

The logo for MASHUP features the word in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are colored: 'M' is orange, 'A' is green, 'S' is teal, 'H' is blue, 'U' is a pink square with a yellow upward-pointing arrow, and 'P' is yellow. A thick cyan line runs horizontally above the logo and vertically down the right side of the page.

MASHUP

Bringing every piece home

Theory of change **& IMPACT**

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Contact Info

Email us info@mashupnashville.org
Call or Text Us 615-475-7116

Website

www.mashupnation.org



Dear Friends & Supporters of MashUp,

The times we are currently facing are unprecedented. Society is faced with challenges that even the most profound thinkers of our times could not have foreseen. And amongst these challenges, our underrepresented communities, especially the Black LGBTQ+ community, and more specific – our trans community, are finding it more difficult than ever to access necessary resources and networks. Yet, despite these obstacles, **we continue to push ahead, reflecting an unmatched strength and an unwavering commitment** to our cause.

We acknowledge the dedicated funders who have supported us and made it possible for us to continue our work, but **the stakes are higher now.** Just as we thrive in our communities and build sustainable networks, we are also challenged by a lack of sufficient investment. But our strength is not born out of conflict alone. **Our resilience comes from the culture we create, the community we care for, and the inclusive work we do despite the challenges.**

We aim not just to survive, but to flourish, offering hope to those we represent and those who support us. Don't let the struggles we face every day make you think that we are any less capable or lacking in any way. Instead, let it be a testament to our strong will and our ability to grow against adversity. **We are an organization that respects unity, human dignity, and the pursuit of a life where everyone can prosper.**

We invite support simply because our cause is just, our resolve is strong, and our work, paramount to the upliftment of the communities we serve. Thank you for standing in solidarity with us. As we proceed in these uncertain times, we look forward to your continued support and commitment in helping MashUp uplift and empower the Black LGBTQ+ community.

In unity and resistance,
Eric L Cox- Chief Village Keeper

MASHUP



Bringing every piece home.

ABOUT

We **center** black queer liberation through holistic programming **created by us, for us.**

We celebrate the **unique** social spaces our hyphenated **identities** occupy, and are dedicated to telling the bold, hard truths of our experiences in service of **advancing health equity** for Black queer folks.

Our **impact is measured** by the data we collect directly from the community we serve **through participatory research** informed by Black feminist researchers and **translated by those who understand the nuance of intersectionality.** ^{(1),(2),(3)}

WHOLENESS IS OUR PATH TO HEALING

Why MashUp! is pivotal:

83%

of Black LGBTQ+ individuals reported that discrimination

has negatively affected their well-being to some degree; comparatively 61% of white respondents reported the same.⁴



MASHUP'S MISSION & PROGRAMMING ARE DIRECTLY INFORMED BY THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF OUR COMMUNITY.

Black queer folks occupy multiple social status positions that manifest in an **intersectional** experience, one that predominantly yields **multiple jeopardies** rather than multiple advantages, as white counterparts typically experience.⁵

OUR COMMUNITY

These compounded realities of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and class discrimination shape that outcome.⁶

The lived experience of navigating multiple marginalized realities creates barriers that are unique to our hyphenated identity.

Barriers and realities that MashUp is uniquely positioned to understand and solve for.

Telling the story of our community requires an understanding of the nuances and lived experiences of Black queer folks. **Intersectionality is not an additive, nor mutually exclusive reality, it is a mutually constructed experience.**⁶



Data can lead in #s, or it can lead from the ♥.

Public health is increasingly calling for community collaboration and participatory research to reduce disparities.⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾ But too often, there is a disconnect between the data collected and the people living the reality behind it. When community voice is excluded from the interpretation of data, critical insight is lost.

MASHUP =

- DIRECT RESOURCES
- REBUILDING HEALTHCARE TRUST
- PERSON-CENTERED CARE

Building community + participatory public health
= direct prevention & intervention



What Makes MashUp Different:

- We measure belonging.
- We treat stories as data.
- We design every program with a Pillar.
- We close the loop with learning.

Needs require relational intelligence. That is why our qualitative approach matters. We translate lived experience into informed programming that centers the wholeness of Black queer folks as a path to healing.

“ —

“The narratives and analyses of sorrow, pain, tragedy, and inequity in health equity research tell only part of the story of what it means to be Black in the United States. There are many other stories to be investigated and reported, stories of Black people’s strengths, assets, resistance, and joy, even in health inequity research.” (Bowleg, L)²

— ”



WE ARE ARCHITECTS OF BLACK QUEER CULTURE, EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORLDBUILDERS. WE ARE UNIQUE BECAUSE WE HOLD SPACES OF TRUST AND WHOLENESS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE A HISTORY OF FRAGMENTATION.

“ —

“Some folks for whom openness is not about the luxury of ‘will i choose to share this or tell that’ but rather, ‘will i survive-will i make it through-will i stay alive.’ And openness is about how to be well, and telling the truth is about how to put the broken bits and pieces of the heart back together again. It is about being whole-being wholehearted.”

(bell hooks)²

— ”





DEMOGRAPHICS

MashUp primarily serves Black queer adults. Through close partnerships and our fiscally sponsored programs we are able to reach broader LGBTQ+ communities.

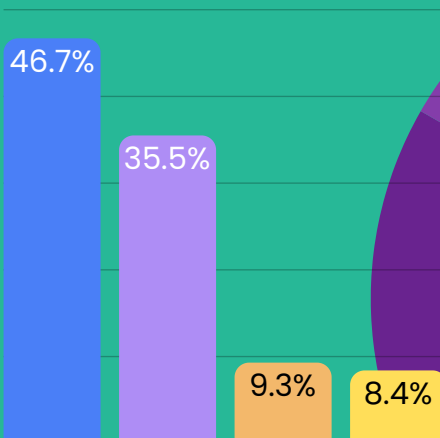
Our social following is **6k** across all social platforms.

Our community's age ranges from 18-50+ with our largest **core audience between 25-54** on socials, and 35-49 in person at events.

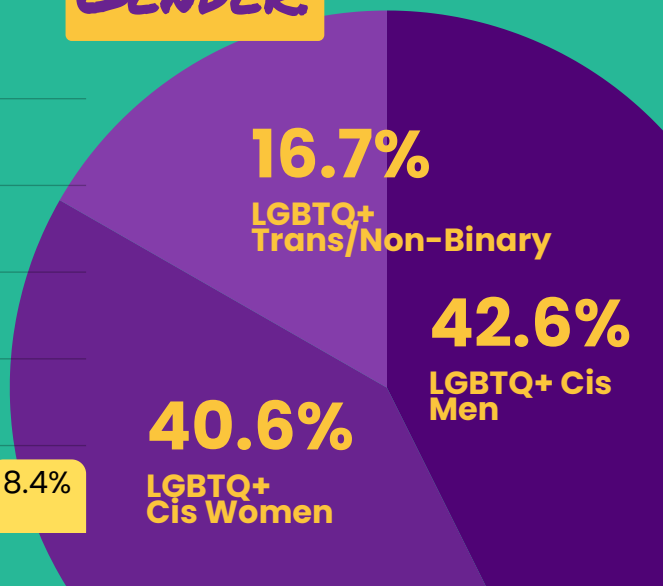
Our primary geographical reach is Nashville, TN (~80%), Memphis, TN (~8%), and Atlanta, GA (~8%)

HOW THEY FOUND US:

- Social media
- Word of mouth
- Email/Newsletter
- Other (various)



GENDER:



AGE:



“

“I wasn’t able to make it this year but one of my favorite people in the WORLD got to go for the first time and came out BEAMING. He looked lighter. He was smiling bigger. He was so excited about everyone he met. 10/10 on his behalf because he has had a really REALLY hard year and this elevated his spirit in a way that I really can’t put into words. Thank you all for doing this!!!” – Anonymous participant (Event Survey)

”



“

“I love being around other Black queer people and we need more spaces to celebrate one another.”
– Anonymous participant (Event Survey)

”

“

“As a Nashvillian of many years it puts a smile on my face to see the LGBTQIA+ community have such a magnificent presence of talent, authentic, black excellence, resources and voices joined together in unity.” – Anonymous participant (Event Survey)

“I love how mashup welcomes everyone and makes you feel like family.” – Anonymous participant (Event Survey)

”



Our Impact Framework

Barriers → **Pillars** → **Programs** → **Proof** → **Learning + Next Steps**

We begin with a question, barrier, or need and a mission to solve it.

Each program we create acts as a proof of concept and creates opportunities for us to solve for our core questions, while collecting participatory data. We map our objectives, methods of data collection, and ownership across all our programs, events, collaborations, and partnerships.

Everything we do is rooted in clear logic: name the harm, build the space, measure the change.

**“THE PLACE IN WHICH I’LL FIT,
WILL NOT EXIST UNTIL I MAKE IT.”**
-James Baldwin

The Barriers (the “why”)

The lived experience of occupying multiple marginalized realities yields barriers that are unique to this hyphenated identity if Black queer people living in the South.

1

Programs & Experiences (the “what we do”)

Each signature program and special event is designed to solve for a question based on a barrier. Each program aims to meet the unique needs of our community. Our programming is our path to wholeness; each bringing the fragmented pieces of our community together.

3

2

The Pillars (the “how”)

MashUp’s theory of change—the principles that shape every space, program, and message. This is the ministry of our work. Each pillar is the path to changing a barrier we have identified. From a research perspective, each pillar informs our objectives as well as how we organize our participatory data.

Our Impact Framework

Barriers → Pillars → Programs → Proof → Learning + Next Steps

4

Proof of Impact (the “receipts”)

Impact is measured with surveys, testimonials, media, and real people’s feedback; We collaboratively work with public health experts, data scientists, and community members to decipher data, co-creating methods of coding and analysis to distill patterns and learning of collective experience. We want to know if our programming eliminates barriers, or changes people’s lives for the better, and measure the change so we can keep going!

Examining intersectionality from multidisciplinary perspectives is a process that is challenging, but one of the most important and fulfilling ways to share impact outside the community we center and ensure we are building more equity for all!

5

Learning & Adaptation (the “so what”)

The outcome of our impact, whether it is positive or negative, helps us identify patterns, adjust our programming, and know what the community is asking for next. Because the way we operate is linked directly to our pillars that inform our theory of change, we are nimble in our adaptation. We can meet our community where they need us, when they ask, because of the way we use programming as a direct path to change.

“Whether numbers or words, data do not speak for themselves; they acquire meaning only within a framework of interpretation created by the researcher.”¹⁰ We have a symbiotic exchange between participants informing programming while programming informs change for participants. Because MashUp is made up of the community we center, we are able to bring value to the connections of macro and microstructural shifts in communities that are historically disenfranchised. To that end we contribute to much needed representation in Black and queer represented research, and will continue to, for generations to come.¹¹



We are a family of advocates
creating an economy of
unapologetic, identity-
centered health equity.





HOW WE ASSIGN PROGRAMS TO PILLARS

For each program, ask:

- **What is the primary transformation happening?**
 - healing → Pillar 1
 - access → Pillar 2
 - learning → Pillar 3
 - leadership → Pillar 4
- **What is the participant walking away with first?**
- **What is the main outcome?**
 - That answer = primary pillar

Example:

Barrier: Lack of access to affirming health care Black queer folks face multi-minority stress caused by discrimination, which is directly linked to substance use disorders.

Question: What happens when Black queer folks are given an affirming space to reduce reliance on harmful coping behaviors, and rebuild connection to themselves and community?

Program (solution): Mindful MashUp Transformation Program (MMTP)

Primary Pillar: Wholeness as a Path to Healing = INTERNAL EXPERIENCE

Secondary Pillar: Health Equity Through Identity Integration = ACCESS + CARE SYSTEMS

Impact: 13 people received 200 hours of free therapeutic services and healthier coping strategies

PARTICIPANTS DESCRIBED MMTP AS
"THE FIRST TIME MY HEALING WAS
CELEBRATED, NOT JUST TOLERATED."



Mindful MashUp Transformation Program (MMTP)

BACKGROUND: THE PROBLEM WE ARE SOLVING

Black queer folks are navigating compounded stress at the intersection of racism, homophobia, and systemic exclusion. LGBTQ adults experience higher rates of substance use and behavioral health challenges compared to their heterosexual peers.¹⁴ Minority stress suggests that environment is pathogenic, not the person.⁽¹³⁾⁽¹⁵⁾

To cope with stigma, discrimination, and daily pressure, many queer people turn to harmful coping mechanisms.⁽¹⁶⁾⁽¹⁷⁾⁽¹⁸⁾ These behaviors are responses to chronic stress, not isolated issues.

For Black LGBTQ communities, experiences of racial discrimination and anti-LGBTQ stigma are not separate, but mutually constructed, creating unique behavioral health outcomes.² Discrimination is directly linked to substance use disorders, with significantly higher odds among those experiencing multiple forms of discrimination.¹⁹ Additional stigma, lack of access, and economic inequities in the south further limit pathways to care.

Black adults are significantly less likely to receive mental health treatment, with only one in three receiving the care they need.⁽²⁰⁾⁽²¹⁾ Historical harm, cultural expectations around strength, and a lack of culturally competent providers continue to shape distrust and access.⁽²²⁾⁽²³⁾

25% OF BLACK QUEER SOUTHERNERS DON'T HAVE HEALTH CARE.^{(24)(FIGURE 13)} WHICH IS A BIG REASON WHY MINDFUL MASHUP PROGRAMMING IS FREE!

AT THE SAME TIME, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT INCREASED SOCIAL SUPPORT REDUCES RELIANCE ON HARMFUL COPING MECHANISMS AND IMPROVES OVERALL WELLBEING. CREATING SPACES WHERE PEOPLE FEEL VALUED, CONNECTED, AND SEEN IS A CRITICAL INTERVENTION.²⁵ THIS IS WHERE THE HEART OF THE MINDFUL MASHUP PROGRAM BEGAN.

PILLARS:

PRIMARY: WHOLENESS AS A PATH TO HEALING

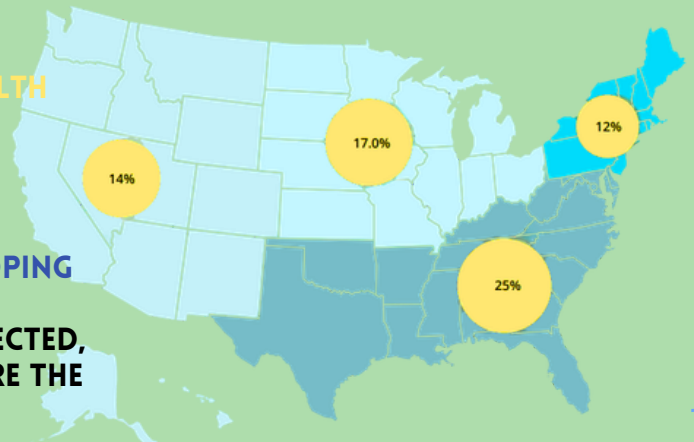
SECONDARY: HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH IDENTITY INTEGRATION



What we're solving for THE QUESTION

What happens when Black queer folks are given a culturally grounded, affirming space to unpack trauma, reduce reliance on harmful coping behaviors, and rebuild connection to themselves and community?

Figure 13. Proportion of Black LGBT adults with no insurance.



THE WORK (WHAT WE CREATED IN RESPONSE)

MMTP NOW INCLUDES:



- Free monthly healing circles (10–15 participants) focused on trauma, behavior, and creative expression
- Quarterly large-scale events like Art & Soul and The Uplift! that expand access and celebrate community
- Community ambassadors who ensure the work stays rooted in lived experience
- Bridge gaps in care by connecting participants to affirming providers, reducing barriers to therapy while rebuilding trust in mental health systems.

Our core offering remains: intimate healing spaces led by therapists and facilitators, integrating storytelling, art, movement, and peer support.

We designed MMTP as a trauma-informed, creativity-centered approach to mental health, combining licensed therapeutic support, expressive arts, and peer-led activities to help participants address addictive behaviors, rebuild coping skills, and foster community.

The program began with free, open, drop-in sessions where participants reported feeling seen, reclaiming joy, and forming lasting bonds. We quickly learned that sustained engagement was key, leading to a cohort-based model where participants committed to a series of sessions to explore the roots of their behaviors, process trauma, and reconnect with themselves without shame.

As the program evolved, we responded to real barriers like transportation, stigma, and scheduling, as well as differing needs for intimacy and scale. This led to our current model, which balances both.

HOW WE LISTEN (HOW DATA IS GATHERED):

We don't extract data, we receive it.

Our understanding is shaped through:

- surveys and participant feedback
- open dialogue and shared storytelling
- interviews and lived experience
- real-time observations within our spaces

This program is built from community voice, including insights from 400+ BIPOC LGBTQ+ Tennesseans, which informed the development of our 2023 LGBTQ+ Health Experiences Survey. ([see appendix](#))

Participants were first asked to share their tobacco use history and what motivated them to seek support through Mindful MashUp. One of the most common motivators was health. For some, this looked like a doctor's appointment uncovering underlying issues. For others, it was recognizing the impact of smoking on daily life, from asthma symptoms to physical performance. **These moments often became entry points for change and highlight the role of healthcare touchpoints in identifying and referring participants.**

Beyond physical health, participants also described a desire for self-understanding and personal growth. Many were not just looking to quit a behavior, but to better understand themselves. **The need for connection also came up consistently**, with participants emphasizing the importance of being in a space where they felt supported and not alone.

Because of this, **our metrics and outcomes reflect more than participation.** We measure:

- belonging and connection
- emotional shifts
- changes in coping behaviors



A mindful approach to addressing addictive behaviors for LGBTQ+ Black people

★ WHAT CHANGED (IMPACT)

- Over the evolution of this program 13 participants received over 200 hours of therapy, resulting in \$35,000 in client savings
- Reduced feelings of isolation and shame
- Increased emotional awareness and healthier coping strategies
- Stronger peer connection and sense of belonging
- Increased access to culturally relevant mental health resources

WHAT WE'RE SEEING (EMERGING INSIGHT)

Participants are carrying deep, often unspoken experiences of shame, isolation, and survival-based coping. At the same time, there is a strong desire for connection, accountability, and spaces where healing feels culturally relevant and affirmed.

We're seeing that when people are given permission to show up fully, without fragmentation, they begin to shift how they relate to themselves, their coping, and their community.



WHAT WE'RE LEARNING (SO WHAT)

Healing requires more than access. It requires trust, cultural relevance, and spaces where people are not asked to fragment themselves.

Substance use and impulsive behaviors cannot be addressed without addressing the conditions that produce them.

Community is not supplemental to care. It is the intervention.

WHAT'S NEXT (HOW WE ADAPT)

We are continuing to:

- expand while maintaining intimacy
- partnerships with affirming providers
- grow community-led ambassadors
- refine based on lived experience and data
- explore replication in other communities

MMTP is not just a program. It is a model for what culturally grounded, community-led behavioral health support can look like.



“WITHOUT COMMUNITY,
THERE IS NO LIBERATION”
- AUDRE LORDE

MASHUP WEEKEND 2025

BACKGROUND: THE PROBLEM WE ARE SOLVING

For Black LGBTQ+ individuals, community is essential to well-being, serving as a critical source of support, affirmation, and connection. In the face of ongoing structural inequities and identity-based stressors, many rely on chosen family networks and community-centered spaces to access care and resources not consistently available through traditional systems. Recent research shows that minority stress continues to impact mental health outcomes, particularly for those navigating multiple marginalized identities.⁽²⁶⁾⁽²⁷⁾

ACCESS TO LGBTQ+ AFFIRMING RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SPACES IS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER IN SOUTHERN STATES, WHERE FEWER PROTECTIVE POLICIES AND HIGHER LEVELS OF SOCIAL STIGMA IMPACT OVERALL WELL-BEING AND CONNECTEDNESS.²⁸

Affirming community spaces play a powerful protective role. Social connectedness and participation in LGBTQ+ centered environments are associated with reduced isolation, improved mental health, and increased resilience.⁽²⁹⁾⁽³⁰⁾ Community events, in particular, serve as key sites for connection, education, and visibility, creating opportunities for individuals to engage, access resources, and build meaningful relationships in environments where their full identities are affirmed.⁽³¹⁾⁽³²⁾

PILLARS:

MASHUP WEEKEND ENCOMPASSES ALL OUR PILLARS!



What we're solving for ★ THE QUESTION ★

What role do affirming, community-centered events play in improving connection, access to resources, and overall well-being for Black LGBTQ+ individuals in the South?

Equally important is the role of joy and celebration. **Spaces that center creativity, culture, and self-expression help counter deficit-based narratives, fostering pride, belonging, and sustained community engagement.** MashUp Weekend reflects this approach, creating intentional spaces that strengthen chosen family, expand access to resources, and celebrate the fullness of Black queer existence. In doing so, it contributes to a growing body of work that positions community-centered experiences as essential to advancing well-being, connection, and equity.

THE WORK (WHAT WE CREATED IN RESPONSE)

MASHUP WEEKEND 2025 INCLUDED:



- Multi-day experience engaging community across social, cultural, and wellness-centered events
- The inaugural Family Reunion & the signature Giving Out Loud Brunch
- Access to community resources and peer engagement
- Entry points for volunteering, partnership, and continued involvement

Core offering: creating spaces where people feel seen, celebrated, and connected to community.



We created essential programming to ensure our community has opportunities to celebrate joyfully and thrive! **MashUp Weekend 2025 was a multi-day, culturally grounded experience designed to create space for connection, celebration, and community engagement.** Through a series of curated events, including the MashUp Family Reunion, Giving Out Loud Brunch, and Karaoke Night, participants engaged across social, cultural, and community-centered touchpoints that prioritized visibility, joy, and belonging.

Day 1: Gimme Some Throat Karaoke was a kick off to inspire voice and spirit. We presented competitors with cash prizes and started the weekend off right.

Day 2: The MashUp! Family Reunion was an immersive community day celebrating the resilience and unity of chosen family. With food trucks, entertainment, workshops, and community vendors, this event offered dynamic experiences, from interactive workshops to cultural showcases. Collaborating with queer organizations, holistic health and faith-based communities, and social justice advocates, we created a space that inspired unity, resilience, and joy.

Day 3: The Annual Giving Out Loud (GOL) Brunch celebrated the theme “Roses of Resilience,” honoring the unwavering determination and leadership of our community. The most important part of this brunch is the honorees we recognize. It is with great pride we get to amplify the work of worldbuilders, changemakers, and mentors of our community. We believe in giving flowers to those who inspire while they are here to receive them. This event is our way of giving back, building recognition for black queer leaders and ensuring our work is archived for generations to come.

MASHUP WEEKEND WAS OUR BOLDEST FUNDRAISER, BRINGING IN \$22K+ AND OVER 800 ATTENDEES, MARKING THE LARGEST WEEKEND TO DATE. THIS PROGRAM DEMONSTRATES THE ROLE THAT THIS TYPE OF EVENT DOESN'T JUST IMPROVE BLACK QUEER LIVES, BUT ENHANCES THEM AND FUNDS THEM! THE POWER OF SAFE VISIBILITY, JOY AND BELONGING IS IN THE FEEDBACK.

For many, the weekend represented more than an event. It was a space to reconnect with community, experience affirmation, and engage without feeling fragmented. Participants expressed a desire for continued engagement, signaling that these spaces are not only impactful in the moment, but also serve as entry points for ongoing connection and involvement.

Because of this, our measures of success reflect more than attendance.

We look at:

- sense of connection and belonging
- participant engagement and interaction
- inspiration to take action and stay involved



★ WHAT CHANGED (IMPACT)

Survey findings further highlight the depth of this impact [\(see appendix\)](#)

- 4.88 / 5 average satisfaction rating
- 4.5 / 5 average sense of connection to the MashUp community
- 87.5% of participants reported being inspired to take action
- 50% first-time attendees, indicating continued expansion of reach

Additionally, the MashUp Family Reunion featured 17 local vendors and organizations, providing access to mental health support, sexual health resources, advocacy organizations, and culturally relevant services.

Participants described the experience as “spectacular” and “the absolute best,” reflecting strong levels of satisfaction, affirmation, and community connection.

WHAT WE'RE SEEING (EMERGING INSIGHT)

Participants are not simply attending events. They are seeking connection, belonging, and spaces where they feel fully seen.

Across responses, we observed:

- a strong desire for affirming, community-centered environments
- immediate increases in connection and engagement during shared experiences
- interest in deeper involvement beyond a single event (many asking to volunteer!)

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING (SO WHAT)

Connection is the outcome.

The data shows that impact is driven not only by attendance, but by whether individuals:

- feel connected to community
- see themselves reflected in the space
- leave with a desire to remain engaged

With 87.5% of participants inspired to take action, MashUp Weekend serves as an entry point to sustained community involvement.

WHAT'S NEXT (HOW WE ADAPT)

We heard loud and clear that Mashup Weekend needs to continue! As we grow this annual event, we will:

- strengthen pathways from attendee to volunteer, partner, and donor
- deepen community connection through intentional programming
- build on participant feedback to enhance future experiences

MashUp Weekend is evolving from a moment into a sustained community staple!



“THIS REFRAMED AGING AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONTINUED VITALITY, NOT DECLINE.”

-ANONYMOUS (EVENT SURVEY)

Timeless Jewels

BACKGROUND: THE PROBLEM WE ARE SOLVING

- **59% OF LGBTQ+ SENIORS REPORT A LACK OF COMPANIONSHIP.**³³
- **73% OF BLACK LGBTQ+ ADULTS ARE NOT PARTNERED.**³⁴
- **OVER HALF OF BLACK LGBTQ+ ADULTS LIVE IN THE SOUTH, WHERE ACCESS TO AFFIRMING SPACES IS MORE LIMITED.**³⁴

Black LGBTQ+ elders are navigating isolation shaped by a lifetime of compounded marginalization. Many are more likely to live alone, less likely to have children, and more likely to lack consistent companionship.⁽³³⁾⁽³⁵⁾ Economic inequity further limits access to caregivers, healthcare, and transportation with 39% of Black LGBTQ+ adults living on less than \$24,000 annually and over half residing in the South, where access to affirming healthcare and community spaces is more limited.³⁵

But isolation is not just about proximity. It is about exclusion.

Research shows that **Black LGBTQ+ elders often feel alienated not only from broader society, but from LGBTQ+ spaces themselves**, which are frequently youth-centered and majority white. Many report experiencing ageism within queer spaces, strained family relationships, and disconnection from religious communities because of their identities.³⁴ **As a result, many withdraw from community participation altogether.**

PILLARS: COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE + GENERATIONAL WISDOM

SECONDARY: HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH IDENTITY INTEGRATION



What we're solving for

★ THE QUESTION ★

What happens when Black queer elders are centered in spaces where they are not only included, but reflected, valued, and connected across generations?

AND YET, THE SAME RESEARCH SHOWS THAT CONNECTION IS THE INTERVENTION. FRIENDSHIP, INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, SPIRITUALITY, & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ARE DIRECTLY TIED TO IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMONG BLACK LGBTQ+ ELDERS.³⁴

THE ISSUE IS NOT THAT COMMUNITY IS ABSENT. IT IS THAT IT HAS NOT BEEN BUILT FOR THE FULL REALITY OF WHO PEOPLE ARE.

THE WORK (WHAT WE CREATED IN RESPONSE)

HOW WE LISTEN (HOW DATA IS GATHERED):



We don't extract data, we receive it.

Our understanding is shaped through:

- post-event surveys across multiple 2025 gatherings ([see Appendix](#))
- participant testimonials and lived experience ([see Appendix](#))
- open dialogue and shared storytelling
- observed engagement, connection, and return

All respondents identify as part of the Timeless Jewels community, offering a focused view into the experiences of our Black queer elders.

Timeless Jewels is a group that meets monthly with events that are designed to foster connection, reflection, and community for Black queer folks age 50 and above.

We create spaces where aging is not treated as decline, but as depth. Where identity does not need to be edited to belong. Where people can show up fully across race, sexuality, gender, spirituality, and lived experience.

While the space centers elders, it remains open to those who value intergenerational connection, creating opportunities for reflection, mentorship, and shared experience across age groups. This is not just a meetup. It is a space where knowledge is embodied, stigma is humanized, and aging, sexuality, and wellness are reclaimed through community.

WHAT WE'RE SEEING (EMERGING INSIGHT):

Connection is the most consistent outcome.

Across program formats, participants report high levels of satisfaction, but more importantly, a strong sense of belonging and community connection .

- people are not just attending, they are returning, volunteering, and investing in the space
- participants are seeking deeper, more intentional spaces for dialogue, especially around identity, HIV, and belonging
- authenticity is the difference between being present and actually belonging

Participants are naming that spaces exist, but few allow them to be fully seen. Timeless Jewels is beginning to fill that gap.

Black queer elders often feel more positive about aging when they have opportunities to fully embrace who they are. Recognizing their lived experiences and intersectional identities can help build confidence, pride, and self-acceptance. [\(36\)\(37\)\(38\)\(39\)\(40\)](#)

INTERGENERATIONAL FEEDBACK:

"Your pure existence did something for me because I saw someone older than me that felt like a reflection of me" -Milton Memphis

"One of the most valuable takeaways from the Timeless Jewels event was the revelation that sexual activity can extend well into our 80s, challenging conventional notions about aging and intimacy... This insight resonated with me because it reframes aging as an opportunity for continued vitality, rather than a decline, emphasizing that nurturing both physical and sexual health is key to longevity and overall quality of life." - Anonymous



Timeless Jewels is not just a gathering. It is social infrastructure. Connection is the intervention, and participants are staying, returning, and building within it.

★ WHAT CHANGED (IMPACT)

SEE APPENDIX

- 71% of participants reported feeling “VERY CONNECTED” after attending
- 95% of participants reported feeling CONNECTED OVERALL (rating 4 or 5)
- Nearly all participants rated their experience at the highest level
- Participants returned as attendees, volunteers, donors, and community members
- Strong demand for continued and expanded programming across social and educational formats

IN THEIR WORDS

“I have had the pleasure of attending various events under the heading of Timeless Jewels. Being an elderly black gay man, it’s refreshing to gather with other people with similar interests, experiences, and perspectives as well as to learn from new friends. This venue offers a safe haven where we can connect and be ourselves without fear. As we age, variables from health status to even bouts of depression can be improved and alleviated. I have the luxury of seeing friends who no longer ventured out socially but now will come and participate with others. The bar scene is no longer our only escape from reality. Timeless Jewels reunite us and remind ourselves we are not alone. It is truly a jewel.” -Phil Michal Thomas. ABA. CPI

“The Timeless Jewels group offers a safe place for me to get information that’s practical, constructive, and helpful. The group encourages me greatly and teaches me about coping with problems through shared experiences. Hearing from others facing similar challenges gives me comfort and makes me feel less alone in my troubles.” -Lewayne Childrey

WHAT WE’RE LEARNING (SO WHAT)

Isolation is not just about being alone. It is about not being reflected.

Intergenerational connection is a protective factor. It reduces stigma, strengthens identity, and creates continuity in a community that has been historically fragmented.

We are also learning that:

- people need spaces where nothing about them has to be edited to belong
- silence and stigma still shape how people show up, especially around HIV and aging
- community is not just support, it is a site of healing, leadership, and self-repair

WHAT’S NEXT (HOW WE ADAPT)

Participant feedback is guiding the next phase of this work:

- creating smaller, affinity-based spaces (e.g., trans SGL men, people living with HIV)
- facilitating open dialogue around stigma, identity, and disclosure
- expanding social and interest-based gatherings to deepen connection
- developing pathways into leadership through the Timeless Voices Fellowship

Timeless Jewels is evolving from a gathering space into a pipeline for connection, healing, and community-led leadership.



“We need more events like this one.”
-Anonymous (Event Survey)

Dining Dialogues

At MashUp, we understand that **food not only nourishes the body, it softens the spirit and prepares us for deeper dialogue.** Dining Dialogues uses this simple but powerful tool to host community dinners centered on topics relevant to those we serve, facilitated by educators and individuals with lived experience. We primarily focus on conversations around sexual health and identity.

THE NEED

- Sexual health conversations are often stigmatized, clinical, or not culturally relevant.
- Conversations about race, identity, and sexual orientation require intentional spaces and facilitators that can hold the nuance of intersectionality.
- Queer Black communities lack identity-specific, affirming spaces for open dialogue.

PILLARS: COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE +
GENERATIONAL WISDOM
SECONDARY: HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH IDENTITY INTEGRATION



What we're solving for
✦ **THE QUESTION** ✦

What happens when sexual health and identity conversations are grounded in culture, community, and lived experience rather than clinical distance?

PRE-DINING DIALOGUE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK (THE NEED FOR THIS PROGRAMMING):

- **85-90% OF PARTICIPANTS SOUGHT EDUCATION ON THE TOPICS WE OFFERED (SEXUAL HEALTH, HIV, KINK, OR RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS)**
- **70-80% ATTENDED IN SEARCH OF COMMUNITY, CONNECTION, AND BELONGING**
- **~75% WERE SPECIFICALLY INTERESTED IN STIGMATIZED OR UNDERREPRESENTED TOPICS**

SEE APPENDIX

THE WORK (WHAT WE CREATED IN RESPONSE)

HOW WE LISTEN (HOW DATA IS GATHERED):



We gather insight through:

- pre- and post-event surveys to measure knowledge and attitude shifts
- participant feedback, focus groups, and interviews
- real-time observations within each session

We also track attendance, engagement, and topic demand to continuously refine the program.

WHAT WE'RE SEEING (EMERGING INSIGHT):

Our data shows that participants are actively seeking both knowledge and connection:

- 85-90% come looking for education on sexual health and related topics [\(see appendix\)](#)
- 70-80% are motivated by a desire for community and belonging [\(see appendix\)](#)
- ~75% are drawn to conversations that are often stigmatized or overlooked [\(see appendix\)](#)

Participants engage more deeply when conversations are identity-specific, community-led, and grounded in lived experience.

Dining Dialogues uses shared meals as a tool to bring people together for intentional, facilitated conversations around sexual health and identity.

Each gathering is curated to:

- center specific segments of the LGBTQ+ community
- prioritize storytelling as a form of education and connection
- create space for participants to speak freely and listen deeply

Every session is guided by a sexual health expert who provides accurate, accessible information while connecting lived experience to practical care. **This approach transforms education into something communal, relational, and affirming.**

WHAT CHANGED (IMPACT)

Post-event data reflects both learning and transformation [\(see appendix\)](#)

- **90%** report gaining new knowledge or deeper understanding
- **80-85%** leave with practical tools they can apply in their lives
- **70-80%** highlight feeling seen and connected
- **65-75%** report personal growth, including increased confidence and reduced stigma

Participants are not just receiving information, they are integrating it.

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING (SO WHAT)

Information alone is not enough.

People need:

- cultural relevance
- emotional safety
- and community connection

We are learning that when these elements are present, education becomes more impactful and more likely to translate into real-life change.

WHAT'S NEXT (HOW WE ADAPT)

We are continuing to:

- expand topic areas based on community demand
- deepen partnerships with sexual health educators and organizations
- refine evaluation tools to better measure long-term impact
- develop resources that extend learning beyond the table

Dining Dialogues is not just a program.

It's a model for how sexual health education can be delivered with dignity, relevance, and care.



“I’m thankful for projects like The Wholiness Project and groups like MashUp! that I’m able to have these spaces to discover what it is about me that I love so much and how I can affirm that.” - Charity (22)

The Wholiness Project

BACKGROUND: THE PROBLEM WE ARE SOLVING

For many LGBTQ+ individuals, spirituality is both a source of grounding and harm.

While 51% of queer people maintain a religious affiliation,⁴¹ many navigate deep internal conflict:

- **33% OF RELIGIOUS LGBT ADULTS EXPERIENCE CONFLICT BETWEEN THEIR BELIEFS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION.**⁴¹
- **63.1% OF THOSE RAISED IN A RELIGION SAID THEIR RELIGION IS UNFRIENDLY TO LGBTQ+ PEOPLE.**⁴²
- **54.5% SAID THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TRIGGERED FEELINGS OF GUILT AND SHAME WHEN THEY CAME OUT AS AN LGBTQ+ PERSON.**⁴²

For Black queer folks this is compounded by geography and culture. In the South, queer individuals are significantly more likely to attempt to maintain religious ties, often without access to affirming spaces. 86% of Black queer individuals reported that discrimination has negatively affected their spiritual well-being to some degree; comparatively 69% of white respondents reported the same.⁴

When faith communities are non-affirming, individuals often lose access to what was once a critical source of resilience, coping, and belonging. This is a deep concern when considering queer folks are **2x more likely** to experience mental health conditions, specifically trans folks who are **43% more likely** to attempt suicide.⁴³

PILLARS: WHOLENESS AS A PATH TO HEALING

SECONDARY: COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE + GENERATIONAL WISDOM



What we’re solving for ★ THE QUESTION ★

What does healing look like when spirituality has been both a source of harm and a pathway to resilience? And how do we reclaim faith, ritual, and connection in ways that affirm queer identity?

MASHUP IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Strongly Agree

100%

MASHUP! FOSTERS A SENSE OF BELONGING, COMMUNITY CONNECTION, & SOCIAL SUPPORT.

Agree

80%

MASHUP! INCREASES AWARENESS & VISIBILITY OF ISSUES IMPACTING BIPOC LGBTQ+ PEOPLE. (SEE APPENDIX)

THE WORK (WHAT WE CREATED IN RESPONSE)

HOW WE LISTEN (HOW DATA IS GATHERED):



We don't separate spirituality from lived experience, we learn through it.

Our understanding is shaped by:

- participant surveys and reflections
- community dialogue and storytelling
- observations within ritual and ceremonial spaces
- feedback from collaborative partners and events

WHAT WE'RE SEEING (EMERGING INSIGHT):

Participants are not rejecting spirituality; they are seeking ways to reconnect with it on their own terms.

We see:

- a desire to redefine faith outside of shame-based frameworks
- participants engaging deeply with ceremony and ritual practices that have previously had oppressive effects on them, but are able to do so in an affirming way that gives them back these deeply personal and fulfilling modalities
- increased openness to self-exploration and identity integration

The Wholiness Project creates spaces where spirituality and queerness are not in conflict.

Through our programming we:

- Reclaim spiritual practices as tools for healing and self-affirmation
- Challenge harmful religious narratives that dehumanize queer people
- Center ourselves as the divine spiritual beings we are
- Partner with aligned organizations (e.g., Include Pride in the Pews, Nashville Hoodoo Festival) to expand access to affirming spiritual spaces

This work is rooted in both cultural practice and healing frameworks, including principles that are traditionally the backbone to therapeutic practices. By creating safe spaces for the Black queer community to reconcile spirituality identity, we help foster mental health and self-acceptance. A skill often used in DBT (dialectical behavioral therapy) to help increase self love and emotional regulation is what is found in spirituality: "acceptance" and "loving kindness."⁴¹

WHAT CHANGED (IMPACT)

The impact is both personal and collective.

Participants report:

- greater self-acceptance and reduced internalized shame
- renewed connection to spirituality as a source of strength
- feeling seen, affirmed, and safe in spaces that once felt inaccessible
- A connectedness to community that combats the isolation that is a result of discriminatory faith systems

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING (SO WHAT)

Healing from religious trauma requires restoring the spiritual body, carving out spaces that hold that deeply personal and emotional work, and sharing in the experience of restoration.

When Black queer folks are given space to:

- explore belief without judgment
- engage in affirming ritual and community
- reconnect with spirituality through love and acceptance, instead of fear and discrimination

...spirituality becomes a tool for resilience rather than harm.

WHAT'S NEXT (HOW WE ADAPT)

We are continuing to:

- expand partnerships with affirming faith and cultural organizations
- deepen programming around ritual, ceremony, and collective healing
- create more entry points for LGBTQ+ individuals navigating religious trauma

Because healing isn't just about leaving harmful spaces, it's about building new ones rooted in wholeness.



MASHUP TV: ELEVATING THE VOICES OF THE BLACK QUEER COMMUNITY



Follow us on youtube

MashUp TV is our media platform dedicated to amplifying our mission through discussions, interviews, and storytelling. Our goal is to document and share the unique stories of queer individuals, providing a space for meaningful conversations around the issues impacting their well-being. By showcasing these narratives, we aim to bridge the gap between the queer community and those outside of it, reduce stigma, and preserve our rich history. Tune in for MashUp TV, where we celebrate community heroes, explore critical topics, and drive meaningful change.

EJR LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



LEARN

MORE



Mission – The EJR Institute centers Black queer youth by building leadership skills and fostering bold, impactful change. Inspired by trailblazers like Ernestine Eckstein and Marsha P. Johnson, the institute aims to offer business networking, skill-building workshops, learning cohorts, and life coaching. We also aim to build this program out to support our solidarity network for young people and young organizations who need fiscal sponsorship to fund their projects and growth. Together, these programs uplift past legacies and equip a new generation of Black queer leaders to lead confidently and have the backbone to drive progress successfully.



COLLABORATIONS

MashUp is deeply committed to a solidarity network that fosters community care with organizations that align with our mission. These are our partners and program collaborators.

Advocacy & Support Networks

- Civic Table
- Today's Hope (Street Works)
- Launchpad

Helping to advance solutions to the barriers our community faces. We advocate for community needs and partner to help broaden outreach.

Health & Wellness Initiatives

- Healing in the Margins
- Pride in the Pews
- Black Health Mental Village
- Brothers United

Helping to supply our community with resources for holistic healing and health. Our partners provide healing and harm reduction services we can't.

Social & Cultural Engagement

- Nashville Black Pride
- BLAQ Link
- Music City ACC Ball
- Hoodoo Festival
- People's Pride

It takes a village to cultivate and sustain culture. We partner to help build sustainable cultural organizing, events, and community legacy.

Our Fiscal Sponsorships

- Trans Aid Nashville
- Heaxuly House
- OutGaze
- Individual Artists

We are committed to building networks of solidarity and stewardship. Equity begins with access. We provide organizational structure and fiscal sponsorship to programs and people that grow MashUp's mission.

Through these partnerships, MashUp! strengthens its impact, ensuring our work remains rooted in community, culture, and collective action.



GLOBAL IMPACT

We aim to be a vital part of the global community by committing to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that shape our collective future. By driving local change with a shared purpose, we extend our impact globally and build stronger partnerships with organizations and stakeholders. Our focus on SDG3 and SDG10 aligns MashUp with global priorities.

SDG #3: Good Health and Well-Being

Aligned Pillars:

- 1) Wholeness as a Path to Healing
- 2) Health Equity Through Identity Integration

Aligned Programs:

Mindful MashUp Transformation
Dining Dialogues
The Wholeness Project
MashUp Weekend

SDG #10: Reduce Inequality Within/Among Countries

Aligned Pillars:

- 2) Health Equity Through Identity Integration
- 3) Community Knowledge & Generational Wisdom
- 4) Leadership and Social Justice in Action

Aligned Programs:

Timeless Jewels
Dining Dialogues
EJR Leadership Institute
MashUp Weekend

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Learn More about the UN's SDGs



CALL TO ACTION

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR, OR SEND A ONE TIME DONATION!



How to connect with us:

General inquiries: info@mashupnation.org

Want to plan an event?

Email: marketing@mashupnation.org

Want to partner with us or collaborate on a project?

Email: e.rector@mashupnation.org

What to sponsor a MashUp program?

Email: development@mashupnation.org

Have a proposal?

Email: j.ivery@mashupnation.org

Follow us!



@mashup.nation



@mashupfamily

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

“

"MashUp has silently transformed my life this year and I would say that the impact that you all are making supersedes the LGBTQ+ community. It's for everyone because at it's foundation is genuine love. It's my hopes that as organizations and foundations continue to find nonprofits to support who are truly making a difference in the community that they are drawn to MashUp. You all are saving lives."

”

References and Appendix:

Appendix:

Mindful MashUp Transformation Program: [2023 LGBTQ+ Health Experiences Survey](#)

Mindful MashUp Transformation Program: [Mindful MashUp Interview Analysis](#)

Dining Dialogues: [Pre and Post event survey](#)

Timeless Jewels Survey Data: [Timeless Jewels 9/21/24 Dining Dialogues](#)

Timeless Jewels Survey Data: [MashUp! Event Survey 2025 \(age 50+ Responses\)](#)

Timeless Jewels Survey Data: [Camp Moonstone Fellows\(Ages 50+ & Living with HIV\)](#)

MashUp Weekend: [Event Survey Data](#)

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MashUp's Theory of Change Editors:

Jerry Ivery, CEO
 Dr. Brian Marshall, Chief Officer of Data and Media/Founder
 Emmett Rector, Director of Communications & Partner Engagement