

Take a Breather: Avoiding Post-Midterm Despair and Complacency

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Written for Cutis Lipscomb, LGBT Detroit

My religious teachings tell me that I should not be fearful. However, real and tangible fear should always be met head on. I struggle with that. On voting day, which has come and gone, there are two fears that I confess I faced:

First, I fear that if progressive values do prevail, a sense of complacency will invade our community. After all of the hard work that we have done canvassing, calling, advocating, speaking and getting out the vote, a win could create a false sense of security. If so, movement toward the more just and equal society we hope for could be stalled. Even with preferred elected officials in office, victory still requires us to engage the public and work toward significant legislation that solidifies and protects progressive values in our country.

Secondly, if the election didn't bring about the win for which we had been working so hard, that despair and despondency would extinguish the flame of hope that was burning before.

Either way, I know that we cannot give into despair. As a descendant of enslaved Americans, I can attest that misery had to be tackled for centuries. We cannot lose hope. We must continue to band together, work strategically, unite and support one another as we work to advance progressive values. Regardless of the outcome of the midterm elections, our community requires spaces to gather, to celebrate, to grieve, to plan, to connect and to feel safe as we brave the next chapter in our country.

A Safe Space, A Brave Space

I am the executive director of LGBT Detroit, and we are preparing for this next phase in community and legislative advocacy with our #SafeBraveSpace campaign. With the newly acquired space on Greenfield Road, we want the unique ability to offer a physical structure where the hope and direction needed can occur.

For area activists, we want to offer a place where they can gather and inspire the movement. For the questioning, we want to offer a space where it is safe to be inquisitive. For those who suffer loneliness, we want to offer connections.

Organizing around the crisis of urban African-American LGBT issues remains a heightened priority. The loss of life caused by disease, trauma or depression, has to be addressed culturally and effectively to a distinct population.

Regardless of the political climate of the time, with the new #SafeBraveSpace, we can expand the critical direct services to the LGBT residents in both the city of Detroit and surrounding areas for individuals. Direct services such as educational programming designed for questioning teenagers and young adults, legislative advocacy to encourage voter participation and social gatherings designed to combat loneliness are but some of the immediate types of offerings planned.

This safe, brave space will also serve as a location for current and newly elected officials to offer meaningful forums held consistently so that the LGBT option leaders of Detroit can directly share concerns and welcomed officials can offer means to participate in the success of their LGBT constituents.

We are in the first phase of transforming our newly acquired space into a place for the community with the hope of opening to the public in Spring 2019. The site has ample space for administration, volunteer activities, small events and client-centered programs. Planning has already begun to partner with individuals, civic groups, foundations and corporate partners to create a hub of social and economic opportunities for area residents. For those interested in being a part of the creation of this Safe Brave Space, please visit lgbtdetroit.org and sign up to volunteer or invest in its success.

By avoiding the complacency or despair we may feel after the elections, let's take a collective breath and come together. Let us also address our physical and emotional well-being and provide accessible spaces to tackle the challenging issues for individuals and the community at large with a Safe Brave Space within Detroit.