

Service of Thanksgiving
for the life of



Keith Dwayne Cylar

April 14, 1958 – April 5, 2004

at

Church of the Intercession
550 West 155 Street
New York, New York

Tuesday, April 13, 2004
12:00 p.m.

Officiating Ministers:

The Reverend Canon Frederick B. Williams,
Rector, The Church of the Intercession

The Reverend Errol Harvey,
Rector, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church

Order of Service

Anthem

Lift Every Voice

*Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the roaring seas
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of a new day begun, let us march on
Till victory is won.*

*Stony the road we trod, bitter the chast'ning rod
Felt in the days when hope and unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered
We have come treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our star is cast.*

Greetings

Prayer

Scripture Reading ***Isaiah 61:1-3; 7-8***

Linney C. Smith, Senior Vice President, Housing Works, Inc.

Hymn ***Come Ye Disconsolate***

*Come ye disconsolate, where're ye languish;
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can-not heal*

*Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
Hope of the penitente, fade-less and pure,
Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can- not cure*

*Here see the bread of life; see waters flowing
Forth from the throne of God, pure from above;
Come to the feast of love; come, ever knowing
Earth has no sorrow but Heaven can remove.*

Tributes *The Honorable David Dinkins, former Mayor of New York*

Sandra L. Thurman, President and CEO, International AIDS Trust

The Honorable Thomas Duane, State Senator of New York

Musical Selection ***AIDS Resource Center Choir***

Scripture Reading ***Romans 8:35-39***
Virginia Shubert
Co-Founder/former Co-Executive Director, Housing Works, Inc.

Scripture Reading **Luke 6:20-23**
Barbara Aikens, Board Member, Housing Works, Inc.

Musical selection **AIDS Resource Choir**

Homily *The Rev. Errol Harvey, Vice Chair, Housing Works, Inc.*
St. Augustine's Episcopal Church

Musical selection **AIDS Resource Choir**

Tribute **The Reverend Charles King**
Co-President/CEO, Housing Works, Inc.
"A Psalm for the AIDS Warrior"

Commendation

Hymn ***I'll Fly Away***

*Some glad morning when this life is o'er,
I'll fly away;
To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away.*

Refrain *I'll fly away O glory
I'll fly away
When I die, hallelujah by and by,
I'll fly away*

*When the shadows of this life have grown,
I'll fly away
Like a bird from prison bars has flown,
I'll fly away*

*Just a few more wary days and then,
I'll fly away
To a land where joys shall never end,
I'll fly away*

Obituary

Keith Cylar, one of the leaders of the modern AIDS activist movement and a founder and co-president of the nation's largest community-based AIDS service provider, Housing Works, Inc., died on April 5. He was 45 years old.

Keith had lived with HIV for over 20 years and was diagnosed with AIDS in 1989. In the last year, Mr. Cylar developed cardiomyopathy, a serious enlargement of the heart. He died in his sleep early Monday morning of cardioarrhythmia.

After organizing the Housing Committee of ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), the groundbreaking AIDS activist organization, Keith founded Housing Works with his partner Charles King, Eric Sawyer, lawyer Virginia Shubert and other members of ACT UP Housing Committee at a time when the medical and social services system were failing to respond to the twin crises of homelessness and HIV/AIDS.

At the time, Mr. Cylar recalled, "I couldn't get people out of the hospital because they didn't have a place to live...New York City literally had hospital gridlock and that was when they were keeping people out on hospital gurneys in the hallways. That was when people were not being fed, bathed, or touched. It was horrendous. You can't imagine what it was like to be black, gay, a drug user, or transgender and dying from AIDS."

Keith led his colleagues in vigorous advocacy to demand city, state and federal funding for housing and services, establishing their agency as a leader in both direct service provision and advocacy. And he led dozens of direct action protests, engaging in civil disobedience and getting arrested to dramatize the life-and-death needs of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who were dying from HIV/AIDS.

"There was this incredible sense of anger and fury and determination that we were not going to die," said Mr. Cylar in a 2003 recollection. "And if we were going to die, then we were going to go down fighting. It's a weird place that gets you to not care whether you had enough sleep or if you were going to pay your taxes. A lot of things just weren't important. What was important was making sure you were at the demo. Making sure that we were going to stop this government, changing the way this epidemic was killing us. Life could not just go on as usual as long as we were suffering, as long as our friends, our lovers, and our sisters, our brothers were dying."

Mr. Cylar played a leading role in the development of federal legislation to create and fund HIV/AIDS service programs, including the Ryan White CARE Act, Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS, and HIV-related substance abuse and mental health services. He and his organization also led groundbreaking advances in state and local HIV/AIDS policies and funding. His work on behalf of his community has been widely acknowledged both by federal officials and colleagues in the field.

Sandra Thurman, who served as ‘AIDS Czar’ and Director of the National Office of AIDS Policy under President Bill Clinton, said Tuesday that “as a social worker, an activist and an advocate, Keith brought a passion and brilliance to his work that is unparalleled in the AIDS community. His willingness to vigorously challenge those with whom he did not agree was matched only by his willingness to stay at the table until the needs of those who had no seat at the table had been heard.”

Dennis DeLeon, founder of the Latino Commission on AIDS, said Tuesday, “He was loud when others remained silent. He could shame any bureaucrat into action, by any means necessary. He put his body in harm’s way on countless occasions, spending innumerable hours behind bars to try to wake people up to injustice. He was a national figure on the AIDS scene, promoting the successful model of client empowerment and entrepreneurship to address social ills. He consoled the families of countless friends who were clients who had lost loved ones.”

Eric Sawyer, a fellow ACT-UP member, said that “Keith was able to kick back with a homeless person on a street corner, dance with a member of the Congress, break bread with a former Mayor, sip wine with a Cabinet Member and debate a member of the First Family with equal ease. He could also hold the hand of the dying and help them make peace with the Universe.”

In addition to heralding the rights of homeless New Yorkers with HIV, Mr. Cylar was a devoted promoter of the harm reduction approach to drug management, which helps users set small achievable goals toward the end of managing their drug use and improving their own quality of life while focusing on decreasing the risk associated with drug use. Mr. Cylar was a board member of the National Harm Reduction Coalition and helped ensure that, from the beginning, Housing Works would not turn away anyone in need of service simply because they were still using drugs (in marked contrast to policies in place at many other AIDS and social service organizations).

Although he was trained as a clinical social worker and oversaw client services at Housing Works, Mr. Cylar also distinguished himself as an entrepreneur. Under the stewardship of Mr. Cylar and his partner Charles King, Housing Works became a model of social entrepreneurship, establishing thrift stores, a used book café, food service and catering operations and other social ventures that provided jobs for clients and generated millions of dollars in unrestricted support for the organization.

Most recently, Mr. Cylar led Housing Works to become more involved in research. Mr. Cylar performed research for the Rand Corporation on its HIV Cost and Services Utilization Study (HCSUS), the first major research effort to collect information on a nationally representative sample of people in care for HIV infection, and was Co-Principal Investigator on a joint project with the National Development Research Institute (NDRI) and Beth Israel Medical Center to increase access to AIDS clinical trials for people of color.

A native of Virginia, Mr. Cylar was born on April 14, 1958. He received a Bachelor's degree in psychology from Boston University in 1982 and a Masters degree in social work from Columbia University.

He is survived by his long-time partner, Reverend Charles King, co-founder and co-president of Housing Works; his parents Anna E. Patton of Cleveland Ohio, and Marva and Harry Langester, of Portsmouth Virginia; his great-aunt Esther Dudley; and the thousands of Housing Works staff and clients to whom he dedicated his life, as well as countless others whose lives he enriched.

Mr. Cylar hoped that he would be remembered through donations to Housing Works, and we have established a Keith Cylar Fund in his memory. Donations may be sent to 320 W. 13th Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10014. Credit card donations are also accepted at www.housingworks.org.

Pallbearers

*Errol Chin-Loy
Andrew Coamey
Duane Ebesu
Nina Herzog*

Acknowledgement

Every expression of love, sympathy, and act of kindness that you so wonderfully shared with us can never be forgotten and we thank you. We would like to especially acknowledge: Zachary Bregman, David Cohen, David France, Betty Deepe and her staff, Rev. Errol Harvey, Nina Herzog Mike Kink, Brigid Lang, Margarita Lopez, Todd Ludwig, Susan Perl, Marie Nahikian and her staff, Linney Smith, Terri Smith-Caronia & Rev. Frederick B. Williams.