

LGBT Healthcare: Healing the Whole Person by Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson

Written by [Devan Nambiar](#) on Wednesday, 10 November 2010. Posted in [Health](#), [The Bare Facts of being POZ](#)

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I was at the Gay Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA) Conference 2010 in San Deigo. I had the pleasure of listening to Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson speak at the evening plenary on Healing the Whole Person at GLMA.



Rev. Gene Robinson is the ninth bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Robinson was elected bishop in 2003 and entered office in March 2004. His public profile as a gay bishop caused much angst amongst the religious right across the Christian world.

Personally, find the topic very engaging, interesting as there is hardly any dialogue of religion or spirituality and LGBT or even in HIV/AIDS work or conferences. There are however HIV/AIDS Interfaith Conferences in Asia but not in North America.

Hence the talk was very welcome to the packed audience of LGBT persons. In my discussion with MSW and mental health counsellors, religion has had a huge impact on psychological well-being, mental and emotional well-being of many LGBT people including HIV positive persons. Rev. Robinson brings an integrative aspect to embrace the unknown and work with it for our well-being.

The below is his speech (verbatim).



“Religion plays an important part in our culture and the LGBT movement regardless of whether we believe in religion, practice it or is an atheist. Ninety five percent of the pain experienced by LGBT is due to religion. And so religion needs to be an important part of our change and movement.

Healing is much more involved than just curing or fixing the body. We begin by knowing our history. The younger we are, the more we have to study our history.

Example many young LGBT people have no idea who Harvey Milk was or what he stood for. Another example, if not for the drag queens who stood up at Stone Wall –we would not be where we are today. I have immense respect for what they did for us.

Even though many LGBT have never read any religious text they know the word “abomination.” God loves all LGBT beyond their wildest imagination. At a more strategic level, we ignore religion at our own peril. Example Proposition 8 in the US, the progressive religious people were pushed out at the sides. If they were engaged, the outcome may have been different. Religion matters if we want to achieve the equal right.

Let us look at the word “ism.” Ism is a combination of prejudice and power. What our enemy truly is, is not homophobia but heterosexism. It is the predominant majority that needs to know about the impact of heterosexism. They are the dominant culture who oppresses the minority. Example on the return trip from Kenya to US, I and my partner had to fill two separate immigration forms in spite of us being together for 23 years while the straight couple in next aisle who have only been married for 2 weeks fills one form as they qualify as a family.

When you dismantle the power, the prejudice will still be there. There will be a lot of work and healing to be done. The reason we have so much resistance to our movement is the fear of end of patriarchy. Example, years ago, gay couples were always asked who plays the women’s role in the house or in sex. Women are viewed as inferior and subservient to men. Being a woman is seen as less than. Most of us in this room are white Anglo Saxon middle class men with privilege. And you have a tiny window of what women, racialised persons and handicapped people experience because you are gay. As gay men we have to stand up to racism and sexism.

I want to share with you 7 principles that we can strive for:

1. Be out, be open and be a model. You are a witness to the world
2. If you live in a city, do not forget the rural LGBT people. Do not forget people in the rural are not living your life. You cannot forget them and the privilege you have living in the city.
3. Make sure your health care facility implements the next of kin changes.
4. Do not forget your straight allies. Think of the African American movement and Civil Rights, and the Women’s Right movement.

5. As LGBT we are a natural minority and need to build bridges. We cannot afford to live in our LGBT silos.

6. We have bridges to build in our own community, as in with the transgender experience. It is not enough to add the "T" in the acronym but to educate ourselves.

7. Take some risk for our movement. No civil movement moves forward without taking risk. At my consecration to become the Bishop, my partner and I had to wear bullet proof vest. I had my blood type identified incase I was shot and need an infusion. The paramedics were on stand by. It was all very surreal, knowing the possibility of being killed. A recent death attempt has been made on our lives. The man was arrested on route to our home. It is going to take all of us to do this work. We have to keep our courage, strength, and the end result we see, will happen.

“ We need to draw our strength from each. We don't need to loose our strength, get burned out but stay in the blessed company of each other to change the world. And the change may not come in my life time, but it will.”

End of speech. Standing Ovation.