As we approach pride season, I wanted to send a message out to remind us all that the first pride was a riot! A riot against police, surveillance and violent repression of bodily autonomy. In fact one of the Black Trans Women at one of those very first riots, came out here to San Francisco, to make space for other Trans folk. That was 20 years ago and that woman is our trans mother, the one and only, Miss Major Griffin Gracy. Miss Major Co/founded TGI Justice Project with Alexander L. Lee. In fact it was Alex that first made space for us to gather and support each other inside prisons. Alex made space and saw that the most powerful thing he could do for our collective liberation was to share that space and ultimately turn it over to a Black Trans Woman with lived experience inside prison.

Miss Major had a radical vision, to share that space with me and gave me a hire letter to join leadership at TGI Justice Project when I was on my way IN to the Prison! I can tell you no one had ever believed in me so courageously, and that was how I began to believe in myself, and I knew I had to pay it forward. We have built TGIJP with our trans community here in San Francisco. Always centering and prioritizing the most vulnerable and underserved for our services and employment. Following Miss Majors leadership we built the Melanie Elenkie Re-Entry Program to provide a letter of hire from TGI Justice Project to our Trans Siblings while they are still incarcerated so they can take it to the parole board and get released! In fact, three of the Black trans people who are in leadership at TGIJP received their hire letters while they were still incarcerated.

We pick our siblings up upon release from any prison in California and bring them home to SF where we provide them with independent housing, and a $35/hr paycheck for 6-9 months, with the option of full time employment for those wanting to join the movement. Through this practice, we have built deep connections throughout the U.S. carceral system. We nurture and grow these connections through a decades long letter writing program and our Stiletto Newsletter.

This is a movement not a moment. Through over a decade of organizing inside California prisons, we were able to build relationships and support leaders on the inside to participate in the California Transgender Policy Work group, where we helped to craft the California Transgender Dignity Act, which was passed in 2017. We currently work inside the prisons to ensure that the California Transgender Dignity act is being applied. Our legal team also provides legal representation for our siblings that are incarcerated, not only to address issues related to the passage of the Transgender Dignity Act, but also related to human rights violations that they experience on an ongoing basis. In addition to this, we have built a wellness program where we offer our community culturally relevant healing services, to support them in moving off the streets and into sustainable independent housing. We do this with a radical housing first, harm reduction, uncompromising abolitionist approach. And after 20 years of service our beloved trans community has worked together to purchase a building for resistance! It is with great gratitude and honor that we name our new building the Miss Major Alexander L. Lee Black Trans Cultural Center.

Please join us in supporting this legacy making moment in the movement by supporting our annual Bustin Out Official Trans March After Party! Please tell your friends, family, comrades and alliances. Oh and if you are not able to carry out the work in this movement in the manner described above, please be a dear and plan your fundraiser on another day, or better yet give us a call and we'll figure out a way for you to have a party to support our work.

Remember, the first pride was a riot! And if you throw an afterparty and don’t give us the money, there’ll be another one! Black Trans Women have been paying the tab for the longest and paying the ultimate price so often for just existing. We just managed to buy a building in this city after 20 years of service. Let’s celebrate Black Trans Women this pride!

With Love,

Miss Major Alexander L. Lee TGIJP Black Trans Cultural Center’s Executive Leadership
Janetta Johnson, CEO - zy’aire nassirah, Co-Executive Director - vandell, Strategic Advisor

Hello beloved community

With Love,

Miss Major Alexander L. Lee TGIJP Black Trans Cultural Center’s Executive Leadership
Janetta Johnson, CEO - zy’aire nassirah, Co-Executive Director - vandell, Strategic Advisor