

My Support

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Article

Readers of this blog are probably not surprised that I'm supporting the boycott of the Human Rights Campaign's San Francisco Dinner. What you might find surprising is that I'm supporting my friend Diego Sanchez, in speaking at the event. I'm also supporting the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) nationally, now as a member. That's right, I'm now a paid member of HRC. Why?

If the transgender community is going to attain their civil rights as a part of the larger GLBT movement, we should be part of the largest, most powerful organization. And my isn't HRC powerful?! Their power is so great that the organizations affiliated with United ENDA still feel the need to work with them. The historic transgender hearings were led (Barney Frank's Senior Policy Adviser, Joe Recalto's words, not mine) by HRC. Whether they liked it or not, the groups of United ENDA decided that they had to work with HRC for the hearings. In fact, I don't know of any boycott that a national GLBT organization is engaged in with HRC. Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) still co-sponsors the True Colors tour with HRC. I'm not just singling out PFLAG here, because this isn't an isolated occurrence. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) sponsors a meeting of various GLBT civil rights organizations called "The National Policy Roundtable" NGLTF's website states:

"The National Policy Roundtable convenes the executive directors of policy-oriented national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and HIV/AIDS organizations and the national co-chairs of policy-oriented national associations of local and state organizations semi-annually for two days of discussion, strategic thinking, information sharing and development of collaborative projects."

And the goals of the NPR are to:

*"Strengthen relationships between national LGBT organization leaders.
Brief LGBT organization leaders on policy issues of common concern.
Strategize about pending challenges to the LGBT movement and mechanisms for response.
Generate collaborative efforts among national LGBT organizations and associations."*

The Human Rights Campaign is still a member of the NPR, along with United ENDA coalition partners the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), New York Trans Rights Organization, PFLAG, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), National Stonewall Democrats, The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (CLGS), the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network(GLSEN), Mautner Project: the National Lesbian Health Organization, Out & Equal Workplace

Advocates, The National Black Justice Coalition, and Pride At Work, just to name a few. There may be an illusion of protest within the GLBT community, but like the Wizard, if you pull back the curtain, things are much different than they seem from the outside. Excluding Atlanta Pride, no Pride has boycotted HRC. Statewide organizations that were part of the ENDA coalition continue to collaborate with HRC (like my state equality group, Indiana Equality, for example).

I support the protesters of HRC in New York and San Francisco, because they put their money where their mouth is/was. The protesters are sending a message that it is not ok to leave out gender identity in the next version of ENDA. The most effective means of getting a message across to an organization or business is a boycott.

At the same time, I refuse to demonize the HRC. They are the one of the only major GLBT organization that has hired a transwoman on to their staff (Pride At Work being the only exception that comes to mind), they've apologized for their misstatement at SCC, and they are the political gatekeepers. I'm not going to demonize Diego Sanchez for speaking to the San Francisco HRC gala, either. There needs to be representation inside the most powerful GLBT organization. Sanchez isn't hiding his dissatisfaction with the events of last year, but his vision of an inclusive bill includes every organization:

I believe our whole community is driven to move forward. I hope we choose to advance as partners, or we benefit those against us. I work with and need HRC, the National Center for Transgender Equality, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force for their different expertise. I'm one transguy, outside of HRC, working directly and candidly with HRC, to help it expand and fortify how it serves us.

The darling of the transgender community, Donna Rose (the HRC board member that resigned last fall), also continues to dialogue with HRC.

I'm meeting with Joe this morning and I'm looking forward to that for several reasons. If this meeting had happened a long time ago it might have eased a number of things. But it didn't so better late than never. Nobody knows what I'm planning to say, or what we're planning to discuss. Others are already making assumptions - that was inevitable - but nobody knows. I haven't told anyone. Nobody. Not one person. Because that's how rumors start. So - from the get go, the things I hope to discuss at this point are private to me and me alone. What I choose to share here afterwards will be private, as well. I don't want to dampen our ability to talk freely, and that's the most important part.

If the leaders of the United ENDA coalition don't boycott HRC, why should I? I'm a gay transgender person with a gay son. HRC supports our right to work, to adopt, and to marry. While HRC had a moment of indiscretion, they've come clean and are being clear about their position on ENDA. The protestors in San Francisco are clear about their position on ENDA and HRC. The coalition of United ENDA?

... not so much.

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