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Alecs C. ([cassleung2002](#)) wrote in [lostkidz](#),
[2004-05-07](#) 09:46:00



Current music: NPR's Weekend Edition

If not now, when???

HRC

IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR

REBECCA JURO

For years now, we've been hearing the same thing from the Human Rights Campaign, Barney Frank, and their political bedfellows over and over: "You're not ready...there aren't enough votes in Congress to support a transgender-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act or hate crimes protection bill. No one understands you, more education is needed. Just wait, be patient, we'll fight for you when the time is right. "

We always suspected it, and now we know it for a certainty. They've been lying through their teeth, and not just to us.

It all started in the last week of April, when transgender activists of all stripes descended on Washington, DC. I was there, as both a journalist and a participant. The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition's Lobby Days event, where the organization spent two days lobbying Congress for the inclusion of gender identity and gender expression protections in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the hate crimes bill, boasted an active and committed group of transgender activists. GenderPAC (GPAC) was there, holding its National Conference on Gender, the Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA) was gathering for its March to the Wall, and a team of transgender activists drawn mainly from the membership of Out For Democracy –Transgender met with the GLBT Outreach leaders of

both the Kerry campaign and the Democratic National Committee, the first time such a meeting has ever taken place.

Literally hundreds of politically-active Transgender Americans had come to our nation's capital to be seen, be heard, and to send a clear message to our country's leaders that we will no longer be invisible, ignored, or silent. The history books will record these days as the moment our community truly came out of the closet, as a valid minority constituency, as a political force, and as a community, with a social, political, and cultural identity all our own.

As is so often the case with breaking news stories, this one started with just a small kernel of information, but grew and grew, spiraling ever upward and outward...

The kernel was the stunning tidbit NTAC lobbyists heard when visiting the office of a major Republican co-sponsor of ENDA. When asked if the congressman would be willing to support a version of ENDA that is inclusive of gender identity and expression protections, a closely-placed source responded, "If HRC would just get on board with this, it would be so much easier." Those in many other congressional offices, while generally supportive of protecting Transgender Americans in civil rights legislation, were curious as to why HRC isn't supporting a trans-inclusive ENDA.

The seed expands and bursts, takes root, and begins to sprout...

More information began to trickle in. We learned that HRC has been pressuring GLBT advocacy organizations that have historically been very supportive and proactive in fighting for civil rights legislation that includes gender identity and gender expression protections to abandon their support of our community and support the non-inclusive "gay and lesbian only" bills HRC has been promoting. We also learned that most of these organizations are resisting HRC's efforts to curtail their support of Transgender Americans...most, but not all.

The sprout grows, its leaves unfurl and expand. The stalk lengthens, raising the still tightly wrapped bud toward the sun...

At about 2:30pm DC time on Friday, April 30th, a group of about 15 protesters, some wearing Transsexual Menace t-shirts, along with documentary filmmaker Tim Watts and his cameraman Kwan, there to record the protest for inclusion in their upcoming documentary film about Lobby Days and transgender activism, arrived at HRC headquarters and began picketing on the sidewalk outside the lavishly appointed building. We held signs with slogans proclaiming "These T's Are Not Silent! ", "Separate and Unequal! ",

"GLB...Where's the T? ", "HRC...Where Are We? ", and "Ten Years of Exclusion ". We stood, we marched, we chanted our slogans, and waved our signs at the shiny floor-to-ceiling HRC office windows for about half an hour, until an HRC representative came outside to invite us all into the building to talk.

Some of us immediately realized that what they were trying to do by inviting us all inside was to take the protest off of their sidewalk and out of public view, so we sent Gwen Smith, the well-read community columnist and webmistress of the Remembering Our Dead website, and Ethan St.Pierre, host of the Internet radio show Trans-FM, into the building with the HRC rep while I and the rest of our group remained outside and continued the protest.

A few of those entering or leaving the building and passers-by stopped to ask us what was going on, and we told them. It was street-level education at its most effective, if perhaps not at its most efficient. We let these folks see the faces and hear the voices of a community HRC has been doing everything it can to marginalize and disempower in the interests of exclusively promoting the equal treatment and civil rights of its mostly wealthy, mostly white, mostly straight-looking, mostly gay male major donor base while, at the same time, publicly proclaiming itself an advocate of Transgender Americans, and supportive of our equality and our civil rights.

Inside the building, Gwen and Ethan met with several HRC folks, who offered them cold water (which they refused), soothing, inclusive platitudes of "open door "policies and tales of tearful meetings discussing trans inclusion, and the promise of yet another upcoming discussion of a trans-inclusive ENDA to take place sometime this summer, all with Tim and Kwan keeping the microphone hot and the camera rolling despite the objections of the HRC reps.

When Gwen and Ethan emerged from the building, we wrapped up the protest and headed back toward the Dupont Circle Metro station, where we went our separate ways, most heading back to the train to reunite with the groups they'd come from to join us.

Finally, the bud blossoms into fullness, spreading its petals and revealing the true colors of its face to meet the light of day...

It wasn't until after we'd all returned to our respective homes days later that we learned the true impact of what we'd done. Our little protest, small in number though we were, hadn't gone unnoticed. Soon, Gwen and Ethan began receiving messages from other segments of the GLBT community that HRC has failed to support and represent fairly and honestly because they don't fit the organization's conservative public image. Drag queens, leather

community members, and gay groups from as far away as Louisiana all checked in with statements of solidarity and support for the protest and its message.

We also learned that we'd just happened to show up to protest on a day when HRC was holding a fund-raising event for some of its major donors. Apparently, the event had to be quickly moved to another location, no doubt to avoid having to answer inconvenient questions from these folks about why we were out there. Yes, boys, girls, and everyone else, the Goddess is trans-inclusive, even though some of Her children aren't.

So, you might ask, what happens now?

This, my friends, is just the beginning. The first step is this, the column you are reading right now, and what you'll soon be seeing, hearing, and reading from a variety of media resources about what happened and what we learned in DC, what we're going to do about it, and how you can help make it happen.

There will be more columns and more protests. You'll hear about it on community radio shows, you'll read about it in GLBT newspapers and on websites, and your community needs you to do your part. Call your Congressman, call your Pride Center, call your friends and neighbors. Tell them you're not going to support HRC or their elitist political games and ask them not to do it, either. If you're a member of HRC, rip up your membership card, send it back to them in pieces, and tell them why you're doing it. Don't buy another t-shirt or donate another nickel to these people until they're willing to truly honor the words emblazoned on the wall of their obscenely opulent office building:

Working for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender equality

At long last, our time has come. We've grown up as a community, as a political force, and as a culture. We've seen through the lies, the misrepresentations, the double-dealing, and the thinly-veiled bigotries. No longer will we sit quietly and idly by as others promote themselves and their own fair and equal treatment at our expense. We are speaking out, and our voices are being heard, on the street, in the media, and in the halls of Congress. And as we are speaking, so are we listening.

We know the truth now.

The time of lies is over.

These T's are NOT silent!

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 [phisiggirl](#)

2004-05-23 05:21 am UTC

I saw that conference! I happened to be staying in the same hotel as the Transgendered Veterans group! I hope that you are all able to achieve your goals, people who are willing to work so hard for society should be successful. keep up the effort!

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