

When I first moved to East Texas a year and a half ago, I asked why there was no gay community here, and everyone seemed to agree that this area has more of a hostile attitude toward gays than anywhere in the country. Apparently, we're famous for our "in-hospitality."

Though it seems a daunting task, and I don't delude myself into thinking I can single-handedly bring East Texas into the third millennium, I do intend to do my part if and when the opportunity arises.

Local CBS affiliate KYTX interviewed me to get the gay community's response to the House's passing of the "Hate Crimes Act" a couple of weeks ago, but their resulting report was so egregiously biased, that it prompted a further response, which I've appended below:

Local CBS Affiliate Angered Over Hate Crimes Bill

Tyler, Texas. Local CBS affiliate, KYTX CBS 19 ran a televised news segment regarding the "Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act" (Six O'clock News, May 3, 2007), which was blatantly inaccurate and purposefully misleading. At the time of the broadcast, the legislation had already passed the House by a wide majority, after receiving overwhelming support by law enforcement agencies and the American public.

In researching their subject matter, the news team focused exclusively on James Dobson's (Focus on the Family) demonstrably false notion that the bill would impose "thought crime" legislation and curtail religious leaders from being able to express critical views towards gay and lesbian citizens.

To be clear, and despite what the newscast seemed to indicate, there are no provisions in this bill that curtail free speech, though it does include measures to *protect* free speech. Mr. Dobson has employed this falsehood in his attempt to divert all eyes away from substantive issues. East Texas' own Louie Gohmert, favoring Dobson's untruths over an actual reading of the bill, has also made the false claim that it contains a provision to arrest pastors for expressing their views. Because of widely expressed concerns that the legislation would in fact place limits on freedom of speech or expression, the following official rebuttal was prepared, which specifically addresses the false claim endorsed by Dobson and Gohmert:

"It [the Hate Crimes Bill] does not impinge on public speech or writing in any way," countered Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, D-Mich., pointing out that the bill explicitly reaffirms First Amendment and free-speech rights. (Jim Abrams, AP)* – Unfortunately, KYTX failed to discuss the actual bill during their report.

Perhaps it would have been preferable for KYTX to reference the short, 14-page Act itself. Considering Dobson's misinformation, it seems ironic to note that "religion" is a specifically-protected group under the Act (page 7, lines 10-12, Library of Congress link provided below**), and that; "Nothing in this Act, or the amendments made by this Act,

shall be construed to prohibit any expressive conduct protected from legal prohibition by, or any activities protected by the free speech or free exercise of the First Amendment to the Constitution (reference begins page 12, line 21, *ibid.*).

The report was submitted by KYTX “Eye at 5” anchor, Annalisa Petralia, who had been referred to me by our regional PFLAG president for an interview. I told Annalisa that the bill contained no such “thought-crime” provision... warning her specifically that James Dobson has a documented track record on the subject of hate speech against the GLBT community (see supporting material below). I also mentioned that one in every six hate crimes is committed because of the victims’ sexual orientation and gave specific examples of three murderers here in Tyler that had selected their victim because he was gay. Yet the records and facts that I shared with her seemed of little value in light of Ms Petralia’s single-minded issue of pastoral liberty. “How could a preacher’s words cause violence against gays,” she asked me (paraphrased from memory).

“Well,” I answered, “let’s imagine you were a preacher talking about how gays aren’t really people, that they don’t deserve any consideration, because they’re evil. Now let’s imagine I was a congregant who was being told that the attack by gays on my family values was exactly like the attack on Pearl Harbor, as one of Dobson’s staff has said... well, I’m learning a type of bigotry that’s going to make it more likely for me to be violent toward that class of people.”

From this quote, and from my entire ten-minute interview, Annalisa played only the following video clip: “...well, I’m learning a type of bigotry that’s going to make it more likely for me to be violent toward that class of people ...”

This segment, separated from the journalist’s hypothetical question and qualifiers that preceded it, appeared to be a threat of violence, and is a tragic misuse of journalistic ethics and trust. The Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics states that, “Deliberate distortion is never permissible.”

Among other obviously wholesome provisions, this Code of Ethics calls for journalists to...

“Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing them on others”

“Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant”

“Give voice to the voiceless”

and...

“Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting”

KYTX has an opportunity to help mend issues that deeply divide our community by objectively reporting the facts. This report has instead supported Dobson’s “red herring” while ignoring any factual material whatsoever. Then, in what seems a break with the ethical standards supported by professional journalists, my interview was edited so that I appeared to mean the exact opposite of what I actually said. Where I was pleading for peace, it gave the appearance that I was making a call for violence. I’m saddened by the

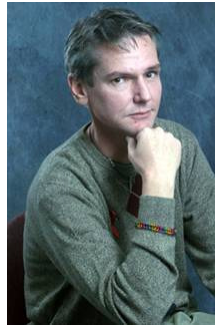
lack of truth in this report. It seems more effective as a means to stir angry passions rather than objectively cover community news.

A subsequent email request to KYTX for a follow-up news report and a personal meeting with local PFLAG leaders was rebuffed.

Troy Carlyle holds a BS from the Air Force Academy and is the recipient of two Air Medals. He is an active member of Mensa, PFLAG, the Human Rights Campaign, and the American Civil Liberties Union -- and holds a position on the Board of Directors for the Community Health Clinics of Northeast Texas and press credentials through Cassell Network of Writers. He is the author of the book, "The Remainder of My Life: an autobiography written in real time" (Lulu Press, lulu.com).



Annalisa Petralia/Eye @ 5 Anchor



Troy Carlyle (Photo by Herb Nygren, courtesy of Tyler Courier-Times-Telegraph, Tyler, TX)

Supporting Material:

I have provided source material and further illuminating data below.

Jim Abrams (AP) article:

http://www.gay.com/news/article.html?coll=news_articles&sernum=2007/05/03/1&navpath=/channels/news/&page=1

Violence against the GLBT Community:

On July 1, 1999, Gary Matson and his partner of 16 years, Winfield Mowder, were found shot dead in their bed in their home. Police arrested Matthew Williams and his brother James Tyler Williams. The Williams brothers, rightwing fundamental radicals, believed that God ordered them to commit these murders, based on hate rhetoric from Christian fundamentalists. Source: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?1999/07/12/2> and www.soulforce.org. You can watch a video of a personal friend of the victims of this crime talk about the role hate speech played in his friends' deaths (just before being arrested outside James Dobson's headquarters for "trespassing") here: <http://www.soulforce.org/article/1257>

Think about the murders of Gary and Winfield as you read the following quote from “Marriage Under Fire: the State of Our Union,” on Dobson’s “Focus on the Family” website:

“Just as the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 by the Empire of Japan served to energize and mobilize the armed forces of America, it would appear that the vicious assault on marriage and the church in recent months has begun to re-energize people of faith. I see indications that the church is mobilizing its forces to meet the challenge. Evil has a way of overreaching, and that appears to have happened regarding the blatant, lawless attack on marriage and biblical morality.”

How many more must die because of what Dr. Dobson teaches before he stops it?

James Dobson (Focus on the Family) Hate Speech: <http://www.family.org/> (emphasis added)

“Solid, irrefutable evidence proves there are lethal consequences to engaging in the defining features of male homosexuality.” – James Dobson

“Lesbian relationships are equally unhealthy and just as life-threatening as gay male relationships.” – James Dobson

“Moms and dads... are you listening? This [homosexual] movement is the greatest threat to your children.” – James Dobson

“They want to destroy marriage and family as we know it.” – James Dobson

“Traditional marriage between one man and one woman cannot coexist with homosexual marriage. It will destroy the family.” – James Dobson

“What do we know about this [homosexual] disorder? Well, first it *is* a disorder, despite the denials of the American Psychiatric Association.” – James Dobson

The Facts about the Hate Crimes Bill:

The actual bill, known as the “Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007,” may be viewed and printed through the Library of Congress website: <http://thomas.loc.gov/> ... and searching using the bill number, “H.R. 1592.” It is only 14 pages long, and 2 of those are title pages.

For those who are interested, further factual information about the Hate Crimes Bill can be found on the Human Rights Campaign website (hrc.org):
<http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=36630&TEMPLATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm>

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act gives the Justice Department the power to investigate and prosecute bias-motivated violence by providing the department with jurisdiction over crimes of violence where the perpetrator has selected the victim because of the person's actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

Support for this legislation is overwhelming. The bill is endorsed by notable individuals and more than 210 law enforcement, civil rights, civic and religious organizations, including: President George H.W. Bush's attorney general, Dick Thornburgh; National Sheriffs' Association; International Association of Chiefs of Police; U.S. Conference of Mayors; Presbyterian Church; Episcopal Church; and the Parent's Network on Disabilities. Poll after poll continues to show that the American public supports hate crimes legislation inclusive of sexual orientation, including a Kaiser Family Foundation poll released in November 2001 showing 73 percent of Americans supporting hate crimes legislation that includes sexual orientation. Source:

http://www.hrc.org/Content/NavigationMenu/HRC/Get_Informed/Federal_Legislation/Hate_Crimes_110th_Factsheet/The_Local_Law_Enforcement_Hate_Crimes_Prevention_Act.htm

*Source:

http://www.gay.com/news/article.html?coll=news_articles&sernum=2007/05/03/1&navpath=/channels/news/&page=1

**Source :

Library of Congress, H.R. 1592: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>