

TRANSADVOCATE

Black Transpeople's Burden -The NBJC Report On The NTDS Findings

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Abstract

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Article



As I've talked about over the last five years on TransGriot, the way a gender transition is experienced for African descended transpeople is vastly different from the way our white counterparts do.

The National Black Justice Coalition recently sent me a copy of the report they compiled based on the recently released National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS). Of the 6,456 people who completed the survey that the data was based on, 381 of them were Black or Black multiracial.

This NBJC report focused on the findings for African-American trans people. While the eye opening general survey results show that trans people face discrimination that affects all areas of their lives, when it is combined with structural and individual racism, as I am painfully aware of, the levels of discrimination faced by transpeople of color are devastating and particularly egregious.

The key findings:

*The combination of anti-transgender bias and persistent, structural and individual racism was devastating for Black transpeople and other transpeople of color.

* Black trans people live in extreme poverty with 34% reporting a household income of less than \$10,000 a year.

That's more than twice the rate (15%) for transgender people of all races, four times the rate of the general African American population (9%) and over eight times the general US population rate.

* Black transgender people are affected by HIV in devastating numbers, with over one-fifth of the African American trans respondents (20.23%) being HIV+ and an additional 10% reporting they did not know their status.

The rates for transgender respondents of all races were 2.64%, 2.4% for the general Black population and 0.60% for the general US population.

* Nearly half (49%) of the Black respondents reported having attempted suicide.

* Black transgender people who were out to their families found acceptance at a higher rate than the overall sample of transgender respondents.

Education findings:

The key to breaking the cycle of discrimination and getting Black trans people in a better position to become fully functioning taxpaying members of society is a good quality education. But according to the NBJC report:

* Black people who attended school as transgender persons reported alarming rates of harassment (49%), physical assault (27%) and sexual assault (15%) at school. Harassment was so severe it led 21% of respondents to leave school with 6% being expelled due to bias.

* Respondents who were harassed and abused by teachers in K-12 settings showed dramatically worse health and other outcomes than those who did not experience such abuse. Peer harassment and abuse also had highly damaging effects.

Employment Discrimination findings.

A J-O-B is essential because without it, in the US you can't get access to or pay for the health care you'll need to transition, much less feed, clothe and house yourself. It's why ENDA passage and trans civil rights employment coverage at every level of government is essential and these NTDS numbers only underscore why I'm so hard line about it.:

* Black transgender people have a 26% unemployment rate, two times the rate of the overall transgender sample and four times the rate of the general population.

* 32% of Black transpeople lost a job due to bias and 28% were not hired for a job due to bias.

* 46% of Black transgender people were harassed, 15% were physically assaulted and 13% were sexually assaulted at work.

* Half of the respondents (50%) reported that had been compelled to sell drugs or do sex work for income at some point in their lives.

Housing Discrimination and Homelessness findings:

This is another reason I'm adamant about comprehensive trans civil rights bills. Quoting from the NBJC report:

- * Black trans people reported various forms of direct housing discrimination- 38% reported having been refused a home or apartment due to bias and 31% reported being evicted due to bias.
 - * 41% of Black respondents said they had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, over five times the rate of the general US population. Of those who experienced homelessness and tried to access shelters, 40% were denied access altogether. Of those who managed to get into those shelters, 61% experienced harassment, 32% physical assault and 31% sexual assault.
 - * Black trans people are less likely than trans respondents of other races to own homes with a home ownership rate of 14%. That compares to 32% percent for transpeople of any race and 67% of the general US population. The minority home ownership rate according to HUD was 47%
- Health Care Discrimination findings

It's a major issue with transpeople of all races, and one that has a negative impact on a community that already has a deep distrust of the medical profession due to the odious Tuskegee Experiment. Black transpeople haven't forgotten that DC transwoman Tyra Hunter died of survivable injuries from an August 1995 car crash due to transphobia experienced at the hands of a transphobic EMT and emergency room doctor. Quoting from the NBJC report::

- * The health outcomes for African American respondents show the heinous effects of the social and economic marginalization that include higher HIV infection, smoking, drug and alcohol use and suicide attempts than the general population.
- * 21% of Black trans people reported being refused medical care due to bias.
- * 34% of Black trans people reported having postponed care when sick or injured due to fear of discrimination.
- * While African Americans in general have lower suicide rates than other racial groups as shown by research, nearly half (49%) of the Black transpeople in the NTDS survey reported having attempted suicide. It's higher than the 41% rate for transgender people of all races and 1.6% of the general US population

Abuse by Police and In Prison findings

As I've reported here on TransGriot, Amnesty International has discovered in its reports and the multiple lawsuits filed by transpeople of color against police departments around the country, Officer Friendly ain't so friendly to transpeople of color, and that does have deleterious effects on how we view law enforcement in our neighborhoods.

- * 38% of Black transgender people who interacted with the police reported sexual harassment, 14% reported physical assault and 6% reported sexual assault.
- * 35% of Black trans people have been arrested or held in a cell due to bias at some point in their lives.
- * Half of the respondents (51%) reported discomfort in seeking police assistance

Physical and sexual assault in prison/jail is a serious problem, and transpeople are affected by it.

* 29% of the African American respondents who had been to jail or prison reported being physically assaulted and 32% reported being sexually assaulted while in custody. So when the TransGriot and other African descended trans people tell you that in various forums, panel discussion and other venues that being an African descend transperson isn't easy and we have serious problems that demand attention and legislative relief, none of us are sellin' you woof tickets on that.

And it's why we go ballistic every time we get dissed, dismissed or ignored when we try to tell our stories or are excluded from venues and forums that would allow us to do so.

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