William Brandon Lacy Campos

November 13, 2012 By Aundaray Guess

When I signed onto Facebook Saturday morning I was prepared to post something witty about my need for coffee to get my weekend going. Along with the usual Facebook timeline postings I was expecting the usual praise to God, catching up on friends' wild night and a few Instagrams of folks posing in the mirror. What I wasn't expecting was to see a posting giving condolences to a friend who had passed. My heart raced and I immediately went to his page and there it was. A long list of people commenting on the passing of a great warrior. His Facebook page gives his full name William Brandon Lacy Campos but ask anyone and they know him simply as Brandon.

Brandon who was anything but simple passed on late Friday. He was a truly unique man. He has been described rightly as a warrior, an author, an advocate, a blogger and most importantly he has been described as a good friend to all. He battled drug abuse, homophobia and wrote candidly about his HIV-positive status. As a gay man of color living with HIV he literally bared his soul for all to see and in that nakedness he exposed the many injustices that the disenfranchised had to endure. He spoke not just for gays and those living with HIV but he gave a voice for those who may have felt they had no voice. He didn't use his male privileges with abandon but instead recognized that as a male with certain privileges that it was his duty to make sure women had the same rights. In his own words Brandon describes himself as the following, "a poet, playwright, journalist, amateur chef and life commentator doing his bit to put his foot in the asses of the regressive masses, while putting filling and nutritious food on plates of folks that ain't got much and deserve better." And oh yeah he was a tough as nail feminist!

I admire him mostly because of his writings on HIV. In this age when we still have so many living in a space where their HIV is so stigmatized, he refused to let anyone place him in a box. He was a intellect who could effectively communicate the life one has to live with HIV and not only point out the injustices of those with HIV but he stood there in the frontlines daring anyone to try to silence him that discussion no matter how uncomfortable it made them feel. He was a walking ACT-UP who may not have been the quietest person but that's what we needed. Someone to get up in your face and in his words let you know, "We're going to talk about this shit and the motherfucking train ain't leaving until we all strapped in". As a college educated man he had letters behind his name but he didn't let those letters define who he was. He also didn't just hang with only intellectuals but instead made himself available for all, no matter what road you walked. So whether you had a PhD or a degree in street smarts, he was there for you. He knew we all had a story to tell.

Don't get me wrong Brandon would do some crazy shit. Sometimes the postings on his

Facebook page would be the perfect candidate for to much information, but in all honesty he did what a lot of us are so afraid to do. He lived. He made his life have meaning and a purpose and he didn't forget to have fun. He loved to love and he loved to be in love. And that's what I feel made people gravitate to him. Simply look at his Facebook page and you'll see people from all walks of life. You'll see a rainbow of genders, sexuality, countries and perspectives. And just from reading the last few days of postings you'll see someone who took the time, which in this day and age of sometimes only communicating through social media, to actually connect with people face to face, person to person and cooking from his soul as he fed not only your stomach but also your heart.

It's a wonder how he made the time as he was very active in the queer community. Starting in his teens he was there giving a voice. In his twenties he co-chaired the National Queer Student Coalition. He sat on the board for the Audre Lord Project and was co-executive director of the New York City-based nonprofit Queers for Economic Justice. He was a constant blogger that brought up timely issues in his widely read blog, myfeetonlywalkforward.blogspot.com and as a fierce spoken word artist his book titled "It Ain't Truth If It Doesn't Hurt" which was published last year and I can hear Brandon saying, "and guess what bitches you can get it at Amazon.com plus it's in e-book form, boo-yah!" And with his Naked Poetry Series, he let it all hang out and left you with something to think about.

I knew Brandon personally when I lived in Minnesota of which he also was from. With the state being 97.2 percent white us LGBT people of color had to find each other quick. I always joked that he followed me to NYC. That may not be the case but I do know that I followed him in his activism as he inspired me to start blogging and telling my own story of living with HIV. I was amazed that he was able to put it out there and in his words it gave me the strength to do the same. What Brandon did was throw a big rock in the deep water and from that he created ripples of people who were also inspired by him. I let him know this when I saw him at a performance we both attended.

Brandon didn't belong to me, to you or anybody at the top of his friends list. Brandon belonged to us all because his spirit is in all of us. With the heavy load of caring for people's rights his blog was aptly titled my feet only walk forward as with such a huge load to carry he knew it was the only way to go. I hope me and others make Brandon proud as we pick up that load and be the voice of justice in whatever form we utilize but when we do it we do it in the spirit of my friend Brandon. And if we encounter people with closed ears and minds, "we're just going to beat them silly with a piece of ham hock until their damn neck snap back into reality"

I hope I got that right Brandon and thank you for inspiring me to be naked.

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