

# To My People — A Nation Without a Name

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*Delivered at Bronx Pride by Maxxavier Resto*

My beloved community,

Today, I'm not speaking to strangers. I'm speaking to you — my people. My family. My tribe.

We — the LGBTQ community — are more than a movement. We are a nation within nations. We transcend borders, languages, religions, and generations. But unlike other nations, we are not marked at birth. We aren't identified by skin color or flag. You can't always see us — but oh, when we speak our truth... the world knows we're here.

If we are a nation, then we are one without a homeland. Without a defense force. Without a flag that's recognized in global diplomacy. And because of that, we've always been easy targets — for bullies, for bigots, for entire governments.

But let me tell you something they always forget:

We've never raised armies — we've raised art.

We've never sought conquest — we've given the world culture.

We are creators. Innovators. Dreamers. Survivors.

We are the soul behind music, fashion, architecture, literature, science, and movements that have shaped the very world around us.

And yet, when we come out — when we dare to live honestly — we are often punished. We're exiled from our homes, stripped of our dignity, denied basic rights, and in too many cases, we are killed. Why? For simply living in truth.

Think of Oscar Wilde, sentenced and shamed for loving another man.

Think of Jonathan Joss, gunned down while checking the mail outside the home he shared with his husband — a home that had already been burned to the ground after two years of threats and homophobic harassment. He had no weapon. He posed no threat. He was grieving — mourning the skull of their dog, left there like a message. And still, someone looked at two men in love and decided that was enough reason to kill.

Jonathan died saving his husband's life. He died because two men loved each

other openly. That's the cost of being visible in this world. And we must never let his name or his story be forgotten.

Think of Matthew Shepard, tied to a fence like a scarecrow and left to die, alone, in the cold.

We have always had to fight for the right to exist. And I've been fighting since I was 13 years old — the day I came out.

When I saw someone being bullied, I jumped in. No second thoughts. That instinct to protect each other — that's our heritage. As I grew older, I found other ways to fight. I lobbied the government. I marched in national protests. I raised my voice in spaces where they wanted us silent.

And I know I'm not alone.

We've made progress. We've achieved visibility. For a moment, it even felt like we could breathe. But now, I look around and see the storm clouds forming again. Hate is rising. And we must face the truth: the fight is not over.

Pride has become a seasonal celebration to some — a marketing tool for corporations that fly our flag in June, only to fold it up and store it next to their Halloween decorations. But I'm not a holiday. You're not a trend.

My Pride is 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

And still — they fear us. So much, they once tried to destroy us with disease.

During the AIDS crisis, they let us die. They wanted us to die. They called it GRID — Gay-Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome — and let it spread, blaming our love, our sex, our joy. President Reagan said, "Those people are getting what they deserve." That wasn't ignorance. That was genocide.

But they couldn't contain the virus — because monsters, once created, don't obey. The disease spread to women, to children, to straight folks. So they renamed it AIDS — and pretended we hadn't been screaming for help all along.

Then came Monkeypox — and again, they whispered the same lies. Tried to pin it on us. But this time, we called it out. We caught it early. But no one asked — who started that rumor? And why does it always lead back to us?

Now they try to erase us in other ways. They ban our books. Strip our rights. Silence our teachers. They attack drag queens, ban trans kids from sports, and call our love "inappropriate."

We need to be vigilant. We need to watch each other's backs. We need to take care of one another. Because every time one of these vile, wannabe dictators tries to take away our unalienable human rights, we must make noise. We must fight back.

I spent years trying to normalize the word "gay" — years of being told it was wrong, sinful, dirty. And now they want to pass laws telling us we can't say gay at all?

Fuck you, DeSantis.

We will not go back into the closet — you and your hate are already taking up all the space.

And let's be clear: the danger is real. They want us gone — from classrooms, from stories, from law, from life. And if we stay silent, we give them permission.

But here's the thing:

We are still here.

We are still rising. Still dancing. Still fabulous. Still fierce. Still fighting. We don't need permission to exist. We are not going anywhere.

We are not a people you can erase.

We are not a mistake you can cure.

We are not a phase.

We are a nation — without borders, but with soul. With history. With love.

And if they are scared of our love — let's show them even more.

Because silence is not survival. Silence is surrender.

And I will not surrender.

I will not be silent.

And neither should you.

This Pride — this Bronx Pride — is not just a party. It's a declaration:

We are here.

We are beautiful.

We are unbreakable.

And we will never go back.

Thank you. I love you. And I stand with you — always.

I didn't grow up Latino. My mother was a lesbian, and I was raised in the Gay community. It takes a village — and it has. This community raised me, loved me, and made me who I am.

I have always considered myself an activist, but recently, someone called me a warrior. And I can't think of a better cause. A soldier gives their life for their country — because no one else will. And I will always fight for this one.

My name is Minister Maxxavier Resto, of the Universal Life Church. My name is my pronoun.

And I will continue to speak the truth. I will continue to fight against injustice. Always.