was called upon to contribute, for years. Being a comedian helped in the delivery of these sometimes very unpleasant opinions and often truths in ways that allowed both black gay and heterosexual people alike to digest the topics at hand. This would also probably be a great time to admit, for the most part, besides my sexuality, that I easily fit into the mold of what an ideal, traditional black man is in how I carry myself and interact. This has made it much easier to connect with and relate to the black community at large. In fact, even as black, gay people, I've always said "Yes, we are gay—but we are black first."

The truth is, for a long time, and even up 'til now in some ways, the black community has equated "gayness" with whiteness—as if a black gay man in particular (because nobody cares about women being gay) is giving up an important part of themselves (blackness) to have access to a better life because gays are treated better, which couldn't be further from the truth. Not many people stop to think "these folks are black AND also gay...how can that be easy in any way?" However, once we take a moment to clarify that we are black first, it instantly reminds our folks that we are one of them—even if we love and sex differently. Many black people aren't aware that even in the gay community we encounter the same issues of race and prejudice that any other black person does. I'd argue this is even a more passive aggressive occurrence in a lot of more white liberal spaces where equality is preached but at the same time, there exists an intense obsession with black genitalia and many of us, especially taller, more built, dark-skinned brothers are fetishized by some white gays and queer folks who love to suck the meat of our (BBC's: big black cocks) (yuck) in bath houses, the bathrooms of gay clubs and anywhere else they manage to suck or ride one into ecstasy, but will never acknowledge us in bars, on the streets or anywhere else. It's been that way since gay men were dying of AIDS at the height of the AIDS pandemic when black gay men were being edged out of resources, being shunned by their families in illness, dying and being denied funerals by black churches, overlooked by the gay community and stigmatized by raging ignorance in our community.

There's no way anyone could possibly think that black gay and queer people forfeit blackness for an easier existence. When it's broken down like this, and the fact that black gay men like Bayard Rustin, Norris B. Herndon and James

Baldwin were the backbone of the black civil rights movement, more black people are able to understand and embrace the fact that black gay people belong to the black community.

During the segment on FOX Soul's *The Black Report*, the producers and anchors knew what they were getting, and when the tone of the segment, which was fun and lighthearted shifted to discuss the issues of "changing language in the queer community, including pronouns and understanding of gender expression." It really should have been no surprise when I began expressing "Sure, some people are non-binary and these other things, and that's fine—but the reality is when you come outside, it doesn't matter what gender you FEEL like, whatever you LOOK like is how most people will call and respond to you as. Also, most people do believe if you identify as a gender, you probably should model that gender somewhat well—put some effort into it." Not this particular issue, but, issues similar is how I'd spoken for years. "Black people need to stop killing each other—everybody else will follow." "If a bakery doesn't want to make your gay wedding cake, stop begging them to take your money and go find one who will make the cake, they probably could use the money more anyway." "Most black churches are Sunday morning gay bars." "Yes, your pastor that's telling you that you're going to hell for being gay is on Grindr cruising for dick when he's out of town." "Yes, it's OK to date and sleep with HIV-positive people," and a few other things that throughout time, people seemed to find shocking simply because it was an honest and usually practical truth. None of this was to be mean, dismissive or insensitive, but to express the reality of the world outside of bubbles like LA, San Francisco and New York City, especially outside of the gay/queer community itself where WE still struggle with these everchanging social politics and ideologies—and if WE don't understand or even in some cases agree with it, then we certainly would be delusional to think that people outside of our community would "get it."

Hesitating for a moment before continuing on, I shared an experience that I'd had at a Target in Oakland where someone who was CLEARLY, CLEARLY a grown ass white man, who looked like a dump truck driving version of Piers Morgan was standing in the middle of an aisle. Attempting to try and get by, I politely say "Excuse me, sir," with a reaction that indicated they'd clearly been triggered, this person spins around and snaps "I'M...I'M A MA'AM!" Now listen, nothing really shocks me in these streets, but that sort of did and it was agitating. The first thought that came to mind was that the loud, angry, aggressive response was unwarranted and second, after it processed, that this Mick Foley looking ass man was saying "I'M A MA'AM!" I thought "I know the fuck you're lying." And the reality is, anybody would've thought the same thing, no matter how "progressive" or open minded one is in practice or claims to be.

Who knows what was going on with that person, perhaps that had happened several times that day and that was the last straw that got pulled on that aisle, it's hard to know, but it pissed me off a little, sitting there rehashing the incident during this discussion on this segment. "How was I supposed to know?!" I asked. "He...excuse me, THEY, (because I really was trying not to misgender this person again on air and using "THEY" probably did anyway) didn't have on no sundress or kitten heels or nothing!" Perhaps I was shit talking a little bit, but was being honest and really meant no harm. The general consensus of responses from viewers was agreement, "This stuff is all just too much to keep up with." and relief "Many of us are thinking this, but it's not safe to say it."



This was genuinely the intention, to create honest dialogue, because dialogue mends issues that we have in our communities and society. However, not just with this issue, but with many others, it seems we have arrived to the point that rather than accept that it's OK to live in a world where we have different opinions and people may say things and have views that don't make us feel good, it doesn't mean that we need to go around trying to beat people into submission. Within 12 hours and around 3 million views, tons of tags, shares, tweets and any other kind of way that people spread outrage, the response to what was said proved my point. Decades of being in the streets with and for the LGBTQ community, Entertaining the community and being someone who demonstrated love to the community in every way, all seemed to go overlooked. In an act of attempting to beat me into submission, several queer activists rallied around making sure that upcoming gigs I had in the LGBTQ community were cancelled and there was an overall smear campaign. No attempts at dialogue, real conversations or reconciliation, only efforts to destroy.

As a person who'd been in the trenches for marriage equality, trans rights (before we really understood what that was), LGBTQ youth homelessness, working to make churches more inclusive, and so many other things to name—the response from many and the level of hatred (not disagreement) pure evil that came with it, made it hard for me to want to associate with the community, particularly as an advocate ever again. If this is coming from someone in the community who has worked directly in, with and a part of it, it shouldn't be hard to imagine the



growing level of resentment that the general public who probably had no connection to the community was starting to feel about it. This is all because we were no longer making an effort to connect with hearts and minds, but to dictate control—which will never garner allies or achieve progress. Additionally, this situation offered another lesson (giving myself grace because it was hard to find much coming back from many people): just because someone has an opinion that we don't agree with or "doesn't make us feel good" doesn't mean this is a bad person, we simply have different views. There are plenty of people who say all the correct things, but you look into what they are DOING and it betrays any character that their mouth claims they have. A great example was finding out a couple of the same activists who were out to humiliate anyone with a different opinion or wouldn't "bow" to them, were stealing money from organizations that they were a part of, or had started online fundraising campaigns for children who were victims of hate crimes, but instead of turning the money over, kept it.

This is where a lot of our nuance has been lost, in thinking that it's simply what someone says that makes them good or bad. Sure, words matter, but action and behavior are where the real principles are executed and displayed. Many

of us probably have a cousin or brother who'll call us "fags" or tease us, pretty heavily and obnoxiously about being gay, but that same relative would be the first person to fight for you out in the street if anyone else did it. You may have an aunt, who, if you ask "What do you think about gay marriage?" might respond "I believe that marriage is one man and one woman," but she'd still attend your gay ass wedding and sends plates back home to your partner whenever you visit, she's not homophobic, she simply has her own views. This is where connection starts and becomes effective, connecting beyond the differences that make the world and who we all are, complex, varied, but ultimately still the same. The more we leave room for others to be themselves, they give us that in return. Being able to be so OK with ourselves, that it's OK if someone else isn't OK with all of it, is where we fully find self-acceptance, and in an age of social media where we have given the false idea that people should be exactly how we want or we do away with them, is where we instead, learn to have healthier human connections with ourselves and in our community. That's what accepting nuance helps us to create. Lastly, a sense of humor will always be important—it helps us process the challenges of life and all of its complexities, keeps us honest and resilient.

So, where do we draw the line? At not being able to handle the truth and that line is drawn, now.

Sampson McCormick is an award winning comedian, trailblazer, film producer, and global citizen. You'll love it here!

TOUCH STARVATION AMONG MEN

AN UNSPOKEN CRISIS

BY TREVOR JAMES



INTRODUCTION TO TOUCH STARVATION AMONG MEN

Imagine living in a world where a simple hug, a pat on the back, or a comforting touch on the arm is scarce—almost non-existent. This is the reality for many men who are touch starved and suffering in silence. The issue of touch deprivation is far more common than we might think, and its impact is profound, often leading to severe mental and physical health issues. Unfortunately, it remains an unspoken crisis, with many not even understanding the concept of being touch starved or what it means to be touch deprived.

Being touch starved is not about sexual deprivation. It's about the lack of human touch—a basic need essential for our wellbeing. As humans, we are wired to be social creatures. We thrive on connection, communication, and yes, contact. When these are absent, it brings about a state of touch starvation, one that can be deeply detrimental to our overall health.

The situation is particularly dire for men due to societal norms and expectations. The idea that men should be tough, stoic, and independent often discourages them from seeking the physical contact they need, thus leading to a state of touch deprivation.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF TOUCH STARVATION

What is touch starved? What does touch deprived mean? The term 'touch starvation' or 'touch deprivation' refers to the state of receiving less human touch than one needs for optimal health and wellbeing. It's a phenomenon that occurs when a person experiences little to no physical contact over extended periods. Scientifically speaking, humans are social animals that need physical touch, just as they need air, water, and food.

Touch starvation is not about craving physical touch in a sexual context. It's about the need for non-sexual, platonic physical contact—holding hands, hugging, a pat on the back, a comforting touch on the arm, or a friendly handshake. These forms of contact are essential for emotional wellbeing and are a fundamental aspect of human interaction.

The concept is often misunderstood or overlooked, especially when it comes to men. In a society that often discourages men from displaying vulnerability or seeking comfort, understanding the reality of being touch starved can be a challenge. However, acknowledging this issue is the first step in addressing the crisis.

WHY MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE TOUCH STARVED

The issue of touch starvation is especially prevalent among men. Societal norms and expectations often discourage men from seeking the physical contact they need, leading to a higher incidence of touch deprivation. But why is this the case?

The stereotype that men should be “tough” and “unemotional” often prevents them from expressing their need for physical contact. The societal expectation that men should always be strong and independent can lead them to suppress their craving for physical touch. This lack of physical touch can result in feelings of isolation, loneliness, and depression.

Furthermore, the fear of being perceived as weak or needy can deter men from seeking physical contact. This can create a vicious cycle where men become increasingly touch deprived, further exacerbating feelings of loneliness and isolation. Therefore, it's crucial to break this cycle and challenge the societal norms that contribute to touch starvation among men.



Then there is the sexualization of touch in society, where touch is easily misinterpreted to be a sexual advance and men are the predators. To prove that they are not making any sexual advances, men avoid touch altogether.

Homophobia also prevents men from touching each other. It is very normal for women to touch each other multiple times during a conversation, but for men, the wrong type of touch could be seen as an indication that they might be gay, and so to avoid being labeled gay, men don't touch each other.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF BEING TOUCH STARVED

How do you know if someone is touch starved? What are the touch starved symptoms? The signs and symptoms can vary from person to person, but some common indicators can help identify if someone is dealing with touch starvation.

One of the most evident signs someone is touch starved is a craving for physical touch. This does not necessarily mean in a sexual context but could manifest as a longing for platonic touch, like hugging, holding hands, or cuddling.

People who are touch starved might also display heightened sensitivity to touch. They may react more intensely to physical contact, whether it's a hug, a pat on the back, or even a handshake.

Mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and feelings of loneliness can also indicate that someone is touch starved. Lack of physical contact can lead to feelings of isolation, which can exacerbate mental health issues. Therefore, if someone appears to be struggling with these issues, they may be dealing with touch starvation.

THE IMPACT OF TOUCH DEPRIVATION ON MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Touch deprivation can have severe implications for both mental and physical health. On a psychological level, being touch starved can lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression. It can also increase stress levels and contribute to anxiety disorders.

Physically, a lack of physical touch can result in a weakened immune system. Studies have shown that physical contact can help boost our immunity, making us more resilient to illnesses and diseases. Therefore, being touch deprived can leave us more susceptible to getting sick.

Furthermore, touch deprivation can affect our sleep patterns. Physical touch, especially in the form of hugs or cuddling, can help release oxytocin, a hormone that promotes

relaxation and sleep. Therefore, a lack of physical contact can result in insomnia or other sleep disorders.



UNDERSTANDING AFFECTION STARVATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Closely related to touch starvation is the concept of affection starvation. Affection starved individuals crave emotional intimacy and connectedness but struggle to find it in their relationships. This can occur in romantic relationships, friendships, or family relationships. Like touch starvation, affection deprivation can have detrimental effects on our mental and physical wellbeing.

Affection deprived individuals often struggle with feelings of loneliness and isolation. They may feel disconnected from others and struggle to form meaningful relationships. This can lead to mental health issues like depression and anxiety and can negatively impact their overall quality of life.

The lack of affection can also hinder our ability to form secure attachments. This

can lead to relationship issues and difficulties in forming meaningful connections with others. Therefore, addressing affection starvation is just as crucial as addressing touch starvation.

TOUCH DEPRIVATION SCALE: A TOOL TO IDENTIFY TOUCH STARVATION

To help identify if someone is touch starved, psychologists have developed a tool known as the touch deprivation scale. This scale measures the extent to which an individual feels deprived of non-sexual, physical contact. It assesses factors like the frequency of physical contact, the desire for more touch, and the extent to which the lack of touch is distressing for the individual.

The touch deprivation scale can be a useful tool in identifying touch starvation and facilitating discussions around the need for more physical contact. It can help individuals recognize their need for touch and seek help if necessary.

COPING STRATEGIES FOR THOSE STRUGGLING WITH TOUCH STARVATION

So, what can you do if you or someone you know is touch starved? There are several coping strategies that can help alleviate feelings of touch starvation.

Firstly, it's essential to acknowledge the need for physical touch. Recognizing and accepting that you are touch starved can be a significant first step towards addressing the issue.

Secondly, seek out opportunities for physical contact. This could be as simple as hugging a friend, holding hands with a loved one, seeing a cuddle professional, or even getting a massage. Physical contact with pets can also provide comfort and alleviate feelings of touch starvation.

Finally, if you're not comfortable with physical touch or if it's not possible due to circumstances, consider alternatives like weighted blankets that can provide a sense of comfort and security.

HOW TO COMBAT THE CRISIS OF TOUCH STARVATION AMONG MEN

Combating touch starvation among men involves challenging societal norms and encouraging men to seek the physical contact they need. This could involve promoting open discussions about the importance of touch and encouraging men to express their need for physical contact.

It also involves understanding the difference between platonic and sexual touch and promoting the importance of non-sexual, physical contact. Encouraging men to seek out platonic touch can help alleviate feelings of touch starvation.

Finally, it involves creating safe spaces where men can express their need for

touch without fear of judgment or ridicule. This can help break down the societal barriers that often deter men from seeking physical contact.

SEEKING PROFESSIONAL HELP: ADDRESSING TOUCH DEPRIVATION

In some cases, professional help may be necessary to address touch deprivation.

Therapists and counselors can provide valuable tools and strategies to cope with touch starvation and can help individuals navigate their feelings around touch.



Professional cuddling services can also provide a safe, non-judgmental space for those craving physical touch. If you or

someone you know is struggling with touch starvation, consider reaching out to a professional. Call or text Trevor at 213.588.4242 to schedule a cuddle session.

CONCLUSION: THE UNSPOKEN CRISIS OF TOUCH STARVATION AMONG MEN

Touch starvation among men is an unspoken crisis with profound implications for mental and physical health. It's high time we start acknowledging this issue and taking steps to address it.

Whether it's promoting open discussions about touch, challenging societal norms, or seeking professional help, there are several ways to combat touch starvation. Remember, there is no shame in needing physical touch. It is a basic human need, just like food, water, and air.

Let's work together to address this crisis and create a world where no one has to suffer in silence from being touch starved.

Trevor James is a touch and cuddle therapist, intimacy coach, masseur, and sacred intimate based in Hollywood, Los Angeles. With a deep understanding of the power of connection, Trevor helps men navigate challenges around intimacy, sexuality, and spirituality. His compassionate and professional approach creates a safe space for clients to explore their needs, heal emotional wounds, and rediscover their authentic selves. Offering services such as massage therapy, cuddle therapy, and sacred intimacy, Trevor integrates body-centered practices with emotional and spiritual insights to foster growth and transformation. His mission is to help clients feel seen, heard, and empowered to build meaningful relationships—with themselves and others. When he's not working with clients, Trevor enjoys traveling, exploring the performing arts, and creating content to destigmatize professional intimacy services.



EXPLORING THE WORLD WITH **PRIDE**

THE IMPORTANCE OF LGBTQ+ TRAVEL

BY GREGORY PATTERSON



CST 2016320

Traveling is a transformative experience that allows individuals to broaden their horizons, embrace new cultures, and create lifelong memories. For the LGBTQ+ community, travel holds an even deeper significance as it provides an opportunity for self-expression, and the chance to explore destination that celebrate diversity and inclusivity.

One of the most crucial factors for LGBTQ+ travelers is the safety and acceptance they encounter in their chosen destination. LGBTQ+ individuals often face discrimination, prejudice, and even legal challenges in various parts of the world. Consequently, they seek out destinations that have progressive laws, policies, and cultural attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. These destinations not only provide a sense of security but also foster an environment where travelers can openly express their identities without fear of judgement or persecution.

There are places around the world that are welcoming to LGBTQ+ travelers, but several cities tend to continually top the charts of the most queer-friendly destinations.



BARCELONA, SPAIN

Spain is one of the most progressive countries in the world for LGBTQ+ rights where queer folks have the rights to marry, adopt, serve in the military, change gender, and donate blood. Barcelona's gayborhood is well worth a visit. L'Eixample (lovingly known locally as Gaixample) is home to iconic gay bars such as Punto BCN, Moeem, Night Barcelona, and drag shows at El Cangrejo. Travelers can visit Gaudi's unfinished church, La Sagrada Familia.

PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO

Since the 1960s this year-round Mexican beach destination has been welcoming LGBTQ+ travelers. The beach-front Blue Chair Resort was one of the first gay bars in town and continues to be the top spot for leisurely beach days surrounded by other queer travelers. Mr. Flamingos is the place to sing and dance the night away to pop hits from the 90s, early aughts, and current Top 40 ballads. Puerto Vallarta has a growing lesbian scene with specialized events during Puerto Vallarta Gay Pride for queer women hosted by PV Lesbian Pride and year-round events at the lesbian-owned-and-operated Elixir Misology in the gayborhood of Zona Romantica.

For a complete list of LGBTQ+ Friendly Hotels, Resorts, and Cruise Lines, contact Gregory Patterson at dcn431@aol.com.

Poetic Melody

Eau De Parfum

Flirtatious Rhythmic Romance



balmori balmori

New York ~ Atlanta ~ Italy

LeDRAPE: A ROMANTIC POETIC ROMANCE

HERITAGE | MODERN | INNOVATIVE

It's a unique fragrance that resonates like a poetic melody, blending notes that move effortlessly in a flirtatious dance—inviting every wearer to embody their confidence, allure, and irresistible magnetism.

Created by Balmori, an artisan olfactory perfumery independently founded by Otis and Timothy Daniels Knight, LeDRAPE balances heritage and modernity in this beautiful olfactive creation of harmony and balance.

Housing blends of passion fruits, exotic florals, and sensual woods, it offers an intimate presence—a must-have accessory for the lover of fine perfumery.

Discover more at balmoribalmori.com