Aging Fiercely While Trans Now on Vimeo

August 25, 2015 By Visual AIDS

From left: Kate Bornstein, Miss Major Griffin-Gracy and Jay Toole speak at Aging Fiercely While Trans

We would like to thank everyone who joined us at Aging Fiercely While Trans on July 11 for an intergenerational discussion about aging resiliently from trans elders.

Visual AIDS brought together Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, Kate Bornstein, Jay Toole, and Sheila Cunningham to discuss experiences of aging, disadvantage, discrimination, and maintaining one's dignity as a trans/gender nonconforming person. Amidst ongoing violence and increased visibility for the trans community is the truth of the importance of trans lives.

Aging Fiercely While Trans was inspired by the art, activism and life of Chloe Dzubilo, who passed away in 2011. Although Chloe is no longer with us, it is clear to those who love her and the organizers of this event that she would be among the growing intergenerational dialogue of trans lives and legacies.

A full audience listened and engaged with our presenters. Clips from the discussion are embedded below, and also viewable on Vimeo.

There is also a Facebook album.

“You want to be appreciated for your ability, not what someone thinks you can do based on how you’re presenting or how you look. It has nothing to do with what you look like…respect people for the choices that they make in regards to who they are. Transgender…it means that’s how I see me.” -- Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

“I don’t think of myself as aging. I think of myself as dying and I embrace it. I’ve chosen to make my presentation in the world one of delight. I want to delight people…I’m learning about fun and guilt-free pleasure.” -- Kate Bornstein

“We didn’t think of ourselves as getting old. We didn’t have jobs--we couldn’t get jobs…I wonder how I’m gonna survive.” -- Jay Toole

“I couldn’t come home during holidays because I refused to take off the dress. I had to be ”other.“…The girls used to come to my house…and cry together because we couldn’t go home.” -- Sheila Cunningham

Mizz June performs her single “Light the Way.”

Presenters respond to the question: “In what ways did the HIV/AIDS crisis affect your life and the trans community?”

“(The AIDS crisis) was a whole generation of trans people dying…Dear friends left.” -- Kate Bornstein

“People were getting diagnosed on Monday and dying by Friday…No one wanted to meet anyone.” -- Miss Major

Presenters respond to the question: “Even though trans people are visible right now, homelessness has not been. What are your thoughts on centering homeless communities within trans communities?”

“The shelters are still dangerous for trans people…we need to stop the way the city thinks about (transness).” -- Jay Toole

“It’s a matter of making sure we take care of one another. Because yes, [Janet Mock and Caitlyn Jenner] are popular, but their visibility has affected the girls that need to work to survive. The girls who are struggling to make it. The girls who don’t know what’s gonna happen to them tomorrow. You can’t reach them, but you can reach the girls on the streets.” -- Miss Major

Presenters share the names of important people in their lives that they have lost (In addition to Chloe Dzubilo and Sylvia Rivera).

“Doris Fish, my drag mom. She taught me fierce. I was a shy thing. I was a scared thing. And she taught me fierce.” -- Kate Bornstein

Presenters respond to a question about keeping up with technology, being aged out of jobs, and how the gay marriage movement pushes out queer elders.

“There needs to be a place for elders…I think I have something important to give you. Even if it’s just a story of the past. We walked those roads ahead of you.” -- Jay Toole

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