

The title of your first book is *One More River to Cross*, and that's also the title of your talk at the UO. What are you going to tell the students?

Well you know, I have spent a lot of time talking about intersection of race, sexuality and politics. That's what I'm going to be talking about when I get to Oregon as well. In this election season when there's so much going on in the national level, issues of gender and race and sexual orientation are front and center as well.

What kind of a country would we like to build together?

Where would we like to be? What kind of country would be like to build together? These aren't left-right, liberal-conservative issues; these are just issues about America. Is it going to be a country where everyone is included and there's freedom to debate?

Let's talk election. On your blog, you write about all of the candidates, and you give advice to John Edwards to be more of a fighter. You experienced Hillary Rodham Clinton when you worked in the Bill Clinton White House. Who's your candidate? What about all of their stances on same-sex marriage?

I actually do not have a candidate preference right now. I'm just doing a series of articles on my website [www.keithboykin.com], where I profile them and talk about pros and cons of each. As you noticed, lately I've been offering unsolicited advice to Hillary, Barack and John Edwards. I'd like all of the candidates, maybe with the exception of Dennis Kucinich, to do more on the issues.

I went to law school with Barack, and I feel like he's more gay-friendly than his position indicates. But if he wants to be the candidate of change, I want him to be more out there and be more supportive of change on LGBT issues, for example. And I feel the same way about other candidates, too. This is the time when the candidates are supposed to be pressured by the base, and the base is supposed to push the candidates as far as they can. When the nominations are over and the general election cycle begins, they won't be spending as much time talking to the base. If there's any hope to influence where the candidate ends up, the time is now.

Tell me about the National Black Justice Coalition.

First I should tell you I'm not a member of the board anymore. I was the founder of the organization and the first board president, but I retired last year from black LGBT activism. I'm not speaking for the organization, just to be clear.

It started primarily so that black people and LGBT people could come together and discuss their common concerns, so we could bridge the gap that divides the communities by using black LGBT voices to do so. In December of 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Court issued an opinion essentially legalizing same-sex marriage, and then black ministers in Massachusetts convened to speak against same-sex marriage. They were represented not only as speaking for

the black community but speaking from the perspective of those who were in the civil rights movement.

We came out to say hold on, that's not the case. Other people in the black community understand the connection between the black struggle and the gay struggle, understand Dr. King's message about "an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

We should be concerned about the partition of civil rights to include one group and not another. ... Some ministers are so busy buying ATMs for their churches and buying Bentleys that they are not paying attention to the concerns of the community, but more importantly, they're not paying attention to or don't understand the legacy of the civil rights tradition they seek to inherit. Dr. King didn't own a Bentley or Rolls; Dr. King didn't build an ATM in his church. He didn't die a rich man. Dr. King spent his life working for what he thought was good and right. He understood the interconnection of these issues. ... I think he would turn over in his grave to see people misquoting and misconstruing him.

I know this is an annoying question from a white lesbian, but in your opinion, what does the white LGBT movement need to do to show some solidarity with civil rights for African Americans?

There's so much. It's kind of related to what I said before. The white LGBT community needs to go beyond the boundaries of white LGBT concerns. If we're only talking about gay issues, why should we expect anybody else to take concern with our community or our issues? That said, I think the white LGBT community needs to diversify its ranks and leadership. It's disturbing and troubling that in so many communities where there are people of color, the primary faces we see are the usual suspects. The people we see in the media tend to be overwhelmingly white as well. Yes, this is a white majority country, but there's also diversity. If we want people of color who are not gay to understand the range and complexity of issues that face gay people, it's important that they see that there are people of color who are gay.

Tell us about the projects — the movie and the book — you're working on.

The movie is *Dirty Laundry*. It's scheduled to debut during the holiday season. It is a first of its kind story about a black family dealing with a black gay member. I don't want to spoil too much of it, but we were able to get well-known black actors to be involved in and play major roles in this film. Bobby Jones, who does a popular gospel hour, is one of the people in the film. You wouldn't expect to see people like that in a film that deals with homosexuality, but these issues are bubbling to the surface. We've had 25 years of HIV and AIDS, and more recently controversies about the down low.

It's a film whose time has come. It's time for people in the black community to deal with homosexuality, and for larger society to understand that the black community does deal with homosexuality.

And your book?

Actually, I'm working on two books, and I haven't figured out which one's going to come out first. I think it will be *Black Enough*, which is a discussion on what it

means to be black and who gets to decide and define that. Why is it that culture is defined by rappers and thugs and athletes, and not by ordinary people, people who get up and go to work and come home and pay their taxes and send their kids to school? They're more a reflection of community than people who are using the b-word and the h-word and the n-word every night on television.

Who defines black? Can you be just as down for the cause if you're gay and black as if you're not gay and you're black? We need to pull up the rug on these issues and say what they mean.

Speaking of the down low, let's talk about your book *Beyond the Down Low*. You know, nobody said Sen. Larry Craig was on the down low.

Nor did they say that about the governor of New Jersey, Jim McGreevey, when he came out. He was a married man with children, sleeping with men on the side — a classic definition of the down low. When white people do it, we talk about it and just go on. But when black people do it, we want to pathologize it.

Eugene is overwhelmingly white. This year, the MLK Committee brought the Rev. Walter Fauntroy, who worked with Dr. King but who has supported a Constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. Some on the Eugene City Council wanted to withdraw city support for Fauntroy's speech, and it led to a lot of controversy.

What about the black LGBT people in Eugene? They'd be the perfect people to talk about an issue like that. I see this kind of thing all of the time; it's a common phenomenon, and it happens often in places where there are not a lot of people of color.

I was in Boulder a couple of weeks ago, giving a speech to Boulder County AIDS Project. At the benefit auction, there was a motor scooter, a kind called the "Buddy," and

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the auctioneer noted that the motor scooter was black. He said, "If you buy this scooter, you can tell your friends that you're riding on your black buddy." I spoke to him later, and he said someone else told him to tell that joke, and he didn't think it would be a problem.

The absence of familiarity creates problems where people say and do things they wouldn't do if they knew more of a diversity of people. And not just like the man who cleans up the tennis court, but somebody you really have a relationship with and you can talk to. We would all learn more if we had more chances to interact.

It seems to me like you might feel the weight or the burden of being a spokesperson for black America to white gay communities, and for LGBT people to African American communities. I take it that means you're often asked to speak in October and in February.

