



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

How Is Being Gay a Gift?

White Plains, New York – March 2, 2015 - Last year, Pope Francis proposed that gay people have “gifts and qualities” to offer. When Apple CEO Tim Cook came out in 2014, he stated that “being gay [is] among the greatest gifts God has given me.”

But how, specifically, is being a gay man a gift? What are these “gifts and qualities”?

A new book by Raymond L. Rigoglioso, *Gay Men and The New Way Forward* (Mond Press) proposes that gay men’s differences—those traits that society often judges—are the source of gay men’s special contributions to the human family. It introduces a bold new vision—that gay men have become teachers for humanity.

Organized around 14 Distinct Gay Male Gifts, this book shows how gay men serve and heal humanity, reinvent manhood, and free and enrich the human spirit. Written as an invitation to self-discovery, it contains a self-assessment to help the reader explore the extent to which these gifts apply to him. The author proposes that, when we understand how gay men contribute to the health and vitality of society, LGBT people can make an entirely new case for equality and begin a new era in our movement.

Raymond L. Rigoglioso founded Gay Men of Wisdom in 2012 as a project to explore gay men’s purpose, roles, and impact. Borrowing ideas from the gay spirituality literature, and using his own observations, he led dozens of discussion groups, workshops, and programs that invited gay men to consider how these ideas apply to them. This book synthesizes these findings and presents an iterative understanding of what it means to be a gay man today. *Gay Men and The New Way Forward* is available online and at select independent bookstores.

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About Raymond L. Rigoglioso

Founder, Gay Men of Wisdom

Raymond L. Rigoglioso is the founder of Gay Men of Wisdom (www.gaymenofwisdom.com) and is certified as a life coach through the International Coach Federation. His professional background includes more than two decades as a writer and editor for nonprofit organizations in New York City and Boston.

In 1989, two months after Ray came out, he and a friend co-founded the Danbury [Connecticut] Area Gay and Lesbian Youth Group. He facilitated this group for a year before moving to New York City. After receiving his bachelor of arts degree from The New School in 1991, Ray landed a job at the only place he wanted to work at the time: Gay Men's Health Crisis. In 1993, while living in Provincetown, Massachusetts, for the summer, he met his partner, Keith D. Pettay. Ray and Keith live in White Plains, New York, with their dog, Baxter.

This is his first book.

Testimonials

"Thoughtful and clearly written, Raymond Rigoglioso's wondrous book holds wisdom for gay men of each generation. Historical in its sweeping vision yet practical on a daily level, a copy of *The New Way Forward* should be given to every gay man on planet earth. Because in healing ourselves with the profound insights offered here, we have the capacity to heal the world itself."

--Mark Thompson, author of the *Gay Spirit, Gay Soul, Gay Body* trilogy

"At the outset of the modern LGBT movement, Harry Hay posed three existential questions: Who are we? Where did we come from? What are we for? In the great awakening of LGBT people that has swept the world in the decades that followed, answering these questions has been the road less taken. Now comes Raymond Rigoglioso's *Gay Men and The New Way Forward*, taking up the quest, opening new byways, and revealing the vistas that await us when we embrace our queer difference and seek its meaning...and in doing so, make our gift to the world."

--Will Roscoe, editor of *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of Its Founder*, and author of *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* and *Jesus and the Shamanic Tradition of Same-Sex Love*

"*Gay Men and The New Way Forward* is a miracle of a book. Raymond Rigoglioso goes to the social, psychological, ethical, and mythical roots of what it means to be a gay man in the world today. Urging a journey from shame into a world of self-love and acknowledgment of the social

and moral gifts that gay men can offer the world, this book is visionary in the best sense of the word. It is grounded in material reality, and yet understands the past and can see a potential future that is loving, healthy, and radiant not only for gay men, but the entire world.”

--Michael Bronski, author of *A Queer History of the United States* and *The Pleasure Principle: Sex, Backlash and the Struggle for Gay Freedom* and Professor of the Practice in Activism and Media in the Studies of Women, Gender and Sexuality at Harvard University

“Raymond Rigoglioso has issued a powerful call to gay men everywhere to see our gayness as a gift and to become more skillful at using this gift for ourselves, our communities, and humanity. He has effectively synthesized many ideas regarding gay spirituality and perennial wisdom. His work is clear, provocative, and inspiring. His bold invitation and challenge to take our gay gifts seriously and to transform ourselves to be gifts for the world will have a powerful impact on this generation of queer seekers. Bravo, Ray!”

--John Stasio, founder of Easton Mountain

“*Gay Men and The New Way Forward* is an urgently important book for our time, and I recommend it highly. It illumines the painful and beautiful secrets gay men wrestle with in the privacy of our hearts, and then gives us—and the world at large—a new way to understand our unique mission as a people. This lucid, wise, and inspiring work is a handbook for a new world.”

--Ken Page, author of *Deeper Dating*

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Aren’t gay men just like everyone else? Aren’t you playing into stereotypes of gay men?

Answer: Most human beings are much more alike than they are different. But differences can be observed among all major cultural, ethnic, and racial groups. To the extent that all people are alike, gay men are just like everyone else. To the extent that groups contain distinct characteristics, gay men possess essential differences from other men. Stereotyping involves making a blanket generalization along with a negative judgment. In this book, we explore the range of gay men’s differences from a perspective of honoring those differences.

Question: What are the 14 Distinct Gay Male Gifts?

Answer: The foundational gift is Masculine-Feminine Intelligence, which shows up in nearly every other distinct gift. The 13 other gifts are divided into three categories as follows:

Serving and Healing: A Gentle Collaborative Social Orientation; An Orientation toward Service; Religious Reformers and Spiritual Leaders; Teachers of Compassion, Generosity, and the Authentic Masculine; Models of Forgiveness.

Reinventing Manhood: Friends, Soul Mates, and Co-Revolutionaries with Straight Women; Esthetic Outsiders and Gender Tricksters: The Art of Camp and Drag; Modeling Sustainable Manhood.

Freeing and Enriching the Human Spirit: Sexual Leadership; Fine Attunement to Beauty, Creators and Keepers of Culture; A "Gay" Spirit; Models of Authenticity and Courage, Cleansers of Shame; Outsiders Driving Evolutionary Advancement

Question: Do all gay men possess these gifts?

Answer: Each gay man will possess his own unique constellation of these gifts. Many gay men will recognize all of these gifts within themselves, though they may manifest some gifts more strongly than others. Most gay men will see at least a solid majority of these gifts within themselves, though some gay men may possess just a few. Every human group contains variations, but that does not mean we cannot observe distinct characteristics of a given group.

Whenever I gather gay men to discuss what makes us different, these gifts surface again and again. What's unique about this approach is that we are creating a self-generated narrative about traits that characterize us as a group. This model presents an entirely new way of valuing the contributions that all humans make to society.

Because of these inherent variations, *Gay Men and The New Way Forward* is written as an invitation to self-discovery. It invites the reader to ask himself which gifts pertain to him, and to what extent he embodies these gifts. It contains a self-assessment at the end to foster this self-discovery.

Question: Are you suggesting that gay men are better than others?

Answer: In answer to this question, I would ask: Is a tulip better than a rose? Is a mother better than a father? Is an athlete better than a musician?

In patriarchy, we tend to assume that when two things are different, one is better and the other worse, one dominant and the other subordinate. This kind of thinking has created many of the world's problems. It pits one against the other and prevents us from appreciating difference. This book, and the approach it takes, presents a New Way Forward. It invites us to embrace the paradox of having special gifts while being equal to all others.

Question: Do other men have some of these same gifts?

Answer: I would ask--and defer to--other men to answer this question. With that said, I think some heterosexual and bisexual men possess some of these gifts, especially men who do not fit into typical male gender norms, and/or those who have consciously eschewed those norms. If we look at heterosexual and bisexual men as a whole, however, we would not see this constellation of gifts as characteristic or typical.

Question: What about gay men's shortcomings? Gay men can treat each other terribly.

Answer: It is too easy to levy critique against other gay men. We do this reflexively and to such an extent that we often fail to consider what is right about gay men. Loving ourselves is the hard work. One chapter in the book—Owning and Managing the Shadow—takes an honest look at our individual and collective responsibility to each other, and how we can do better. I believe that when we honor all of who we are, we will much more readily see the good in each other.

Headshot

A downloadable version is available at www.gaymenofwisdom.com/media.html



Book Cover

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