



EDITORIAL CARTOON

## Editorial

### 'Stop Loss Order' for Gays: Typical Military Hypocrisy

**Stop a bullet today and get discharged tomorrow.** That is what the Armed Forces is asking of the gay community in the light of the current world crisis over terrorism.

It is five-star hypocrisy. The government winds a medal, but it is not gold or brass, it is yellow and cowardly.

We are 30 days removed from the terrorist attack, where a gay man may have assisted in overcoming hijackers, where a gay priest lost his life in service to firemen and where countless gay men and women may have died in the air and in their offices.

We are 30 years removed from the day where a gay man disarmed a woman as she was attempting to shoot and kill then President Ford. When will we learn?

It almost seems unnecessary to call for an end to gay discharges from the military in an enlightened world where gay men openly serves as U.S. ambassadors, and gay women serve in Congress. In St. Paul, a transgendered person runs an administrative agency for Republican Mayor Norm Coleman. We have come so far and yet seemingly learned so little.

Throughout Europe, and in NATO, gays serve in the military. In America, our Air Force has announced it has currently implemented a 30 day 'stop-loss' order, temporarily suspending some administrative

discharges, but exempting discharges "for cause," including discharges under Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

The Air Force order, which was implemented on September 22nd, includes language specifically instructing leaders to continue processing gay discharges despite halting many other discharges. Amazing!

C. Dixon Osburn, Executive Director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), noted that the order singles out lesbian, gay and bisexual service members for second-class treatment. What else is new?

Other services will follow suit with a 'Stop-Loss' order, but all service members - regardless of the branch in which they serve - should continue to operate with the knowledge that 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' remains in full effect.

What a courageous but unifying step it would be for George Bush to put an end to this archaic and disgusting discharge policy!

And what better time would there be then now, when Americans of all creeds and colors, nationalities and origins, religions and political allegiances, have come together in a spirit of unity, togetherness, and pride?

What better time, Mr. Bush, what better time?

To quote from a very good book, the *Talmud*, "If not now, when? If not me, who?"

### Coming Out Today Liberates You Tomorrow

"If not now, when?" might also be applied to the public process of coming out, and acknowledging your sexual identity. To be sure, this newspaper has not been sensitive to closeted public personalities who shield their private sexuality.

We have criticized sarcastically, and ripped editorially the many hypocrites who are activists in the day and closeted at night, whether they are congressmen or celebrities.

Maybe we have not directly outed persons, but we have brought them into the sunlight. The truth is, though, we need their help. Every time a successful actor, noted politician, or community leader 'comes out,' we take another step in tearing down barriers. It is not because we want to define them by their sexuality. It is because we do not want to.

Our goal is to show it is okay for a Republican Congressman to be conservative, from West Palm Beach, and gay. That applies to a wealth of other celebrities and entertainers, who do interview after interview, but avoid any discussion of who they really are when the curtains fall.

The media is too often an accomplice in the lie. After Father Mychal Judge, of the New

York City Fire Department, lost his life at the Twin Towers, the media steadfastly and earnestly avoided discussions of his sexuality.

Why? They failed to depict the true picture of a caring and kind soul, warm with goodness, guided by God, and supporting of others.

Yes, coming out is a process, so we must be patient with individuals finding themselves. So to those still searching, please pause, and take a moment. Look at the lessons and learning experiences of those who opened their souls, their lives, and their friends to Truth. They have been liberated, freed, and released from the bondage of fear, exposure, and inner terror. And when a Rosie O'Donnell or Rickey Martin breaks down a wall, the floodgates open a path for so many others that will take their lead.

'Coming Out Day' is officially this Thursday. But truthfully, it is any day that you feel right about being yourself. Ultimately, you do not need an official sanction from any movie star, Pride South Florida, or any other organization or group. You just need to find honor, strength, and courage from within.

We encourage you to search your soul, evaluate your essence, and ask whether it is not time for you to become who you really are.

## THE EXPRESS CHAT ROOM

### Letters to the Editor

#### A Young Man Calls for Greater Activism in the Community

As LGBT people of South Florida we have this idea that this great land is gay friendly. We live in a bubble, it's the big gay bubble we call South Florida. It's a happy place where we can hold hands, hug, and maybe even sneak a kiss in public. We have crossed over the rainbow to a field of greener grass.

We seem to have forgotten the wonderful people of Equal Rights Not Special Rights now terrorizing our area, handing out hate fliers, and spewing there bigoted beliefs to our cities children.. It seems to me, this bubble has popped.

Some of us walk from day to day completely oblivious to the fact that gay men, women, youth, and transgender people are still not equal; that we still can't get married, we can't adopt, and we are treated as less than human. We still have teachers, Deans, and other school officials who ignore the gruesome affects of harassment on gay youth.

As we sit here drinking coffee talking over the complexity of grape flavored bubble gum, others are being tortured, tormented, raped, and harassed. But we still get to watch *Queer as Folk* while drinking a margarita in comfortable chair at Georgies Alibi. We watch the television glued to one gay show after another while eating a bowl of popcorn while Mathew Sheppard rots in a forgotten 6 foot deep grave, but it's okay because we're doing the best we can.

I sent my \$20 donation to the local GLCC, I voted Gore, and I don't eat at the Cracker Barrel. So you think that's all you can do? With over 350,000 of us in Broward County I think we can do more than that. Just take one hour out of every weekend, donate that precious hour to any of the numerous groups in South Florida... GLSEN, SAGE, Empower

Broward, Scouting For All, and that's only the tip of the iceberg.

With 8049 hate crimes committed in 1997, as a community we need to worry more about the safety of every one of us than about what great new outfit is on sale at the Gap. In a peaceful revolution knowledge is our weapon and we must use excessive force. Every last one of us wants the benefits that activist, volunteers, and voters provide us with, but fewer of us want to do anything to help. If sending a small check is what you can do, then do it. Just take some time to get involved. It isn't going to kill you, but not getting involved just might.

The world has seen that we aren't going to back down, that we aren't going to go away, and that we aren't going to give up... Now that we've shown them that, let's take to action and get something done. Write to your local senator, become involved in any area of the community, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, GLCC, one of the numerous Human Rights groups, there are so many different ways you can help prevent crimes against humanity. Just take one precious moment, of your precious week, of your precious life, to help someone else's.

There are 350,000 LGBT men and women in Broward that's a total of 5,250,000 hours a week that we could potentially use to get the rights we deserve.

There are 168 hours in a week. You say you don't have time... No... you just don't take the time! We can do better.

**For more information or help on what you can do contact the Author, Michael J Anderson at [Queerrants@hotmail.com](mailto:Queerrants@hotmail.com).**



Michael J Anderson

#### AFE Chair Bodiford Reminds

#### Everyone That The Fight is Not Over

On Monday, September 17, Equal Rights Not Special Rights (ERNSR), the political action committee seeking to remove "sexual orientation" from Broward County's Human Rights Ordinance, turned in 66,304 signature petitions to the County Administrator. Later that week, the County Administrator certified the count.

On September 20, the petitions were transferred to the Supervisor of Elections office for validation. The Supervisor of Elections has 30 days, under the county charter, to validate/reject the petitions. ERNSR needs 62,143 valid signature petitions to qualify for a referendum.

66,304 petitions gives them about a 6.5% margin for error. The average margin of error for signature petitions is between 9-15%. That hurts their chance for success.

According to our observers the number of signatures being invalidated appears to be in excess of 6.5%. That's great news! We are cautiously optimistic they will not validate a sufficient number of signatures to qualify for a referendum.

However, we don't want to be caught off guard. Should the Supervisor of Elections validate enough signatures for a referendum, the referendum must occur within 90 days. That doesn't give us much

time to run a campaign.

In turn, Americans For Equality: Empower Broward, the political action committee formed to oppose the repeal effort, has spent the past few weeks preparing for a campaign.

It is imperative that you and your friends be ready to assist us with the campaign at a moments notice. We will need volunteers and contributions. Running a successful campaign will cost a minimum of \$100,000.

Voter identification and phone banks will require hundreds of volunteers. We cannot win this campaign without your help.

Please continue to monitor your e-mail. And, contact Americans For Equality: Empower Broward immediately should we notify you that your assistance is required. We can be reached at: Americans For Equality: Empower Broward, 2228 Wilton Drive, Box 16, Wilton Manors, FL 33305, 954.567.8585 or [www.americansforequality.org](http://www.americansforequality.org).

Rest assured, Americans For Equality: Empower Broward is working hard in laying the groundwork to respond immediately, if necessary. We'll know the outcome within the next few weeks.

Robin L. Bodiford, Esq., Chairman Americans For Equality: Empower Broward

#### Editor's Note: Enter an Express Poll and Read our Updates

Enter the *Express* poll online beginning later this week as we ask you, our readers, to evaluate our columnists and critics, in a feature 'The Best and Worst of the Express,' to be also highlighted in our next print edition, on the stands and in 7-11's, Monday October 22. Also, *Express* distribution points have now been expanded to include 7-11 stores in northern Broward and Palm Beach Counties.

Our Halloween issue, October 22, will also feature information on the Fort Lauderdale Film Festival, a review on the popular Coral Springs eatery, *Chowders*, and an interview with Richard Gray as he celebrates his tenth anniversary with the Royal Palms in Fort Lauderdale.

**Breaking News Updates** are of course, always available, online at our website, [www.expressgaynews.com](http://www.expressgaynews.com)



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