

# **WE WHO FEEL DIFFERENTLY**

## **INTERVIEWS**

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### **An Interview with Kenyon Farrow**

**February 22, 2011**

**Kenyon's home in New York City**

**Kenyon Farrow:** My name is Kenyon Farrow. We are in Brooklyn, New York City where I have lived for the last twelve years. I am originally from Cleveland. For the last five years I have worked in different capacities within the organization *Queers for Economic Justice*. *QEJ* does community organizing, advocacy, research, leadership development, and work on economic justice issues that impact the LGBT community in the United States. What you often see in terms of the gay and lesbian community here reflects many wealthy, often white gay men and lesbians, the Ellen's and "Will and Grace" people of the world. We do not often hear a lot about poor, homeless, working class, low income LGBT folks in the U.S. and especially people of color, so our organization does work on those issues as they impact that aspect of our community. I have also been involved in HIV prevention work for a number of years, have done organizing work around the prison system in the U.S. and around homophobic violence. Writing and editing is part of my work as well.

**Carlos Motta:** When was *Queers for Economic Justice* founded?

**KF:** *Queers for Economic Justice* was founded about ten years ago by a group of advocates and activists who saw the mainstream LGBT movement was moving more toward the right in terms of its politics. At the same time they we were seeing more poor LGBT folks in New York City showing up in welfare offices, in the shelter system, and having particular kinds of challenges, so *QEJ* was initially a network of people and organizations in 1999 that were trying to figure out how to do work and advocate on behalf of low income and homeless LGBT and queer people in New York City. It was a unique organization and a lot of the initial founders including Joseph Defilippis, who is the founding Executive Director, found it difficult to get a lot of the work done in network coalition where everybody had to go back home to their original organizations in order to make decisions. The organization was officially incorporated in 2002 and has been an official non-profit for about eight years.

Initially the organization worked on homelessness and welfare as its primary issues. Many people do not think about welfare and public assistance in the U.S. and how it impacts low-income LGBT people. In 1997, the federal government passed the *Welfare Reform Act*, which ended public assistance, and welfare, as we once knew it. Part of that policy change created a situation where there was more money being put into marriage promotion for low-income women in order to get their public assistance benefits to take care of their children as well as

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forcing women to have to identify biological fathers on birth certificates in order to get those benefits as well. If you are a lesbian with children and don't have contact with the father anymore, or you had a baby in an arrangement where it was understood that that man was not going to be a primary caretaker of that child, naming him on the birth certificate so that the State could go after him for child support payments didn't make any sense, so they found themselves in a catch-22. *QEJ* was really formed because of some of those issues. Because it was such a unique voice in the world, it ended up having more national reach as an organization because there were so few organizations working specifically on homelessness, and welfare, and those of kinds of issues as they pertain to LGBT people.

**CM:** The name of the organization is striking, *Queers for Economic Justice*, because it could have been called *LGBT for Equality*, for example. It is an important distinction in 1999 to identify as queer instead of LGBT, and to demand economic justice as opposed to equality. Can you speak about this and how the organization positions itself theoretically or ideologically?

**KF:** The name *Queers for Economic Justice* was intentionally chosen because the founders wanted to make sure we were talking about these issues in terms of a queer politics and queer political ends versus an LGBT lens. People sometimes use the term "queer" to be all encompassing of different sexual orientations and gender identities. It is also about actually naming the lesbian and gay rights movement as a product that is about assimilating into what already exists in terms of a well-fed, well-scrubbed, middle class, bourgeoisie with white values, and the term "queer" being a politic that values the different ways in which the community is gendered and made up of different people of color who use a range of other terms that aren't necessarily gay and lesbian terms. It also says it is okay to be "deviant," that you do not have to assimilate to a more "normal" model in order to be accepted.

"Economic justice" was chosen versus, say, "economic empowerment," or "equality" because *QEJ* has an anti-capitalist, and socialist lens in terms of how it sees economic justice. We are not talking about ways in which to assimilate poor, low-income, or queer people into the dominant capitalist system or framework. We are talking about wealth redistribution largely, and though we sometimes are working very specifically on local policies that impact low-income LGBT people in order to make conditions better for negotiating some of the systems poor people have to negotiate, we also understand that it is morally objectionable that people are poor in a country that has so much wealth, and we understand poverty as systemic and institutionalized, rather than only about getting people training to be able to access better jobs, or education. In a situation where the labor movement has been gutted in a lot of ways by the right, what we are seeing in Wisconsin right now to us in terms of public workers losing, or threatening to have their benefits cut while their right to collectively bargain is being undermined, we see these as queer issues and central to how we see the world.

**CM:** What organizations are your strategies modeled on, if any?

**KF:** Some of the founders of *Queers for Economic Justice* are older activists who actually come from the left of the 1960s and 1970s. Amber Hollibaugh for instance, who is the current Interim Executive Director, was a civil rights organizer and tried to join the *Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee* (SNCC) when she was very young. She moved into the queer liberation movement once that began to formulate in the early 1970s. A lot of that work was leftist work in a queer context, but was not a project of assimilation. We also have people who

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came on in the 1980s through the more radical formations of the AIDS movement as well, so a lot of our folks come from those trajectories, which informed how *QEJ* politically was situated as opposed to becoming an equality or economic opportunity kind of organization.

**CM:** How is *Queers for Economic Justice* funded?

**KF:** Private foundations and individual donors primarily fund *QEJ*. It is a challenge because our name is *Queers for Economic Justice*, and not many funding organizations even in the progressive world understand or even support what we do or how we think about the world and how it functions. We have struggled for years to in order to fund the work we do, articulate why economic justice issues matter to queer people that how we actually do the work matters. It is not just an organization where we are advocating on an issue that does not have any connection to a larger base that is not intimately involved in the community that we work in, and folks' lives in a particular way.

This kind of organizing strategy and work takes longer in some respects to do, and we are not just an organization that is just going to write a bunch of policy papers and do legislative advocacy in absence of actually being able to also organize and do leadership development amongst a base, so that work looks really different from larger organizations with more resources where their base is just their e-mail list, or the people that write checks for twenty five or fifty dollars a year to become "members." We want people to write us those checks too, and larger ones, but we see membership in a much more direct relationship way. This influences any kind of political work we do. It is a challenge with a lot of funders and an increasing situation where philanthropy is concerned with measurable goals and measurable outcomes and are introducing corporate-nonprofit lingo for how work should happen and how to measure specific kinds of social change, which I think is a lot of bunk.

**CM:** It also seems to me that the mission of *Queers for Economic Justice* is completely opposed to current mainstream LGBT agendas and organizing. You seem to be concerned with very different types of issues that are not trying to represent a singular community, but rather perhaps communities in plural?

**KF:** *QEJ* is opposed to the four-pillar mainstream issues of the U.S. LGBT movement including: marriage equality, "Don't Ask Don't Tell," hate crimes inclusion, and the employment non-discrimination rights.

First of all marriage equality is an issue that primarily benefits upper class, wealthy, often white gays and lesbians who have property or health insurance that they want to give their partner. If you are a poor queer with no health insurance or no job to speak of, and certainly no property, marriage as the singular issue in the way that it has framed as the panacea for all that ills the LGBT community doesn't work. We know many poor straight people who are married for whom marriage did not bring about any major economic shifts. We also see that kind of marriage equality movement tied to a conservative, and neo-conservative agenda around privatization, so that the state itself can take less responsibility for helping people through different kinds of social safety net programs. If everybody is supposed to be married and all of your social and economic needs are taken care of in your home then the state owes you nothing. This is what we are seeing in Wisconsin with the pension debate, where a neo conservative movement is advancing that agenda so we are opposed to marriage on those standpoints.

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We are also opposed to dropping the ban on gays in the military and advocating for gay inclusion in the military because of the impact of the military industrial complex on the U.S. budgets, where about half of the U.S. budget comes down to military spending, and can be cut from major portions of how much money is available to help people with health care and a range of other needs. We are also opposed to what the military and U.S. war machine does in other countries. Supporting human rights of gays and lesbians in the U.S. does not make any sense alongside being able and kill, maim, and destroy gays and lesbians in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and the many places where the U.S. is doing all kinds of imperialist military operations.

This is similar to our position toward hate crime legislation in terms of expanding the prison system in the U.S., which is already the largest the world has ever seen in human civilization and primarily impacts people of color, including queer people who were locked up.

The “Employee Non-Discrimination Act,” finally, is not a real plan towards economic justice. It is not talking about livable wages or economic sustainability; it is merely a plan for working people to figure out some legal system for filing discrimination cases. We see, in terms of race, religion, or gender, that discrimination cases are actually quite difficult to win and we are opposed to the mainstream movement.

**CM:** Can you speak about your recent writing regarding “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” countering the argument that military jobs offer opportunities to LGBT people?

**KF:** When I tell people that myself and *Q EJ* as an organization oppose the lifting of the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” ban, they argue that many poor and working class LGBT folks rely on the military for those jobs and to get out of poverty, or to fund education. I understand people join the military for these reasons however, I think it is immoral that the largest federal jobs program in the United States is the military. That is an absurd reality and does not solve the actual problem.

Additionally, what if we consider being in the several wars we are in right now and the number of soldiers who come back with post traumatic stress disorder, physical disabilities or the pervasive rape and sexual assault occurring in the military particularly targeting women. We do not have data around how many of those women are targeted because they are queer or perceived to be, or how many men are targeted for sexual assault and rape because they are perceived to be queer. I am looking at the mirative ways that devastate people in the military and how the material conditions of serving in the military create poverty. Think about the numbers of homeless veterans and people who come back with various kinds of disabilities caused by their military service, as well as the specific acts of violence the military perpetuates into different places around the world. Particularly in the case of the Middle East right now, queer people become targeted under fueled fundamental/nationalist backlashes, so the idea that the military is kind of an answer to an economic justice question is really a shallow answer.

**CM:** Your organization seems to work very closely with communities creating educational programs, self-empowerment and positive self-perceptions. Can you speak about the situation of homeless queers in New York, or in the U.S.? What is happening and how is *Q EJ* approaching this question?

**KF:** In the United States we have a homeless queer population that is nothing short of a national crisis. When you look at New York City, we certainly know that among queer LGBT

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youth, conservative numbers say thirty percent, other numbers say half of all homeless youth in New York City identify as LGBT or queer. When you look at the national numbers they are very similar, about twenty percent on the low end to forty percent on the high end of homeless youth in the U.S. identifying as queer youth. This is not an issue included in any national LGBT movement conversation right now despite the numbers suggest an actual crisis.

To combat one of the challenges we face at *QEI* in respect to homelessness, we work specifically in the adult shelter system in New York City. The only data collected about LGBT homelessness is about youth, but we also feel one of the things that happens in the U.S. in the LGBT movement is people give lip-service to the crisis of LGBT youth homelessness while no funding is really applied to a major effort to stem it. Disconnected people think it is okay if there are people who are homeless at sixteen, because they will somehow end up in a graduate MBA program at Harvard at twenty-five. That is just not the reality, that there becomes an ability to get out of out of poverty once they reach adulthood isn't true. If you are homeless at eighteen, you are likely to be homeless at twenty-five or to have various kinds of housing instability throughout your life.

First we train a team of facilitators who run support groups in the adult shelter system in New York City. In addition to doing those trainings, we hold "Train the Trainers" workshops, to train members of the community to provide support. Being homeless, you are so far removed from generally being able to participate in certain kinds of places and institutions in society, but also being queer because so much of the LGBT infrastructure is based in places of commerce such as bars and clubs, gay coffee shops, bookshops, and restaurants. We have seen over the last ten or fifteen years people increasingly becoming targeted when they occupy these places but are not buying things. I have been in gay coffee shops where queer kids, mostly black and Latino are hanging out and if they are not buying something at that moment they are kicked out.

Folks get marginalized so actually being in the shelter itself provides a space to build some level of community and support within the shelter as well as help others connect to different kinds of service or advocacy so that they can either get out of the shelter system and get housing or get access to the kind of welfare and public assistance benefits that will help stabilize their income. We also begin to organize these folks to be able to challenge the actual shelter based on issues that are relevant to all homeless people, whether it is around conditions in a particular shelter such as food or security guards targeting queer folks, or other folks in the shelter. This work ends up informing our citywide campaigns around the shelter system.

I have also been reading different stories around the country. Recently in Georgia, queer folks were kicked out of shelters. We get calls all the time from around the country asking us to help them figure out how to organize and do advocacy in their cities because we are as small as we are. We are increasingly looking at ways to actually begin to help different cities, places, and organizations to take up work around queer homelessness in their cities but we are sort of in the early stages of that.

**CM:** Are those layers of discrimination both from the shelter system itself and from the other homeless people against queer people in the shelter?

**KF:** The discrimination of queer homeless folks in the shelter system is from an array of places, both from the staff and the institution. We see discrimination in interpersonal interactions with

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other homeless people in the shelter system and even sometimes targeting by queer folks against trans folks. We work to help build these communities and do work to decrease some of the tensions between queer, lesbian, and trans women in the same shelter. We also see straight folks in the shelter system targeting queer folks and we keep our groups open to anybody in the shelter who wants to come, explaining that the group is queer focused. Actually some of the folks who come to those are straight folks who have queer kids and siblings they have been out of touch with because of their homophobia for years, so they come to the space sometimes to work through issues around homophobia and transphobia and this has been another positive product of actually doing that work inside the shelters.

**CM:** Recently *Queers for Economic Justice* managed to arbitrate the possibility for homeless trans people to choose what shelter to go to in New York City. How was the situation before this, and how has this changed the life of trans homeless people?

**KF:** Several years ago the situation for trans people trying to access the New York City shelter system was intense and it still is in many ways. If you were a trans person and you signed up to get access to the shelter system and went to the intake, it was up to the person sitting at intake to decide whether you belonged in the men's or women's shelter despite what you or your documentation said. Even if you were able to get your birth certificate, or other sort of I.D., if they perceived you to be the opposite gender from what you stated, they could tell you where to go.

**CM:** Based on anatomic biology?

**KF:** Absolutely, based on anatomic biology, they would make whatever determination and you had to go in order to get shelter that night. *Q.E.J.* in conjunction with a few other organizations, advocated within the department of homeless services, for trans people to be able to self-identify what shelter they felt most comfortable in, despite what their documentation said or based on whether or not somebody had surgeries to begin their physical transition. The policy was written so any person who identified as transgender, queer, and a range of terms, could access whatever shelter they felt most comfortable in. This benefits many trans folks in the shelter system but we still have situations where shelters tell trans people they do not take trans people, which is a lie. In New York City, you have to take people in if there are beds, the shelter can't say, "No, we don't take your kind here" or whatever, so we have been working to build enough relationships with shelters, particularly women's shelters, to become more queer friendly. Then people refer queer and trans folks to these specific shelters because they will be safer in places where staff has better training. So yes, it is important policy that has helped trans folks in terms of getting access to shelters in New York City, but there is still a long way to go.

**CM:** Is the situation in the prison system similar in many ways?

**KF:** The situation in the prison system is very similar to the shelter system in the sense that in most places, if you are trans identified you have to go to whatever prison your biological documentation dictates. Some places have queer specific wings in the prison and often times queer and trans folks are put in protective custody, which is really solitary confinement, it is not as though there is a separate place in prisons where they place queer people, but they use it in order to supposedly keep them safe from various kinds of violence, sexual assault, and rape within the prison. Solitary confinement is twenty-three hours a day lockdown, with one hour

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spent outside on the yard. You are still in an actual cage outside, so it is like you are out in the open space with the other prisoners, but you are in a twelve foot cage so you have to exercise and do whatever you are going to do in that cage to keep you protected. Many queer and trans folks even if they have been targeted for or have experienced certain kinds of violence or rape in prisons will rather be in with the general population. Who wants to be in solitary confinement? Sometimes folks have advocated to be removed from general population and then when they find out that they are actually in solitary confinement they try to get back and that is another sort of challenge. Sometimes it depends on the warden or guards who may think you will cause problems in the general population, which basically means you are targeted in all these different ways, so they will keep you in solitary confinement as long as they can.

**CM:** What kind of work can be done to improve the lives of people in prison systems?

**KF:** I think that the best thing to be done to improve the lives of prisoners is to imprison less people. In the U.S. we are five percent of the world's total population, but we have twenty five percent of the world's prisoners, 2.3 million prisoners at this point. That does not include people under other kinds of surveillance like house arrest, parole, and probation, which totals almost 7.5 million people. Looking at prisoners, we are also talking about half of those people being of African descent and seventy percent of them being people of color in general. I think the best thing to be done in terms of the prison situation is to actually end mandatory minimum sentencing, end the war on drugs, decriminalize drug use and possession in the U.S. and as more than half the prison population is currently there for petty drug offenses, primarily address those policies and we will have less folks going to prison to begin with.

**CM:** What is the relationship between HIV transmission and prevention work and the prison system? What kind of work is done in that regard?

**KF:** HIV transmission in the prison system is really a patchwork across the U.S. The city jails do one thing in different places, and then prisoners do a different thing, and the federal prisons do something different from state prisons so there is no arching policy or approach in terms of HIV transmission in prison, other than it is illegal to have sex in prisons, and illegal to have drug paraphernalia, or do tattooing, which are some ways in which transmission may happen, but primarily sexual contact is what we are talking about. In some cities, like New York City, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, jails do distribute condoms. I think the only other state other than New York State that gives condoms in prisons is Alabama, or Mississippi, one of the two strangely enough. There is really no strategy. What is interesting about the prison system and HIV, which goes against a lot of narratives that people think, is that of all the people who have HIV in U.S. prisons, only about nine percent of them contract HIV in prison. Ninety one percent of them came to prison HIV positive and many find out when they are in prison because it is the first time they have ever been offered a HIV test.

There is public health research mounting that is beginning to point to the connections between massive imprisonment and the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the U.S. If we consider New York City, which has one of the highest HIV rates in the country, about ten percent of all people with HIV in the United States live in New York City. Looking at New York City neighborhoods that have the highest HIV rates and incarceration rates, it is almost a one for one match, with the exception of Chelsea being the outlier because that is where white gay men also impacted by the epidemic

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live. Seventy percent of prisoners in New York State come from seven neighborhoods in New York City, all Black or Latino neighborhoods.

If you think about that and think about a high percentage of people who are constantly being moved in and out of the state prison system, the social and sexual networks and dynamics change as people are constantly changing partners because of the impact of prison. Public Health researchers are actually looking at massive imprisonment in the U.S. as an actual driver of HIV transmission and to a far less extent sex that may be happening in prisons itself, though some studies look at this, even in states like Georgia, which criminalizes sex between prisoners.

There was one study done by the *Center for Disease Control* (CDC) and they concluded most prisoners were trying to figure out ways to have protected sex, using Saran wrap, and a range of different things, as condoms were not available or were considered contraband. It is not as though people in prison are not trying to protect themselves. The other interesting thing about that study was that a lot of sex that was happening, about thirty to forty percent of it, was with guards and other staff rather than with other prisoners so there is also a relationship between coercion and systems of security or the conditions in which prisoners sleep with guards in order to be able to get certain kinds of privileges. These are just some of the ways HIV transmission and prison connection defies what people often think.

**CM:** Most of the things you are talking about strike me as being fundamentally determined by class and race. How can the LGBT movements be so completely disassociated from the realities faced by such large portions of the population?

**KF:** That is primarily what I am talking about. Economic justice issues and massive imprisonment are so clearly based on race and class and the ability or opportunity to access material resources as well as the likelihood of your body and physical presence to be criminalized by the state. The national mainstream equality movement in the LGBT population is not dealing with these issues because they think in order to win the policy agenda they set, they have to present the LGBT community as “normal” as middle America. Meaning the community and all of its promotion, advocacy, TV shows, sitcoms, all that has to present as white, middle-class, and heteronormative as possible in order to get approval from white, straight America.

The movement isn't interested in challenging larger structures of racism or economic deprivation because it sees value in assimilating the few gay and lesbians who can assimilate into white, middle-class, “Christian, capitalist patriarchy,” as Bell Hooks once said. If that is your goal, you will then only talk about poverty, wealth distribution, and racial justice in ways that are very tokenized.

**CM:** What is your opinion about the racial segregation debate that happened following “Proposition 8” in California with gays and lesbians claiming the black population did not support the bill, a token representation of black identifies in the media that presupposes “black” as a unified community?

**KF:** What happened in California with “Proposition 8” and the backlash against the black community in California and across the U.S. was just a hot mess to be quite blunt about it. First, the white gay community made several false assumptions about themselves and about what actually happened in “Proposition 8.” The first false claim was that gay white people went out on

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a limb to vote for Barack Obama, paired with a mindset that we did this for black people, who turned around and stabbed us in the back by voting for “Proposition 8.” When you actually look at the electoral data from 2008, gay and lesbian voters actually voted less for Barack Obama than they did for John Kerry or Al Gore in 2000 and 2004, meaning the gay vote didn’t turn out for Barack Obama in the numbers suggested. That’s number one.

Number two is, the first exit polling data from California suggesting seventy percent of black people in California voted for “Proposition 8” turned out to be wrong. Subsequent data showed that fifty-seven percent of black voters voted for “Proposition 8,” which is only slightly higher than all other racial communities, which were around fifty, fifty-two, and fifty-three percent. The black population was not an outlier in that respect and black people are only seven percent of the population in the state of California, so there were not even enough numbers for black people to solely impact how “Proposition 8” went. When you look at the people who voted for “Proposition 8,” it swung it in the direction of older voters, and voters who considered themselves religious. Yet, there were no attacks against senior citizens or Christians from the gay community after “Proposition 8” passed. There was also no ownership on behalf of LGBT leadership regarding how horribly they ran that campaign. For example, no one was hired to work in black communities in California until seven days before the election and that has been documented. There were few if any resources provided to folks who wanted to do organize locally, so there was no ground game. Instead, they tried to run a media campaign without grassroots organizing and they got whooped. The money was about the same on both sides so it wasn’t like they got outspent in financial resources. The “Yes on 8” was a better campaign and the LGBT movement got their asses handed to them; they still won’t take entire ownership over that.

**CM:** Have these processes re-exposed systemic racism in the United States?

**KF:** “Proposition 8” felt like a moment when all these white gays and lesbians who wanted to say a lot of stuff to black people suddenly had their opportunity to do it. Dan Savage wrote a blog called “Black Homophobia” and it read to me like something he had been thinking for a long time and used this opportunity to say. All of the things that have rolled out since, names I have been called on the Internet by white gay and lesbian folks who, despite all the data I just quoted, refuse to actually believe it or that it wasn’t some majority of black people who voted for it. Their concept is that the black community is their primary opposition, without any acknowledgement of the different ways in which queer stuff is actually being talked about, debated, and discussed in the black community. Monique for instance on her show is talking about queer folks and has queer folks on all the time, and that is a popular show. *Black Entertainment Television* (BET) just had me on and did this thing about a video by R&B artist, Marsha Ambrosius, which deals very squarely with homophobic violence in the black community.

**CM:** You were recently awarded a “Hero Award” from *BET*; can you mention what it was?

**KF:** I was honored by *Black Entertainment Television* as one of the modern black history heroes this year. This is the second year they have done this and they honor four people a year, so I was one of four. In two years of them awarding this, I was the first queer person they chose, which was a shock to me. It was a shock because I do not feel like I am on the national radar

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like that, but also because I felt there were politically safer black queer folks they could have chosen who work in entertainment and do a range of different things, but they approached me.

From what I have seen on the Internet the feedback has been positive, which shows there is clearly queer work being done in the black community. It is not to say there is not homophobia in black communities but clearly black queer folks and black straight allies are pushing different things. The last couple months there have now been two higher profile recognitions of queer black people, myself and the Ambrosius video, which shows a black gay couple kissing and a clear homophobic response within the narrative of the video, and I have not seen any of the national organizations like *The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation* (GLAAD), show any respect or honor her or me or *BET* for making those advances. I think because it speaks to the actual racist framework dislodging the black community as homophobic that it goes completely unacknowledged.

**CM:** During this project, I have been developing the value of difference as opposed to complying with promises of equality. How do you respond to difference? Do you find that difference is an interesting political platform to work from, rescue, and reinstate in this discourse?

**KF:** In some ways I think it is important for people in terms of the political discourse to be thinking about difference and for lack of a better word, diversity. I think the danger is that people will take difference to mean “tokenization,” so if I have a black person, a Latino immigrant, a poor person, a trans person, in my organization it allows me to think I am doing okay without requiring me to think deeply about my politics and my political commitments.

I am more interested in a debate around what justice really is. What is the vision? I do not think the LGBT movement has a vision for where it is going. I think it has made politically expedient choices without actual vision for change or consideration of their policy choices and what these campaigns ultimately mean. I think this is reflected in the work itself. “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” was dropped in some respects, mostly by court order and not advocacy work. With gay marriage, work done at the state level resulted in thirty different state constitutions, so it was a colossal failure if you want to quantify the same sex marriage movement. It resulted in fierce opposition and worse policy for LGBT folks resulting in organizations that are swimming and do not know what to do next.

This is an important place for people like myself and organizations like *QEI* to resist offering the equality organizations a way out, and stand in the gap proposing a different political framework and rallying around our vision, and a different strategy for where to go next.