

A Line In The Sand

By Marti Abernathey

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Abstract

by Caillean McMahon Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Alliance This well may be the least popular editorial that I have ever written. Having said that, having warned the “gentle reader” that I am about to drop a match onto the gasoline of well-defended complacency, it is time to begin. Today’s news carried a piece on the [...]

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Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Alliance

This well may be the least popular editorial that I have ever written. Having said that, having warned the “gentle reader” that I am about to drop a match onto the gasoline of well-defended complacency, it is time to begin.

Today’s news carried a piece on the outing of Senator Santorum’s aide as gay. It is not a stunning revelation in and of itself, for we have been treated to other gays serving our enemies in the past, going as far as to mastermind gay bashing and smear campaigns, but this one was unique in that a justification was offered. His justification was that the Senator was “a man of principle.”

Yes, I said “our enemies.” People who block, derail or attack our pursuit of the same rights that straights have such as not being evicted because of the gender of your lover, not losing your job arbitrarily because of who you sleep with or which sex you find attractive, tax credits, or the right to legally solemnize your relationship and provide protections and benefits for your partner are most certainly not our friends.

People who block hate crimes legislation on the grounds that it is a special right or protection at a time that the percentage of such crimes that are aimed at us approaches an all time high are engaging in a dishonest game of chess with our lives. We would not need such legislation if we were simply treated like everyone else. Again, they are not our friends.

I do not accept the argument that “our opponents” are acting upon their beliefs or consciences as justification for their actions. All of history has shown that the same specious platitudes were used for the persecution of each minority in sequence. Every time, every single time that it occurred in history it was proven to be morally wrong.

A person who questions any aspect of their own actions would have to at least pause at that fact of human civilization and wonder if that is the case now, that denying us equality is morally wrong.

Instead, those who seek to keep us in thrall as second or third class citizens summon crumbling theological positions to insist that this minority, the gay community, is somehow different. The “different” and therefore unworthy weapon was used against every minority before us as well as they came to the front of the room, hungry for justice, to ask whatever authority oppressed them “please Sir, I want more” as Oliver Twist asked Dickens’s Mr. Bumble while he was a prisoner in the workhouse.

So, we the gay community do have enemies. Our enemies identify themselves clearly by the positions that they take against us. Rick Santorum, US Senator from Pennsylvania, is our enemy.

His now outed Chief of Staff told reporters that “Senator Santorum is a man of principle, he is a man who sticks up for what he believes in, I strongly do support Senator Santorum.”

I read the words twice and sat back in my chair to reflect.

Senator Santorum is a man of principle. His principles are bad. He supports an amendment to bar same-sex marriage. He opposes gays and lesbians in the military. He has said that we “undermine the basic tenets of our society and the family.” He opposed the overturning of sodomy laws, saying a right to privacy doesn’t exist. He misquotes, twists words and overtly deceives when he discusses our aspirations and ambitions.

The argument that “other issues” lead gays and lesbians to support the Pennsylvania Senator and others like him doesn’t impress me. It appalls me. What other issues take precedence over human rights? Do they truly believe that currying favour with the enemy will improve their position?

Yes, I did say “currying favour with the enemy.” Strong words, I agree, but we are being undone by our reluctance to speak them. By not doing so we implicitly validate not only the actions of those of our number who aid in our oppression, but we also lend credence to the stature of a leader who engages in policies that are inherently and irrefutably morally wrong as judged by past history.

Having taken the plunge, “gentle reader”, let us go a bit further together. Every gay who supports the election of a figure opposed to us, every one who raises or donates funds to those who campaign on a platform of oppressing us, every one who lends their skills to engage in the underhanded deviousness used to terrify the public with distortions, half truths and lies about us is akin to Beecher Stowe’s “Uncle Tom” or to the Jewish kapos who enforced Nazi policy on the Jewish victims in the Warsaw ghetto. Another truth of human history is that groveling for crumbs at the table of the authority whose boot is fixed firmly upon your neck has never in the end succeeded. It will not succeed now .

The last major set of elections in this country was in the end about us and our aspirations. It was made a referendum on us by our opponents, our enemies who gloried in the chance to do so. Twenty seven percent of our number put their own future, their own safety and their own job and housing security aside to vote against themselves and against us.

A conservative acquaintance once said to me “we are not all like Alan Keyes.” Well, if you support men like Senator Santorum, yes, you are. If you serve or help to fund politicians who oppose our rights, yes you are. You may justify it in your own mind howsoever that you chose. In doing these things, in lending time, money, skill, or intellect to the enemies of our rights you are, actively or passively, overtly or covertly, like Alan Keys or Rick Santorum.

I know that I am drawing a line in the sand. I know that I am saying to the collaborators that they are doing things that are morally objectionable and inherently evil.

Yes, I said collaborators. Every time that a gay, lesbian or trans person is dismissed out of prejudice because our enemies voted against protections the ink on the firing notice is on the hands of those of us who supported such men.

Every time that a gay, lesbian or trans person loses their housing because such rights have been denied to us the responsibility for the cold of the streets and the terror of homelessness is in the hands of those amongst us for whom “other issues” were more important than human rights.

Every time that a gay, lesbian or trans person is raped, beaten or murdered because the assailant was inspired by hate speech from leaders the blood of the victims is on the hands of those who supported the speakers with their skills, time and money.

“If the case I present seems hard and uncompromising, it is because the evidence makes it so.” The words were spoken by Justice Jackson, I embrace them today as the closing to this editorial.

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